



CHAPTER 13. ECONOMY AND TOWN CENTRES

Strategic policy EC13.1

Promoting economic growth and successful high streets

1. We will support economic recovery, business investment and jobs growth through support for a diverse local economic base in Merton by encouraging developments that provide a greater number and range of jobs and services and add to the vibrancy of the borough.
2. We will focus on encouraging business investment and jobs growth to support a diverse and resilient economy based on a wide range of sectors. We will do this by:
 - a. Supporting development that raises and sustains the number and range of jobs increases the diversity of businesses and reduces carbon emissions where it meets other policies in this plan;
 - b. Considering the full economic potential of all of Merton's sectors when determining planning applications, including social and community infrastructure, industrial and waste services, business, leisure, sports, town centre services and shops, creative, cultural, tech and green sector jobs;
 - c. Promoting resource efficiency and the principles of the circular and sharing economy; supporting developments and encouraging businesses to take advantage of the new economic opportunities associated with reducing carbon emissions and transitioning to a low carbon economy. Safeguarding employment and community floorspace and sites for business and jobs, including for shared workspace;
 - d. Defining Merton's hierarchy of town centres, high streets and neighbourhood parades in Policy TC.13.3 and supporting these by encouraging a broad range of occupiers suitable for each area that support jobs and local vibrancy;
 - e. Strengthening the pathways through education and learning into jobs and careers for residents, supporting employment and training schemes to maximise local employment opportunities and help address skills deficits, including in green skills;
 - f. Encouraging employer participation and investment in skills;
 - g. Aligning the skills offer to our growth and strategic sectors through the Skills for South Londoners Strategy and the south London Skills and Employment Board; and
 - h. Requiring developers and applicants on major sites to support the recruitment of local residents and businesses as part of the construction and end life of their development.

- 3.** We will seek to ensure a supply of viable and appropriate sites and premises for businesses, jobs and other enterprises in locations which optimise the needs of business while minimising disruption to local amenity. We will do this by:
- a.** Strengthening the NPPF’s “town centre first approach” by encouraging a range of appropriate town centre uses, not limited to retail, that generate a larger number of journeys towards Wimbledon (major town centre), Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Morden (district town centres);
 - b.** Supporting local town centres and neighbourhood parades for businesses commensurate with the character of the area and providing services to local residents;
 - c.** Encouraging complementary businesses, services and activities in our town centres that will enhance the vitality and vibrancy of the centre, including uses that will add to the attraction of the town centre for all users and meet the changing needs and desires all high street users;
 - d.** Protecting and managing the designated Strategic Industrial Locations and Locally Significant Industrial Sites, ensuring that they are prioritised for industrial and distribution uses that could operate 24-hours and are not compatible with homes, schools and other sensitive uses;
 - e.** Facilitating new employment by protecting and improving scattered employment sites for small and growing businesses or community uses;
 - f.** Supporting the provision of well managed co-working space close to good public transport links;
 - g.** Seeking to ensure that there is a strong supply of appropriate space for small businesses, including move on space;
 - h.** Supporting opportunities to use vacant buildings and land for flexible and temporary meanwhile uses or pop ups;
 - i.** Supporting the redevelopment of purpose built retail units into other uses;

Justification

- 13.1.1.** The NPPF 2019 and 2021 draft states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.
- 13.1.2.** The COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating impact on the global economy, on unemployment, business closures and structural economic changes across the world. The UK, London and Merton are affected by the profound decline in jobs and rise in business closures. We are still in the pandemic phase and it is not yet known when this will end or the exact nature of the economic recovery.
- 13.1.3.** Economic and social recovery from the effects of COVID-19 will be a priority for the UK, for London and for Merton for the short to medium term. There are already a variety of predictions as to how COVID-19 will change the supply and demand for businesses and jobs. It is not yet known which of these will become a longer term reality and which might fall away as we start to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. This Local Plan continues to plan for space for businesses, jobs, apprenticeships and training in order to boost wages and local employment opportunities within the borough.
- 13.1.4.** What is known is that a global and local transition to a low carbon economy is essential to address climate change and its impacts, and will be important in Merton to achieve a net zero carbon borough by 2050. Through this Local Plan and through other initiatives we support the green recovery and the London-wide aim to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies and improve air quality by doubling the size of London's green economy by 2030 to accelerate job creation.
- 13.1.5.** Merton is characterised by being the gateway between inner and outer south west London. There is a relatively limited amount of land and floorspace available for business and jobs, relative to the space available for homes, parks and open spaces. This is why, in Merton, our plans for sustainable economic development covers all types of businesses, services and jobs from high value financial services through to restaurants, theatres and other town centre activities, manufacturing, sports, logistics, leisure, culture, schools and community uses.

13.1.6. One of the council's main aims is to be open for business and invest in the quality of life of our residents by providing suitable and well-located space for a wide variety of businesses and services that enable residents to work and run businesses locally, reducing the need for excessive commuting. This approach helps to deliver the council's objectives of supporting resilience, tackling climate change, the 20-minute neighbourhood, places for people and good growth. The Local Plan has the following five objectives:

- Tackling climate change
- Supporting resilience
- Places for people
- Good growth
- Place Plans and the 20-minute neighbourhood

13.1.7. The relationship between the number of jobs and employment floorspace is not straightforward and is becoming harder to quantify given ongoing advances in technology and changes in working practices. For example a decline in heavy manufacturing in Merton is not leading to a permanent reduction in demand for industrial premises, as growth areas such as food production, creative industries, advanced manufacturing, research and development, recycling and waste management, construction, printing and publishing and logistics are utilising such sites.

13.1.8. In 2020 Government has introduced successive statutory instruments and changes to the Use Class Order. Merton is supportive of the principle of greater flexibility in what business or community space can be used for and this may help to accelerate opportunities for new enterprises, jobs and different ways of working, thus helping with the Covid19 recovery and providing new services to residents. However we will also seek to minimise unintended harm from implementing flexible proposals that might occur to local amenity of existing businesses, residents or future users.

Industrial land

13.1.9. Successive London Plans from 2004 to the current 2021 London Plan have consistently identified Merton as having low levels of industrial land relative to demand, identifying that a more restrictive approach should be adopted to the transfer of designated industrial sites to non-employment uses. This is common across all south London boroughs.

13.1.10. To help support and strengthen the local economy during this time of continued uncertainty and in order to provide the borough with a strong foundation for future business growth, competition, employment and the transition to the low carbon economy, it is our intention to substantially protect and wherever possible, improve the quality of the borough's Strategic Industrial Locations, Locally Significant Industrial Sites and scattered employment sites.

13.1.11. However the council wants to support established business sites that can continue to safely accommodate modern business operations in an urban setting without requiring restrictions being placed on the business to protect nearby local amenity, such as opening hours and vehicle movements. Therefore, the council has proposed some amendments to Merton's Strategic Industrial Locations and Locally Significant Industrial Areas which are set out in Policy Ec13.2 to ensure that Merton's SILs and LSIA's are fit for purpose. We will also use the "agent of change" principle, putting the onus on new, more sensitive development to address potential harm arising from its location where sensitive uses are seeking to establish themselves within or near established active business areas.

13.1.12. To tackle the loss of scarce business space and reduce the potential for conflict between established business operations and new residents the council has introduced an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights from offices in designated industrial areas and Wimbledon town centre that want to convert into residential use.

13.1.13. Some employment uses do not provide or increase the number of job opportunities in the borough, for instance, storage facilities, particularly self-storage. The council wishes to both increase the number of employment opportunities in the borough and will support new business floorspace that provides a higher number of jobs.

Town centres and high streets

- 13.1.14.** The rapid changes in consumer behaviour, accelerated by the pandemic, are changing the nature of high streets across England. Large standard-format “big box” retail is proving less viable as consumers shop online with deliveries on the same day or within 24 hours and demand an experience to attract them to visit high streets or town centres.
- 13.1.15.** Even before COVID 19, department stores, clothes stores, electronics and other comparison goods were most at risk from these changes and it seems likely that consumer behaviour will adapt further and faster within the 15-year lifetime of this Local Plan. There is likely to be less demand for standard sized purpose-built premises which attract high rents and business rates but have not been designed to support different types of enterprises or to be subdivided into smaller units. The council will support the redevelopment of purpose-built retail units, into other uses appropriate to their location and will encourage new non-residential premises to take reasonable steps in their design to accommodate subdivision or expansion. This approach will be more cost effective in the long run for the landowner and will create viable space for start-ups and other businesses to grow, flex and change with changing demands and consumer behaviour.

Pop ups and meanwhile uses

- 13.1.16.** To create resilient, safe, diverse and vibrant town centres, high streets and other areas in Merton, we will support opportunities to use vacant buildings and land for flexible and temporary meanwhile uses or pop ups. The use of temporary buildings and spaces can help stimulate vibrancy, vitality, viability and security by creating social and economic value from vacant properties and provide services locally that reduce the need to travel. Meanwhile uses can also help to prevent blight, reduce the risk of arson, vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
- 13.1.17.** The benefits of meanwhile use also include short-term affordable accommodation for SMEs and individuals, generating a short-term source of revenue for the local economy and providing new and interesting shops, cultural and other events and spaces, which can attract longer-term business investment.
- 13.1.18.** London Plan policy HC5 supports meanwhile uses for culture and creative industries; the council believes that this should be extended more widely to encompass property guardians and any non-residential use.
- 13.1.19.** In considering these developments, the council's priorities will be:
- The enhancement or protection of local amenity in the surrounding area. This includes the vitality and viability of town centres and high streets, the business priorities for established and designated business areas and residential amenity of local neighbourhoods and scattered employment sites;
 - The provision of jobs, with emphasis on a wide range of salaries and skills and a high number of jobs; and
 - Ensuring that parameters for any meanwhile use, particularly its longevity and associated obligations, should be established from the outset and agreed by all parties.

Boosting skills

13.1.20. Planning to support well paid jobs that offer career progression and meet the needs of the future employers must be considered to ensure a sustainable economic model. Merton will work with partners, including the London Mayor and the South London Partnership to facilitate stronger links between businesses and education and training providers in South London. We will work together to ensure that the London Recovery Programme, the Green New Deal mission and the Skills Devolution programme meets the needs of Merton residents. In doing so we will identify skills needs and gaps, recognise the need to respond to changing work patterns, the rise of technology and the demand for suitable workspace.

13.1.21. Urban farming, food growing car / bike shares, clubs, last mile delivery, recycling and reuse of materials are all emerging parts of the circular and sharing economy. In line with the London Plan, we recognise and promote the benefits of a transition to a low carbon circular economy to strengthen London's economic success. There is a gap in green skills in London and we want to support this. The sharing and circular economy enables the efficient use of space and resources while contributing to facilitating social interaction.

13.1.22. Currently healthcare, education and the public sector are major employers of our residents, both within the borough and beyond its boundaries (for example at St George's and St Helier hospitals). This is expected to continue with the planned increase in housebuilding across London.

13.1.23. It is recognised that the Covid19 recovery, artificial intelligence (AI) and the tech sector will generate new types of employment, working patterns and in some cases roles that currently do not exist. We want to enable this policy to support employment growth by providing flexible work space and infrastructure that will facilitate employment space

13.1.24. .Development trends in Merton over the past 15 years, as in other urban areas, demonstrate that live/work developments have reverted quickly to a single use and any retention of the mixed use function is unachievable. This results in a loss of either employment or residential space. However there are currently substantial changes in working practices arising from COVID19 and it is not known which of these will be permanently established. We will support purpose built live/work developments outside designated industrial areas and scattered employment sites where there is no harm caused to established businesses or residential areas. Planning obligations will be used to establish purpose-built live/work developments. The "agent of change" principle will be used to protect existing amenity.

13.1.25. We will use planning obligations to ensure that job opportunities and apprenticeships are notified to the council or appropriate nominated agencies so that suitable local people can be given the opportunity to fill these vacancies.

Policy EC13.2

Business locations in Merton

Proposals relating to employment sites will be supported where they:

- a. Retain existing employment land and floorspace. The council will support proposals for the redevelopment of vacant and underused existing employment land and floorspace for employment uses.
- b. Are well designed. All proposals for developments should:
 - i. Be flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of different types of potential users over the lifetime of the development;
 - ii. Support the transition to a low carbon economy wherever possible;
 - iii. Have layout, access, parking, landscaping and facilities that are secure and appropriate to the site and its surroundings;
 - iv. Ensure the design of non-residential space protects neighbouring amenity;
 - v. Not unacceptably affect the operation of neighbouring businesses; and,
 - vi. Not adversely affect pedestrian, cycle or traffic movement, road safety or local amenity.
- c. Have good access to public transport. Proposals for offices and business space should be easily accessible by walking and cycling and wherever possible have facilities such as showers and secure cycle parking to support this. Measures to support the Healthy Streets approach and reduce reliance on car travel such as parking restrictions, travel plans and other appropriate measures will also be required.

Offices

- d. Provide larger offices and businesses that generate a lot of trips in town centres or in areas with good access to public transport (PTAL 4 and above) and within close proximity to additional services for employees and workers;

- e. Provide small (generally floorspace below 280 sqm) offices and businesses throughout the borough;
- f. Encourage the refurbishment/ redevelopment of existing offices for office use including shared space and flexible working;
- g. Proposals relating to employment sites will be supported where they demonstrate full and proper marketing. Where planning permission is required, proposals will only be supported for the change of use on upper floors in Wimbledon town centre from office floorspace to residential if it can be demonstrated to the council's satisfaction that there is no demand for the office use. Marketing of the site will need to be demonstrated at reasonable prices for a period of 18 months (1 ½ years).

Industrial land

- h. Provide general industry and storage and distribution in Merton's Strategic Industrial Locations and Locally Significant Industrial Sites.
- i. Protect and manage the designated Strategic Industrial Locations and Locally Significant Industrial Sites. The council will ensure that these sites are prioritised for industrial and distribution uses that could operate 24-hours and are not compatible with homes, schools and other sensitive uses;

Shared workspace and flexible business space

- j. Provide shared workspace, flexible or co-working space which is well-designed and well-managed to optimise its success. Where flexible working/co-working space is proposed in conjunction with a reduction in employment floorspace on the site, the council will seek planning obligations to secure that the flexible working/co-working space will be designed and actively managed for flexible working/co-working for a period of at least two years from the date of opening.

Justification

13.2.1. The NPPF, London Plan and Merton's strategic economic development policy seeks to optimise employment opportunities for Merton's residents assisted by supporting new development of business premise and protect employment land. These policies also direct new employment opportunities to the most appropriate and sustainable locations. This policy will contribute towards delivering these policies by setting out how proposals for employment will be considered.

13.2.2. Merton's main employment areas are the designated town centres and designated industrial sites (both the Strategic Industrial Locations [SILs] and Locally Significant Industrial Sites [LSIS]) as designated on Merton's Policies Map.

13.2.3. Merton's town centres are highly suitable for commercial, business and services (Use Class E and F). These locations are considered the most appropriate and sustainable for these uses as they:

- are highly accessible by different forms of transport;
- allow for the expansion of business;
- allow for similar businesses to locate together and for neighbouring uses to be compatible with each other;
- offer alternative complimentary services/uses to town centre visitors; and
- support the night time and tourist economy.

Businesses and offices

13.2.4. The council aims to increase the borough's capacity for attracting and accommodating a range of jobs in Merton, including offices, to increase employment opportunities and to provide good quality employment in Merton.

- 13.2.5.** The London Plan and Merton's Local Plan encourage office development in Wimbledon town centre, including large offices designed and managed for flexible working. Flexible working supports the economy, helps support collaboration and socialising while reducing the need to travel. The Mayor's London Office Review has consistently identified Wimbledon town centre as one of the few outer London locations capable of attracting office-based businesses and jobs that might otherwise have premises in central London. This is reflected in planning applications and development activity in Wimbledon to modernise existing offices and provide new speculative offices. Post COVID19, Wimbledon is well positioned to act as a hub for offices that are managed specifically for flexible working due to the town centre's excellent transport links, proximity to residential areas, opportunities for socialising and strong brand name.
- 13.2.6.** Over the past 10 years Wimbledon town centre has shown market demand for new and refurbished office development which is not evident in the rest of Merton. Wimbledon is a relatively small major centre, tightly bound by high quality residential areas with very little room for expansion. There is very limited demand for new build offices in the rest of Merton and as such Merton has a constrained office supply.
- 13.2.7.** The council will work with landowners to meet market demand for high quality, well designed offices commensurate with Wimbledon's status as a major centre with metropolitan characteristics and in recognition of Wimbledon's excellent transport links and as an internationally recognised name. Across the borough, smaller offices will be supported in town centres or in areas with good access to public transport (PTAL 3 and above).
- 13.2.8.** As stated in the NPPF and NPPG and detailed in the draft policy in this plan on out-of-centre commercial development, proposals for new large office developments located edge-of-centre and out-of-centre will be required to submit a sequential test and may be required to submit an impact assessment. This is to strike a balance between Merton's aspirations for economic growth whilst protecting the vitality and viability of Merton's designated town centres and minimising harm to residential areas. For the purposes of this policy, small offices are defined as being below 280sqm floorspace.
- 13.2.9.** PTAL informs geographical area levels access to public transport, the higher PTAL levels are concentrated around the town centres and transport interchanges of Wimbledon, Colliers Wood, Mitcham, Morden, and Raynes Park. Areas to the south east and south west of the borough have the lowest accessibility levels. As set out in the transport policies, applicants should use the latest and most up to date PTAL calculator from Transport for London.

- 13.2.10.** We seek to optimise employment opportunities in Merton by supporting the development of offices and directing new office space towards the most appropriate and sustainable locations. This policy will contribute towards delivering these policies by protecting offices for which there is demand. We will encourage the redevelopment/refurbishment of existing vacant offices to modernise the space for businesses. Changes to the Use Class Order in 2020 permit offices to change use (either by permitted development or prior approval) to a wide range of commercial, business and service occupiers.
- 13.2.11.** To protect space for businesses and jobs, in 2015 the council introduced an Article 4 Direction to remove these permitted development rights for offices in Wimbledon town centre and Merton's designated industrial estates to change to residential.
- 13.2.12.** In instances where planning permission is required, proposals for change of use from offices to other uses will be considered, where it can be demonstrated that there is no need for office uses. Applicants will need to provide Marketing and Vacancy evidence in accordance with the criteria set out in the Appendices, for a minimum of 18 months (1.5 years).
- 13.2.13.** Proposals for change of use from offices to alternative uses on the ground floor located in town centres should be dealt with under policies elsewhere in this plan including: Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades. Also outside of town centres, change of use from offices to alternative uses should be in accordance with policy Ec13.3 *Protection of scattered employment sites.*

Designated business and industrial sites

13.2.14. Over the past five years Merton has seen high levels of demand for space in its industrial areas from businesses that need to be close to the London economy, with very low vacancy rates and strong rental yields. Successive London Plans have recognised that industrial space in Merton and south London is limited and is in high demand.

13.2.15. Merton has a wide range of key businesses that support jobs and provide services to London’s population. These include food production, waste management, industrial laundrettes serving hotels and hospitals, printers, theatre stage engineering and other activities.

13.2.16. What these businesses have in common is the need to operate without the restrictions that would be placed on them in more residential areas. HGV movements, additional noise and smells, early morning starts or 24 hour operations are essential operational requirements for many businesses. The council protects its designated industrial areas for these reasons and has implemented an Article 4 Direction to prevent the further conversion of offices to residential within designated industrial areas and Wimbledon town centre via prior approval in order to protect space for business uses. The council will also use its powers to ensure that established noise-generating businesses (e.g. industrial uses, rail infrastructure) remain viable and can continue to grow without unreasonable restrictions being placed on them, in line with the “Agent of Change” approach in the NPPF 2019 and in the London Plan.

13.2.17. Merton’s Strategic Industrial Locations are recorded on Merton’s policies map and set out below:

Strategic Industrial Locations	Size (hectares)	Characteristics
South Wimbledon Business Area	35ha	One of the largest, most occupied strategic industrial locations in south west London with highest rental yields. Wide range of different types of industrial type businesses
Willow Lane	44ha	Large industrial area with focus on heavy industry, recycling and waste management
Durnsford Road / Weir Road	10ha	Range of different businesses
Plough Lane	15ha	Range of businesses
Hallowfield Way / Benedicts Wharf - southern half (amended)	3.2ha	SIL area with frontage to the A24 (west of tram line) being retained as Strategic Industrial Location. Area.

Strategic Industrial Locations	Size (hectares)	Characteristics
Prince George's Road	6ha	Industrial area behind Colliers Wood town centre. Several trade counters

- 13.2.18.** To allow for businesses to operate without excessive constraints from nearby homes (such as restrictions on opening hours, heavy vehicle movements, noise etc) the council will support proposals for manufacturing (B2 Use Class) and storage and distribution (B8 Use Class) within the designated industrial areas. Proposals for research and development light industrial or particular sui generis uses may be supported where the nature of the development requires an industrial (as opposed to a high street or scattered employment site) location and where the scheme is willing to accept restrictions on its conversion to other uses that would not be compatible with an industrial area. In line with the Agent of Change principle, the council will not support proposals in designated industrial areas that would curtail the industrial operations of existing businesses.
- 13.2.19.** In designated industrial areas in Merton, higher density trip-generating developments such as offices, shops or places of worship can interfere with the operations of surrounding businesses through increased traffic congestion, parking and pedestrian movements. Planning permission will not be granted for the development of offices in the designated industrial areas unless these are ancillary to the principle use of the premises or site.
- 13.2.20.** Logistics and other employment activities that generate frequent vehicle movements to and from the site/premises (excluding retail warehousing or any type of retail activity), will be encouraged to locate within the main industrial areas that are adjacent to the Strategic Road Network and have good vehicular access to the site.
- 13.2.21.** Proposals for new development or change of use should be compatible with the amenity of neighbouring occupiers of buildings. If proposals are likely to conflict with the successful operation of existing businesses nearby or cause harm to the amenities of occupants of neighbouring buildings without any way of mitigation, planning permission will not be granted. Mitigation measures through design conditions or planning obligations may be sought to improve site access or minimise disruption to neighbouring businesses where necessary.

Shared workspace and flexible business space

13.2.22. The council supports co-working and other forms of flexible working space in Merton which can support a greater number of jobs within the same office floorspace. Advice from organisations that have experience in managing co-working office and business space in London is that a number of factors are critical to its success including the location, size, presence of other ancillary facilities and the management / rental structures.

13.2.23. There are many examples of flexible managed co-working spaces in London and an increase in companies such as Central Working, Workspace, Co-working and Techhub who specialise in providing this space. Managed correctly, these spaces can support a much higher number of jobs and small businesses than more traditional business floorspace. These spaces can also provide an excellent opportunity for all sizes of office-based businesses to work flexibly; reducing their rental commitments while benefitting from occasional office and meeting space as and when required. The council wants to ensure that development that proposes co-working is managed and run effectively so as to genuinely result in the extra jobs density that is cited at the planning application stage.

13.2.24. Flexible working and co-working business spaces are characterised by:

- Providing desks or small workspaces within a fully serviced office that can be used by individuals or businesses;
- Monthly rents or less, making the space more affordable and flexible, rent being inclusive of services;
- The rent is inclusive of other services such as utilities, telecoms, post, meeting spaces etc.,
- Space for lots of people and businesses to come together, not just one or two, to create a vibrant business community and increase the chances of business collaboration;
- No long leases or large financial commitments required to join;
- Having a range of premises on one site or by having several sites so businesses can grow either by moving to a bigger space within the site or by moving to a flexible working area with larger premises within the same contract;
- Access to other services such as a nearby café or with a café on site;

- Having a dedicated, expert company to manage and curate the co-working offer who knows business needs and can tap into the relevant business and SME market and retain jobs, ensuring that they are being advertised and managed to maximise jobs and business retention and satisfaction;
- Being easily accessible for the individuals, businesses and clients they are trying to attract and not located in areas that will disturb residential neighbours with travel to and from the site; and
- Having a successful brand name and image commensurate to the SME / tech / creative / business market that they are trying to attract.

13.2.25. We want to ensure that proposals for flexible working are successfully delivered in Merton for the benefit of their users and that the provision of flexible working is not simply being cited at planning application stage to claim a higher jobs density when providing less employment floorspace. Therefore, where flexible working is proposed in conjunction with a reduction in employment floorspace on the site, the council will seek planning obligations to secure that the flexible working / co-working space is designed with regard to the attributes listed above and be actively managed for flexible working / co-working for a period of at least two years from the date of opening by a flexible working specialist company with a track record in this.

Policy EC13.3

Protection of scattered employment sites

Proposals that result in the loss of scattered employment sites to residential uses will be resisted except where:

- i. The site is located in a predominantly residential area and it can be demonstrated that its operation has had a significant adverse effect on local residential amenity;
- ii. The size, configuration, access arrangements and other characteristics of the site make it unsuitable and financially unviable for whole-site employment use; and
- iii. It has been demonstrated to the council's satisfaction that there is no realistic prospect of employment or community use on this site in the future. This may be demonstrated by full and proper marketing of the site at reasonable prices for a period of 18 months (1½ years).

If proposals do not meet policy requirements of E13.3 (a) (iii) above, the council will seek measures to mitigate against the loss of employment land. Such measures may include providing employment, as part of a mixed use scheme on site.

Justification

- 13.3.1.** Employment sites outside the designated town centres and designated employment areas (i.e. those not shown on the Policies Map) are referred to as 'scattered employment sites'. For the purposes of this policy, 'employment' and business refers to premises or land that operates within the Use Classes E(g), B2 and B8 under the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order (as amended). 'Community' uses refer to premises or land that operates within the use class E(e-f) and F1 . It is intended for Policy E13.3 to protect other uses located on scattered employment sites such as leisure and entertainment E(d) and F2(c) and uses identified as sui generis uses where appropriate.
- 13.3.2.** The NPPF 2019 paragraphs 8, 20 and 80-92, the London Plan and Merton's strategic policy on economic development all seek to optimise job opportunities for Merton's residents by supporting the development of employment uses to the most appropriate locations. This policy aims to deliver economic growth by setting out a detailed approach to the protection of employment land for which there is need.
- 13.3.3.** Business, commercial, service and local community uses will be supported on scattered employment sites throughout Merton. Employment on scattered employment sites contributes towards Merton's existing and growing diverse economy.
- 13.3.4.** There is constant pressure on scattered employment sites to be redeveloped for residential uses that will bring high values to the developer. Throughout the years, Merton has completed a number of viability studies to support our policies. These studies demonstrate that in Merton over the past 15 years, residential uses have a significantly higher land value, than other land uses. Therefore the 'hope value' that speculative developers can pay for such sites in the expectation of planning permission for housing displaces existing jobs as well as outbidding potential investors in premises for business and community uses.
- 13.3.5.** A delicate balance needs to be struck between delivering new homes and business/job growth. Based on Merton's characteristics, a sustainable future for the borough relies on maximising opportunities for employment and local businesses, in some cases by prioritising business and jobs over high value alternative uses. Without this approach, Merton would not be able to support a diverse local economy and promote a commercially viable, thriving mix of employment, which increases jobs and services to local people in line with the NPPF. Scattered employment sites are valuable to local communities in providing services and local jobs whilst reducing the need to travel, helping create and maintain a robust local economy and achieving sustainable, mixed use communities.

- 13.3.6.** However, where the employment use is not compatible with a residential environment because of noise, smell or other pollutants then the council will encourage redevelopment to community or other employment uses that do not harm the amenity of residential neighbours. The appropriateness and lack of financial viability of the site for employment and community purposes have to be demonstrated before the loss of employment land to residential will be permitted. Proposals for sui generis use on scattered employment sites, not least because by their nature, must be treated on their individual merits and considered on a site-by-site basis.
- 13.3.7.** In these instances, the applicant would need to demonstrate, to the council's satisfaction, that they have undertaken full and proper marketing of the site as well as evidence that the site is no longer appropriate to accommodate employment or community uses. To demonstrate that full and proper marketing has been undertaken to justify that the employment and community uses are no longer viable, the council requires the applicant to provide Marketing and Vacancy evidence in accordance with the criteria set out in the Appendices, for a minimum of 30 months (2.5 years).
- 13.3.8.** If proposals do not meet the terms of this policy, the council may also seek measures to mitigate against the loss of employment or community use.
- 13.3.9.** In circumstances where proposals for mixed use development are considered, proposals must be designed to ensure the future occupation and function of employment uses, upon completion. The premises/sites retained for employment uses must:
- a.** Be of an attractive size and character for occupation by employment and community uses and flexible to accommodate alternative uses;
 - b.** Be compatible with the character and appearance of the area;
 - c.** Be designed to accommodate the proposed use (and other uses);
 - d.** Not be harmed by way of noise, disturbance, loss of light or privacy;
 - e.** Allow adequate safe vehicle access to and from the highway, prioritise access by active travel and public transport, provide adequate high quality cycle parking and minimise car parking in accordance with London Plan standards.
 - f.** The site must be built out in full before proposals for change of use from employment to alternative uses will be considered by the council.
- 13.3.10.** We may require other measures to support the local economy. Such measures may include the applicant providing alternative sites for employment use and community

uses for which there is need, (for instance 'land swaps') or providing equivalent employment in jobs or floorspace, as part of a mixed use scheme on-site.

Policy EC.13.4

Local Employment Opportunities

- a. Merton want to ensure that residents and local businesses are supported within the borough through local employment, business retention and inward investment opportunities which will lead to greater local economic growth and the transition to the low carbon economy. This can be achieved in part, by enabling skills, jobs creation, the circular economy and local procurement during new development.
- b. With this in mind the council will:
 - i. Work with developers to increase skills and employment opportunities in Merton by requiring all major development to provide opportunities for local residents and businesses to apply for employment and other opportunities during the construction of developments and in the resultant end-use. Opportunities for employment and skills training will be considered by means of planning obligations for major developments:
 - residential developments of 10 homes or more
 - non-residential developments exceeding 1,000m².
- c. Will seek to secure a minimum of 10% of the total jobs created by the construction of new development and 20% end use job opportunities and apprenticeships to be advertised exclusively to local residents through the council's economic development officer or appropriate nominated agencies for a minimum period so that local people can be given the opportunity to fill these vacancies. A local employment strategy may be required will for very large development schemes.
- d. Work with local training providers to aim to ensure that local residents are given access to the right skills training so that they can take advantage of opportunities created by new development and help address skills deficits in the local population.
- e. Require the local employment strategy for major developments to cover procedures to ensure small and medium sized local enterprises have access to supply chain tender opportunities for the procurement of goods and services generated by the development both during and after construction, having regard to the council's Local Procurement Code of Practice.
- f. Demonstrate good practice when procuring its own goods and services by following the Public Services (Social Value) Act through Merton's Social Value Toolkit.

Justification

- 13.4.1.** We seek to maximise employment, business and other economic development opportunities for Merton's residents and supporting the transition to a low carbon economy. This policy will contribute towards addressing the climate emergency and delivering these policies by encouraging major developments to contribute towards increasing employment opportunities in Merton.
- 13.4.2.** In accordance with the London Plan, we are committed to training, work placements and apprenticeships and views them as being a sustainable way to improve employment prospects for local people, particularly those to deliver low carbon skills. The council is determined to ensure that the use of S106 obligations helps to secure placements for local people both during the construction phase of building projects and in the resultant end use.
- 13.4.3.** Merton is a relatively affluent borough and overall, Merton is one of the less deprived areas in the country. However parts of the borough have pockets of deprivation, higher rates of unemployment and lower levels of skills/qualifications. We want to address this imbalance by providing employment opportunities for all residents.
- 13.4.4.** Reducing deprivation, sourcing local labour and reducing the need to travel is a fundamental part of creating sustainable communities.
- 13.4.5.** The Mayor's London Plan requires strategic development to support local employment, skills and training including those that support low carbon jobs and skills. Strategic developments are those defined as the schemes of over 150 homes for residential use and development over 15,000 sqm for commercial uses. However Merton is a small borough and it is highlighted in the Authorities Monitoring Reports throughout the years that Merton rarely sees development of this quantum and size. Therefore to increase employment opportunities for Merton's residents and for new developments to benefit the whole community, this policy proposes that major schemes contribute towards increasing residents' employment opportunities and skills, where viable. For this policy, major developments include proposals for:
- Residential development comprising of 10 homes or more;
 - Commercial developments where the floor space is 1,000 square metres or more.

- 13.4.6.** 'Other opportunities' includes applicants procuring local companies in the supply-chain and may include offering local residents apprenticeships or work experience to improve skills. Apprenticeships/ work experience opportunities would be particularly relevant for the larger major developments.
- 13.4.7.** For applicants to demonstrate to the council that they have met this policy, applicants should advertise employment and business procurement opportunities including jobs, work experience and apprenticeships for residents for a reasonable length of time agreed with the council's economic development officer or appropriate nominated agencies.
- 13.4.8.** We currently work in partnership with a number of agencies to secure places for apprenticeships and other employment opportunities throughout Merton.
- 13.4.9.** For larger major schemes, planning conditions may be used to require the submission of a local employment strategy. This local employment strategy should outline measures to demonstrate that training and employment opportunities could be accessed by local people during the construction phase and resultant end-use of the scheme.
- 13.4.10.** We realise that it may not be feasible for all major schemes to meet this policy requirement particularly developments that are close to the size thresholds detailed above. In circumstances where applicants, due to feasibility issues, find it difficult to meet this policy, this would need to be demonstrated to the council.
- 13.4.11.** We wish to encourage use of existing local businesses to support new development and will do this by encouraging local supply chain procurement. Not only does this support local businesses it also has an environmental and social benefit for businesses and residents.
- 13.4.12.** Our Social Value Toolkit has been designed to help council officers along with providers of council goods and services to understand what Social Value is in order to comply with legislation and be able to practically consider and achieve Social Value from commissioning and procurement activities. In doing so, we can help achieve positive outcomes and value for the Borough through the contracts we procure.

Policy TC 13.5

Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades

This policy contributes towards maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness of town centres by encouraging more people to use these locations and promote a sharing and circular economy wherever possible. To maintain and improve the overall vitality and viability of Merton's town centres, the council will support new development in Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades commensurate with their scale and function, providing it respects or improves the character and local environment.

All frontages in Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades.

Supporting proposals for developments where:

- i. The proposed use is compatible with a shopping frontage and provides a direct service to the general public;
- ii. The proposal will result in an active street frontage;
- iii. The vitality and viability of the town centre or neighbourhood parade is not likely to be significantly harmed;
- iv. A window display is provided; and
- v. No significant adverse effects on the amenities of nearby residents, road safety, car parking or traffic flows would result from the proposal.

Within Wimbledon, Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Morden town centres

- a. In addition to (a), supporting proposals for developments that:
 - i. Provide a range of commercial unit sizes;
 - ii. Provide a wide range of town centre type uses which contribute towards the vitality and viability of town centres including shopping, leisure, entertainment, cultural, community and offices.

Within Local town centres

- a. Supporting proposals:

- i. for development up to 1,000sqm per unit of floorspace for town centre type uses in the designated local town centre centres of Arthur Road, Motspur Park, North Mitcham, Raynes Park and South Wimbledon. The council will resist major increases (above 1,000sqm) in town centre type use floorspace in local centres unless it contributes to the council's regeneration objectives.
- ii. that do not amalgamate existing ground floor shopping frontages in Wimbledon Village local centre so as to result in a large unit (with a floorspace of 280sqm or more).

Within Neighbourhood parades

- a. Maintaining neighbourhood parades to provide convenience shopping and other services within walking distance of local residents. Large increases in commercial floorspace in neighbourhood parades will be resisted

Justification

- 13.5.1.** The council aims to maintain, enhance and protect Merton's town centres as focal points for residents and visitors that provide civic, retail and other commercial services and facilities. Policy TC13.5 contributes towards delivering this by setting out how proposals relating to the scale and function of proposed development in Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades will be considered.
- 13.5.2.** The location of similar businesses, such as shops, cafes, restaurants, theatres and cinemas together makes town centres more attractive and sociable, increasing the footfall which helps support businesses and helps to create an identity and a sense of place for the community. The NPPF 2019 (and 2021 consultation draft) makes clear that local authorities should define the extent of the Primary Shopping Area and the town centre boundary. These are available on Merton's Policies Map for each town centre.
- 13.5.3.** As detailed in the London Plan, the definition of town centres includes major, district and local centres. This term will be used throughout this document to provide policies or guidance that is relevant to all of these types of town centres. The boundaries of these centres and neighbourhood parades are shown on Merton's Policies Map.
- 13.5.4.** The NPPF 2019 and associated NPPG promotes the vitality and viability of town centres. These provide a sense of place for Merton's residents and are important areas for communities. The aim is to focus a wide range of shops, leisure and similar trip-generating uses to locate in Merton's town centres, to encourage people to use our town centres to socialise, to shop and to support local businesses and jobs. However growth needs to be considered alongside the need to conserve the local heritage and character, as well as providing a focus for community and civic activity.
- 13.5.5.** Due to changes in consumer behaviour including the increase of on-line shopping and home shopping, town centres are no longer only retail-focused but provide a social environment for residents, workers and visitors to meet and visit. Pre Covid19 our evidence showed that vacancies in Merton's town centres were lower than both the regional and national average, and over the next 10 years the council wants to ensure that Merton's town centre premises remain occupied and the town centres continue to thrive.
- 13.5.6.** In order to ensure that Merton's town centres remain a focal point for social activity, providing services and facilities as well as employment to residents and attract visitors, the council proposes that Merton's shop front designations are more flexible to deal with changes to the economy and shopping habits.

- 13.5.7.** To ensure Merton's town centres can continue to offer an attractive environment for its users and remain relevant and vibrant to respond to changing consumer behaviour, the council will permit commercial, business, services, local community and learning activities (use classes E and F) cinemas, concert halls, pubs and bars, nightclubs, tourist hostels, theatres, laundrettes and taxi services (sui generis use class). This is to ensure that Merton's residents and workers can meet and enjoy activities with friends and family. These uses would also attract visitors to the area. The proposed use will need to have an active frontage and applicants should use Merton's shop front supplementary planning guidance 2017 to enable high quality design, regardless of the nature of the interior of the premises.
- 13.5.8.** Betting shops and hot food takeaways (use identified as sui generis), are not compatible with the main retail or social function of the town centres and thus are not considered appropriate new uses outside of the primary shopping area.
- 13.5.9.** Changes to the Use Class Order in 2020 support greater flexibility (either by permitted development or prior approval) to a wide range of commercial, business and services, local community and education. We are supportive of the principle of greater flexibility in what business or community space can be used for and may help to accelerate opportunities for new enterprises, jobs and different ways of working, thus helping with the Covid19 recovery and providing new services to residents. However we also want to avoid unintended consequences of greater flexibility, such as the loss of small shops or other vital businesses that provide local services and support a thriving town centre.
- 13.5.10.** We will support development in Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades commensurate with their scale and function and where it respects or improves the character and local environment of the area.
- 13.5.11.** Merton's town centres and neighbourhood parades provide shops and services that meet different needs of residents. But these town centres and neighbourhood parades also have different characteristics and levels of capacity to grow in the future. The council encourages shops and services, cafes, restaurants, leisure and entertainment facilities, offices and community uses to locate in Merton and will support growth that is appropriate to designated town centres, neighbourhood parades and the surrounding area. This will also ensure that development that attracts a large number of trips is located in places which are accessible by a range of transport choices.

Merton’s major and district town centres

13.5.12. Merton’s town centres have the following designations; the boundaries of these designations are in the Policies Map.

Merton’s town centres	Designations
Wimbledon	Major town centre
Colliers Wood; Mitcham; Morden	District town centre
Aruthur Road; Motspur Park; North Mitcham; Raynes Park; South Wimbledon; Wimbledon Village	Local town centre

13.5.13. Attractive to residents, tourists, businesses and their staff, as Merton’s major town centre, Wimbledon has a variety of shops, services, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, theatres and offices. By capitalising on Wimbledon’s international and national reputation for quality, the council hopes to further enhance the character and vibrancy of the area to create a sense of place and ensure that there is continual activity throughout the day and at the weekend for residents, workers and visitors whilst protecting its heritage assets. The FutureWimbledon supplementary planning document should be used to guide development proposals in Wimbledon.

13.5.14. As district centres, Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Morden provide shops, services, cafes/restaurants and local businesses to meet the everyday needs of the local community.

13.5.15. Colliers Wood’s retail offer is on a par with many major centres in London. Over the past 10 years the enhancement through Connecting Colliers Wood, redevelopment of the Tower and enhancement of the town centre offer with restaurants, cafes, a new library and other services has created a far greater diversity of offer to its visitors.

- 13.5.16.** Mitcham has a unique cultural identity and character, reinforced through Rediscover Mitcham, and supports a daily street market which operates in the main shopping area of Mitcham. Merton's Civic Centre and local businesses generally serving day-to-day needs' are located in Morden.
- 13.5.17.** Morden sees higher footfall passing through the centre than other town centres of its size, as people connect between the buses, underground, car parking and nearby train and tram. In terms of the type of shops and services provided, recent consultation undertaken has clarified that Morden does not currently have the types of uses that its residents are looking for. Through the regeneration of Morden town centre, a greater range of shops and other town centre and leisure uses such as cafes and restaurants, will be provided alongside a significant amount of new and affordable housing and substantial improvements to the public realm. Morden will retain its designation as a district centre, with no overall increase to the scale of retail space provided.
- 13.5.18.** Wimbledon, Colliers Wood, Mitcham, and Morden are suitable for a wide range of commercial units sizes. To avoid adverse impacts on existing centres, town centre floorspace over 1,000 square metres will not be supported outside Wimbledon, Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Morden. Small units will be welcomed, particularly in Wimbledon and Colliers Wood, where smaller units will help to attract and retain a diverse town centre offer and give more options to independents and start-ups.

Local Centres

- 13.5.19.** Arthur Road, Motspur Park, North Mitcham, Raynes Park, South Wimbledon and Wimbledon Village are designated as local centres. Except for Wimbledon Village, these local centres provide shops and services to meet the everyday needs of the local community and are places for small and local business. These local centres serve small catchments and are within walking distance of local residents.
- 13.5.20.** South Wimbledon is a newly proposed Local Centre in this Local Plan with specific details available in policy N7.1.

- 13.5.21.** Wimbledon Village has more of a niche/specialist role and a unique character. To retain and reinforce its character and offer, it is considered that the amalgamation of existing ground floor unit frontages facing Wimbledon High Street, Church Road and Ridgway that would result in a large unit (with a gross floorspace of 280 sqm or more) would be inappropriate, having regard to the existing scale and character of the area. Merton's Annual Shopping Survey shows that the average ground floor unit size of existing town centre types uses in Wimbledon Village is less than 100sqm gross floorspace, thus the amalgamation of existing units that would result in a ground floorspace over 280 sqm would be quite large for this area. While amalgamation of unit frontages would be inappropriate, use of upper floors within the same frontage or use of the rear of the premises may be acceptable to deliver town centre type uses above 280sqm.
- 13.5.22.** Local centres complement Merton's main town centres, providing local services and enhances the area's character. Development that provides a major increase (over 1,000 sqm) of town centre type uses will not be supported in the local centres of Arthur Road, Motspur Park, North Mitcham, Raynes Park South Wimbledon and Wimbledon Village unless it contributes to the council's regeneration objectives.

Small commercial units

- 13.5.23.** The availability of small units provides improved choice for business location and affordability. In turn, having a variety of businesses provides choice for consumers and this contributes significantly towards maintaining and enhancing the attractiveness and viability of Merton's town centres. Small units are often more affordable, thereby encouraging more specialist or independent retailers.
- 13.5.24.** The need to maintain and to provide additional small units is particularly relevant to supporting business retention and diversity in Wimbledon town centre, Colliers Wood, South Wimbledon and Wimbledon Village.
- 13.5.25.** For retail proposals, Merton's definition of small, large and major developments refers to net floorspace. For all other town centre type uses the definition of small, large and major developments refer to gross floorspace.

Other frontages within town centres

- 13.5.26.** All town centre development proposals must have active street frontages to contribute towards their vibrancy and to promote a positive identity within Merton's town centre. Activities should complement each other and the centre and should be of a use, design and scale proportionate to the area.

Vacancies in frontages in town centres

13.5.27. In town centres temporary planning permission may be granted for meanwhile and temporary uses vacant shopping frontages until these units are re-occupied by uses that are appropriate to that retail frontage. Temporary Planning Permission will be considered based on the proposal(s) put forward. These proposals must complement surrounding uses in the area and must not harm nearby business and residential amenity

Neighbourhood parades

13.5.28. To meet the day-to-day needs of local communities and to reduce the need to travel, essential local shops such as small supermarkets, pharmacies and post offices should be retained within 5 minutes' walk (400 metres) of residential areas.

13.5.29. Neighbourhood parades, located throughout the borough, have been designated to ensure that residents and workers continue to have access to a range of important local shops available for their day-to-day needs, which are easily accessible to people without a car or with restricted mobility. An unintended consequence of the greater flexibility afforded by government's 2020 changes to the use class order could be the loss of such small shops to other non-retail uses where these lie within a kilometre of another shop. Merton is a fairly compact borough, less than 5km wide in places, and we want to retain small shops and services within walking distance of its residents.

13.5.30. Neighbourhood parades complement the local shopping facilities provided in Merton's town and local centres and ensure that local convenience shopping facilities are within 5 minutes' walk (400 metres) of residential areas in Merton.

13.5.31. Neighbourhood parades are identified to ensure that local shopping facilities are retained within walking distance of residents to meet their day-to-day needs.

13.5.32. To ensure that convenience shops are retained, local research supports a minimum of 30% of units in a designated neighbourhood parade to remain in retail use taking into account unimplemented planning permissions for changes of use.

13.5.33. When a change of use is proposed, the new use must provide a local service, such as shops, small offices, estate agents or banks restaurant, cafe pub, bars and health, indoor sports and community uses (e.g. a crèche) which:

- a. supports the vitality of the parade;
- b. provides a window display; and,

- c. has no significant adverse effects on the amenities of residents, other businesses, road safety or traffic flows.

Neighbourhood parades in Merton

Parade Name	Units
Cannon Hill Lane and Martin Way; 135-151 141-145 Cannon Hill Lane and 244- 262 Martin Way (Cannon Hill Ward)	17
Central Road: 44a – 60 Central Road, Morden (St. Helier Ward)	8
Chestnut Grove and South Lodge Avenue; 158-174 Chestnut Grove, Pollards Hill and 10-32 South Lodge Avenue, Pollards Hill (Pollards Hill ward)	14
Church Road : 55-59 Church Road, Mitcham (Cricket Green)	3
Coombe Lane, West Wimbledon; 253 – 271 Coombe Lane, Raynes Park and 348-364 Coombe Lane, Raynes Park (Raynes Park and Village wards)	17
Durnsford Road: 373-413 Durnsford Road, SW19, north of Arthur Road town centre (Wimbledon Park ward)	23
Epsom Road: 41b-53 Epsom Road, Morden (St.Helier ward)	12
Grand Drive (north): 244A – 264A Grand Drive, Morden (Lower Morden ward)	9
Grand Drive: 300-372 Grand Drive, Lower Morden (Lower Morden ward)	14
Green Lane: 99-137a Green Lane, St. Helier (St. Helier ward)	18
Grove Road: 36-378 Grove Road, Mitcham (Longthornton ward)	7
Haydons Road: 284-298 Haydons Road and 319 – 335 Haydons Road, South Wimbledon (Wimbledon Park ward)	16
High Street: 29 -43 High Street and 46 – 72 High Street, Colliers Wood (Colliers Wood ward)	18
Kingston Road: 92 - 112 Kingston Road (Abbey ward)	14
Leopold Road; 1-27 Leopold Road, 2a – 32 Leopold Road <u>and 1a Strathern Road</u> SW19 (Wimbledon Park and Hillside wards)	26
London Road , Mitcham 323 – 337 London Road CR4	10
Manor Road and Northborough Road; 211-219 Manor Road and 291a – 307 Northborough Road, Pollards Hill, Mitcham (Longthornton ward)	17
Martin Way: 43-55 Martin Way, Morden (Cannon Hill ward)	7

Parade Name	Units
The Rush: 1-12 (cons) Merton Park Parade (The Rush), near Wimbledon Chase (Merton Park ward)	12
Ridgway: 65-89 Ridgway, SW19, Wimbledon (Hillside ward)	11
St. Helier Avenue: 41-67 St.Helier Avenue (Ravensbury ward)	14
Streatham Road ; 172b - 196 – 172B Streatham Road and 173 – 221 Streatham Road, Streatham (Graveney ward)	31
Tamworth Lane : 299- 301 Tamworth Lane Mitcham (Longthornton ward)	2
Tudor Drive : 11-27 Tudor Drive, Morden (Lower Morden ward)	7
Wimbledon Chase: 288 – 312 Kingston Road and 1A (Rothsey Avenue) – 353 Kingston Road, Wimbledon Chase (Merton Park ward)	20

Active street frontages

13.5.34. Active street frontages contribute significantly to the vibrancy, sense of place and safety of town centres. Allowing people to access and view inside and outside of the buildings provides natural surveillance, activity and contributes towards the vibrancy of town centres. Shopfronts should provide clear visibility between the inside of the premises and the street. Conditions may be placed on planning applications to ensure that proposals do not result in dead frontages, for instance, restricting internal advertising. Applicants should use [Merton's supplementary planning document on Shop Fronts \(2017\)](#) to enable the high quality design of shopfronts, regardless of the internal use.

Policy TC 13.6

Development of town centre type uses outside town centres

To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of Merton's town centres, proposals for the development of town centre type uses 'edge-of-centre' and 'out-of-centre' will be permitted only where it can be demonstrated that:

The scope of the sequential test (required over 280sqm net new floorspace) and impact assessment submitted is proportionate to the scale of the development proposed and satisfies the council's requirements.

Local convenience development outside town centres meets all of the following criteria:

- i. The proposal will be a replacement for an existing convenience shop; or,
- ii. The proposal will meet local needs in an area identified as deficient in local convenience shopping (including convenience retail activity in petrol stations); and
- iii. The overall floorspace of the local convenience shop (including petrol stations) would not exceed 280 sqm net retail floorspace.

Vitality and viability of Merton's existing town centres would not be harmed. Planning conditions may be imposed on applications, to ensure that proposals do not have an adverse impact on the vitality and viability of existing town centres. Such conditions may:

- iv. Prevent the amalgamation of small units to create large out-of-centre units;
- v. Limit internal development to specify the maximum amount of floorspace permitted; or,
- vi. Control the type of goods sold or type of activity.

Justification

- 13.6.1.** This policy will contribute towards delivering the “town centre first” approach set out in the NPPF 2019 (paras 80-90), planning practice guidance and the London Plan by setting how proposals for town centre type uses outside of Merton’s town centres will be considered. In developing this proposal, the 2020 use class order changes have also been considered.
- 13.6.2.** The NPPF 2019 and the London Plan support the “town centres first” approach: focusing growth of retail and leisure activities, businesses and other town centre type uses within town centres. This helps create an attractive destination, increasing footfall with advantages for both businesses and consumers and also creates a sense of place for Merton’s residents. This also reduces the need for residents, workers and tourists to travel to a variety of different places to access shops, services and activities.
- 13.6.3.** As Merton is one of the smaller boroughs in London, proposals for new town centre type uses located at the edge-of-centre and out-of-centre, will need to demonstrate that the sequential approach has been appropriately applied. In line with national guidance for retail developments, edge-of-centre is defined as being within 300 metres from the Primary Shopping Area.
- 13.6.4.** As set out in the NPPF 2019 (and the 2021 draft) the Primary Shopping Area is where the council would expect to see a large concentration of convenience, comparison and service retail shops (E Use Class) to locate. For all other town centre type uses, edge-of-centre is defined as being within 300 metres from the town centre boundary. For office development this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange.
- 13.6.5.** Impact assessments may be required for any retail proposals located edge-of-centre or out-of-centre where the net floor area exceeds 280sqm. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF), impact assessments will be required for leisure and office development above 2,500 sqm located outside town centres and not in accordance with the development plan.
- 13.6.6.** Applicants are encouraged to contact the council at the early stages of the application process to discuss the scope of the sequential test and impact assessment required.
- 13.6.7.** Where planning permission is required, we are continuing with the approach to protect small (c280sqm or smaller) food and convenience shops within 5 minutes’ walk (400m) of residential areas to reduce the need to travel and support residents’ day-to-day needs, complimenting the offer in town centres.

13.6.8. There is a decline in the number of petrol stations nationally and regionally, due to increasing competition between multiple and more independent retailers. Although the council seeks to encourage more sustainable methods of travelling other than the private car, it is recognised that some residents in Merton rely on private vehicles as their preferred mode of transport. Rather than residents in Merton travelling to neighbouring boroughs to access petrol stations, which is unsustainable overall, the council supports the retail convenience activity allowed in petrol stations to 280 sqm net floorspace. This measure provides landowners with more flexibility and will contribute towards increasing the financial viability of new and existing petrol stations. However, retail floorspace extensions above 280 sqm net will not be supported to ensure that such developments would not have an adverse impact on the retail vitality and viability of Merton's designated town centres.

Policy TC13.7

Protecting corner / local shops

In predominantly residential areas, outside town centres and neighbourhood parades, to ensure that there are convenience shopping facilities and other services located within walking distance of all residents in Merton, the council will seek to protect corner/local shops for which there is need, by:

- a.** Permitting the change of use of a corner/local convenience shop to a wider range of uses including other shops, businesses, cafes and restaurants public houses, health and community uses where:
 - i.** There are alternative convenience shops located within 400 metres;
 - ii.** The proposal will have no significant adverse effects on the amenities of nearby residents, road safety, traffic movements or car parking impacts; and
 - iii.** Independent access to upper floors is ensured.
- b.** Only permitting the change of use of a corner/local convenience shops to residential where (a) can be met and where:
 - i.** There are no alternative convenience shops located within 400 metres;
 - ii.** It can be demonstrated by full and proper marketing of the site for convenience use at reasonable prices for at least 12 months (1 years) and to the council's satisfaction that there is no realistic prospect of convenience use in the future; and
 - iii.** An active frontage is provided.

Justification

- 13.7.1.** This policy helps to set out how proposals for the change of use of town centre type uses outside of Merton's town centres will be considered.
- 13.7.2.** To support sustainable development, small convenience shops are encouraged to locate within 5 minutes walking distance (400 metres radius) of residential areas in Merton, to reduce the need to travel for day-to-day convenience items.
- 13.7.3.** It may not be possible to retain retail use, especially if there is a lack of customer demand and/ or alternative facilities are available nearby.
- 13.7.4.** Government changes to the Use Class Order introduced in 2020 allows any shops with floorspace above 280sqm (i.e. bigger than a Sainsburys Local or Tesco Metro) to change to other business, service and community uses without the need for planning permission. The same national use class order allows small shops to change to other uses (below 280sqm) but only if there is another small shop within 1km.
- 13.7.5.** In Merton, we consider that sustainable development in line with the NPPF paragraph 8 includes supporting resident's access to essential food within 5 minutes' walk of their homes. This is particularly important for residents who, for whatever reason, would struggle with a 2km walk round trip to bring food shopping home.
- 13.7.6.** In circumstances where there are no alternative convenience shops located within 5 minutes walking distance (400 metre radius), proposals for change of use from convenience shops to those detailed in part (a) of will be permitted where it can be demonstrated to the council's satisfaction that as a result of full and proper marketing at reasonable prices for at least 12 months (1 year), that convenience retail uses are not viable. The applicant will be required to provide Marketing and Vacancy evidence in accordance with the criteria set out in the Appendices.

Policy TC13.8

Food and drink / leisure and entertainment

Proposals for restaurants and cafes, public houses, hot food takeaways and leisure and entertainment uses will be supported, provided all of the following criteria have been met:

- a. The proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on local amenity and the general environment, car parking, traffic congestion and road safety. Proposals would need to take into account the:
 - i. Size of unit;
 - ii. Characteristics and type of use proposed;
 - iii. The nature of the area;
 - iv. The likely cumulative effect of food and drink, leisure and entertainment uses in the area, including combined and cumulative effects at different times of the day and night; and
 - v. Whether the location is well served by public transport.
- b. Adequate noise containment measures are included and sound insulation is provided, where appropriate, to safeguard the amenity of adjoining residential and business uses;
- c. They would not have an unacceptable effect on local amenity through noise, disturbance or fumes;
- d. The proposed opening hours would be acceptable; and
- e. Adequate ventilation, waste disposal, litter management and crime prevention arrangements appropriate to the use and location can be provided.

Hot food takeaways

- f. Proposals which result in an over-concentration of hot food takeaways will not be permitted as this would detract from the ability to adopt healthy lifestyles.

- g.** The council will manage and monitor proposals for new hot food takeaways found within 400 metres of the boundaries of a primary or secondary school to promote the availability of healthy foods.
- h.** Where any development proposal involving hot food takeaways are permitted, the Council will require the operator to achieve and operate in compliance with, the Healthier Catering Commitment standard.

Protection of public houses

- i.** Proposals that will result in the loss of a public house will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:
 - i.** the applicant can demonstrate to the council's satisfaction that the public house is no longer economically viable; and
 - ii.** there are alternative public houses located within the local area.

Protection of leisure and entertainment

- j.** Proposals for the loss of entertainment and leisure facilities will be supported where the applicant can demonstrate to the council's satisfaction that the leisure and entertainment uses are no longer viable.

Justification

- 13.8.1.** The NPPF 2019, the London Plan and Merton’s strategic policies encourage a range and mix of town centre type uses to Merton’s town centres which contributes to their vitality and viability. This policy will contribute towards delivering this by setting out how proposals for new or the change of use from food and drink/ leisure and entertainment uses will be considered in Merton.
- 13.8.2.** The scale of new food and drink/ leisure and entertainment uses must meet the requirements of Policy TC13.5 *Merton’s town centres and neighbourhood parades*.
- 13.8.3.** As detailed in Policy TC13.6 *Development of town centre uses outside town centres*, to strike a balance between Merton’s aspirations for economic growth whilst protecting the vitality and viability of Merton’s designated town centres, proposals for large food and drink/ leisure and entertainment uses will be required to submit a sequential test and may be required to submit an impact assessment.
- 13.8.4.** Changes to the national Use Class Order in 2020 allow some premises to change uses without the need for planning permission (e.g. restaurants to shops or gyms, all within the Use Class E). However in the 2020 Use Class Order most leisure and entertainment premises will now be classed as “sui generis” (e.g. theatres, pubs and bars, cinemas, live music venues, nightclubs etc) which will require planning permission to open or change to another use.

Food and drink / leisure and entertainment uses

- 13.8.5.** The food and drink sector and leisure and entertainment sector is very dynamic and increasingly diverse. This sector includes cafés, restaurants, pubs, cinemas and bowling alleys. These facilities reflect changing population structures, lifestyles and expectations, and are now a regular part of many people’s lives rather than a special event.
- 13.8.6.** Merton’s town centres have above average representation of cafes and restaurants in particular hot food takeaways and there are no specific areas of deficiency. Although Merton’s residents have relatively good access to a range of commercial leisure and entertainment facilities in neighbouring boroughs and central London, there may be potential for additional health club facilities in line with population growth.

- 13.8.7.** The range of restaurants and the evening economy are poor in some centres, including Mitcham, Morden and Colliers Wood. Therefore the council encourages restaurants, cafes, leisure and entertainment uses in these centres which contributes towards supporting shops and other businesses. By improving existing and encouraging more evening economy uses in these areas will extend the centres' use beyond shop opening hours.
- 13.8.8.** However, such uses can sometimes cause problems to nearby residents and businesses because of noise, fumes, traffic and other disturbances, especially at night. The council will therefore seek to control the size and location of such premises, particularly where there is residential accommodation adjacent, close to, or above premises. In addition, these amenity problems are exaggerated when groups of these facilities are located close together and their cumulative and combined impact becomes significant.
- 13.8.9.** Merton Council's Licensing Policy imposed a cumulative impact area in Wimbledon Village and Wimbledon town centre which restricts the number of licences available for cafes, restaurants, public houses, hot food take- away, leisure and entertainment uses, if licences are required.
- 13.8.10.** Where appropriate, conditions and legal agreements will be applied to ensure these developments meet the council's standards, and to protect residential amenity. Conditions may be applied to control the hours of opening, and type of use. Agreements may also include financial contributions for CCTV and other crime prevention and road safety measures.

Hot food takeaways

- 13.8.11.** As set out in Policy HW2.2 Developing healthy places, the Council will look to create and promote a healthy environment in Merton. As such, when considering new development proposals for fast food takeaways located 400 metres from the exit and entrance of an existing or proposed school the Council will have regard to the nature of the proposal, its contribution to healthy food availability and its relationship to the existing provision of hot food takeaway outlets and healthy eating initiatives taking place at the school. As set out in Policy HW2.2 Developing healthy places the council will encourage all new food establishments in Merton to sign up to the Healthy Catering Commitment.
- 13.8.12.** Local research in Merton shows that there is a concern with impacts of the over concentration of hot food takeaways, particularly on Merton High Street, London Road (Mitcham) and Streatham Road. Planning permission will not be permitted for hot food takeaways where there is an ‘over-concentration’. Generally, an ‘over-concentration’ of hot food takeaways would be the development of more than three hot food takeaways in a shopping parade of 10 consecutive shops.
- 13.8.13.** By helping to prevent the over concentration of hot food takeaways in Merton’s high streets, this policy helps ensure that residents have access and choice between a wide range of retail services and facilities including access to healthier food options.
- 13.8.14.** This policy is part of a holistic approach that Merton Council, together with other organisations, is taking to improve opportunities for healthy lifestyles and to tackle obesity issues in the borough. Other projects in Merton include the “healthier catering commitment” to help food outlets offer healthier options. National policy, including the NPPF, the London Plan and Merton’s Policy HW10.1 *health and wellbeing* strongly support this approach
- 13.8.15.** When considering proposals for change of use to hot food takeaways, the first unit in each parade of shops (where possible) should be used as the starting point to ascertain if the proposal meets policy. A ‘unit’ refers to individual shops.

Protection of public houses

- 13.8.16.** In instances where planning permission is required, the council will resist the loss of public houses as they serve a community role (for example, by providing space for clubs, meetings or performances) unless:
- alternative provision is available nearby (within 800 metres); and,

- it can be demonstrated to the council's satisfaction that the public house is no longer economically viable.

13.8.17. To demonstrate a public house is no longer economically viable, the applicants:

- Would need evidence to demonstrate that the public house as a business is no longer economically viable; and
- To demonstrate that full and proper marketing of the site at reasonable prices for a period of 18 months (1 ½ years) confirms the non-viability for these purposes. Applicants will be required to provide marketing evidence in line with the Marketing and Vacancy criteria set out in the Appendices.

Protection of leisure and entertainment facilities

13.8.18. Wimbledon town centre is identified as a 'night time economy cluster of regional/ sub-regional importance' in the London Plan. A cultural quarter has emerged to the east end of The Broadway, with two theatres, leisure, entertainment and community facilities and a selection of restaurants. Combined with the cinemas, wine bars and restaurants these leisure and entertainment facilities makes Wimbledon vibrant and active throughout the day and evening therefore attracting residents, workers and visitors to the benefit of all businesses.

13.8.19. In terms of shopping floorspace, Colliers Wood competes directly with Wimbledon town centre by attracting many high street and multiple retailers. However Colliers Wood does not have the same range and choice of evening activities nor does it have the Wimbledon 'brand' which is internationally recognised. To ensure that Wimbledon remains vibrant despite competition from other town centres, the council will seek to attract and retain leisure and entertainment facilities in Wimbledon town centre.

13.8.20. Currently the choice and quality of the evening economy is poor in Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Morden town centres. Therefore, the council aims to maintain existing leisure and entertainment facilities in these areas, where viable.

13.8.21. In instances where planning permission is required for proposals for change of use from leisure and entertainment uses to alternative town centre type uses in Merton's town centres, the council will require full and proper marketing of the property for its permitted use at reasonable prices for a period of 18 months (1½ years). However, for proposals outside of town centres, where proposals for change of use from leisure and entertainment to alternative uses except employment and community and cultural uses the council would require full and proper marketing of the property for its permitted use at reasonable prices for a period of 18 months (1½ years). Applicants will be required to provide marketing evidence in line with the Marketing and Vacancy criteria set out in the Appendices.

Policy TC13.9

Culture, arts and tourism development

The council will maintain, improve and encourage cultural, arts and tourism in Merton by:

- a.** Supporting:
 - i.** All proposals for cultural and tourism development which are likely to generate a large number of visitors in either Merton's town centres or other areas of the borough which have high levels of accessibility (PTAL level 3 or above) and are within close proximity to additional services for employees and visitors.
 - ii.** Small (generally floorspace below 280 sqm) proposals for culture, arts and tourism development throughout the borough.
- b.** Encouraging improvements or expansion to existing cultural, arts and tourism in Merton, where this complements Merton's strategic objectives for the areas in which they are located.
- c.** Ensuring proposals for culture, arts and tourism developments are well designed, by requiring that:
 - i.** The size and character of the site or building are suitable for the proposed use;
 - ii.** The development will be compatible with the character and appearance of the area;
 - iii.** The amenities of local residents and businesses will not be harmed by way of noise, disturbance, loss of light or privacy;
 - iv.** There will be good access and links to modes of transport other than the private vehicle; and
 - v.** Vehicular access to and from the highway will be safe.
- d.** Balancing the benefits of the submitted proposals opportunity to provide employment and other contributions to the local economy against the above criteria.

- e. Supporting proposals for the change of use from culture, arts and tourist accommodation to alternative uses only if it can be demonstrated to the council's satisfaction that full and proper marketing of the site at reasonable prices for a period of 30 months (2 ½ years) confirms the financial non- viability for these purposes, unless suitable replacement site for the culture and arts use which is of better standard and quality is provided locally; or, ii. Where it can be demonstrated that the existing tourist accommodation is no longer viable and does not provide facilities for the local community.
- f. Subject to the policy protection of scattered employment sites, protecting, maintaining and encouraging the work-space needed to support creative and cultural industries across the borough.

Justification

- 13.9.1.** Culture, arts and tourism development creates economic and social benefits by attracting and entertaining residents, business visitors and tourists. These uses provide employment and complement the shops services, cafes, restaurants, public houses and leisure and entertainment facilities in Merton's town centres, contributing towards their overall vibrancy.
- 13.9.2.** Arts and cultural uses include theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls. For this policy, tourist accommodation includes hotels, hostels [sui generis], accommodation such as AirB&B and guesthouses and other tourist accommodation.
- 13.9.3.** We welcome new proposals for culture, arts and visitor developments. To strike a balance between Merton's aspirations for economic growth whilst protecting the vitality and viability of Merton's designated town centres, proposals for new large culture, arts and tourist developments located edge-of-centre and out-of-centre, will be required to submit a sequential test.
- 13.9.4.** Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTAL) informs geographical area levels access to public transport. Higher PTAL levels are concentrated around the town centres and transport interchanges of Wimbledon, Morden, Colliers Wood, Mitcham and Raynes Park. Areas to the south east and southwest of the borough have the lowest accessibility levels. As set out in the transport policies in this Local Plan, applicants should use Transport for London's WebCAT free online tool to get the most up to date assessment of public transport accessibility for their site.

Arts and culture

- 13.9.5.** In Merton there are a number of arts and cultural uses that the council wishes to protect and enhance including theatres in Wimbledon town centre and Merton Abbey Mills, handcrafts, creative industries and a theatre cultural activities (Abbeyfest, Cannizaro Festival, Mitcham Carnival), museums, sports arenas (such as the All England Lawn Tennis Club, Tooting and Mitcham Hub, the AFC Wimbledon stadium), Deen City Farm and the Wimbledon School of Art. There are recording and film studios scattered throughout the borough and many businesses in Merton support the cultural, creative, arts and tourism sector (e.g. providing stage lighting, production props etc) across London and beyond.
- 13.9.6.** In Merton, the creative sector comprises a range of activities including publishing books, newspapers and software, printing, TV, radio and film production, and photography.
- 13.9.7.** Proposals will be supported that build upon the borough's strength in creative and cultural information, particularly proposals that improve Merton's existing offer.

Tourism

- 13.9.8.** There is a need for a variety of tourist accommodation and facilities to cater for leisure tourism and business visitors, to make Merton's tourism and culture sector more viable and sustainable all year round.
- 13.9.9.** Although there is uncertainty around the aftermath of COVID19 and its impact on business and tourism, there remains a need for high quality hotels with conference facilities in Merton, particularly in Wimbledon town centre, to support businesses visitors and to provide space for local functions. Merton is conveniently situated to help provide additional tourist facilities with good public transport links to central London. The borough also has its own tourist attractions, although those outside the Wimbledon area generally have a lower profile and consequently lower visitor interest. Where possible, facilities provided to guests at larger hotels should also be made available to the local community to help improve the quality of life for local businesses and residents.
- 13.9.10.** In determining the location of hotel, hostel, guest house and B&B facilities, good public transport services to central London and to other Merton tourist attractions are an important factor.

13.9.11. Tourist accommodation should generally be situated in areas of good public transport accessibility and adjacent to the secondary road network to minimise traffic congestion for residents. The capacity and proximity of similar existing facilities should also be considered. The council will not support tourist accommodation (such as apart-hotels) where this displaces capacity for residential accommodation (Use Class C3).

Protection of arts, culture and tourism

13.9.12. Existing arts, culture and tourist attractions and accommodation will be protected in order to maintain the benefits of arts, culture and tourism to the local community. This will benefit the community by providing jobs, attracting visitors, contributing to the overall economy and to local educational resources, and providing a variety of facilities for both residents, businesses, students and visitors.

13.9.13. Since May 2013 government has made a variety of changes to the General Permitted Development Order to allow development to take place without the need for planning permission. In instances where planning permission is required, redevelopment or change of use from arts, culture and tourism development will be permitted only if the current use is proved to be unviable or unless it meets the policy exemptions detailed in this policy above.

13.9.14. To demonstrate that full and proper marketing has been undertaken, the council requires the applicant to demonstrate that:

- The site has been marketed for the time period detailed in policy unless otherwise agreed with the council;
- All opportunities to re-let the site has been fully explored (including more flexible use of the space);
- The site has been marketed using new (on the internet) and traditional marketing tools available; and,
- The site has been marketed at a price which is considered reasonable (based on recent and similar deals or transactions).