



CHAPTER 10. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Strategic policy HW10.1 Health (including mental health) and Wellbeing.

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

- a. Working with strategic partners such as NHS (National Health Service) England, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) and Merton's Health and Wellbeing Boards in tackling health inequalities, public health safety (for example during pandemics and other health emergencies), promoting and encouraging healthy lifestyles and creating 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. Tackling Merton's childhood obesity as identified by Merton's Child Healthy Weight Action Plan especially in areas of deprivation.
- e. Working with Alzheimer's Society, Merton Dementia Action Alliance and other partners to make 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. Ensuring that 20-minute neighbourhoods are planned and designed well in accordance with 20 Minutes approaches which, promote and enable healthier and active living, adopt active aging approaches and improve access to green infrastructure
- g. Improving air quality, reduce public exposure to poor air quality and minimise inequalities in levels of exposure to air pollution.
- h. Improving the public realm in accordance with the Healthy Streets Approach and Active Design principles to provide an improved network of safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle routes that enable healthy and active travel choices, especially in areas identified as Air Quality Focus Areas in Merton's Air Quality Action Plan.
- i. Ensuring that our neighbourhoods are inclusive and accessible for all and encourages social interaction.
- j. Taking an integrated approach through a number of policies in the local plan, for example infrastructure, green and blue infrastructure, air quality, climate change, transport and design policies to improve health (including mental health) and wellbeing.

Justification

Coronavirus (COVID-19 pandemic)

- 10.1.1.** The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been described as a watershed moment for inequalities. Covid-19 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.
- 10.1.2.** 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.
- 10.1.3.** 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.
- 10.1.4.** The pandemic highlighted that behaviour change is possible. This behaviour change has been a direct and implemented by government and legislation. Behaviour change at a local level may not be able to be that direct but done in an integrated way we can create healthier and greener environments which will encourage and enable behaviour change such as walking and cycling.
- 10.1.5.** 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.

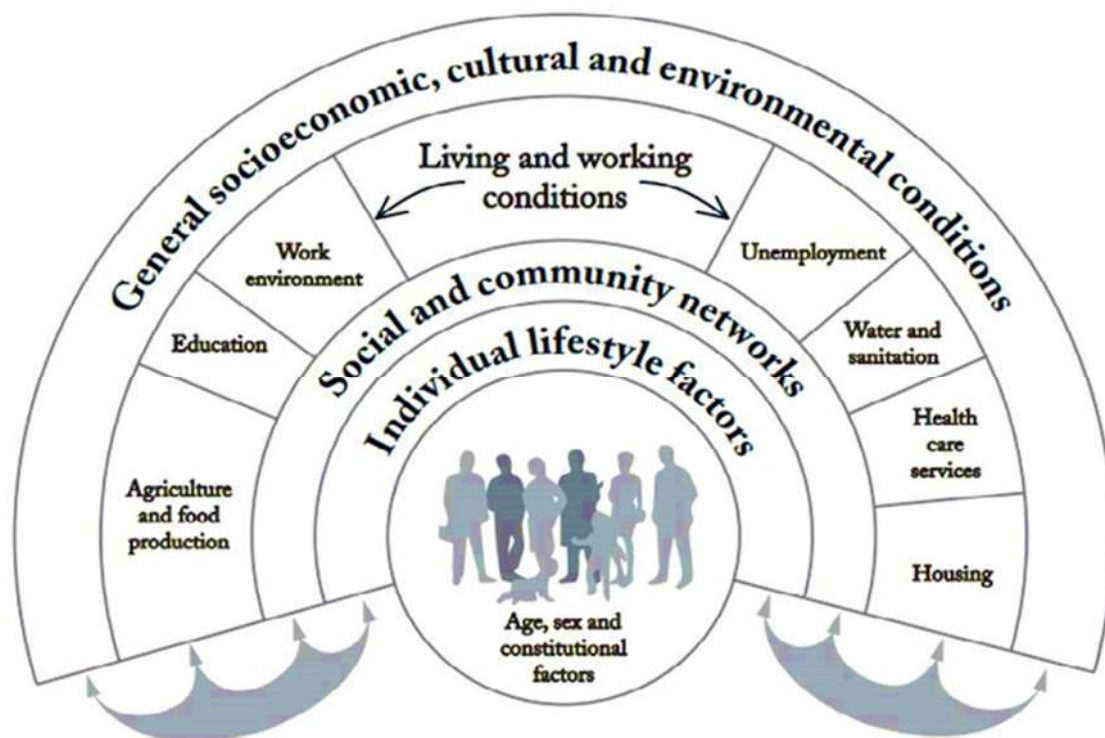
Wider determinants of health

- 10.1.6.** The creation of 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.

10.1.7. The Mayor’s Transport Strategy sets a target for the percentage of residents doing at least 20 minutes of active travel a day, which for Merton is 70% by 2041. Almost 60% of Merton adults are overweight and diabetes cases are increasing by about 2% per year. One in five children entering reception are currently overweight or obese, a figure which increases to one in three leaving primary school in Year 6.

10.1.8. 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).

10.1.9. The World Health Organisation defines health as ‘a state of social, physical and mental wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease. We understand 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. We will ensure that development proposals in Merton help to promote active travel choices, 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.

- 10.1.10.** 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.
- 10.1.11.** Following a call for evidence from 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.

Health and climate change

- 10.1.12.** Climate change is also a public health emergency – climate change impacts health directly through extreme weather condition such as floods and heatwaves, indirectly through disruption to natural systems (changing patterns of disease), social systems (forced migration) and the interaction between the two systems. In the UK, the effects of climate change will not be felt equally and are likely to increase health inequalities. However there are significant health opportunities in the response to climate change. Many of the solutions to address climate change, such as promoting more active travel (walking, cycling and other sustainable travel modes) and healthy sustainable diets (good eating habit/growing our own food) are inventions that also brings benefits to health.

20 Minute neighbourhoods – health and wellbeing benefits

- 10.1.13.** Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) highlights the importance of promoting access for the whole community. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recommends that local authorities should consider opportunities to support people to live healthy lifestyles including planning for an environment that helps promote active travel and physical activity. Good quality infrastructure encourages walking, cycling and the use of public transport which makes it easier for people to choose more active travel which supports individual health choices and helps prevent weight related illnesses, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- 10.1.14.** There is widespread recognition that the places where people live are major influences on their wellbeing. There are economic, environmental, health and social benefits of 20-minute neighbourhoods. The Town Country Planning Association (TCPA) has produced ['20 Minutes Neighbourhood, Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities An Introduction for Council Planners in England'](#) a guide in creating and transforming areas into

these neighbourhoods.

10.1.15. The 20-minute neighbourhood is about creating attractive, interesting, safe, walkable environments in which people of all ages and levels of fitness are happy to travel actively for short distances from home to the destinations that they visit and the services they need to use day to day – shopping, school, community and healthcare facilities, places of work, green spaces and more.

10.1.16. Every community has its own context and aspirations for the future. Any plans to create a 20-minute neighbourhood will be based on what the local diverse community (including children and young people, ethnic minorities and disabled people) wants. However, the following characteristics, or ‘ingredients’, are likely to be part of the mix:

- Diverse and affordable homes
- Well-connected paths, streets and spaces
- Schools at the heart of communities
- Good green spaces in the right places
- Local food growing
- Keeping jobs and money local
- Community health and wellbeing facilities
- A place for all.



Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) 20 Minutes Neighbourhood features

Active Design

10.1.17. [Active Design](#) principles support National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Many Active Design Principles are already embedded within overlapping disciplines related to open

space and landscape, transport, access and design.

- 10.1.18. Embedding Active Design Principles into the design and layout of a development at an early stage will meet a number of planning, transport and health objectives in an integrated and co-ordinated manner. This can assist in providing a smoother and quicker route through the planning application process and can help build support from neighbours and local communities for proposals resulting in more positive outcomes for applications. Our local plan design policies have embedded Active Design and other recognised design principles.

Healthy Streets Approach

- 10.1.19. The aim of [Transport for London Healthy Streets Approach](#) is to help create a vibrant, successful city where people can live active, healthy lives. The Healthy Streets Approach seeks to make our neighbourhoods a healthier, more sustainable, safer and more connected. The easiest way for most of us to stay active is by walking or cycling as part of our daily travel. Several policies in the Local Plan seek to deliver and have incorporated the Healthy Streets Approach such as, the transport, design and green infrastructure. Our local plan has embedded Health Street Approach throughout.



Transport for London: Healthy Streets Approach indicators

Health and improving air quality.

- 10.1.20. 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.

10.1.21. [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 air quality and to optimise parents' and children's desire and opportunity to adopt sustainable travel options.

10.1.22. The local plan seeks to reduce the impacts of poor air quality in an integrated way, through a number of policies including P15.10 *Improving Air Quality and Minimising Pollution* which seeks to ensure that local environmental impacts of all development proposals do not lead to detrimental effects on the health, safety and the amenity of existing and new users or occupiers of the development site, or the surrounding land.

Dementia Friendly Merton

10.1.23. 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 (United Kingdom) with the aim to make towns and cities more accessible and understandable to enable people with dementia to live more independently for longer.

10.1.24. According to Merton's Strategic Housing Needs Assessment 2019 and based on population projections by 2035 the number of people aged over 85 is predicted to increase by 52% 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 (850,000 people in the UK). If current trends continue, there will be a 40% to increase in the people living with this condition by 2025. It is estimated that circa 2,000 people are living with dementia in Merton.

10.1.25. Merton Council is an active member of [Merton's Dementia Action Alliance \(MDAA\)](#). The

DAA partners includes shops and other businesses, banks, Public Health professionals, the London Fire Brigade, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) 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.

- 10.1.26.** 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.
- 10.1.27.** 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/neighbourhoods and will help reduce stigma and supported people living with dementia and other health conditions such as autism. Inclusive neighbourhoods go beyond providing physical access and creates solutions that work better for everyone; ensuring that everyone can equally, confidently and independently use buildings, transport and public spaces. An inclusive environment is one which can be used safely, easily and with dignity by all. It is convenient and welcoming with no disabling barriers, and provides independent access without added undue effort, separation or special treatment for any group of people.
- 10.1.28.** There are several practical guides that provide to help 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](#)' 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.
- 10.1.29.** Another useful tool for developers is '[The Place Standard](#)' toolkit. This tool was developed by the Scottish Government, NHS (National Health Service) 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 assets proposals.
- 10.1.30.** 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.

- 10.1.31.** 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.

Policy HW10.2: Delivering healthy places.

We require development proposals to improve and promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

- a. We will require development proposals to:
- i Contribute towards the health priorities of Merton Health and Wellbeing Board and partners to help reduce inequalities including health, across Merton.
 - ii Incorporate the Transport for London (TfL) Healthy Streets Approach as part of development proposals in accordance 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.
 - iv Incorporate Sport England and Public Health Active Design principles as part of development proposals.
- a. We will:
- i Use the Healthy Streets Approach to priorities health and wellbeing in planning decisions.
 - ii Require all developments in Merton of 100+ residential units or over 10,000m² non-residential development to carry out a Health Impact Assessment (HIA).
 - iii Require a HIA for developments of over 50 homes in areas identified by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Indices of Deprivation or identified in Merton's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) as an area of health priorities.
 - iv Require a HIA for the following developments:
 - Cumulative impact - proposed development is in an area with two or more other major developments planned or started.
 - Significant developments in areas of poor air quality, for example Air Quality Focus Areas
 - If 1 or more hot foods takeaways are proposed.
 - New educational, health facilities or publicly accessible open space are proposed.
 - v In line with the policy in this plan to 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.

Justification

10.2.1. 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

10.2.2. According to [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.

10.2.3. We 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.

10.2.4. We fully support 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 (HIA)

- 10.2.5.** We recommend 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.
- 10.2.6.** 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 and should identify actions to enhance the positive impacts and mitigate the negative impacts. The outcome of these actions should be clearly identifiable within the planning application.
 - 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.
- 10.2.7.** We 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.