

2. Health and Wellbeing



Strategic Policy HW2.1

Health and wellbeing

We will continue to improve the health and wellbeing of all our residents, encourage and support healthy living; 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 Health and Wellbeing Boards to promote and encourage good 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;
- d) Tackle Merton's childhood obesity in Merton as identified by Merton's Child Healthy Weight Action Plan especially in areas of deprivation;
- e) Creating Dementia Friendly and Autism Friendly public realm, housing and communities;
- f) Creating safe and accessible neighbourhoods that promote social interactions, including places for people to meet, socialise and help combat loneliness;
- g) Encourage more active transport use to help improve the health and wellbeing of people and assist in reduce 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 well designed and promote healthier living, active living and adopt active aging approaches.

Justification

- 2.1.1. Merton Council understands that it is possible to make the health and wellbeing outcomes of an area better, recognise that planning has a vital role to play. The council 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 and attractive street frontages and creating spaces where people can come together to relax and socialise.
- 2.1.2. According to the GLA Population and Household Projections (2016), the number of people aged over 75 is predicted to increase by 11% by 2030 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.
- 2.1.3. Merton Council is an active member of Merton's Dementia Action Alliance (DAA). The DAA partners include retail businesses, banks, Public Health professionals, the fire service and leisure industry. The DAA aim is for Merton to become a Dementia Friendly borough. In 2018 the council achieved 'working to become dementia friendly;' status by the Alzheimer's Society, which recognise the good work to date the DAA are making to become a Dementia Friendly borough.
- 2.1.4. Good quality housing and well planned local environments can have a substantial impact on the quality of life of someone living with dementia, helping them to live well for longer. Incorporating dementia friendly approaches into development proposals benefits not only people with dementia, but also older people, young disabled people, families with small children and ultimately for everyone. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has produced a practice guide 'Creating better environments for

people living with dementia'. The guide gives advice on how good planning can create better environments for people living with dementia.

2.1.5. The council is also working towards becoming an Autism Friendly borough in which people with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within our communities.

2.1.6. The council will seek that development proposals incorporate Dementia Friendly and Autism Friendly approaches by way of design and layout. Adopting such approaches, which are also compatible with the Mayor of London's healthy streets approach, not only benefits people with dementia and autism but has huge benefits for us all.

Policy HW2.2

Delivering healthy places

The council will support developments proposals that:

- i. Contribute towards the health priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board and partners to help reduce health inequalities across Merton
- ii. Incorporate the Healthy Streets approach as part of development proposals and 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) Manage and monitor proposals for new hot food takeaways (A5 Use Class) located within 400 metres of the boundaries of a primary or secondary schools in order to promote the availability of healthy foods;
- ii) Where any development proposals involving hot food takeaways (A5 Use Class) 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 10,000m² non-residential development to carry out a Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

The council may require a HIA for the following developments:

- 1 or more hot food (Use Class A5) takeaways;
- Major developments in areas identified by the Ministry Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Indices of Deprivation as having high levels of multiple deprivation and health inequalities;
- Cumulative impact proposed development is in an area with a number of other major developments planned or started;

2.2.1. Merton is considered a healthy borough when compared to other London boroughs. However, if we take a closer look at the borough, a different picture emerges especially when it comes to health inequalities. Parts of the borough are healthier, more physically active, have higher levels of educational attainment and earn more money. Other neighbourhoods have higher levels of health inequalities, less are physically active, lower educational attainment and tend to earn less.

2.2.2. 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

Fast food takeaways (Use Class A5)

2.2.3. 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 (Use class A5) may influence the ability of our children to adopt healthy lifestyles and may potentially undermine healthy eating initiatives which are in place in a number of schools in Merton.

2.2.4. The council will seek to create a healthy food environment in Merton by increasing the availability of healthy food and limiting unhealthy options. As such, when considering development proposals for fast food takeaways (A5 Use Class) 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, its relationship to the existing provision of A5 outlets and healthy eating initiatives taking place at the school. Outside of these areas, applications for fast food takeaways will be considered in line with other policies in the Local Plan.

2.2.5. The council fully supports the Mayor of London Healthier Catering Commitment (HCC) and with Merton Public Health will be encouraging and working with businesses, including new businesses that serve and/or sale food to improve their food offer and will encourage all food establishment to sign up to the HCC.

Health Impact Assessments

2.2.6. A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) helps ensure that health and wellbeing are being properly considered in planning policies and proposals. Conducting a HIA during the implementation stage is technically possible but it brings a risk of retro-fitting health sensitive solutions to the proposal and is likely to generating additional development costs; which could adversely affect financial viability of the development. The council recommends that a HIA is carried out at an early stage of a development proposal.

2.2.7. The council will require the HIA to demonstrate how it has informed the development proposal, any changes made to the proposal and how Merton's health and wellbeing priorities have informed the proposal. It is recommend that before carrying out a HIA that developers seek advice from the council and Merton Public Health. Further details on the council's requirement and evidence required in HIAs can be found in Merton's Health Impact Assessment guidance.