

Future Merton Team  
London Borough of Merton  
London Road  
Morden  
SM4 5DX

4<sup>th</sup> January 2019

Dear Future Merton Team,

**RE: Local Plan 2020**

I am writing to respond to stage 2 of Merton's draft Local Plan which I understand will provide a basis for future planning decisions in the borough.

Across the country there are more than 1.15 million households stuck on social housing waiting lists. Whilst I do not underestimate the fact that Merton Council could not solve the housing crisis on its own, there can be no doubt that the Council is a significant player and a large land holder. What the Council chooses to do with this land, and what type and tenure of property is built on it, has an enormous impact on the almost 10,000 households on Merton's own housing waiting list.

That's why, reading through the Local Plan, I am so disappointed by the lack of attention given to Merton's low supply of genuinely affordable housing with no proactive policies to increase the number of social housing units. The Council is a large land owner and could proactively work with social landlords to provide more social housing.

This issue is of particular importance for Merton, with the borough ranked second nationally for the highest demand for social housing. As of June 2018, there are a staggering 35 households waiting for every one of the 270 available homes.

As it stands, I understand that the Council plans to use much of its land to build private rented sector properties that exclude the very people likely to be poorer or in worse health. What's more, a report in the Guardian newspaper recently found that just 6% of London's private rental market is currently available to families relying on housing benefit. That is why it is so important that the issues of tenure and affordability are addressed in this Local Plan. Not just the Government's definition of affordable (80% of market rent) but the provision of genuinely affordable properties available for those households locally who need them.

The Local Plan also fails to suggest that the Council will be proactive in support of the thousands of local residents who are living in overcrowded and insecure accommodation. I was disappointed to not read of proactive policies to deal with the large amount of privately rented properties that are in disrepair or used as illegal houses in multiple occupation. Merton has an estimated 24,100 non-decent private rented and owner-occupied homes, but the Council did not prosecute a single landlord between 2015 and 2017. These are homes that typically have the worst overcrowding and living conditions. I would have expected to have seen this key issue addressed in the Local Plan.

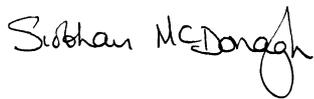
Furthermore, though I found important references to children's health and obesity, I could not find any reference to the impact that poor housing has on a child's health. Historically, we know that the most effective way to improve health is to improve housing. How does a child get fed if they do not have access to a kitchen?

Finally, I read closely the vision and strategic objectives of the Local Plan and was pleased to see a focus on providing 'a choice and mix of homes which are accessible, adaptable and sustainable'. However, it is of paramount importance that these homes are also genuinely affordable too. I was interested to read about the anticipated new homes in Mitcham Town Centre, Colliers Wood and Morden Town Centre. However, I could not find numbers of how many more residents the Council expects to live in these areas or how affordable these new homes would be.

Almost 2 years ago I presented a list of small sites in Merton, all of which are undeveloped. I presented these to the Council but, despite numerous meetings, no action has been taken. I have enclosed these once again below. I am also aware that there are plans for a number of car parks in Mitcham to be redeveloped for privately rented properties but found no mention of these in the Local Plan.

It is of paramount importance that Merton's Local Plan focuses on providing the genuinely affordable social homes that our Borough is so desperate for and I would expect a future draft to address this.

Yours Sincerely,



**Siobhain McDonagh MP**

#### **List of potential sites**

- Land in front of Varley Way (Currently owned by Persimmon)
- Victoria Road (by the rounabout)
- Land adjacent to William Morris School on Recreation Way
- Hallowfield Way
- Former Scout Hut site at Worsfold House
- Car park at Chapel Orchard
- Land to the rear of Saxonbury Close
- Land to the rear of Dreadnought Close on Phipps Bridge Road
- Former bowling green at Lavender Pavilion
- Grassed area near the children's playground at Lavender Pavilion
- Former community centre plot on Rose Avenue
- Garages on Crusoe Road (Owned by Clarion)
- Garages opposite 37 Rialto Road (Owned by National Rail)

**From:** MCDONAGH, Siobhain <siobhain.mcdonagh.mp@parliament.uk>  
**Sent:** 21 December 2018 18:32  
**To:** Future Merton  
**Subject:** Application by TM United

Dear Future Merton,

I am writing to support the application by TM United as part of the consultation on the new Local Development Framework. I understand that they have asked for an area of Imperial Sports Grounds to be released from its current designation as Metropolitan Open Land. If successful, I understand that TM United aim to provide affordable homes for local people and establish the long-term viability of their community facility. The resulting income would be reinvested into TM United, enabling the building of a new entrance block and a changing facility with education suite at the rear of the site.

As you may be aware, this is a particularly popular asset to our community, with 35 sports teams using their facilities and an 80-year age span of people who take part in their sports. What's more, there are 6 businesses running from the facility and over 20 community events held onsite each year.

Their proposals would provide much needed affordable housing for local people on an unused piece of scrubland with no ecological value. This is a site that is next to other houses and with excellent accessibility for local public transport including nearby bus routes and Mitcham tram stop. It will also secure the long-term future of the hub which is most certainly a much-valued local community facility.

I hope that you will accept this letter of support for the application but if I can elaborate further on any points please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Siobhain McDonagh

**Office of Siobhain McDonagh MP | Labour Member of Parliament for Mitcham and Morden**

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