

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)
Screening Determination Statement

Draft Borough Character
Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

February 2021

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this statement is to determine if, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and European Directive 2001/402EC is the required for, Borough Character Supplementary Planning Document (2021) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (locally known as the Character Study)
- 1.2 Merton's Local Plan¹ comprises of the following documents as well as the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and [national Planning Policy Guidance \(PPG\)](#):
- South London Waste Plan (2012) and emerging new waste plan (expected adoption in 2021)
 - Core Planning Strategy (2011)
 - Sites and Policies Plan (2014)
 - Policies Map (2014²)
 - [Draft Local Plan \(emerging\)](#) – once adopted will be the Local Plan for Merton
 - [‘Intend to publish’ London Plan](#) (expected adoption February 2021)
- 1.3 All the above mentioned documents have been subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal incorporating SEA. The National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) states: *“Strategic environmental assessment alone can be required in some limited situations where sustainability appraisal is not needed. This is usually only where either neighbourhood plans or supplementary planning documents could have significant environmental effects.”*
- 1.4 The SEA Directive requires SEA for plans which (i) ‘*determine the use of small areas at a local level*’ or (ii) ‘*minor modification*’ is to plans, only when these are likely to cause significant environment effects. The criteria for determining the significance of effects are taken from schedule 19(2) (a) and 10(4) (a) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004 and are redefined in Appendix 1. These can be split into criteria related to:
- (i) the scope and influence of the document
 - (ii) the type of impact and area likely to be affected

¹ <https://www2.merton.gov.uk/environment/planning/planningpolicy/localplan.htm>

² The Core Planning Strategy (2011), Sites and Policies Plan (2014) and the Policies Map (2014) will be replaced by the new Local Plan once adopted.

2 The Borough Character SPD

- 2.1 The SPD sets out the detailed description of the physical form and character of the borough, including the history and place and built environment. It will help to provide an understanding of the particular attributes which makes Merton a unique place and draws out the identity of the neighbourhood within Merton.
- 2.2 In addition, the SPD, provides detailed advice and guidance to the developers, decision makers for example planning committee, public and other interested parties on the implementation and compliance with policies in Merton's Local Plan¹. The SPD does not introduce new planning policies.
- 2.3 Once adopted the SPD is a material consideration which has weight in making decisions on planning applications.

3 SEA Screening Procedure

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of the Responsible Authority (in this case Merton Council) to decide whether the plan or programme under assessment is likely to have a significant adverse environmental effect. This assessment must be made taking account of the criteria set of in Schedule 1 of the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and in consultation with:

- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England

Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (part 3) (6):

Where a consultation body wishes to respond to a consultation under paragraph (5), it shall do so within the period of 5 weeks beginning with the date on which it receives the responsible authority's invitation to engage in the consultation.

- 3.2 Where the Responsible Authority determines that a plan or programme is unlikely to have a significant effect and therefore does not need to be subject to a full SEA; the Responsible Authority must prepare a statement showing the reason for this determination.
- 3.3 In accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (part 3) (6). The council invites the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England to comment on the findings of this statement.

Figure 1: Determining the 'likely significant' of effects on the environment

SEA Directive Criteria schedule 1 Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004	Summary of significant effects
1. Characteristics of the SPD	
(a) <i>The degree to which the SPD sets out a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to location, nature, size or operating conditions or by allocating resources</i>	The SPD will provides guidance to the statutory framework for planning development in the London Borough of Merton, namely the Local Plan. The Local Plan has been subject to a full Sustainability Appraisal incorporating SEA.
(b) <i>The degree to which the SPD influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy</i>	The guidance provides further details to Merton's Local Plan policies and is subject to full Sustainability Appraisal/SEA at each consultation stage and towards adoption.
(c) <i>The relevance of the SPD for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.</i>	The SPD promotes sustainable development by providing guidance on the implementation of, and compliance with, the strategic objectives, spatial vision and polices within Merton Local Plan documents.
(d) <i>Environmental problems relevant to the planning brief</i>	The SPD will not introduce or increase any environmental problems.
(e) <i>The relevance of the SPD for the implementation of community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes related to water and waste).</i>	The SPD will not impact on the implementation of the community legislation on the environment.
2. Characteristics of the effects and area likely to be affected having particular regard to:	
(a) <i>The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</i>	The overall impact of the SPD will be positive by maximising the positive environmental effects of development and minimising or avoiding negative impacts on the environment in Merton.
(b) <i>The cumulative nature of the effects of the SPD</i>	The effects of SPD support sustainable development, therefore any cumulative impact will also be beneficial.
(c) <i>The trans boundary nature of the effects of the SPD</i>	The effects are limited to developments within Merton's geographical boundary.
(d) <i>The risk to human health or environment (e.g. due to accident)</i>	There are no significant risks to human health envisaged through the application of the SPD.
(e) <i>The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographic area and size of the population likely to be affected) by the planning brief</i>	The SPD is only applicable to developments and the population of Merton.
(f) <i>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected by the planning brief due to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Special nature characteristics or cultural heritage</i> 	The SPD applies to developments within the borough of Merton, which includes several conservation areas, listed buildings and other heritage assets. Policy impacts on heritage assets have been subject to full Sustainability Appraisals/SEA for Merton's Local Plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Exceed environmental quality standards or limits values Intensive</i> 	<p>which, this SPD is a supporting document to the Local Plan.</p>
<p>(g) <i>The effects of the SPD on areas or landscapes which have recognised national Community or international protected status.</i></p>	<p>The overall, impact of the SPD will be positive by maximising the positive environmental effects of development in Merton and minimising or avoiding negative and adverse impacts.</p>

4 Screening outcome

- 4.1 This section sets out Merton’s formal determination in the regard to SEA of the SPD, made per regulation 9 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It sets out the reasons for the determination.
- 4.2 Following the screening process Merton Council has determined that the SPD would not be ‘likely’ to have ‘*significant environmental effects*’ in itself. In coming to this conclusion, the council has had regard to the fact that the SPD will not have effects beyond Merton’s Local Plan policies which, have all been subject to Sustainability Appraisal and SEA; the findings of which have been considered in this assessment.
- 4.3 The Council believes that the SPD does not need a SEA for the following reasons:
- It is unlikely to have significant effects on the wider environment since it provides guidance on the implementation of Local Plan policies which will have positive impacts. Therefore, it will not be necessary to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment on this SPD
 - Merton’s Local Plan policies have all been subjected to Sustainability Appraisals and SEAs (Strategic Environmental Assessment) for their environmental impact at each consultation stage, towards adoption.
 - It does not introduce any new policies, nor amend any existing policies, nor allocate sites for any specific use.
 - Its purpose is to provide more advice and guidance to the public, developers and officers on implementation and compliance with Merton Local Plan policies and be a consideration in planning application decisions at Planning Application Committee (PAC).
 - The SPD guidance does not create or raise any cross-boundary issues.