

# Conservatives Group

## Merton Local Plan 2020 – Stage 2 Consultation Response of Merton Conservatives Group

Merton Conservatives support a vision for the Merton Local Plan as set out below. This applies to all areas of our Borough, including Wimbledon/South Wimbledon, Mitcham, Morden, Colliers Wood, Motspur Park and Raynes Park.

### High / First Class Design Quality - buildings and architecture:

Merton must always require architecture, design and planning standards that are based upon *high / first class design quality* and that require the use of high quality aesthetically pleasing and sustainable materials. Design must show respect for (and enhance and restore) Merton's *Heritage* Character and History. Modern design and architecture may be approved where this is of the highest aesthetic quality such that its appearance *gives back* to our community. Harsh, poorly designed, unattractive buildings that adversely impact our community may not be approved.

High rise must be limited or avoided in Merton; if ever accepted (and only in limited quantities), it must be subject to justification only after prior publication of a clear business case and would then generally need to be restricted to a maximum of eight or nine storeys; it would also need to be *set back* from community open spaces, with top floors of mid/high rise also being *set back* to reduce the overall appearance of height; preference should be given instead to mid-rise, which must be subject to the same requirements. Significant open and amenity spaces must be retained and provided, such that new buildings may not be overbearing on neighbours or on street amenity.

Merton Council should be ambitious and encourage developments to be as sustainable as possible, with regards to insulation of property, and use of renewable energy (such as air/ground-source heat pumps, solar energy and photovoltaics) installed as standard. Developments should achieve high energy efficiency ratings and have minimal CO2 emissions.

### Housing: Provision & Design of Affordable Housing:

The Borough must work to ambitious targets for the provision of new Affordable Housing. The requirement for excellence in design must also extend to all Affordable Homes (both intermediate *and* social costed affordable housing); such developments must allow for the retention or development of sufficient open / amenity / green spaces to ensure architectural design that gives back to and encourages community. Developers must provide Financial Development Appraisals to confirm and justify the quantity of Affordable Units that will be provided.

### Improvement of Public Realm: encouraging open space and the fostering of both Community and Character:

Sufficient and properly landscaped (and greened) *open amenity space* must be prioritised to foster community and allow engagement and cohesion. Opportunities must be found for pedestrian zones and/or *central squares* in town and district centres and retail areas, which maximise traffic-free environments where space permits. The development of Community must also enhance character.

The creation of a community environment that is dominated by an 'office focused' character or 'office-based' town centre must be restricted and avoided. Opportunities must be provided for the *arts and culture*, including for open air performances within communities, with opportunity for more regular (weekly / daily) engagement and usage, and possible quality street market usage. To the extent office provision is increased in town centres, it must be positively balanced with community amenity for residents and all visitors, and with the facilitation of regular arts and culture events.

### Public Realm Improvement: our three main town centres:

The quality of design and the provision of properly landscaped amenity space in the new centres proposed for each of Wimbledon, Morden and Mitcham must all be of the highest quality, with strong levels of urban greening and associated green infrastructure. The "Merton feel" of quality, heritage architecture and a green and leafy borough should be prioritised and extended through South Wimbledon, Mitcham, Morden and Colliers Wood. Should Crossrail 2 proceed, it should be used as an *opportunity*, in order to deliver a better, superior and more attractive, sustainable and greener town centre in Wimbledon.

### Environment: Air Quality, Trees & Urban Greening:

The improvement of air quality (reducing NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>/PM<sub>2.5</sub>) must be a priority in every commercial or infrastructure based planning approval, with neutral impact developments only being allowed by exception and after ensuring strong mitigation and/or greening measures. Rigorous monitoring must be carried out at all locations of poor air quality with the *regular* publication of relevant data, clearly set out for ease of quick reference by residents. For commercial, infrastructure based and residential developments, urban greening, plantings and an *increase in tree cover* must be ensured, with the use also of planters, rain gardens, living walls and other green infrastructure, as well as the protection and restoration of pocket parks. Any new school site proposed must be fully consulted on with the public and residents and any decision must take into consideration the views of all groups on the council and of relevant residents' associations. Further new school sites should not be approved at busy roads suffering poor air quality.

### Environment: Leisure, Parks & Wellbeing:

The Borough's leisure facilities and parks must remain a priority in terms of protecting land allocation and ensuring the continuing quality and levels of diverse plant and tree cover, and also the restoration of relevant heritage characteristics and available heritage listings for our green spaces, whose general quality must be

prioritised and retained. Planning must allow for such facilities to be provided for all ages within our population, with special focus given to the leisure and wellbeing of our Borough's young persons of school age and pre-school groups, and additional focus for Merton's ageing population and senior citizens. Merton Council should seek to protect garden space across the borough to maintain the biodiversity of wildlife, the aesthetic look and feel of residential roads and help with sustainable urban drainage. Protection of hedgerows, garden trees and street-trees should be a requirement of planning conditions for development and removal only allowed if offset by other means.

#### The Wandle Trail:

The Local Plan 2020 offers an opportunity to connect the Wandle Trail across the River Wandle from Haslemere Avenue into Earlsfield. The money to provide a bridge link across the Wandle could be provided from the potential development of site Wi7 at the Rufus Business Centre. In addition to site Wi7 Merton Council has already agreed to develop the Haslemere Industrial Estate which was granted planning permission in June 2017. The connection of the banks of the River Wandle will allow a much needed additional crossing which will improve connectivity into Wandsworth and the wider area, as well as improving safety for local cyclists and pedestrians. We strongly urge Merton Council to explore all available funding streams for this project including money from TfL.

#### Infrastructure – climate change & sustainable travel:

In the interests of the Borough doing what it can to lead on mitigating climate change impact and encouraging wellbeing, ambitious levels and forms of sustainable travel must be maximised with priority planning given to the advent of Electric Vehicles (EV's) (including the moving of all Borough bus and taxi provision to EV / renewable energy based provision, as well as the quick adoption of low emission bus routes); significant and attractive, innovative, and even concealed parking capacity for EV's must be provided in town centres, with supporting charging infrastructure to be developed across the Borough and even consideration in the mid to long term to provide infrastructure in support of autonomous vehicles.

Segregated cycling routes and quiet paths must be developed along with the promotion of pedestrian walking routes. Safe road zones around schools must be prioritised, and 20mph speed limit zones should generally be deployed in all residential roads (subject to support of the road's residents), together with anti-engine idling schemes on all busy polluted roads. Easy to use / quick convenient Hopper mini-E-bus services should be considered, e.g. to connect Wimbledon town centre to Wimbledon Village. To encourage modal shift to cycling in the borough the council, business and any new developments should provide secure and covered bicycle storage units and bicycle stands.

The current pressures on residential parking must be mitigated with the development of CPZ's across the wider Borough and specifically to encourage residents to switch (in time) any 2<sup>nd</sup> vehicles to cars which are either smaller, or which are EV's. The council should set out ambitious targets to work to delivery of a high (majority) percentage of EV's in the Borough within the term of the new Local Plan 2020-2035.

CPZ zones should allow parking for residents, but must also support local business and ensure sufficient provision for visitors to retail units in our town, district and local centres. With the future predicted rise in electric vehicles, it should be mandated that parking bays provided as part of planning applications shall have EV charging points installed or as a minimum wired up to allow future EV charge point installation.

#### Sustainable Waste Management:

The Authority must ensure the highest standards of sustainable waste and also waste-to-energy management, by working to ensure the proper categorization of waste (including demolition wastes), regularly publishing suitable data to allow for maximum / full levels of recycling and/or conversion to energy.

Best practices must be introduced to ensure street lighting is of the highest standard in terms of both energy usage and light pollution impact; the Authority must also work to ensure replacements and upgrades to adopt up-to-date solar/PV technology to promote sustainability and the reduction of energy consumption.

#### Infrastructure: future office development & the digital economy:

The Borough must ensure that it does not over-provide on office space capacity and similarly does not provide mass low-tech office space to the detriment of the character of Borough or any town centre; the development of new office space must only come after establishment of a clear business case and proven level of demand; every consideration must be given to encouraging well designed and high-tech office space with supporting digital infrastructure to allow skilled and creative workspaces to develop. As stated above in the context of ensuring quality town centres, any increase in office space capacity must be positively balanced to ensure community amenity is prioritised for residents and all visitors, alongside the facilitation of arts and culture. Merton Council should ensure that all new developments have fast and up-to-date broadband as standard to meet the needs of future residents and business.

#### Support of Retail Economy:

Priority must be given to the development and enhancement of quality retail locations, for example by providing exceptional first class designs for 'laneways' for small retail, possible market use and also quality bars/restaurants to develop community centres of the highest quality and character; local shops should also be supported by clear '30 minute stop-and-shop' parking on available spaces; planning must allow for a positive balance of retail classes and quality / authentic restaurant / bar offerings to create vibrant and safe environments for use by all. A proper allocation of CPZ's must be provided for visitors to town, district and local retail centres.

#### Funding:

Contributions such as s106 and CIL monies should be raised and allocated to support all of the above. The Council must ensure it monitors and applies for all

available grants and CIL monies from Mayor of London and TfL in support of all of the above.

**Merton Conservatives 4.1.19**