

29th January 2021

Dear Ms Butler,

Response to Merton Stage 2a Draft Local Plan Consultation

I am writing with a response to the Merton Stage 2a Draft local plan. I have not completed the questionnaire, as we have limited and specific comments, and I understand that it is therefore acceptable to do this.

This response is from Bioregional Hill LLP. A partnership between Bioregional; a sustainability charity and social enterprise. We are the people behind BedZED eco-village, and are based there, just outside the Mitcham boundary in LB Sutton. And Hill, an award-winning housebuilder and one of the leading developers in London and the south east of England, delivering both private for sale and affordable homes in partnership with government, local authorities and housing associations. Both Bioregional and Hill have connections in the borough with BedZED supporting the Merton rule, and Hill currently contracted to build affordable housing in the borough.

We wish to comment on three issues. Enabling sustainable living in the borough. Providing a wider range of types of affordable homes. And enabling community-led housing.

1. **We write in support of the proposed Urban Development Objectives for resilience, climate change, place plans and enabling 20 minute neighbourhoods.** This addresses the sustainable mobility and climate change challenges set out in your Good Growth strategy. These approaches are enshrined in the [One Planet Living](#) framework, which we developed from our strategies at BedZED, and which has been used all around the world, from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, to homes across the UK, and internationally in \$30billion of development. If you wished to further develop your policies locally to support enabling sustainable living, you could draw on the [eco-towns planning policy statement](#), which evolved the successful One Planet Living approach. It was withdrawn in 2015 by the conservative government, although the policies were then adopted by Cherwell District Council in their supplementary planning guidance.
2. **Providing a wider range of affordable tenure types.** You highlight the challenge of supply and cost of housing in the borough in the Good Growth strategy. We would like to highlight that a discount market sale approach can, combined with regular social housing provision, tackle this and enable a greater number of Merton residents to have an affordable home. Bioregional Hill is [working with communities to build truly affordable, sustainable homes which enable One Planet Living](#). Our approach to enable the homes to be truly affordable

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based on one third of local household incomes, starts with doing the appraisal based on what people can afford. To make the sums work, this requires the land to be sold for a fair price. This is often land designated only for affordable homes or offered at a reasonable price by socially conscious landowners or local authorities. And to further ensure affordability, the projects usually comprise a mix of discounted sale homes and a few (20-30%) full price homes. The affordable house prices are then permanently protected through planning governance and can also be enshrined and managed through a Community Land Trust. This approach has been largely adopted by Government in its forthcoming First Homes policy. So is seen as workable in a policy context.

3. **Community Led Housing** - The local community have expressed an interest in Community Led Housing to us. We work with community groups as an enabling developer, using the above One Planet Living and affordable Discount Market Sale approaches. We would very much like to see Community Led Housing included in your Local Plan. This would be empowering for the community and is supported and promoted by the London Mayor, through the GLA. The local community group has suggested that the Dementia Hub/Birches, Hallowfield Way and Worsfold House are all sites that would be suitable for Community Led Housing and we write in support of this.

Merton council officers did invite Bioregional to meet to discuss these approaches two or three years ago. At the time Worsfold House was proposed by council officers as a potential site where you were interested to receive a proposal from us. Circumstances changed at the time for Merton, and so we left it there.

We would welcome a further conversation to explore the potential to bring forward zero carbon homes which enable One Planet Living, permanently- affordable discount market sale homes based on one third of household income, and community led housing. It was good to see these aspirations in your draft local plan and I will get in touch again with the officers concerned.

Yours sincerely,



Sue Riddlestone OBE
Director, Bioregional Hill