

Merton Conservatives submission to Merton Council's LIP3 report consultation

Overview

We note that the council's draft Local Implementation Plan (LIP3) report's aims and objectives mirrors those of the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy. Our submission offers our group priorities and where we have concerns with the draft LIP3 report.

Our Group is concerned by the Mayor's cuts to the LIP funding and we have concerns about how the council can deliver on various transport improvement schemes if this funding level continues to fall. In the wider TfL context, we are concerned that improvements planned for the Northern Line and District Line are being delayed or stopped and this will have a negative impact on the residents of Merton who rely on these tube lines every day.

We also have doubts as to how the Mayor expects to reduce car usage and ownership when wider public transport matters are not improved sufficiently. We are particularly worried about Mayoral ideas to hit motorists in the pocket, either via expanded ULEZs or his mooted idea of road pricing and tolls.

Traffic flow

We support a review of traffic congestion black-spots. Congested junctions and traffic signalling, and we suggest new traffic-light phasing and junction alterations could reduce congestion across the borough. This can also be addressed by new innovative designs to reduce delays.

A key junction that should be prioritised is South Wimbledon which has suffered from congestion, traffic light failures and accidents in relatively large numbers in recent years.

Key focus areas would include Wimbledon Town Centre, Morden gyratory, Mitcham Town Centre and Cricket Green by the Vestry Hall.

We have concerns about the use of 42 ANPR cameras currently in the borough, as it is not clear they have had an effect in reducing traffic. They are viewed negatively by many residents. No more cameras should be deployed and no more LIP funding spent on them.

Pavements and pedestrian access

All new public realm design should be properly assessed to prevent trip hazards, and bus stops should have step free access for disabled residents and those with push chairs. Pavements need to be maintained to a high standard and in high footfall areas a consideration to widening of pavements should be considered, this will help make walking a more attractive option for our residents.

Pavements should have sufficient lighting and be clear from as much clutter as possible, to ensure that people feel safe and secure and navigable for all user groups.

Road safety

We would like to see active involvement from councillors to progress new safety schemes and initiatives within their wards, and work on new sustainable transport ideas, which may include enhanced cycling provision. Merton Council should actively engage with local resident associations with the aim of, where possible, incorporating their views into the final design. We would also like new investment in walking and cycling infrastructure across the borough to enable cyclists to move from roads to safe cycling pathways.

We also support the provision of an additional council officer to focus on road safety and to work with the Highways, Parking, and Public Health teams to coordinate the introduction of safe infrastructure and to promote active travel.

Accessibility

Further measures to improve accessibility for trains and buses are needed for residents. With particular attention for step free access at Wimbledon Park Station, Raynes Park Station and Motspur Park Station, with lift provision where necessary. Merton Council should also liaise with the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Transport for London to ensure step free provision can be properly funded and provided as swiftly as possible. This will make the lives of disabled, elderly and families much easier and helps encourage these groups to make use of public transport instead of using cars for all journeys.

Cycling provision

We would like to see greater investment in cycling infrastructure with the provision of more cycling lanes to improve cycle access across the borough, and to link into to other boroughs such as Kingston, Sutton and Wandsworth. More safe space for cycling will help relieve the worries of many residents about safety. In particular wider cycle lanes, advanced stopping zones and extend the Quietway routes in to Merton.

We would also like to see greater support for bike hire schemes such as the Lime E-bike hire scheme, as long as sufficient geo-fencing safeguards are put in place, as this will make the schemes acceptable to our residents.. It is also necessary to ensure safe cycle storage is widespread across the borough as theft of pedal cycles is a major concern of cycle owners. As obesity and childhood obesity are rising in London, increasing cycle provision is especially important.

Liveable neighbourhoods

Funding should be used to further green the borough, with a strong focus on vegetation and trees to enhance wellbeing and air quality. We also support the

introduction of 'green screens' to reduce pollution and enhance the appearance of local neighbourhoods. Widespread pollution reduction measures should also be introduced, with special attention paid to local schools, and areas with large numbers of pedestrians such as the town centres.

Aspects of town planning should take account of 'liveable neighbourhoods' by avoiding canyoning effects of tall buildings packed in close to busy roads. Town planning should ensure sufficient gaps are maintained between buildings, 'greening' included such as green walls, planters at ground level and provision of more street trees.

On residential roads it would be good if the council encourages more gardens, less paving. More hedging and planting should be encouraged and street trees planted by the council. Loss of mature trees should be minimised and more protection should be offered. This will make our neighbourhoods nicer places to live when residents can see more greenery. Additionally this will help reduce surface flooding problems. LIP money could be used to a borough-wide clearing and unblocking of drains and sewers.

Car usage

We support measures to improve access to car sharing programs as well as increasing the roll out of quick electric charging points, which need to be widespread across the borough. As Merton is an outer London borough the council should avoid penalising motorists. If residents are travelling into central London then it is likely they will be using public transport to complete their journey. Residents are most likely to use cars to undertake 'outward movements' to travel away from Central London as public transport is less efficient and effective.

Through the LIP the council should rollout more electric charging points, including in lamppost columns to help facilitate residents switching over to cleaner vehicles. It is important that major taxi ranks (e.g. Orinoco Lane, Wimbledon Station) have rapid chargers to enable 'black-cab' taxi drivers to consider switching to electric and away from their current taxis, which are the most polluting cars on the road. This will help make the lives of residents living in close proximity much better. Additionally providing alternative stacking arrangements for taxis away from residential properties is necessary and should be expedited.

Controlled Parking Zones

We support the review of CPZs across the borough in order to establish whether they are still fit for purpose. We believe residents should be consulted during this process, and be actively involved to ensure the CPZs serve the needs of residents, and are not simply a money making (Stealth Tax) scheme for the council. Also, provision should be allowed for residents to abolish their CPZ or seek amendments where its not working. CPZ permit fees should only be there to administer parking needs and requirements and be priced uniformly and equally without prejudice to certain areas, demographics or profiles within the borough.

Air Quality

Air Quality is high up in the public interest over recent years. This has come to the attention of Merton Council and some actions have started. To help facilitate more positive action, there is a requirement for more LIP funding to meet the aspirations of residents for more trees, green screens, electric charging points and better liveable neighbourhoods.

One example that our group lobbied for years is the introduction of anti-idling across Merton, which has now slowly come about. We want more signage installed to alert motorists to this problem and we support the anti-idling campaign by the Mums-for-Lungs group and Clean Air Parents' Network (backed by British Lung Foundation and Client Earth) which has set out an Air Quality programme for Children which has been going on for some time.

Future transport

The future Sutton Tramlink project needs to be ambitious and unlock the potential of Morden and North Mitcham to link up with the Northern Line at Colliers Wood. The use of modern technology is vital to achieving this aim (such as using guided busways not heavy rails and trams), and of reducing the current estimated cost which at present makes this project unaffordable. We are concerned by some rumoured estimates that any Sutton Tramlink could cost up to £500 million. This would need to come down before we could support this new route.

If Merton is to achieve its target of 73% of all journeys being made without cars by 2041, then schemes to increase the provision of public transport, especially in the east of the borough, will become ever more urgent. We also support the introduction of electric buses on a London wide level, this will greatly assist with improving London's air quality. We would welcome the introduction of Low Emission Bus Zones in Merton to help improve the air quality of the area, the pedestrian experience, walking and waiting beside buses, and the passenger experience on board.

The council should work with partners to improve the frequency and reliability of trains on the Thameslink (Wimbledon loop) because a large number of Merton residents travel from the south of the borough to Wimbledon to interchange with Tube, Train or Bus, and many Wimbledon residents use this to get to the City of London or Central/ North London.

Public parks

We support greater accessibility in our public parks, and enhanced provision of walking and cycle routes to link into wider green infrastructure projects in Merton and linking to other local boroughs. Our parks need to be pleasant and enjoyable places, with modern facilities where necessary to help the residents be more active and become healthier. Some LIP money could be used to upgrade playground equipment, create schemes suitable for teenagers, and benches and tables for families and older users.