



13. HEALTH & WELLBEING

Strategic Policy HW2.1 Health and Wellbeing

We will continue to improve and promote more active and healthier lifestyle of our residents, tackle the causes of ill health and health inequalities in Merton. This will be achieved by:

- a. Working with strategic partners such as NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) and Merton's Health and Wellbeing Boards in tackling health inequalities, in public health safety (for example during pandemics), promoting and encouraging healthy lifestyles and create healthy environments in Merton for all.
- b. Improving access to healthcare, voluntary organisations and community health facilities.
- c. Addressing and reducing the health inequalities in Merton as identified in Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- d. Tackle Merton's childhood obesity as identified by Merton's Child Healthy Weight Action Plan especially in areas of deprivation.
- e. Work with Alzheimer's Society, Merton Dementia Action Alliance and other partners to Merton a Dementia Friendly borough, helping all those living with dementia in the borough in line with the Mayor's ambition to make London a Dementia Friendly city.
- f. Creating safe, healthy and accessible neighbourhoods that promote social interactions, including places for people to meet and help combat loneliness and promote active living.
- g. Encourage more walking and cycling to help improve people's health and wellbeing and aid in reducing air pollution in the borough, especially in areas identified as Air Quality Focus Areas in Merton's Air Quality Action Plan.
- h. Creating inclusive environments for all including people with disabilities and with reduced mobility by improving accessibility to local community facilities, services and shops which, encourage opportunities for social interaction and active living.

- i. Ensuring that neighbourhoods are, designed well, promote healthier and active living, and adopt active aging approaches. Streets and neighbourhoods are designed using Healthy Streets Approach to encourage active travel.

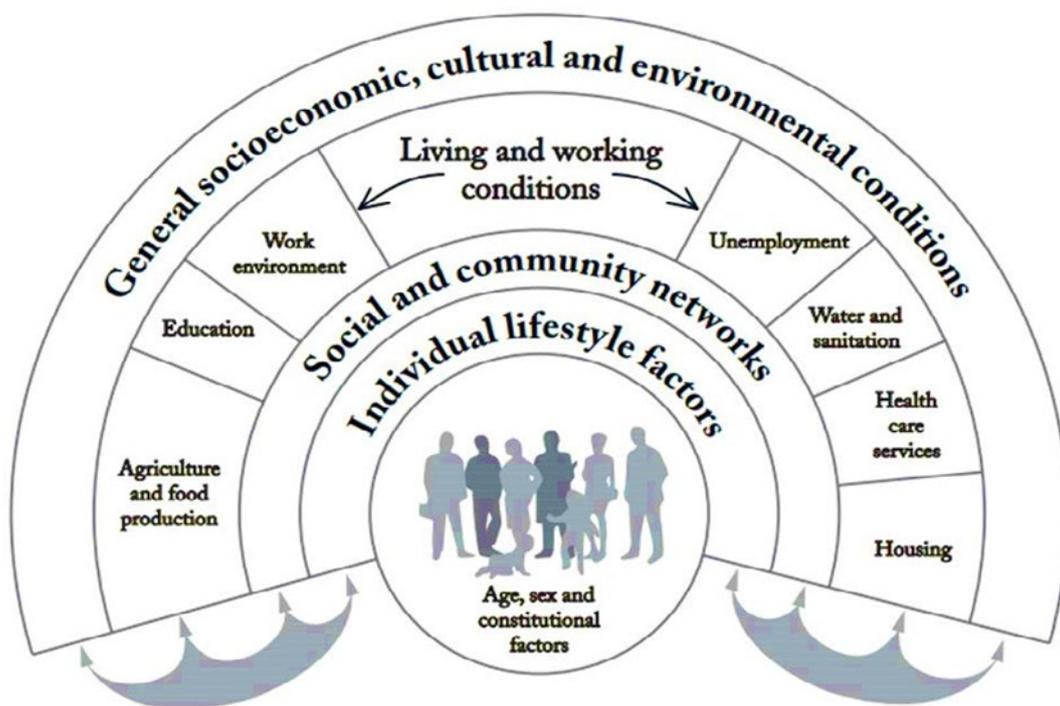
Justification

Covid-19

- 2.1.1.** The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been described as a watershed moment for inequalities. Covid has put the national focus on inequalities, especially the link between health and income. It has deeply exposed known inequalities and will further no doubt compound them. The impact on mental health could lead to a longer-term erosion of people's physical health affecting people who have not previously experience poor mental health.
- 2.1.2.** The way we use our homes has changed; more people are working from home. This has brought to light the importance of excellent quality and adaptable housing including personal, work and outdoor space.
- 2.1.3.** During the pandemic visits to parks and public green spaces increased across London. The pandemic has exposed the benefit of access to green spaces and nature for physical activity and play, mental wellbeing and mental resilience. Several surveys carried out on people with lung condition found that around 20% reported improvement to their conditions. This is contributed to the short-term reductions in levels and exposure of air pollution (for example PM25 and NO2) during lockdown and social distancing measures
- 2.1.4.** The recovery after covid-19 is a priority for Merton Council, not just the economic but also the health and wellbeing recovery. Our response to this health crisis will shape how we will deal with population health in the next decades. Covid-19 pandemic will offer lessons and opportunities leading to action.

2.1.5. Creating healthy environments for people of all ages in Merton will be a key consideration when the Council determining planning applications. A healthy environment can promote and encourage healthy lifestyles by way of good design, green open spaces and opportunities to promote walking and cycling. Other than the built and natural environment, there are social and cultural factors that promote good health and wellbeing – such as a variety of community groups, religious institutions, arts, culture and leisure facilities. Planning can play a pivotal role in influencing key health determinants, especially towards improving long-term outcomes and addressing health inequalities. Delivering health outcomes will be important for our recovery following the pandemic. The determinants of health shown in the diagram below include:

- Social and economic environment
- Physical environment.
- individual characteristics and behaviours



Determinants of health and wellbeing in our neighbourhoods (Barton and Grant, based on Dahlgren and Whitehead).

- 2.1.6.** Merton Council understands that it is possible to make the health and wellbeing outcomes of an area better and recognise that planning has a vital role to play. The Council will ensure that development proposals in Merton help to promote active travel choices (for example walking and cycling), physical activity and active aging, enhancing the feeling of safety and security, creation of permeable attractive street frontages and creating spaces where people can come together to relax and socialise.
- 2.1.7.** The recent released Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) report, *Enabling Healthy Placemaking*, called for a greater level of cooperation and collaboration between health, social care and planning professionals to ensure people's health needs are integrated into the conceptualisation, design and planning stages of new development in the future.
- 2.1.8.** Following a call for evidence, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in September 2019, this research explores local, national and international planning practices enabling the creation and delivery of healthy places. The report highlighted cooperation between public health, social care and the planning profession is essential. Innovative partnerships, communication and adequate resourcing often underpin effective models of cooperation which in turn leads to successful project implementation.

Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019-24)

- 2.1.9.** Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy is aligned with other strategies and plans across the Council including the Children and Young People's Plan, the developing Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Local Plan. The strategy has 4 themes: Start well, Live well and Age well in a Healthy place.

Air Quality and active travel

2.1.10. The government's Clean Air Strategy (2019) highlights that active travel such as, cycling and walking creates less pollution. It says that there are well understood health co-benefits from active travel including greater fitness and improved mental health, as well as lower risk of obesity, heart disease and lung disease. In addition, active travel reduces traffic congestion, itself a major cause of air pollution. The Mayor of London's *Health Inequalities Strategy* states that the Mayor wants London to be a place where our surroundings the places we live, work and play supports good health. The Mayor's key ambition is for London to have the best air quality of any major global city.

2.1.11. Merton's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has been produced as part of our duty under the London Local Air Quality Management statutory process and outlines the action we will take to improve air quality in the London Borough of Merton between 2018 and 2023 for example:

- To provide guidance to developers on the impact of development on air quality and ensure that approved schemes include effective mitigation and maximise the opportunity to improve infrastructure for sustainable transport options.
- To continue to work with schools, parents and students to improve awareness of AQ and to optimise parents' and children's desire and opportunity to adopt sustainable travel options.

Dementia Friendly Merton

2.1.12. Since the G8 dementia summit, 'Global action against dementia' in 2013, there has been a national movement toward developing dementia friendly environment. Over the years there have been several pilot projects across the UK with the aim to make towns and cities more accessible and understandable to enable people with dementia to live more independently for longer.

- 2.1.13.** According to the GLA (Greater London Authority) Population and Household Projections (2016), by 2030 the number of people aged over 75 is predicted to increase by 11% in Merton. With more people living longer there is also an increase in older people living alone and people living at home with long term physical and mental conditions such as dementia. There are an estimated 72,000 people living with dementia in London. If current trends continue, there will be a 40% increase in the people living with this condition by 2025. It is estimated that circa 2,000 people are living with dementia in Merton.
- 2.1.14.** Merton Council is an active member of Merton's Dementia Action Alliance (DAA). The DAA partners includes shops and other businesses, banks, Public Health professionals, the London Fire Brigade, Metropolitan Police and the leisure industry. Merton Council has been recognised for the work we are doing in our aim to be a dementia friendly borough and has been awarded the status of 'Working towards Dementia Friendly' status by the Alzheimer's Society and is fully committed to creating Dementia Friendly communities.
- 2.1.15.** A Dementia friendly borough will consider transport, housing, health services, culture, and social integration through the lens of dementia, with the aim that all those living with dementia in Merton should be empowered and supported to live well. It is recognised that well designed local environments can positively have a substantial impact on the quality of life and on health and wellbeing. Well designed and well-planned environments and buildings can also help also someone living with dementia live well for longer. More importantly incorporating dementia friendly approaches into development proposals does not just help people living with dementia but is also beneficial to Merton's growing ageing population, people with disabilities and families with small children.
- 2.1.16.** Dementia friendly design approaches take existing design best practices and either adapt or strengthens them with a focus on the needs of people living with dementia. These approaches aim to create inclusive environments and will help reduce stigma and supported people living with dementia and other health conditions such as autism.

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- 2.1.17.** There are several practical guides that provide to assist developer incorporate dementia friendly approaches. We recommend that developers have consideration to The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) practice guide '*Creating better environments for people living with dementia*¹.' This guidance provides practical advice on how to incorporate dementia approaches in development proposals. The guidance also provides case studies of development schemes and how developers worked with the Alzheimer Society, Help the aged and other organisations.
- 2.1.18.** Another useful tool for developers is 'The Place Standard'² toolkit. This tool was developed by the Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland, Architecture and Design Scotland. It is used by many local authorities as a framework for consultation on development, however it can be used by developers to assess proposals.
- 2.1.19.** Halsall Lloyd Partnership architects and designers have produced two guides promoting action research into design for dementia, working in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and other partners. *Volume 1: Design for Dementia*, a guide with helpful guidance in the design of exterior and interior environments. *Volume 2: Design for Dementia, Research Projects*, outlines the research projects and describes the participating approach.
- 2.1.20.** We recommend that developers consider the above and other guidance produced by the architectural, urban design and health organisations that provide guidance on creating dementia friendly homes and environments. We would also recommend that developers seek advice from Alzheimer's Society and Merton's Dementia Hub on incorporating dementia approaches in their development proposals at an early stage.

¹ https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/2213533/dementia_and_town_planning_final.compressed.pdf

² <https://www.placestandard.scot/>

Policy HW2.2: Delivering healthy places

The Council expect development proposals to improve and promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

- a. The Council will expect development proposals to:
 - i Contribute towards the health priorities of Merton Health and Wellbeing Board and partners to help reduce health inequalities across Merton.
 - ii Incorporate the Transport for London (TfL) Healthy Streets Approach as part of development proposals in accord with the design, housing, environment, economy and other policies in this plan that address the wider determinants of health and improve quality of life.
 - iii Encourage opportunities for food growing such as allotments, community gardens and other innovative food growing spaces as part of development proposals.
- b. The Council will:
 - i Use the Healthy Streets Approach to priorities health and wellbeing in planning decisions.
 - ii In line with Policy DM TC 7.11, 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. Where any development proposals involving hot food takeaways are permitted, the Council will require the operator to achieve and operate in compliance with, the Healthier Catering Commitment standard.
 - iii Require all substantial developments of 100+ residential units and over 10,000m² non-residential development to carry out a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The Council may require a HIA for the following developments:

- If 1 or more hot foods takeaways are proposed.
- Major developments in areas identified by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Indices of Deprivation of being areas of multiple deprivation and health inequalities or.
- Cumulative impact - proposed development is in an area with several other major developments planned or started

Justification

2.2.1. Merton is considered a healthy borough when compared to other London boroughs regarding health and wellbeing. However as identified in Merton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, a different picture emerges especially when it comes to health inequalities. The west of the borough (Wimbledon and Raynes Park neighbourhoods) in general tends to be healthier, more physically active, have higher levels of educational achievement and earn more money. Other neighbourhoods (Mitcham, Colliers Wood and Morden neighbourhoods) have higher levels of health inequalities, less physically activity, have lower educational achievement and tend to earn less money. There is evidence that creating healthy environments could create economically thriving spaces that would add value to development proposals for example:

- Increase trade by 40% when places are made more attractive for walking.
- Commercially: 80% retail sales when places are easier and more attractive to walk around.

Hot food takeaways

2.2.2. According Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): The Merton Story produced by Public Health Merton and Public Health England the percentage of Year 6 (aged 11) children in Merton identified as obese is 21%; this figure is higher than the national average (19%). Access to fast food takeaways may influence the ability of our children to adopt healthy lifestyles and may potentially undermine healthy eating initiatives which are place in several schools in Merton.

2.2.3. The Council will look to create and promote healthy food environment in Merton by increasing the availability of healthy food and limiting unhealthy options. As such, and in line with line with Policy DM TC 7.11, 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.

- 2.2.4.** The Council fully supports the Mayor of London Healthier Catering Commitment (HCC) and with Merton Public Health will working with businesses (including new businesses) that serve and/or sell food to help improve their food offer. We will encourage all new food establishments in Merton to sign up to the HCC.

Health Impact Assessments

- 2.2.5.** The Council recommends that a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is carried out at an early stage of a development proposal. HIAs are designed to consider whether a development proposal might reinforce health inequalities and inadvertently damage people's health or have positive health outcomes for the local community. Ensuring issues are considered at an early stage in developing planning proposals can help improve both the physical and mental health of the population. Carrying out a HIA during the implementation stage is technically possible but it brings a risk of retrofitting health sensitive solutions to the proposal and is likely to generating more development costs, which could adversely affect financial viability of the development.
- 2.2.6.** HIAs promote sustainable developments that support the creation of strong, vibrant and healthy communities by:
- Considering both the positive and negative health impacts when preparing development proposals.
 - Identifying the actions needed to minimise any negative impacts on health and wellbeing of a particular development scheme.
 - Demonstrating that developers have worked closely with communities directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community.
 - Considering the cumulative impact of development, i.e., where several developments are in progress within the local area, especially where this relates to construction, as well as the potential overconcentration of uses in a local area. The

combination of several large residential schemes may also have a material impact on access to services and amenities.

- 2.2.7.** The Council will require the HIA to prove how it has informed the development proposal, any later changes made to the proposal and how Merton's health and wellbeing priorities have informed the proposal. It is recommended that before carrying out a HIA that developers seek advice from the Council. Merton's emerging Health Impact Assessment guidance will set out the Council's requirement for HIAs (Health Impact Assessments).