

# Statement of Common Ground – London Borough of Merton and Transport for London

## Introduction

1. A Statement of Common Ground (SCG) is a written record of the progress made by strategic policy-making authorities during the process of planning for cross-boundary matters. This SCG has been prepared to demonstrate that Merton's Regulation 19 Local Plan is '*based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters*', in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 27 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance chapter on Maintaining Effective Co-operation.
2. The purpose of the statement of common ground between the London Borough of Merton (LBM) and Transport for London (TfL) is for both parties to acknowledge areas of common ground and to set out areas of cooperation and progress to address joint strategic transport matters. It demonstrates how effective and on-going joint working has informed strategic policy-making through the whole review of Merton's Local Plan ([submitted December 2021](#)) and forms part of the evidence demonstrating compliance with the 'duty to cooperate'.
3. London's transport network consists of a hierarchy of routes ranging from local streets and town centres at borough level to the major road and public transport routes that operate across borough boundaries and have an impact London wide. TfL and LBM have responsibility for the management and operation of different parts of the transport network, so delivering an integrated and efficient transport network requires action and cooperation from both parties.
4. Transport for London (TfL) is the integrated transport authority responsible for the implementation of the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) and has responsibility for the day to day operation of significant parts of the public transport network, the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) and all traffic signals in London.
5. LBM is the Highway Authority responsible for managing and delivering schemes for all other adopted roads in the borough. Boroughs are required to produce and implement a Local Implementation Plan (LIP) which demonstrates how they will deliver the Mayor's Transport Strategy. Merton's Third Local Implementation Plan (LIP3) was adopted in 2019.
6. Merton and TfL officers have extensive ongoing dialogue through the development and delivery of Merton's Local Implementation Plan (LIP) and regularly discuss strategic transport matters affecting Merton and Greater London. Merton and TfL also have regular contact in relation to planning matters, including on strategic planning applications within Merton. TfL have submitted comments on Merton's emerging Local Plan at each stage of preparation including Regulation 19. These ongoing discussions with TfL have informed the development of Merton's Local Plan to submission stage, particularly in respect of Chapter 16, Sustainable Transport.

## **Strategic Geography and Transport Links**

7. Merton is an outer London borough as defined in the London planning process (Annex 2 of the 2021 London Plan) and is located in the south west of Greater London. Merton has boundaries with the London boroughs of Sutton, Croydon, Wandsworth and Lambeth and the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames.
8. Merton is projected to experience significant growth during the plan period. Merton's ten-year target for additional homes set in the 2021 London Plan is 9,180, more than double the former London Plan target of 4,107. It is anticipated that new homes and jobs will be concentrated around the existing town centres and areas of the borough with good access to public transport and local services, particularly those in areas identified as opportunity areas including Morden, Colliers Wood, South Wimbledon and Wimbledon.
9. Parts of Merton benefit from a good public transport provision principally around the town centres but there are other parts of the borough where connectivity remains poor. TfL operated public transport services in Merton include the Tram Service from Wimbledon to Croydon and a network of 28 bus routes. TfL also operates the Northern and District Line Underground services which have terminals in Morden and Wimbledon respectively.
10. Merton Council manages the majority of the borough's network of highways including the footways, cycle facilities and on-street parking. A relatively large proportion (35%) Merton is covered by open space, which includes some strategically important active travel routes within the borough and into neighbouring boroughs, including the Wandle Trail.
11. The Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) in Merton consists of the A297, St Helier Avenue and the A24 which cuts through the centre of the borough passing directly through the district centres of Colliers Wood and Morden. The strategically important Cycleway 7, which starts from Colliers Wood on the A24 and provides a cycle route into central London, is also part of the TLRN.

## **Strategic Transport Matters**

12. The following section summarises the areas of common ground on key transport policy areas and specific transport schemes that will be delivered within Merton and will require joint working and agreement between TfL and LBM.

### **Overarching Transport Policy**

13. The MTS sets out that the overarching approach to addressing some of London's transport challenges is to reduce dependency on private vehicles in favour of active, efficient and sustainable modes of travel. The Mayor has set an overarching target for 80 per cent of all trips in London to be made on foot,

by cycle or using public transport by 2041. The specific target for resident's daily trips in Merton is 73% by sustainable modes by 2041, an increase from 61% in 2021. The most effective way to achieve this will be through the implementation of a comprehensive package of transport measures that prioritise and enable sustainable travel options alongside measures to better manage and reduce the impact of car use, parking and freight. Both parties agree that Merton's Local Plan is consistent with the overarching approach to transport as set out in the MTS and the London Plan.

### **Healthy Streets Approach and Vision Zero**

14. Merton supports TfL's Healthy Streets Approach and The Mayor's Vision Zero target for road safety. Vision Zero sets out a strategy and action plan to reduce danger on the streets, so that by 2041 all deaths and serious injuries will be eliminated from London's transport network. The Healthy Streets Approach puts people's health at the centre of how streets and public spaces are designed, managed and used. Both parties agree that schemes implemented on their transport networks in Merton should adhere with the Healthy Streets and Vision Zero approaches. Both parties agree that through the London Plan and Merton's local plan policies, developments in Merton will be required to adhere to the Mayor's Healthy Streets and Vision Zero Approaches.

### **Managing traffic, parking and freight**

15. The Local Plan contains policies that seek to better manage and reduce the impact of traffic, parking and freight. Both parties agree that this will be essential to achieve mode share targets and tackle congestion, pollution and safety concerns on the road network as a whole.
16. In response to TfL comments, LBM made changes to the Local Plan at regulation 18 and 19 stages to strengthen and clarify the position in relation to car parking and ensure conformity with the London Plan. Both parties agree that Merton's Local Plan now complies with the approach set out in the London Plan of restricting car parking provision to restrain car use and to apply the London Plan maximum car parking standards for new development proposals in Merton.
17. TfL have made comments on the potential impact of sites allocated for development on the TLRN in representations made during previous consultation stages and Merton have amended the site allocations to include these.
18. Freight, servicing and delivery vehicles, particularly heavy goods vehicles are a significant source of noise and air pollution, particularly around commercial and industrial locations. Both parties agree that they will collaborate to implement a package of measures to manage and reduce the impact of freight. These include London wide and sub- regional measures set out in the MTS and managed by TfL, such as the LEZ, ULEZ and the HGV Safety Permit. At a borough level this will include local parking and traffic management measures and restrictions. Both parties agree with the approach of the Local Plan to require development proposals to manage deliveries and construction traffic and in referencing the TfL guidance on Delivery and Servicing Plans and Construction Logistics Plans.

## **Public Transport Schemes**

19. The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets out that significant investment will be needed in the public transport network to improve the customer experience and support anticipated growth without increasing crowding. There are a number of key transport schemes identified in the Mayor's Transport Strategy and London Plan Policy T3 that are relevant to Merton and will deliver an enhanced or expanded travel network to accommodate growth sustainably. These schemes have been identified in Merton's Local Plan and are also included in the [Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2021](#) and the indicative delivery plan to 2041 in Merton's LIP 3. Both parties agree that the paragraphs below provide up to date information, as of February 2022, on the status, progress and likely timescales for delivery of key public transport schemes outlined in Merton's Local Plan.

### **Crossrail 2**

20. The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets out that proposals for a major new line, Crossrail 2 will be essential to alleviate existing overcrowding on the South West Main Line and will have a significant impact on the borough. TfL still expect that the scheme will be required in the long term but the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on travel patterns has resulted in uncertainties around the future and financing of the scheme. An agreement between the Government and TfL in late 2020 has put the scheme development in good order until such time as the scheme can be further progressed. Both parties agree that they will continue to collaborate on any future developments in relation to this project but that it would now be expected to take place beyond this Local Plan period.

21. Some land within the borough has been identified and safeguarded in the [Crossrail 2 Safeguarding Directions confirmed by the Secretary of State in March 2015](#) and both parties agree to support the Secretary of State to refresh the safeguarding directions. Both parties agree to promote discussion with and inform developers that are directly affected by the safeguarding directions and those potentially affected sites beyond the current safeguarded limits that may be critical for the delivery of this strategic project.

### **London Underground**

22. The Mayor's Transport Strategy proposes upgrades to the Underground network which would enable faster and more frequent services, as well as improved accessibility and a more pleasant travelling environment, including through the four lines modernisation programme. This was due to deliver upgrades to the District line but following a recent TfL review assessing and challenging costs and schedules, the re-signalling of the western branches of the District line will not be included in the programme. This means the section of the District line south of East Putney to Wimbledon will remain under the existing signalling and journey times in these sections will remain unchanged, although TfL will continue to assess whether this signalling can be converted in future. However, the programme will still deliver increased frequencies to up to 16 trains per hour on the Wimbledon Branch when more trains are introduced to the central area, now programmed for July 2023 - February 2024.

### **London Trams and Sutton Link**

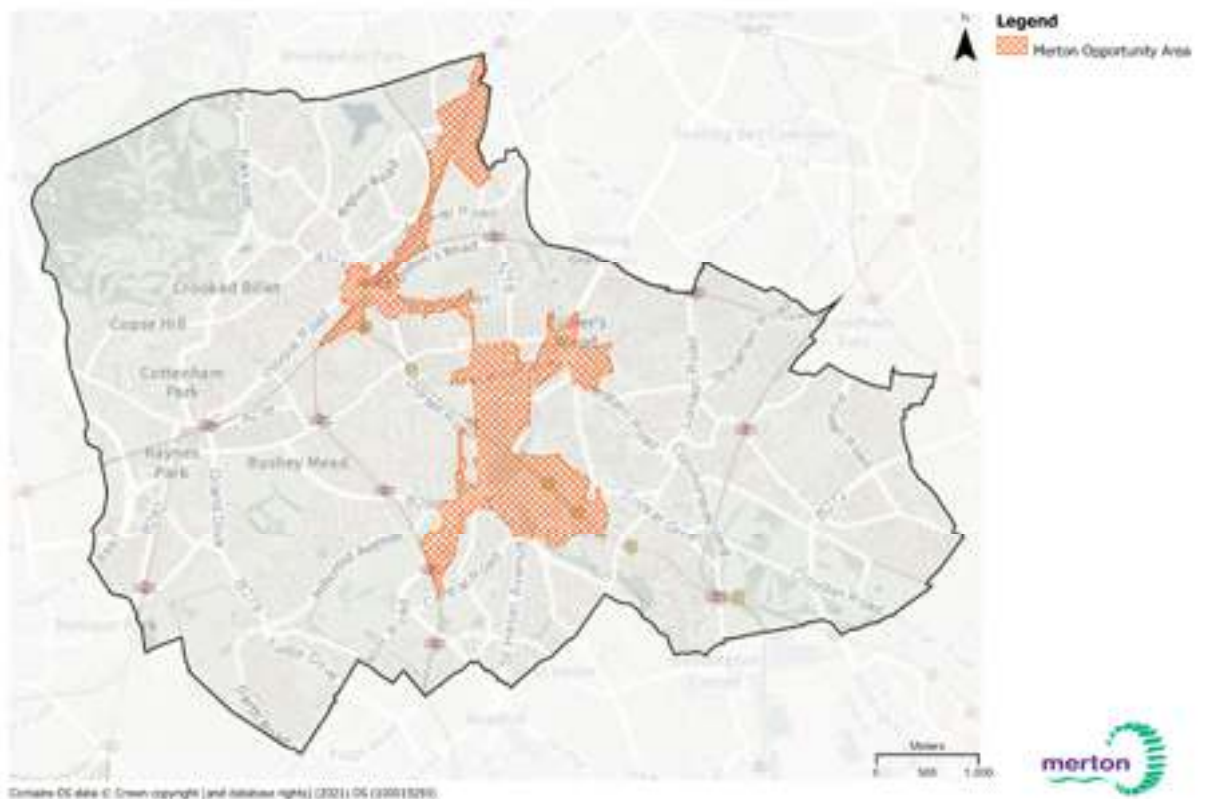
23. Merton is served by London Trams that provides a major orbital link between Wimbledon and Croydon Town Centre via Mitcham. However, the service suffers from over-crowding at peak times and a significant capacity increase is needed to accommodate the anticipated growth in homes and jobs in south London, without reliance on the car. The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets out proposals to upgrade the tram system to improve its reliability and to increase its peak frequency. This includes twin tracking between Morden Road and Phipps Bridge tram stops, which TfL still plan to implement. However, there is no TfL funding allocated at this time so timescales can't be confirmed. The current estimate for delivery is beyond 2031 if funding is secured.
24. Other tram proposals include a potential new tram stop to serve Willow Lane, but this proposal does not form part of TfL's plans and has no allocated funding, so would only be progressed during the plan period as part of appropriate enabling development.
25. TfL have long term aspirations for a better connection between the Trams network and the Northern line which could potentially run on a spur from Morden Road to South Wimbledon. However, there is no TfL funding allocated at this time, so timescales can't be confirmed. The current estimate for delivery is beyond 2031 if funding is secured.
26. A proposed new tram service the "Sutton Link" would create a new, direct and quick route between Sutton and Merton that would offer interchange with the existing tram service. Following public consultation in 2019, TfL's preferred option would serve Colliers Wood via St Helier Avenue, Morden Road and Church Road. Work on the Sutton Link project was paused in July 2020 as it had not proved possible to identify the funding needed to deliver the scheme. If circumstances change and new funding opportunities emerge, then the case for taking the scheme forward will be reviewed.

### **Bus Services**

27. Merton is served by an extensive network of 28 bus services. However, as set out in the Mayors Transport Strategy, significant enhancements to bus services will be required to make the bus an attractive alternative option to replace car journeys, particularly in parts of outer London less well served by public transport. Both parties agree to continue to collaborate on the regular network development review process and to deliver bus priority schemes and bus stop improvements on Merton's roads.
28. The Mayor's Transport Strategy sets out an aim for the TfL bus fleet to emit zero exhaust emissions by 2037 at the latest. Routes 200 and 413 are currently operated with zero emissions vehicles and route 264 has been allocated zero emission vehicles on a new contract due to commence in 2022. Works have already been carried out at Merton bus garage in Colliers Wood to support zero emissions bus fleets. Both parties agree to continue to collaborate on an ongoing basis to facilitate the decarbonisation of the TfL bus fleet and routes in Merton.

## Opportunity areas

29. The London Plan identifies areas known as Opportunity Areas (OAs) that will see the most significant change. Policy SD.1 of the London Plan 2021 sets out the Opportunity Areas for Merton as shown below. The policy ascribes indicative targets to the *Wimbledon – South Wimbledon – Colliers Wood Opportunity Area* of 5,000 homes and 6,000 jobs in the Opportunity Area by 2041. The GLA, has agreed that Morden can be included in this OA.



30. Fig : Proposed boundaries of the Opportunity Areas in Merton

31. The Council will seek to collaborate with GLA and TFL to develop Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks (OAPFs), and when delivering development within the OAs, to ensure that growth and regeneration potential is delivered in a sustainable way and that ambitious sustainable transport mode share targets are realised.

32. Collaboration with TfL be particularly important in The Morden Regeneration Zone which is expected to deliver circa 2000 new homes. The TLRN A24 route that runs through Morden Town Centre, partly as a gyratory system, creates traffic dominance, results in a poor experience for pedestrians and cyclists and negatively impacts on public realm. Both parties agree that there is a need to work collaboratively on the comprehensive regeneration of Morden to deliver improvement to the road network in accordance with vision zero and healthy streets objectives to give greater priority to pedestrians and cyclists and improve the public realm including the provision of alternative facilities for bus standing.

The preferred route of the Sutton-Link Tram extension runs within 400m of Morden Town Centre but this project has now been paused as set out above in paragraph 26. Both parties agree that the Local Plan has been updated to reflect the latest situation and that if circumstances change then the case for taking the scheme forward will be reviewed.

### **Scheme Delivery and Funding**

33. Merton's transport strategy and proposed measures have been set out in the LIP3, which has been agreed by TfL. This includes a three year LIP delivery programme for the period 2019/20 to 2021/22, with a requirement to develop a further three year delivery period up to 2024/25 to be agreed by TfL. Funding is usually allocated to LBM by TfL on an annual basis to enable them to implement schemes in the agreed LIP delivery programme, such as walking and cycling routes. However, the impact of the covid crisis on TfL's finances has resulted in disruption to the allocation of funding to boroughs for the delivery of the LIP programmes during the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years. LBM has submitted an interim delivery plan for the year 2022/23 but TfL is still not able to confirm the allocation of funding for the delivery of the LIP programme (as of February 2022). Both parties agree that there remains ongoing uncertainty about TfL's funding situation and that this has the potential to have a significant impact on TfL's operation of the transport network in London, TfL's delivery of new transport schemes as set out in the MTS and on TfL's allocation of funding to LBM to deliver transport schemes set out in the LIP. Both parties agree to work in collaboration to develop and agree appropriate delivery plans for transport schemes in Merton when there is greater clarity over TfL's future funding situation.

### **Timetable for review and ongoing cooperation**

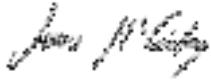
34. This statement has been informed by on-going engagement between the parties and has been informed by various evidence base documents. Merton and TfL Officers are in regular contact on various strategic transport issues.
35. As this statement focuses on issues of relevance to Merton's Regulation 19 post examination it will only need further updating once work commences on any future revisions to the Local Plan. Ongoing collaboration between partners will continue through regular meetings on a one to one basis and through attendance at group meetings where strategic transport issues are discussed.

### **Governance arrangements**

36. It will be for each authority to decide who is the appropriate person to sign the statement.

**London Borough of Merton.**

Signed: James McGinlay



Position: Assistant Director, Sustainable Communities, London Borough of Merton

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022

**Transport for London**

Signed: Danny Calver



Position: Planning Manager, Spatial Planning, Transport for London

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022