

Planning Policy Team
Southwark Council
London
SE1 2QH
06/09/2021

Planning Policy Department
London Borough of Merton Council

Dear Sir / Madam,

We are writing in support of your New Local Plan Publication Stage 3. Our comments focus on your proposed climate change policies which aim to make Merton a more environmentally sustainable place and net carbon zero by 2050. Your commitment to achieving net carbon zero targets by 2050 aligns with our own climate change priorities, as part of our emerging policy and wider Southwark Council climate change commitments.

We have provided supporting comment below on each of the proposed policies in Chapter 02. Climate Change, in addition to support for climate policy requirements embedded within other chapters in the plan including design and green and blue infrastructure.

Policy CC2.1: Promoting sustainable design to mitigate and adapt to climate change

We support the overarching principles of this strategic policy towards achieving Merton Council's carbon reduction targets in line with your Climate Strategy and Action Plan, published in November last year.

We support the approach set out in paragraphs 2.1.8-12 of the justification text, which requires all new development to be fit for the future in terms of energy efficiency, climate resilience, and low carbon and renewable energy. This aims to reduce the need for future retrofitting of buildings over the next 30 years. We recognise the important role of policy in delivering new development that will operate as net-zero carbon and achieve a zero-carbon built environment in the UK by 2050.

We welcome the insight provided in paragraphs 2.1.13-17 in relation to the policy gap between predicted and actual performance required to achieve net-carbon zero development. Paragraph 2.1.18 identifies key shortcomings in the London Plan policy requirement for net carbon zero, such as the reliance on cash-in-lieu contributions, which shift responsibility onto the local authority as well as the application of policy to major schemes only, which represents only 10% of schemes in Merton.

We support the commitment to go beyond the London Plan requirements and push for on-site savings to be maximised through energy efficiency and low carbon / renewable energy generation.

We also support the policy emphasis on minimising embodied carbon through a circular economy, and adapting to climate change impacts through sustainable design. These commitments will be achieved through the local policies set out below.

Policy CC2.2 Minimising greenhouse gas emissions

We support the adoption of the Mayor of London's Energy Hierarchy (Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green and Be Seen) for all development.

We support the requirement for all development creating one or more dwelling or 500sq.m or more non-residential GIA, to provide an energy statement on how emission savings have been maximised for each stage of the hierarchy in order to achieve net-carbon zero targets. In particular, we note and support the application of this policy to residential development including the change of use (CoU) and conversion of existing buildings that would create a new dwelling. This will facilitate retrofitting options for a large number of minor and conversion schemes, which cumulatively have an impact on achieving the net carbon zero by 2050.

Paragraph 2.2.6 of the policy justification text clarifies that in order to incentivise retrofitting, the CoU and conversions of existing buildings will not be required to offset any shortfall in carbon reduction targets. In doing so, this aims to minimise embodied carbon emissions.

We note your commitment to driving on-site carbon reduction by increasing the minimum on-site improvement against Building Regulations 2013 to 60% for major developments and minor development creating one or more dwelling, 50% for all non-residential development creating 500sq.m or more GIA, and 35% for all minor CoU and conversions creating one or more dwelling.

We recognise that it is not always possible to achieve net carbon zero on site and therefore, off-site provision is required to offset any shortfall in carbon reduction. We therefore, welcome your research into carbon pricing which has identified that in order to deliver equivalent carbon savings offsite, the carbon offset price per tonne needs to be higher than the current price of £95/tonne required by the London Plan. On this basis, we support your proposal for a carbon-offset price of £300/tonne. This higher price aims to encourage developers to opt for a higher on-site delivery in the first place, whilst also providing Merton council with sufficient funds to deliver carbon saving equivalents off-site. At Southwark, we are preparing our own evidence base in light of this, to justify a higher carbon tariff for these same reasons.

We support and encourage the requirement for developers to demonstrate why on-site targets are not met through a viability assessment as set out in paragraph 2.2.21 of the policy justification text.

Policy CC2.3 Minimising energy use

We note the importance of this policy in delivering energy efficient development through design and fabric efficiency, as a key element of reducing on-site carbon emissions. We support the trigger point for all development of one or more dwelling or 500sq.m or more non-residential GIA to demonstrate how energy demand specifically has been minimised. This includes providing information on Energy Use Intensity (EUI) targets, which development will be required to meet from 2025.

We welcome the research undertaken by LETI's Climate Emergency Design Guide, which recommends the use of EUI targets for driving energy efficiency. It is noted in paragraph 2.3.22 that Merton intend to enforce minimum EUI targets by 2025 and will be seeking to publish further guidance closer to this time, to confirm these targets. We would seek to continue engaging with Merton as this process develops, either through national regulations or as a locally derived methodology.

We note that in terms of fabric efficiency targets, the policy required compliance with the minimum Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard (FEES) for Zero Carbon Homes. This is justified in paragraphs 2.3.10-13, which provides evidence to suggest that FEES is a more effective method at recognising energy efficiency than a percentage improvement against Building Regulations.

As set out in paragraph 2.3.23, we support Merton's approach to encourage developments that adopt a recognised and successful fabric first approach, such as through the Passivhaus, which is recognised as the most stringent low energy in use standard and consistent with LETI's Climate Emergency Design Guide.

We support the requirement for all major development to monitor and report on energy use for 5 years post occupation, in line with the GLA's Be Seen Energy Monitoring Guidance (or any future equivalent).

Policy CC2.4 Low carbon energy

We support the requirement for all development to make the fullest contribution to clean, efficient energy supply, and maximise opportunity for renewable and low carbon energy generation, storage and use. The policy provides clear guidance on what is required to demonstrate how low carbon energy has been incorporated into development; considering options for rooftop renewable energy, green roofs, smart metre installation, and decentralised energy.

We note that part b(v) of the policy requires all major development located within an identified heat network opportunity area to utilise decentralised or be able to connect to current / future networks. We understand that this relates to Merton's own identified heat network opportunity areas which are linked to two major regeneration schemes in Morden town centre and South Wimbledon, and is subject to technical and financial viability. We support the requirement in paragraph 2.4.15 for all major developments to comply with the London Plan policies on decentralised energy. We also support the requirement in paragraph 2.4.17 for proposals seeking to develop / connect to district heat networks, to do so in compliance with Merton's climate change policies and ensuring development is future proofed and that heat losses have been minimised.

We support the policy requirement for no gas boilers in new residential and non-residential development from 2030. This is supported by the Clean Growth Strategy 'UK Housing: Fit for the Future?' report in 2019, which concluded that new homes should not be connected to the gas grid from 2025 at the latest, in order to avoid retrofitting expense. We note in paragraph 2.4.3 that gas is the primary source of heating for homes in Merton and that, in order to achieve the net carbon zero target by 2050 and minimise the burden of retro-fitting for the council, Merton needs to be gas free. We support the requirement in paragraph 2.4.7 for any development proposing the use of gas-powered systems to provide a robust justification to demonstrate that low or zero carbon systems are not achievable, provide evidence for how the development is future proofed to meet net carbon zero by 2050, and that the use of gas-powered systems is a credible stepping stone towards meeting this target. We understand that this will not apply from January 2023 onwards, when gas boilers will no longer be able to be installed in new development.

Policy CC2.5 Minimising waste and promoting a circular economy

We support the principle of this policy to minimise waste and embodied carbon. We recognise the importance of encouraging all development to prioritise 're-use' and 'retrofit' over 'new building' as well as consider the design of development and choice of materials to minimise embodied carbon and limit the need for repair and replacement over the lifetime of the development.

We note that this policy requires all development creating 30 or more dwellings, 1000sq.m of non-residential GIA, and all development proposing to demolish and rebuild a single dwelling, to undertake a Whole Life-Cycle Carbon assessment. This goes beyond the London Plan requirement for major referable and aligns with the London Plan's aspirations to encourage local authorities to set their own local thresholds.

It is noted in paragraph 2.5.10 that the justification for including demolition and reconstruction of a single dwelling house is linked to the large number of applications received by the council for this type of development. We support the council's approach to identifying this issue and the subsequent requirement for Whole Life-cycle Carbon Assessments, which are proportionate to this type of development, in order to demonstrate compliance with the principles of a circular economy and minimising embodied carbon. This is likely to have a positive outcome for minimising waste and carbon emissions from cumulative small-scale development, which would otherwise not been required to identify and address these issues.

Policy CC2.6 Sustainable design standards

We support the approach to this policy in driving sustainability standards through development of new and existing buildings, including through the effective use of materials and resources, minimising water use, and contributing to carbon reduction targets.

We support the requirement for all residential development to achieve Building Regulation Part G water efficiency standards (or equivalent), and for all conversions and CoU to existing buildings creating 10 or more new dwellings, to achieve the

minimum BREEAM rating of 'Excellent.' We note that there is not a BREEAM requirement as part of this policy, for new residential development. We understand this is due to the policy requirement set out in Policy CC2.3 to adopt a fabric first approach, in accordance with the minimum Fabric Energy Efficiency Standard (FEES) for Zero Carbon Homes. This is justified by your evidence base in paragraphs 2.3.10-13, as a more effective method for recognising energy efficiency.

We support the requirement for all new build, conversion and CoU for non-residential development creating 1,000 sq.m GIA and above, to achieve a minimum BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' (or equivalent). The requirement for conversions and CoU proposals to meet these design standards will contribute to making the existing building stock fit-for-purpose and resilient to climate change and therefore, is supported.

Chapter 12. Places and Spaces in a Growing Borough

We note that climate change impacts have been incorporated into design policy throughout this chapter. This demonstrates the importance of taking into account climate change impacts and delivering solutions to mitigate and adapt to these impacts, through sustainable design and construction. We support the council's recognition that sustainable design principles play a critical role in delivering net-zero carbon and climate resilient development.

In relation to opportunities for retrofitting existing building stock, we support part g of **Policy D12.5 Managing Heritage assets**, which requires proposals to existing heritage assets to improve energy efficiency in an effective and sensitive way without affecting the heritage asset and its setting. This is a good example of how design policy might work together with climate change commitments to deliver sensitively designed energy efficiency measures for London's heritage building stock.

Chapter 15. Green and Blue infrastructure

We note that climate change contributions have been recognised and incorporated throughout this chapter as a positive outcome of biodiversity enhancement, urban greening, protection of trees, sustainable flood management and pollution control. We support this approach to embed climate change as a key theme throughout the chapter, demonstrating the significant link between the protection and enhancement of our natural environment, and mitigation and adaptation measures for tackling climate change.

Overall Southwark Council is supportive of Merton's approach to tackling climate change and energy performance in the Merton Local Plan. Southwark Council would like to continue to be involved in and discuss Climate Change policy with Merton.

Yours Sincerely,

Southwark Council