

06 September 2021

Delivered by email

FutureMerton
London Borough of Merton
Civic Centre
London Road,
Morden SM4 5DX

Ref: TELL3026

Dear Sir / Madam,

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT NEW LOCAL PLAN (STAGE 3) 2021- WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF TELEREAL TRILLIUM

We write on behalf of Telereal Trillium ("TT"; "our Client") with respect to the consultation on the Draft New Local Plan (Stage 3) 2021, currently undergoing Regulation 19 consultation.

Our client supports the general principles and ambitions of the Draft New Local Plan, specifically the focus on optimising delivery of homes on brownfield land, the role of place and 20-minute neighbourhoods and the approach to community and social infrastructure. TT also support the general thrust of the policies on climate change and acknowledge the need for the London Borough of Merton ("LB Merton") to set higher targets for carbon reduction than those set out in the London Plan. However, it is considered that the challenges of converting heritage assets to address wider needs of the borough (i.e. housing) should be reflected in the New Local Plan, with acknowledgement to ensure that existing, underutilised assets, particularly heritage assets, can accommodate a viable, future use. We therefore respectfully request that revisions are made to the emerging policy to be explicit that on site carbon reductions will also need to be considered against site-specific constraints.

Telereal Trillium

It is considered that it will be helpful to provide some background information on Telereal Trillium both nationally and their portfolio within the borough and surrounding area. Telereal Trillium is one of the UK's largest property companies, owning and managing over 12,000 properties across the UK and brings many years of experience in the UK property market to residential development. This experience includes the site at Irene House, Balham in the neighbouring London Borough of Wandsworth, a former DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) 1940s office block next to a Grade II Listed church which TT are currently on site developing into apartments.

Telereal Trillium have also recently expanded their portfolio to include a site within LB Merton and acquired the site at Tooting Police Station, 251 Mitcham Road, in early 2021, after it was identified as surplus to operational requirements by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's ("MOPAC") Estates Strategy (2013).

8th Floor
Lacon House
84 Theobald's Road
London
WC1X 8NL

T 020 7851 4010 turley.co.uk

Since the site was sold by MOPAC and acquired by TT in March 2021, it has been subject to an application to Historic England for Listed Building status. Following this application, the buildings on site were included on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural and historic interest at Grade II on 4 May 2021. Prior to this date, the former Police Station had been included on the Merton Local List since 1993. This building was purpose-built in 1939 for the Metropolitan Police Service to the designs of their chief architect and surveyor Gilbert Mackenzie Trench. It is a steel framed and concrete slab building, which is largely brick clad in a Moderne influenced style.

TT are excited to work with LB Merton and bring their experience and bespoke approach to help revitalise this heritage asset and its contribution towards the local area. As such, there are specific elements of the Draft New Local Plan that TT support and would like to comment on the relevant sections and policies as per below.

Draft Strategic Objective 5 (place plans and the 20-minute neighbourhood) and Draft Strategic Objective 3 (Places for People) within Section 01C (Urban Development Objectives & Vision), Draft Section 01B (Good Growth Strategy) & Draft Policy N4.1 (Mitcham)

It is noted that the Draft New Local Plan has placed a high strategic emphasis on the concept of the 20-minute neighbourhood in order to promote a high quality urban and suburban environment and a strong sense of place at a local level.

This is made clear throughout the document, but particularly as part of **Draft Strategic Objective 5 (place plans and the 20-minute neighbourhood), within Section 01C of the Draft New Local Plan** which focusses on providing reliable, quality local services in accessible, well designed neighbourhoods to ensure that *“development makes the most, efficient use of land and that is designed at the optimum density, considering site context, connectivity by walking, cycling and public transport and access to amenities and services”* (point E).

Draft Strategic Objective 3 (Places for People) also notes at point D that the Council will *“[e]nsur[e] that development makes the most efficient use of brownfield land and that is designed at the optimum density, considering site context, connectivity by walking, cycling and public transport and access to amenities and services.”*

Draft Section 01B (Good Growth Strategy) highlights that outside of Opportunity Areas, within the Mitcham Neighbourhood, growth in this part of the borough should, amongst other things *“[c]reate thriving 20 minutes’ neighbourhoods with local services, which preserves local amenity”* and *“[e]nsure community and social facilities, are coordinated and tailored to meet local needs”*.

This approach is strongly supported by TT as a means to ensure thriving places, particularly in highly accessible locations that are outside of the key borough town centres, and ensuring the most effective use is made of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses/identified needs, and that *“makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land”*, in accordance with paragraph 119 of the NPPF.

It is noted that on the emerging Policies Map, the North Mitcham Local Centre has been extended to include the site of the Tooting Police Station. **Draft Policy N4.1 (Mitcham)** notes that outside of the Mitcham Town Centre, the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods is also supported here and that, in general, the Council will seek to provide quality housing, community facilities and good transport links by supporting *“North Mitcham Local Centre around Tooting rail station: only supporting development that complements or improves the local or wider public realm”*.

The inclusion of the Tooting Police Station site within the North Mitcham Local Centre is strongly welcomed, as is the focus on a 20-minute neighbourhood in this location. It is considered that the building represents an integral part of the local context and has the potential to contribute towards the Council’s housing targets through the provision of new homes in a highly sustainable surrounding, ensuring a well-designed and balanced local centre and thereby meeting the objectives of the 20-minute neighbourhood.

Draft policy IN14.2 (Social and Community Infrastructure)

We support the proposed updates to **Draft Policy IN14.2 (Social and Community Infrastructure)**. Specifically, we note the inclusion at point b (ii), that any proposals involving a loss of community or social infrastructure, in addition to ensuring no shortfall in provision through a Community Needs Assessment, must also demonstrate *“that there is no viable demand for any other social and community infrastructure use on the site, through providing marketing and vacancy evidence for a period of at least 12 months, unless it forms part of a wider public service transformation plan”* [our emphasis underlined]. It is noted that this last point is in compliance with point F 2 of Policy S1 (Developing London’s social infrastructure) of the London Plan (2021), which notes that developments involving a loss of social infrastructure should only be permitted where *“the loss is part of a wider public service transformation plan which requires investment in modern, fit for purpose infrastructure and facilities to meet future population needs or to sustain and improve services”*.

As such, this draft policy is considered to be in accordance with the requirements of the London Plan, and the addition of this clarification is considered sound.

Our client considers this to be an extremely important element of the proposed policy wording, as major (purpose-built) social infrastructure assets of key public organisations such as the Metropolitan Police, i.e. in this case the former Tooting Police Station, often form part of a wider estate strategy. It is therefore strongly supported that LB Merton aligns **Draft Policy IN14.2** with the London Plan and therefore allows Officers and developers to work closely together in identifying and developing proposals for the future use of assets which have been identified as being surplus to the requirements of their former (public) occupiers without significant delays.

Draft policy CC2.2 (Minimising Greenhouse Gas Emissions), Draft Policy CC2.3 (Minimising Energy Use), Draft Policy CC2.4 (Low Carbon Energy)

Our client supports the general thrust of **Draft Strategic Policy CC2.1 (Promoting Sustainable Design to Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change)** and this strategic overview is carried through to **Draft Policy CC2.2 (Minimising Greenhouse Gas Emissions)**. The supporting text to this policy clearly outlines the Council’s rationale for setting higher minimum standards for on-site carbon reduction than the London Plan targets.

As a result, Draft Policy CC2.2 requires major residential developments to provide a minimum of 60% carbon reduction on site, and conversions resulting in the creation of 1 or more dwellings to provide a minimum of 35% reduction on site. Any shortfall where zero carbon cannot be achieved on site beyond these minimums, must then be offset via either a cash in lieu payment to Merton’s carbon offset fund, or provide offsite contributions on an identified alternative proposal.

However, supporting text paragraph 2.2.6 states that *“Any development involving the change of use or conversion of an existing building will not be required to offset the carbon shortfall. This is to encourage the refurbishment of existing buildings and disincentivize the demolition of retrofittable buildings, in order to minimise embodied carbon emissions from development. However, all development will be expected to maximise carbon savings on site towards the net-zero carbon target.”* This is supported and considered in accordance with paragraph 152 of the NPPF which encourages the conversion of existing buildings as a measure to help support the transition to a low carbon future.

This policy approach is supported by TT, acknowledging that development will be expected to maximise carbon savings on site.

Nevertheless, whilst the intention of the Council is acknowledged, it is noted that the minimum on site carbon reduction target for conversions of 35% is the same as the London Plan target for all major development, and **Draft Policy CC2.3 (Minimising Energy Use)** also reinforces the London Plan target that 10% of the reduction should be provided through energy efficiency measures, such as maximising the efficiency of the building’s form, fabric and

systems. It is considered that these targets may be difficult to achieve on buildings of heritage value, or indeed statutorily listed buildings where elements of historic significance requiring protection may impact the scope of acceptable internal and external alterations.

Consideration of the balance between the energy strategy and heritage is noted in the supporting text to **Draft Policy CC2.4 (Low Carbon Energy)** at paragraph 2.4.20, which states that *“Developments in conservation areas or involving heritage assets need to provide careful consideration of how sustainable energy measures may be incorporated without adversely impacting on the character, function and preservation of a specific area or asset, in accordance with the policies on design in this Local Plan. In such circumstances, development proposals should not presume that a viable sustainable solution cannot be provided. Where necessary, Merton will determine whether the provision of sustainability measures causes any adverse impact with the asset or area, and will prioritise safeguarding of the asset, as appropriate.”*

As such, given the limitations of adapting existing building form, fabric and systems on Listed buildings and other heritage assets, it is considered that the Council should recognise the need to adjust the policy wording and/or supporting text to Draft Policies CC2.2 and CC2.3, to specifically take into account or acknowledge the challenges arising with the conversion of heritage assets/Listed buildings and therefore acknowledge that whilst energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures should be maximised and viable solutions found where possible, that the minimum targets should be considered alongside the safeguarding of the heritage asset as appropriate. This approach is also supported by the NPPF, which states at paragraph 16 that plans should be *“prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational, but deliverable”* as well as setting out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of heritage assets, taking into account *“the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation”* at paragraph 190 (a).

Draft Policy H11.3 (Housing Mix)

Although this draft policy sets out a borough-wide target mix, it is noted in the policy wording to **Draft Policy H11.3 (Housing Mix)** that *“The borough level housing mix will be applied having regard to relevant factors, including individual site circumstances, site location, identified local needs and economics of provision.”* Similarly, the supporting text at paragraph 11.3.10 states that *“The borough level housing mix proportions will be applied having regard to relevant factors including individual site circumstances, site location, identified local needs, economics of provision such as financial viability and other planning contributions. Where a developer considers a site unsuitable to apply the borough level housing mix set out in this Policy H 11.3, the developer will be responsible for demonstrating why this is the case.”*

We acknowledge the proposed borough-wide target mix, but wish to highlight that we find it extremely important to maintain flexibility as set out in the policy and supporting text, as quoted above, as site-specific circumstances (i.e. listed buildings, conversion of/working within the constraints of an existing building, etc.), economic considerations and a site’s location (i.e. well-connected, access to local services/public transport, etc.) are important factors why a different unit mix may be justified and acceptable. This approach is also supported by the NPPF, which states at paragraph 16 that plans should be *“prepared positively, in a way that is aspirational, but deliverable”*.

Summary

Overall, and subject to the recommendations set out as part of this submission, Telereal Trillium continues to offer its support for the direction of the Draft New Local Plan and relevant emerging policies contained within it, particularly where they relate to the encouragement of 20-minute neighbourhoods and the promotion of North Mitcham Local Centre, as well as the principle of considering community and social infrastructure uses as part of wider public service transformation plans, in accordance with the London Plan, to help deliver strategic transformation and supporting the conversion and re-use of existing buildings that would deliver increased planning/public benefits for neighbourhoods and the public realm.

However, it is considered that the challenges of converting heritage assets to address wider needs of the borough (i.e. housing) should be reflected in the Draft New Local Plan. The Council should ensure that existing, underutilised assets can accommodate a viable, future use, particularly heritage assets, in accordance with paragraph 190 of the NPPF which states that plans should set out a positive strategy for heritage assets including “*the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.*” This is considered to be the case if the Council includes the recommendations set out above.

We look forward to working with the Council in preparing a sound and deliverable Local Plan, and to work together in bringing forward new development at the former Tooting Police Station, which is considered to be a key site and heritage asset within the Borough, to meet the objectives of the North Mitcham Local Centre, and strategic place objectives of the Draft New Local Plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact my colleagues Christopher Schiele (Christopher.Schiele@turley.co.uk), Alice Hawkins (Alice.Hawkins@turley.co.uk) or myself at this office should you require any further information or wish to discuss these representations.

Yours sincerely,



Alex Christopher

Director

Alex.Christopher@turley.co.uk