



CHARACTER EVOLUTION

What should future growth
be like?

J CHARACTER EVOLUTION

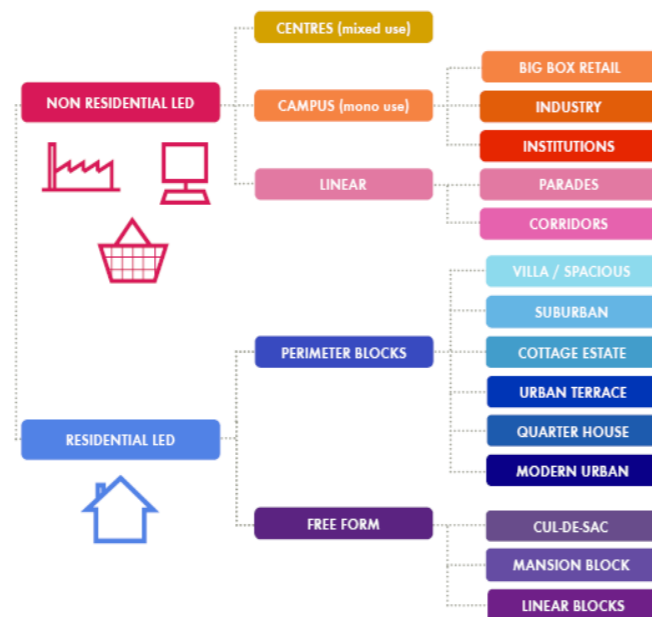
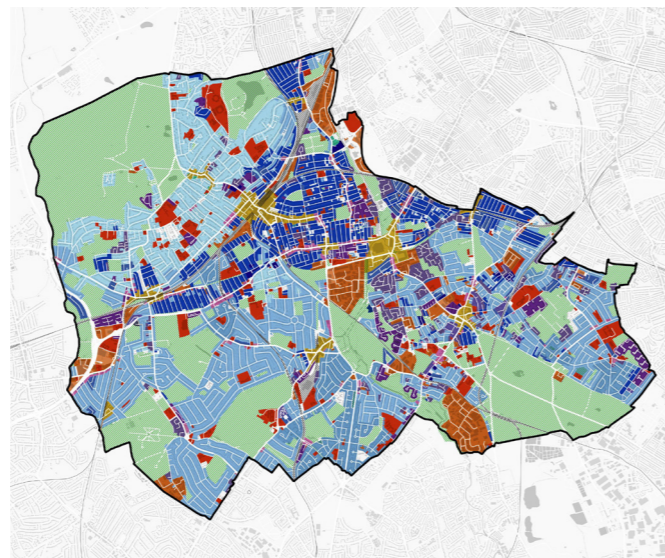
Context-led growth

The aim of this character study is to ensure that the growth that happens in the borough over the next decades is informed by a good understanding of existing (and past) context. It is really important that the next stage of evolution learns the lessons from past development in the borough - the successes and the failures. We want to draw the thread of what makes each area distinctive and great into directing how and where future development should happen.

Context-led growth in Merton must dig deeper than replicating building materials and forms, it should recognise hidden character potential - lost landscapes, buried waterways and lost grain and connections. It will be about identifying how existing development types which are valued in the borough can be sensitively and positively intensified. However, it is also about highlighting thresholds - beyond which change needs to be limited. This will include protecting open spaces, routes, as well as sensitive conservation areas/zones. In areas of significant redevelopment, it is about identifying how sites should be steered to best support local character. This doesn't mean stymieing transformation, rather looking for the local character hooks for design and structure rather than simply using precedents from elsewhere.

Earlier in this report an assessment of the borough's existing typologies was explained (pages 28-23). This mapping helps understanding the existing character of the borough. Each of these types has a different potential for evolution, and, taken alongside the growth themes for each sub-area (pages 26-67), provides a comprehensive understanding of how the character of each area should evolve. The assessment set out over the following pages identifies opportunities for improving performance, key considerations, development opportunities and reinterpretation of the type for new housing within the borough. The study at the block level illustrates how development can respond to local character and how new homes can be successfully integrated within the existing context.

The final section within this chapter focuses on the role of tall buildings in evolving the character of the borough - setting out a rationale for where these are felt to be appropriate from a character perspective.



The table below illustrates a summary of the key environments across the borough which each need a tailored approach to intensification to deliver much needed housing growth. Each row of the table has a corresponding section within this chapter which sets out opportunities and examples of context-led growth within each type of environment.

no.	Typologies / Environment	Existing building types within blocks	Potential opportunities / forms of intensification	Objectives of intensification (beyond housing provision)
I.1 Perimeter residential-led forms				
	Metroland / Suburban	Semi-detached, detached, short terraces, quarter house	Surface parking, ambiguous green open spaces, loft/rear extensions, backlands, amalgamation of plots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain continuous active frontages along perimeter Clear delineation of public/private space Reinforce/complement the existing character (Garden city/cottage style, Metroland or terraced streets)
	Garden city principles / cottage estate	Semi-detached, cottages, terrace	Ambiguous green open spaces, loft/rear extensions, backlands, amalgamation of plots	
	Urban perimeter	Terrace, Villa, quarter house, mews, apartment blocks	Infill, corner/end of terrace, garage sites, backlands, roof/rear extensions, amalgamation of plots	
I.2 Non-perimeter residential-led forms				
	Higher density free-form	Mansion blocks, linear blocks, towers, maisonettes, mansion blocks	Infill, surface parking sites, partial redevelopment, comprehensive redevelopment, roof extensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reintegrate the urban fabric Connect dead-end streets Improve delineation of public/private space
	Lower density free form	Houses, semis, maisonettes, bungalows	Infill, surface parking sites, garages, partial redevelopment, comprehensive redevelopment	
Non-residential led forms				
I.3	Centres (allocated town centres)	Ground floor commercial units, offices, residential / storage above	Change of use class, infill, surface parking sites, garages, roof extensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a - too context specific
I.4	Campus environments	Industrial sheds, big box retail parks, education/ institutions	Change of use class, partial redevelopment, surface parking sites, yards, roof extensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve thresholds Rebalance/diversify mix of uses
I.5	Linear - parades and corridors	Mixed use blocks, parades and terraces, petrol stations	Partial redevelopment, infill, ambiguous green open spaces, surface parking sites, roof extensions, backlands development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate underutilised land Make environments better suited to pedestrians and human scale
Tall buildings				
I.6	Tall buildings	Taller elements than the prevailing context	Roof extensions, conversion, partial or comprehensive redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n/a - too context specific

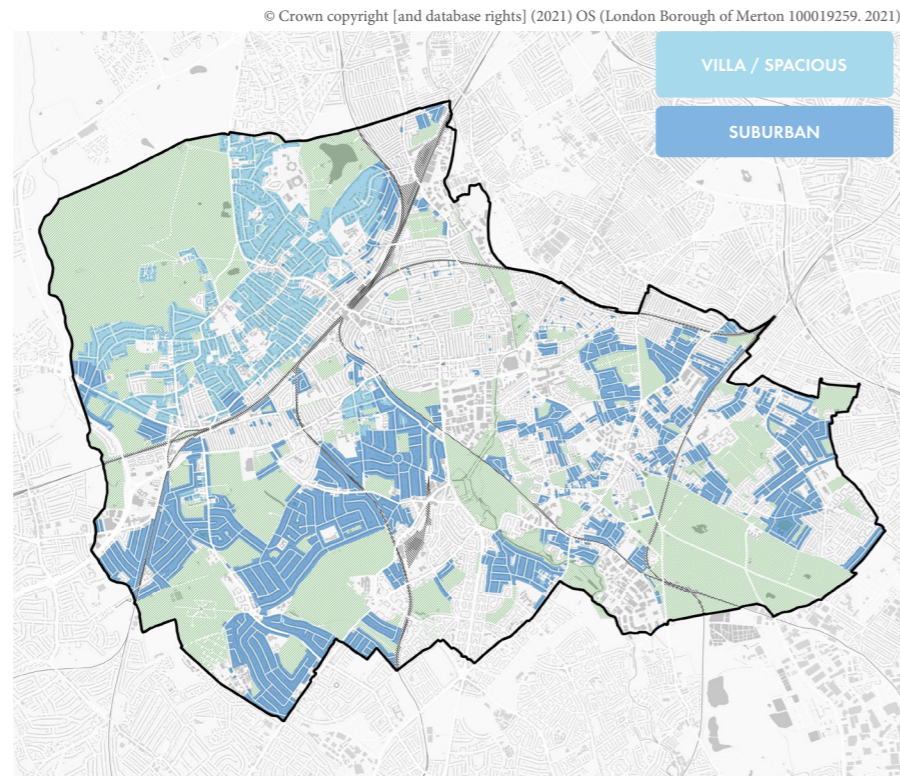
J.1 PERIMETER RESIDENTIAL

Lower density perimeter residential-led forms - 'spacious' and 'suburban'

Given their often uniform prevailing character, existing suburban areas of Morden can prove challenging in terms of the potential for change. Their scale and grain tends to be generally consistent and low-rise with only minor undeveloped areas with potential for new development. Opportunities for change will generally focus on the intensification of existing plots or where larger sites come forward for a change of use. The looser form and larger plots of the 'villa/spacious' typology may offer more opportunities for infill development between plots, where this can be done sensitively.

Key considerations for interventions will include:

- Block depth - e.g. <40m excludes garden development, >100m allows for mews
- Garden centre line - if this is off centre, it reduces the complexity of introducing new homes
- Block aspect - an east-west block could result in single aspect north facing units
- Geometry - unusual step ins or curves can limit opportunities
- Mix of uses - sites such as former / underused garages can present more significant opportunities
- Existence of hard standing access routes would facilitate internal mews or rear garden dwellings



The lowest density 'Villa/spacious' typology is located to the north of the borough on the hill towards Wimbledon Common. The 'suburban' typology is consistently found to the south west and neighbourhoods to the east



Opportunities for intervention

- 1 Vacant corner sites
- 2 Deep plots with large gardens
- 3 Wide plots on long curved corners
- 4 Large building envelopes and profile

Opportunities for context-led growth within the suburban block type (the 'villa/spacious' block is an even lower density version of the above diagram, with larger plots and a greater number of detached properties)



VILLA/SPACIOUS

Examples of context-led growth:

1. Sensitive conversions, extensions and division of single large buildings into multiple smaller dwellings (Eagle House, Wimbledon Village, Merton)
2. Redevelopment of larger plots to deliver multiple new homes in keeping with existing scale and grain (Montem Square, The Drive, Merton)
3. Careful integration of new dwellings (a) to the rear of larger properties (b) with care taken to reduce overlooking/impact on adjacent properties (Parkside Gardens, Merton)
4. Mews style development - integration of new homes at the rear of larger plots facing a more minor route. New development is in keeping with the diminutive style and scale (Parkside, Merton)



VILLA/SPACIOUS

Examples of context-led growth:

1. New dwellings delivered on a former garage plot at the end of a street - modern reinterpretation of style, materials and features (Durnsford Road, Harp and Harp architects)
2. Redevelopment of larger opportunity sites to deliver new streets in keeping with existing scale and grain (Rowan Park, SW16, Merton)
3. Reinterpreting suburban style and features, reflecting arts and crafts influences of adjacent pubs, with a clever stepping up of scale using varied roofline (Nunhead Green, AOC architects)
4. Potential delivery of a new home on an underused area within a perimeter block of existing homes. Careful design is required to maximise light and minimise overlooking and impact on existing homes

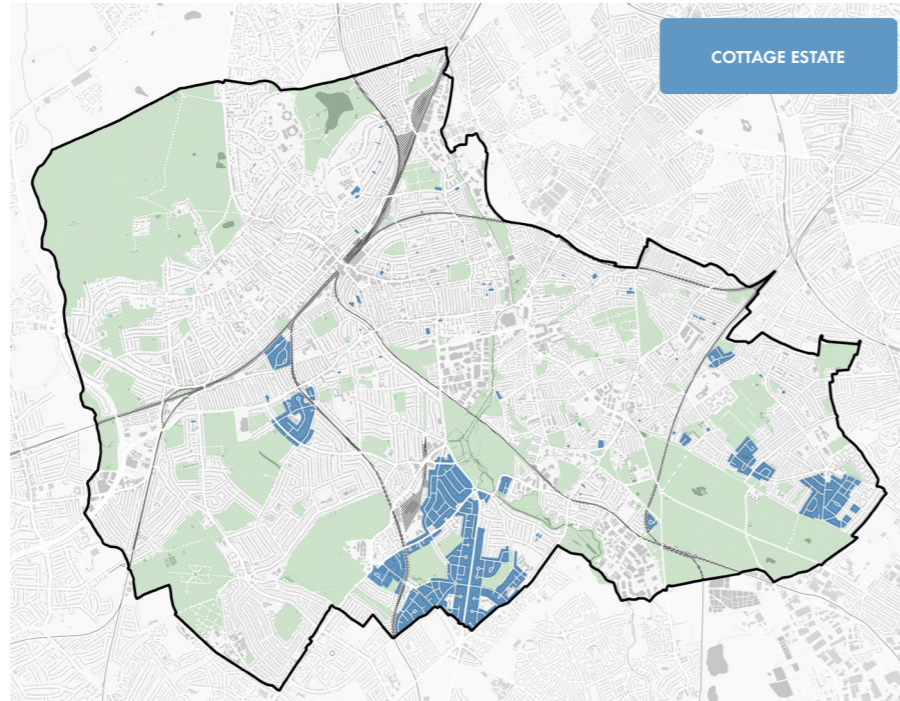
Lower density perimeter residential-led forms - 'cottage estate'

The 'cottage estate' typology is another low density residential form found in a number of locations across the borough. The plan form varies significantly from the 'suburban' typology which results in alternative context-led growth opportunities.

Future opportunities must take account of the geometric street pattern, often with elements of symmetry and set pieces. Streets tend to have a wider profile with planned verges, front gardens and green spaces. Although some of these green spaces - both within the street scene and within blocks add value to the streetscene - others are under-used and have been converted to hard-standing. Overall there is a need to restore the green character in these neighbourhoods, however, careful redevelopment of some of these spaces (see case study) could result in the upgrading of other spaces for biodiversity and more active amenity use. The street pattern and regularity of spaces means that one approach could be repeated across an area resulting in new consistency and area-wide investment.

In terms of style and aesthetics, homes were built with cottage-like proportions and features, modest detailing and a limited palette of materials. This limited material palette, use of matching brick colour, with a reinterpretation of the cottage-like proportions will be imperative in the successful integration of new development within these areas, that have such a strong and consistent character.

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)



There is a very consistent area of the 'cottage estate' typology to the south of the borough around St Helier Avenue, with smaller neighbourhoods to the far east of the borough and east of Raynes Park



Opportunities for intervention

- 1 Underused open space - consider how these spaces could be better used
- 2 Internal grassed areas, garages and overgrown spaces could potentially be infilled where they are underused and considered surplus to requirements
- 3 Larger building envelopes could be retrofitted and subdivided

A potential range of opportunities for context-led growth within the cottage estate typology



CHARACTER EVOLUTION



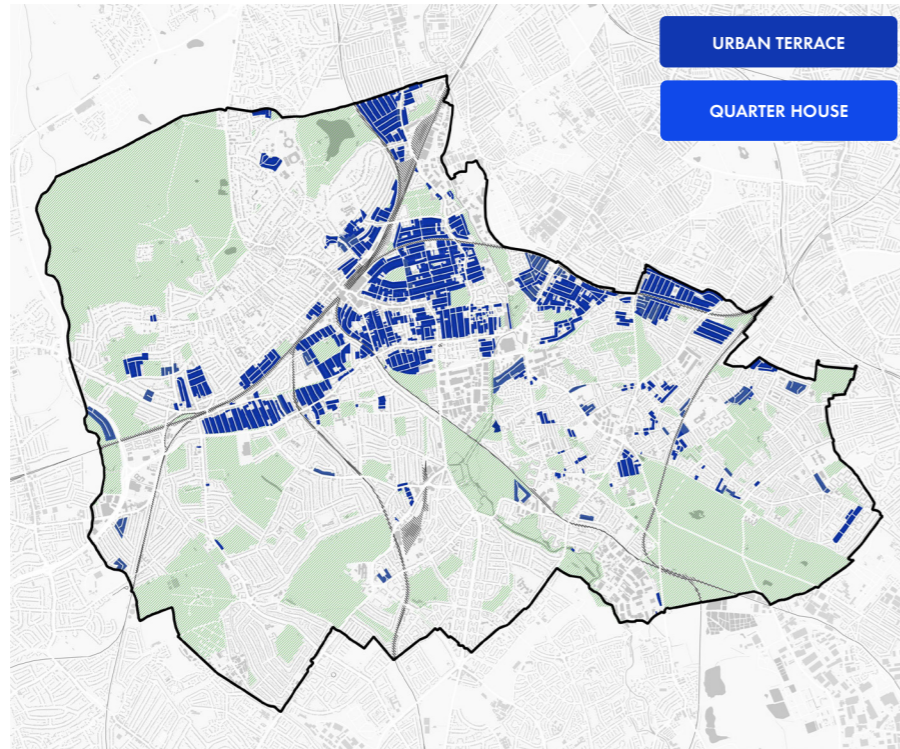
Higher density perimeter residential-led forms - urban terrace and quarter house

Terraced forms of development tend to have a more urban character - with a continuous perimeter frontage and a regular and gridded street pattern. Due to their more urban character, they successfully integrate small blocks of flats, both as part of their original developments delivered as 'quarter houses' as well as new buildings that complete the corner of blocks.

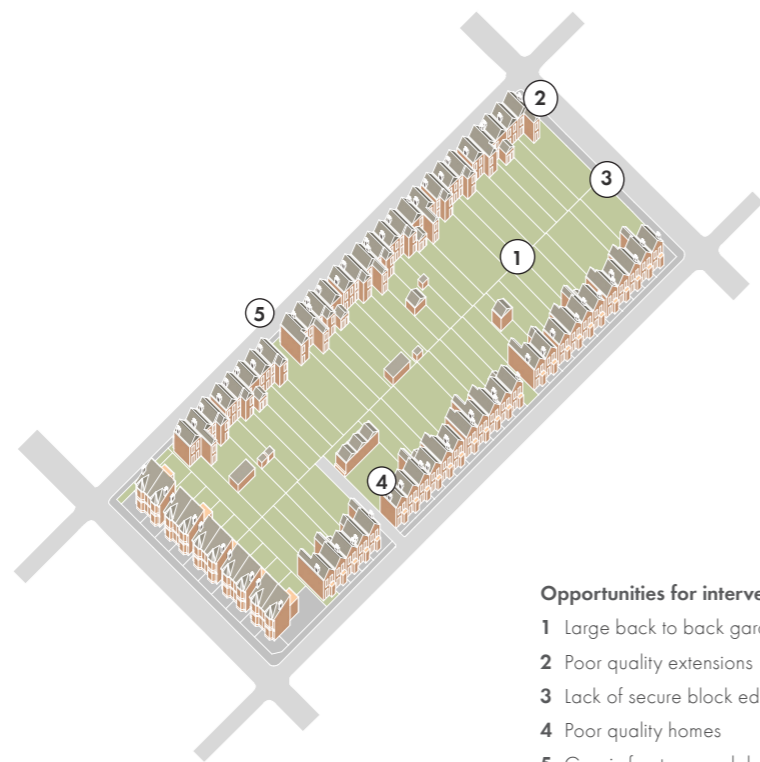
Key considerations for interventions will include:

- Block depth - e.g <40m excludes garden development, >100m allows for mews
- Garden centre line - if this is off centre, it reduces the complexity of introducing new homes
- Block aspect - an east-west block could result in single aspect north facing units
- Geometry - unusual step ins or curves can limit opportunities
- Mix of uses - sites such as former / underused garages can present more significant opportunities
- Existence of hard standing access routes would facilitate internal mews or rear garden dwellings
- Potentially suitable for intensification through town houses, though should consider existing form and facades - where this is articulated through bay windows or detailing, new development should respond.

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)



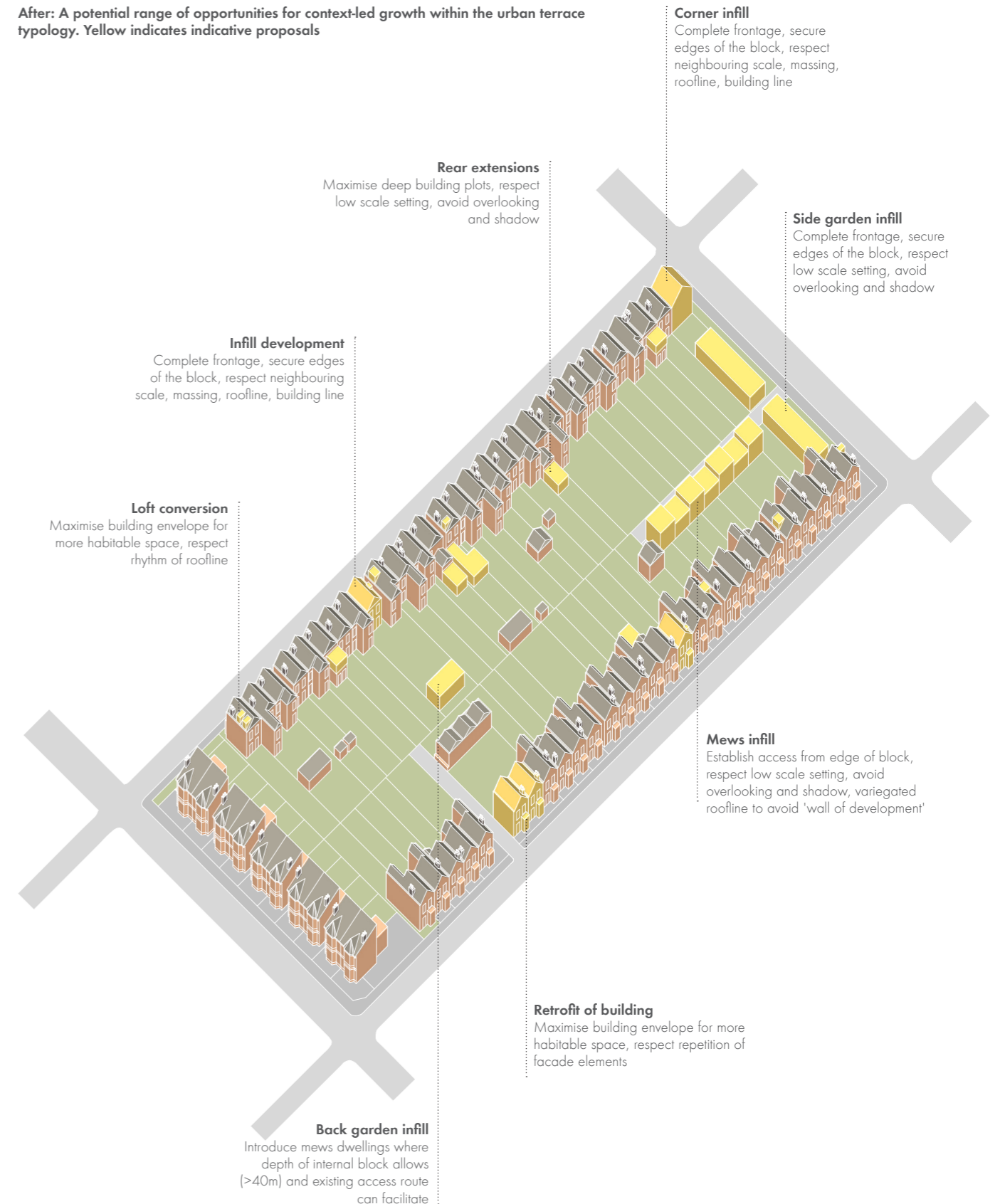
The majority of the higher density perimeter forms are 'urban terrace' which are located in a triangle stretching across the borough from Raynes Park to central Wimbledon and Colliers Wood



- Opportunities for intervention**
- 1 Large back to back gardens
 - 2 Poor quality extensions
 - 3 Lack of secure block edge
 - 4 Poor quality homes
 - 5 Gap in frontage and rhythm

Before: A potential range of instances which provide opportunities for context-led growth within the urban terrace typology

After: A potential range of opportunities for context-led growth within the urban terrace typology. Yellow indicates indicative proposals



Corner infill
Complete frontage, secure edges of the block, respect neighbouring scale, massing, roofline, building line

Rear extensions
Maximise deep building plots, respect low scale setting, avoid overlooking and shadow

Infill development
Complete frontage, secure edges of the block, respect neighbouring scale, massing, roofline, building line

Loft conversion
Maximise building envelope for more habitable space, respect rhythm of roofline

Side garden infill
Complete frontage, secure edges of the block, respect low scale setting, avoid overlooking and shadow

Mews infill
Establish access from edge of block, respect low scale setting, avoid overlooking and shadow, variegated roofline to avoid 'wall of development'

Retrofit of building
Maximise building envelope for more habitable space, respect repetition of facade elements

Back garden infill
Introduce mews dwellings where depth of internal block allows (>40m) and existing access route can facilitate



URBAN TERRACE

Examples of context-led growth:

1. New dwellings delivered at the end of a terraced street - modern reinterpretation of style, materials and features (Red House St Aidan's Road, Dulwich - 31-44 Architects)
2. Garden intensification: This sensitive scheme delivers a new home on an underused area within a perimeter block of existing homes. The scheme is carefully designed to maximise light and minimise overlooking and impact on existing homes (Kings Grove Peckham, Morris + company)
3. Change of use: A former light-industrial site is redeveloped for residential use with careful design of upper floors to minimise impact and overlooking using screens and frosted glazing (Graveney Mews, Inglemere Rd, Merton)
4. Wellsborough Mews, successfully mediates between two scales. Providing higher density frontage along Kingston Road, with smaller houses integrated within the site behind (Kingston Road, Merton)
5. Stage House successfully increased the density of a corner plot within an area of urban terraced and semi-detached properties. The building rises to four stories, with the fourth set back within parts of the block to minimise its impact on adjacent homes. (Montague Road, Merton)



Case Study

This is an example of an industrial backland site which currently sits in the space at the centre of a terraced residential perimeter block, at the rear of gardens. The case study illustrates one potential method of intensifying the use of this type of site for residential-led mixed use. This site benefits from two access points which gives the opportunity to create a new street of 2 and 3 bed live/work units.

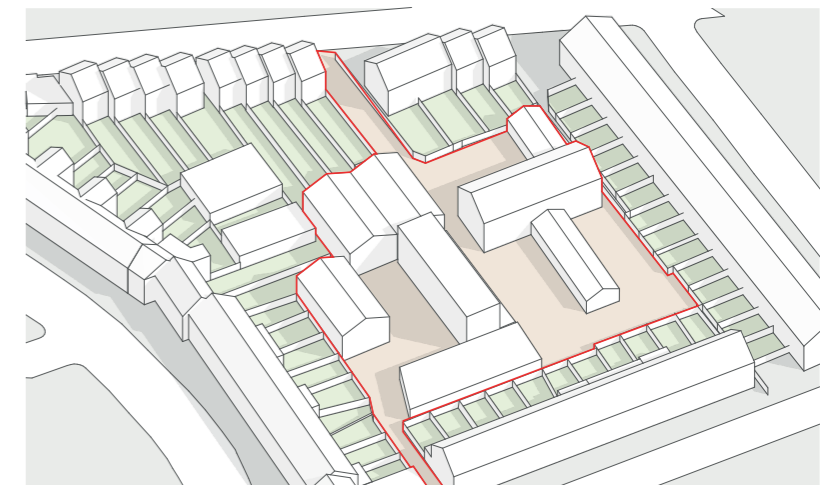
The proposal for this site is a mix of two and three bed 3 storey live/work houses, with the ground floor providing the work space. In our post-covid world there is a growing focus on live/work housing typologies, this proposal addresses this trend. However, the design for this site could of course be mixed in different ways,

with an entirely residential proposal, or one that gives one side of the new street to employment use.

In this illustration, the houses are arranged around a new shared surface street which runs through the site. Each house has a rear garden that abutts the existing gardens. This site allows for generous distance between elevations both within the development and surrounding it. The distances indicated will not be achievable on more constrained sites, so overlooking both out of and within the development will need to be addressed in the placement and direction of windows, and how boundaries are formed. On all such sites the provision of parking spaces needs to be carefully designed to support the wider use of the shared street.



Indicative example massing



Indicative example location - site before intensification



Indicative example plan of how this type of site could be developed to deliver new homes in keeping with the existing character of the area



Nieuw, Leyden



Byhusene, Copenhagen



Iliffe yard, London SE17

Precedents for this kind of mixed use yard environment

J.2 NON PERIMETER RESIDENTIAL

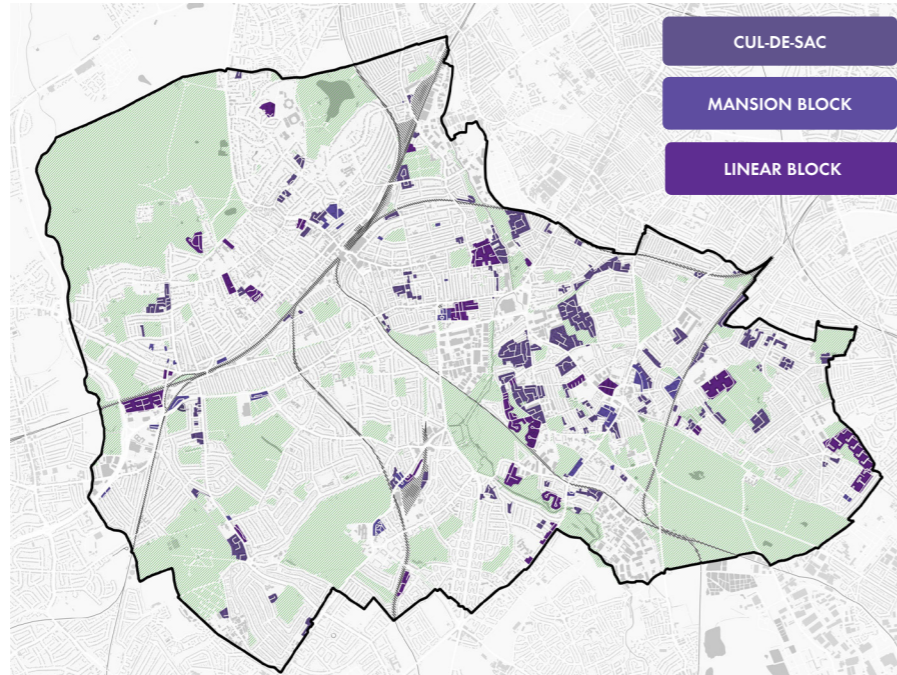
Non-perimeter residential-led forms

Whilst perimeter forms of development make up the majority of the existing residential areas of Morden, there are a range of housing areas which break with this pattern and introduce more complex street patterns and layouts. Intensifying these areas often requires a bespoke response to the layout of existing development - identifying where underused spaces could be used for development in a way that supports better integration of the housing into the wider area. For these housing types the key focus is on enhancing the delineation of public and private space through intensification or partial redevelopment. This must be done sensitively so as not to lose the very benefits that make these areas great places to live.

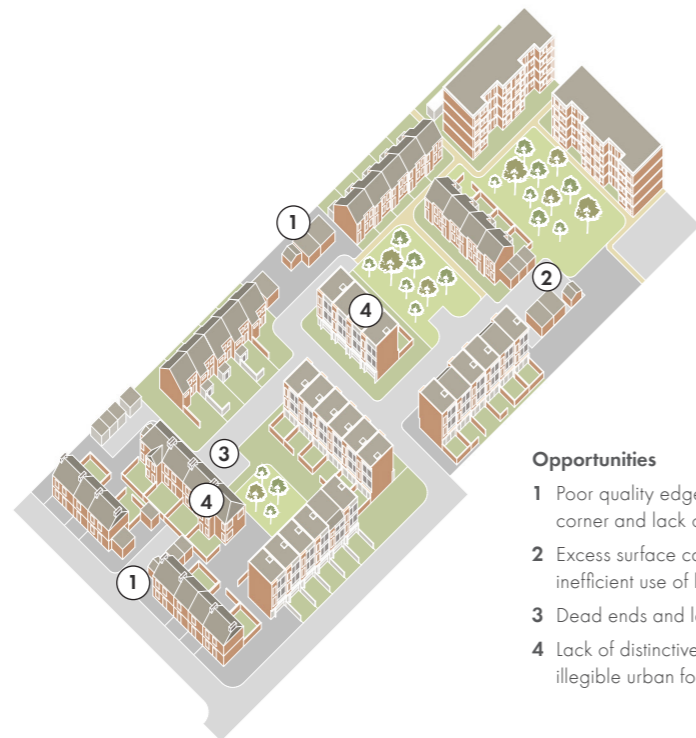
Key considerations for interventions will include:

- A strategic vision and framework is required on these sites to successfully deliver long-term objectives and transformation
- Repairing the urban fabric through the creation of routes, streets, spaces and buildings that integrate with surrounding grain
- Soft edges - delivering public realm and movement investment outside of the red line boundary to blur the edges of development
- Gradual transition in scale to mediate between low density surroundings and higher density proposals
- Overcoming severance of road and rail infrastructure is often required - achieving strong pedestrian and cycle connectivity through these sites is essential.

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)



The three types of non-perimeter residential development in the borough - cul-de-sacs, mansion blocks and slab block estates are all well represented, with a greater incidence of all three in the eastern half of the borough

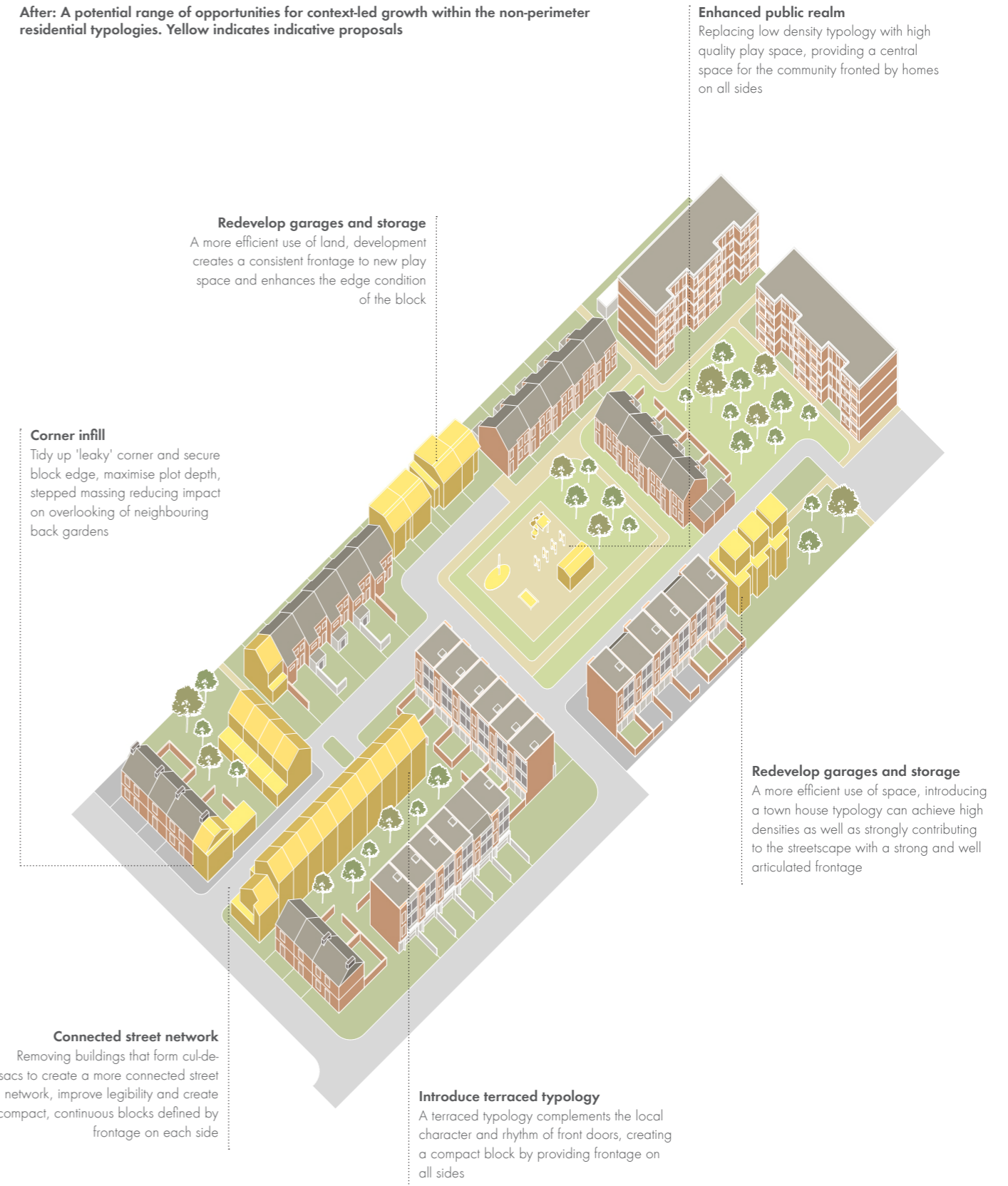


Opportunities

- 1 Poor quality edge condition/ corner and lack of frontage
- 2 Excess surface car parking, inefficient use of land
- 3 Dead ends and lack of connection
- 4 Lack of distinctive character, illegible urban form

Before: A potential range of instances which provide opportunities for context-led growth within the non-perimeter residential typologies

After: A potential range of opportunities for context-led growth within the non-perimeter residential typologies. Yellow indicates indicative proposals



Redevelop garages and storage

A more efficient use of land, development creates a consistent frontage to new play space and enhances the edge condition of the block

Corner infill

Tidy up 'leaky' corner and secure block edge, maximise plot depth, stepped massing reducing impact on overlooking of neighbouring back gardens

Enhanced public realm

Replacing low density typology with high quality play space, providing a central space for the community fronted by homes on all sides

Redevelop garages and storage

A more efficient use of space, introducing a town house typology can achieve high densities as well as strongly contributing to the streetscape with a strong and well articulated frontage

Connected street network

Removing buildings that form cul-de-sacs to create a more connected street network, improve legibility and create compact, continuous blocks defined by frontage on each side

Introduce terraced typology

A terraced typology complements the local character and rhythm of front doors, creating a compact block by providing frontage on all sides



NON-PERIMETER RESIDENTIAL
Examples of context-led growth:

1. Infill development on slab estates or cul-de-sacs to support block and street structure such as Auckland Rise by HTA Design. New buildings alongside more trees, play spaces and a food-growing area, new footpaths and lighting, and improved parking layouts within the estate (Croydon).
2. Partial redevelopment and intensification of slab estates as part of a wider masterplan to enhance the integration of an estate into the wider area and support South Wimbledon Local Centre (High Path regeneration, Merton)
3. Re-configuration of mansion block estate such as Darbshire Place through infill development to rationalise the environment, securing the block edge and framing an internal courtyard space. (Niall McLaughling Architects for Peabody, Whitechapel)
4. The Rye Apartments: Flatted infill development on a corner plot that responds to and overcomes privacy and daylight constraints, responding to neighbouring building forms. (Tikari Works, Peckham Rye).
5. Additional storeys added to create new homes in an accessible location, alongside the refurbishment of Mansion blocks at Malden Court (Raynes Park, Merton)



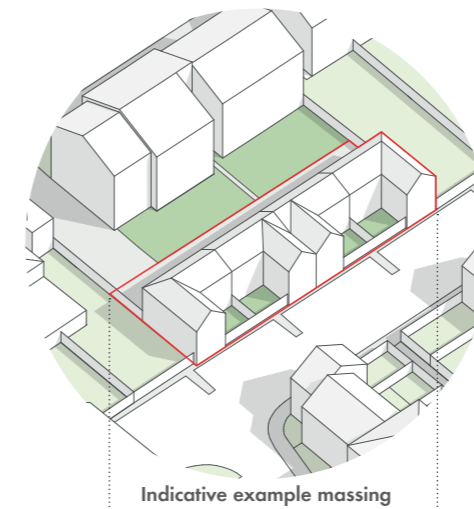
Case Study

This case study explores an example site within a 'non-perimeter' area, where a cul-de-sac meets the rear of another street. This creates 'messy' and illegible areas for pedestrians that are more complex to navigate. The proposal attempts to provide a clearer frontage to existing streets.

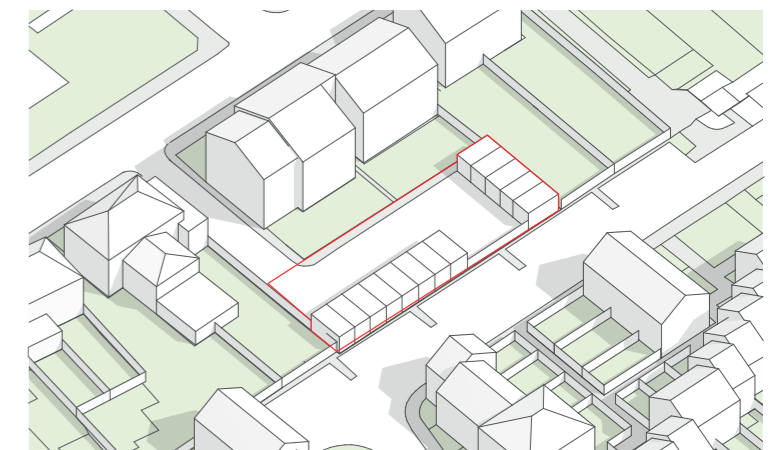
The site is currently occupied by garages. The site is owned by the freeholder of the apartment block to the north so gives an opportunity for the landowner, or an SME developer, to intensify the site.

The proposals introduces new houses accessed via the existing side entrance off the main road. The proposal is for four 3 bed houses which wrap around a private courtyard. A communal garden space is created between the existing block and the new houses.

Overlooking within the development is the main constraint of this site, with the placement of windows into the courtyard being particularly important. Although the houses are accessed from the main road an active frontage is created along the close to the rear, with the sides of the houses extending to the back of pavement.



Indicative example massing



Indicative example location - site before intensification



Indicative example plan of how this type of site could be developed to deliver new homes in keeping with the existing character of the area



Precedent for this type of intensification: Moray Mews, Finsbury Park, London

J.3 TOWN CENTRES

Non-residential led - Centres

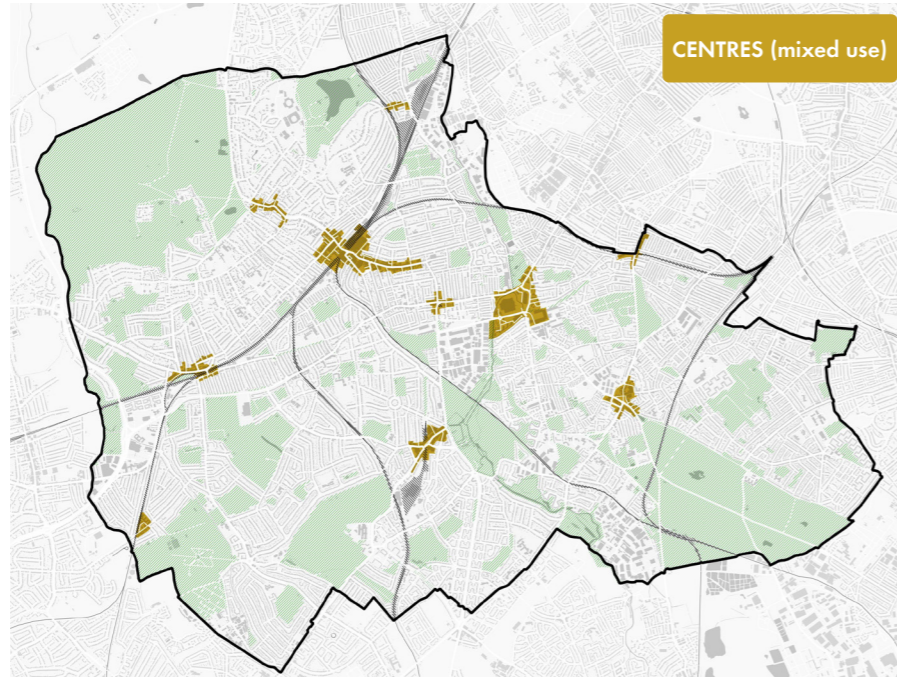
Town centres are the commercial, cultural and civic hub of our communities and increasingly need to accommodate high density development. High density typologies are especially scrutinised and need to deliver quality at every stage of design and delivery.

Scale and massing that responds to its context is important, using massing to mediate between existing low rise and higher proposals. Edge condition is also important, such as articulating facades through historic vernacular and planting to soften blunt edges between proposals and the public realm.

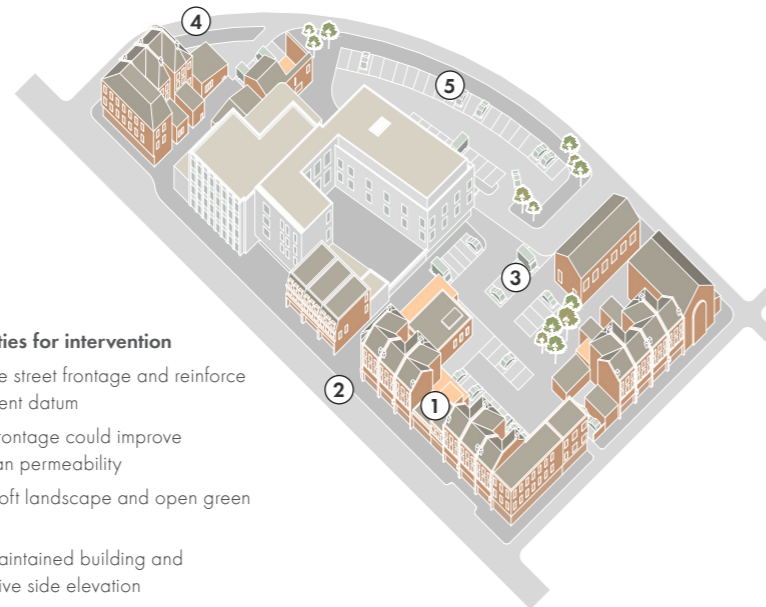
Key considerations for interventions will include:

- Seek to repair finer grain and permeability of historic centres; often lost to 20th century development
- Mixed uses should be prioritised, with ground floor non-residential units and residential above
- Creating consistent datum along frontages - vertical extensions set back can go higher and preserve street profile
- Public realm enhancements can improve existing or introduce new pedestrian routes and spaces
- Irregular blocks often exist either side of a high road but proposals should seek to complete frontage along block perimeter
- Suitable and sensitive for high density, tall schemes - introducing podium development can achieve taller extruded massing whilst positively meeting the ground
- Where a number of tall buildings may come forward, these should consider one another. The relationship between the buildings will have a significant impact on the townscape.

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)



The mixed use town centres in the borough include the larger centres of Wimbledon and Collier's Wood as well as Morden, Raynes Park and Mitcham. Each form key locations for increased density.

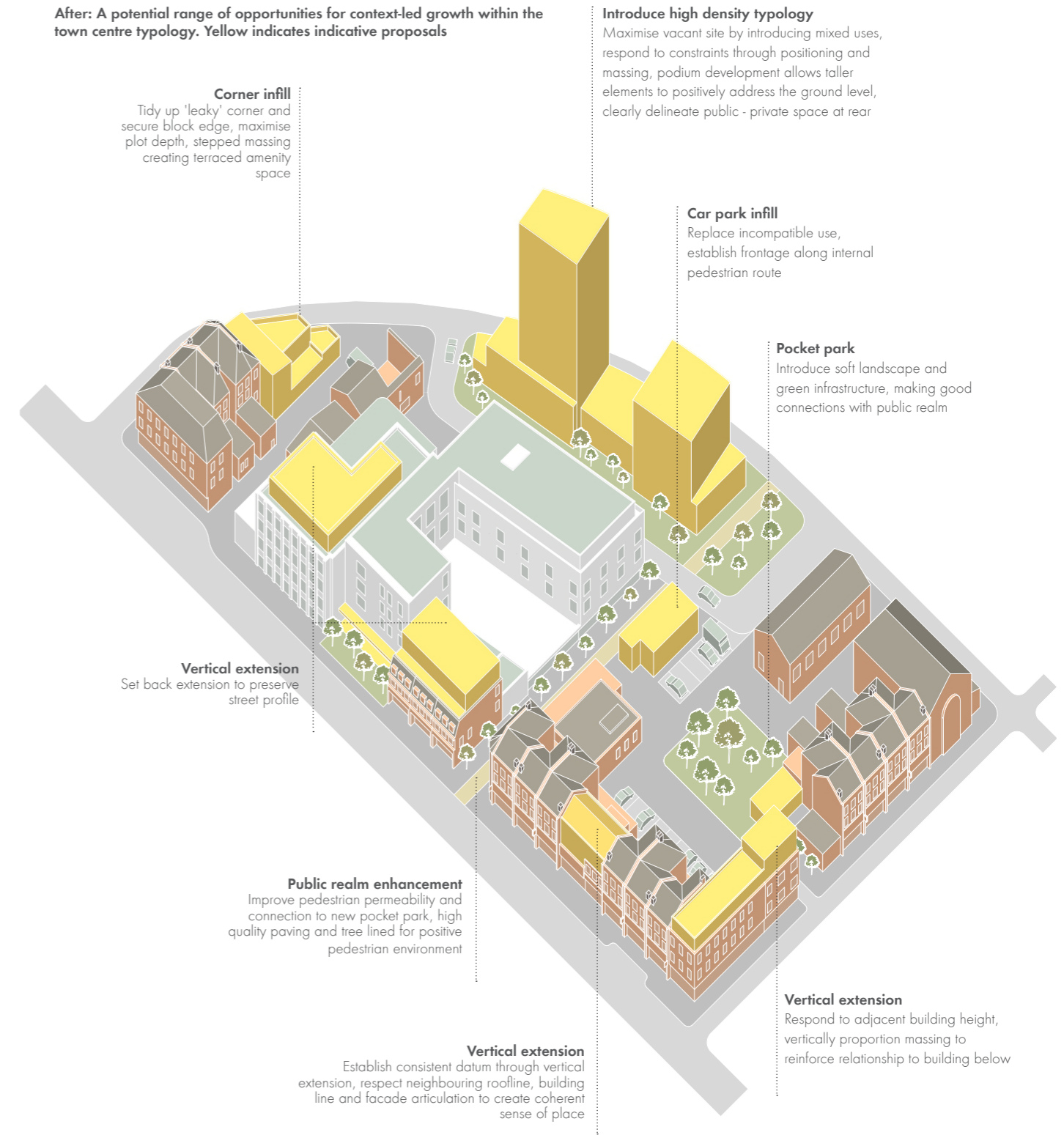


Opportunities for intervention

- 1 Complete street frontage and reinforce a consistent datum
- 2 Gap in frontage could improve pedestrian permeability
- 3 Lack of soft landscape and open green space
- 4 Poorly maintained building and unattractive side elevation
- 5 Vacant car park sites - increasingly incompatible with centres

Before: A potential range of instances which provide opportunities for context-led growth within the town centre typology

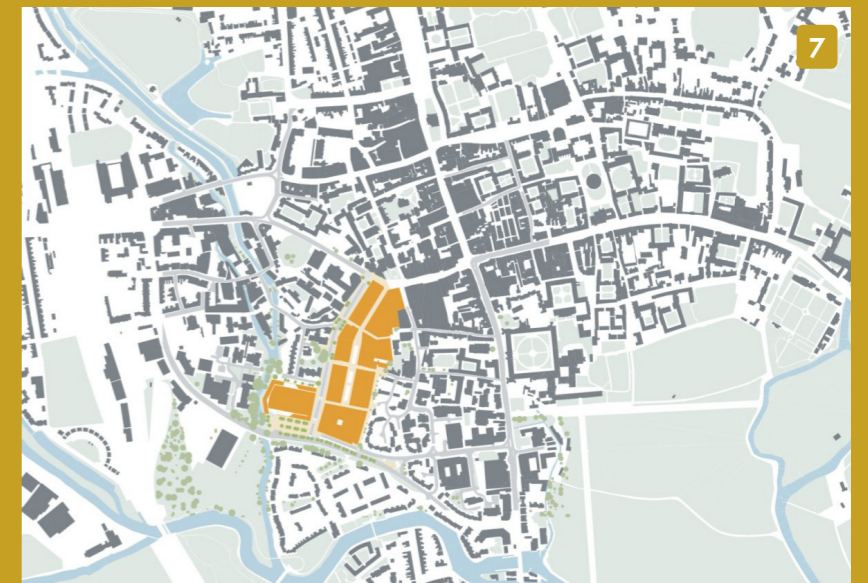
After: A potential range of opportunities for context-led growth within the town centre typology. Yellow indicates indicative proposals





TOWN CENTRES
Examples of context-led growth:

1. Following the closure of Debenhams in the historic Arding and Hobbs department store in the heart of Clapham Junction the building has been bought by W.RE. It will be refurbished with a significant roof extension and will deliver new workspace, co-working space and boutique retail and leisure uses on the lower floors (Clapham Junction)
2. Roof extensions adding new units to existing high street properties - a new four storey property inserted into the high street, replacing a one storey retail unit. The new building repaired the retail frontage and created a consistent datum, reinforcing the commercial role of the street. (Gordon Shrigley Architecture, 276 Bethnal Green Road)
3. Intensification through estate regeneration to intensify around centres and tube stations. High Path regeneration to deliver new homes, a new park and new shops, cafes and community space at South Wimbledon (PRP architects)
4. Redevelopment of low rise, poor quality and poor performance high street buildings to deliver strong frontage and high density development (Lewisham)
5. Sustainable reuse of existing architecture: Wellington House is a retrofit scheme which retains 80% of the original building, whilst doubling the floor space. By MATT Architecture (Wimbledon Hill, Merton)
6. Colliers Wood library successfully utilises community uses to provide an active frontage to the high street whilst delivering new homes above (Colliers Wood, Merton)
7. Reconfiguration or redevelopment of large format and coarse grain blocks such as 20th century indoor shopping centres into finer grain high density pieces of town centre (redevelopment of Westgate Shopping Centre, Oxford)



J.4 LINEAR - CORRIDORS & PARADES

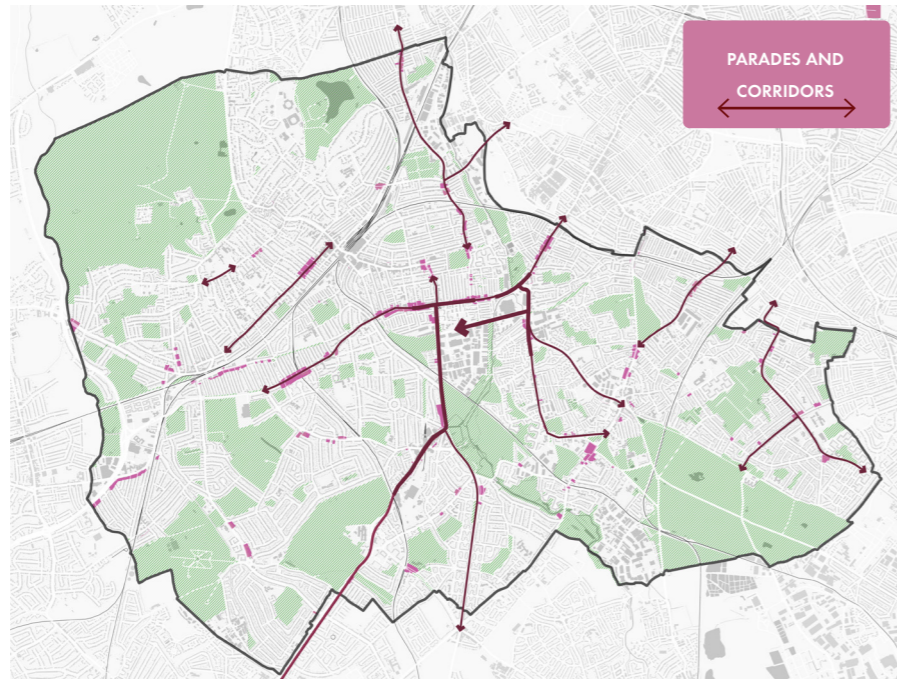
Non-residential led - Linear typologies

These typologies come in two scales - parades and corridors. Parades have the sense of being a 'destination' or place, whilst corridors are often a more gradual and continual linear environment linking places. They tend to occur along the key connecting routes in the borough. Due to their diversity in terms of scale and grain of buildings, alongside their accessibility, they are generally sustainable locations for growth. The quality of these environments can be poor due to vehicular dominance and new development and investment can help to positively address this character.

Key considerations:

- Creating strong frontage and articulation onto route will help positively evolve character
- Suitable for high density development - can contribute to reimagining of character
- Development must take account of excessive noise levels and poor air quality - mechanical ventilation and non-opening windows should not result in poor quality habitable environment or poor facade articulation
- Strengthen and tighten building line through new development - better framing route
- New development to align with prevailing block structure - creating permeable and coherent sense of place
- Pedestrian and vehicular access to / from busy arterial routes must be considered early in design process

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)



This plan shows the parades and corridors that sit outside of the designated town centres. In reality many of these parade and corridor environments extend into the borough's town centres



Opportunities

- 1 Poor quality edge condition and lack of frontage
- 2 Excess surface car parking, inefficient use of land
- 3 Low density detached villa property
- 4 Poor quality pedestrian environment, dominated by vehicles
- 5 Lack of distinctive character, illegible urban form

Before: A potential range of instances which provide opportunities for context-led growth within a typical example corridor environment

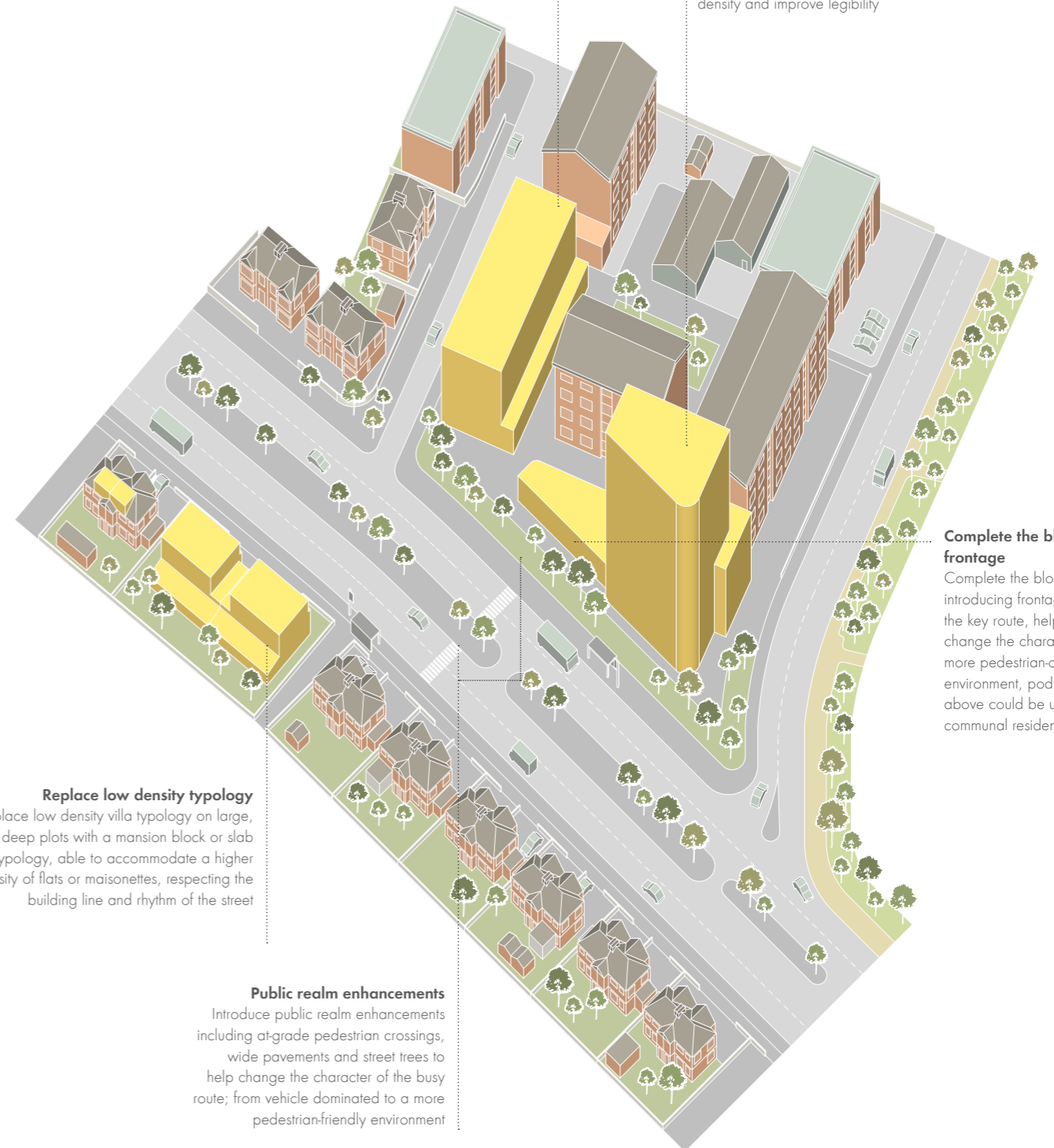
After: A potential range of opportunities for context-led growth within the corridor typology. Yellow indicates indicative proposals

Redevelop car parking lot

A more efficient use of land, mid-rise development can help to formalise the urban environment, creating consistent frontage to the block, a consistent datum and a more coherent sequence of spaces between buildings

Introduce high density typology

Tall buildings could be suitable to a corridor site, with a step up in height helping to define a more distinctive character. Concentrating massing on a podium 'shoulder' will create a better quality environment at ground level, whilst concentrating massing at the corner of the block can achieve high density and improve legibility



Complete the block with frontage

Complete the block by introducing frontage along the key route, helping to change the character to a more pedestrian-oriented environment, podium gardens above could be used as communal residential space

Replace low density typology

Replace low density villa typology on large, deep plots with a mansion block or slab typology, able to accommodate a higher density of flats or maisonettes, respecting the building line and rhythm of the street

Public realm enhancements

Introduce public realm enhancements including at-grade pedestrian crossings, wide pavements and street trees to help change the character of the busy route; from vehicle dominated to a more pedestrian-friendly environment



PARADES
Examples of context-led growth:

1. This scheme illustrates the opportunities that corner sites present to step up the scale, which can be done in a traditional style (Old Brompton Road - Earls Court)
2. This mixed use scheme delivered new homes above a larger ground floor commercial use, successfully integrating an increase in scale (Haydons Road, Merton)
3. Nelson Health Centre refurbished and re-used historic buildings to create active frontage with community uses, integrated into a wider local parade (Wimbledon Chase, Merton)



CORRIDORS
Examples of context-led growth:

1. Contemporary new architecture in keeping with adjacent historic assets raises the quality of a key corridor in the borough (Cricketers, Lower Green, Merton)
2. Mizen Heights delivers an element of significant height at the corner of a large plot to help balance the width of the very wide corridor (Colliers Wood, Merton)
3. This 'Mansion Block' scheme by Peter Barber cleverly steps up in scale along a key corridor, whilst delivering significant amenity space for each home (Peckham Road, Southwark)



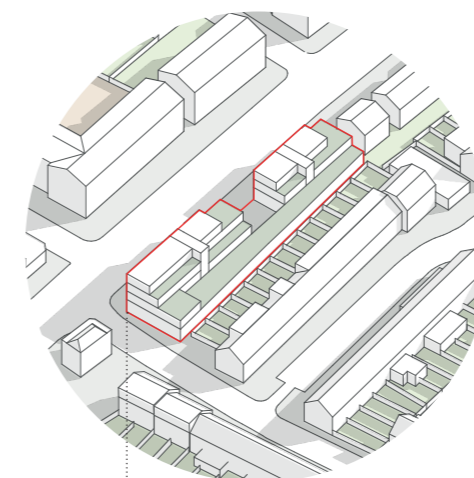
Case Study

This case study illustrates the potential of sites along or near to key corridors. Some corridors include parades and therefore how they relate to existing shops and services will need to be considered.

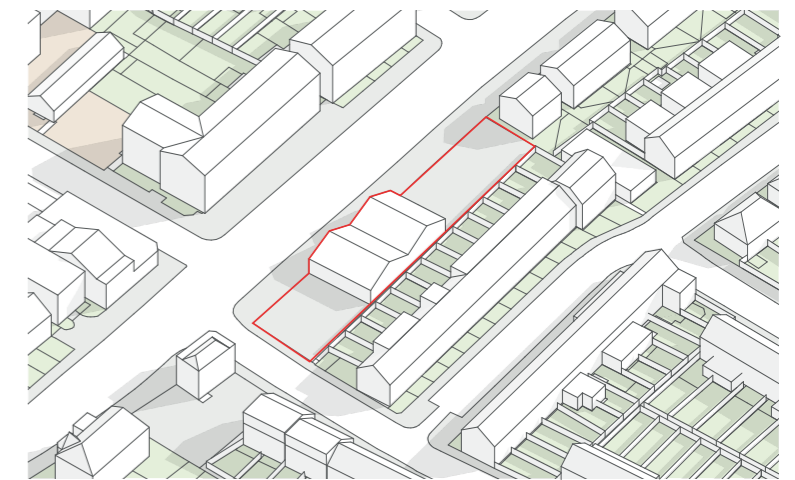
The site illustrates an opportunity for a scheme with a partly commercial ground floor with residential above to help strengthen and improve the quality and continuity of the frontage along this important corridor. The site is quite long so a courtyard is incorporated into the ground floor for use by the commercial units. The residential units sit above the commercial space, either side of the courtyard. The residential units all have generous external amenity space, with a communal terrace on the first floor.

A key consideration for the design of a site such as this is the overlooking to the houses to the rear. This means that windows to new residential units must be set back from the site boundary. Amenity space can be used as a buffer. To reduce the daylight/sunlight impact the development has on the houses to the rear the building steps back at each storey.

The proposal rises from two to four storeys across the site. There is potential for a fifth storey on the corner which would need to carefully consider the context.



Indicative example massing



Indicative example location - site before intensification



Indicative example plan of how this type of site could be developed to deliver new homes in keeping with the existing character of the area

J.5 CAMPUS

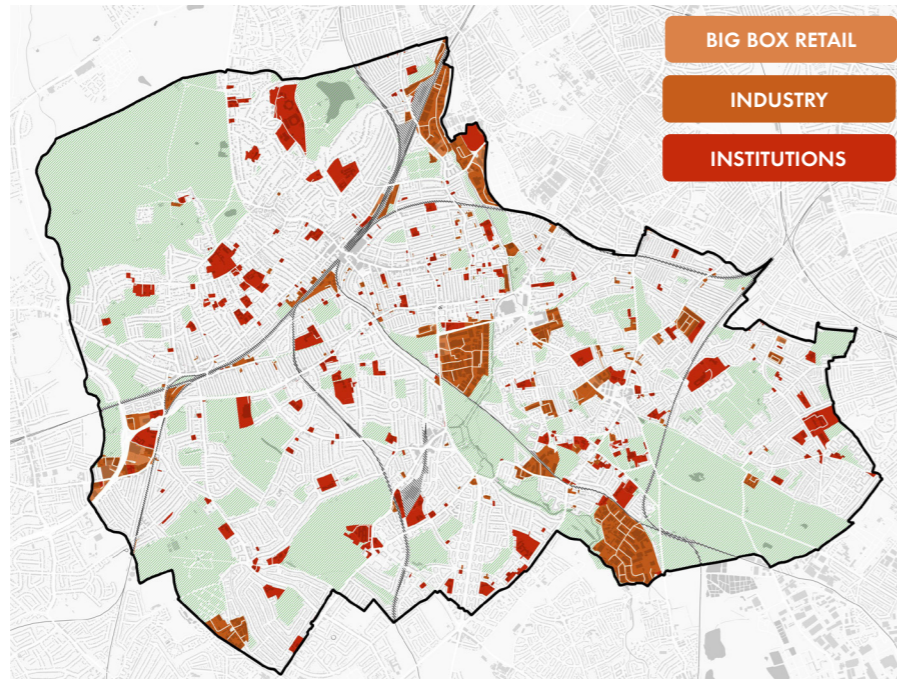
Non-residential led - Campus

Campus typologies are defined by their mono-use, and provide a significant amount of Merton's non-residential floor space, particularly outside of the town centres and local parades. Although many industrial areas perform an important employment function and service the borough, some campus environments offer good opportunities for intensification and growth by being more intensively used, with a greater variety of uses. Improvements may be about improving the quality of the internal public realm environment alongside making these areas better neighbours to their context. Development should not necessarily be about changing the use.

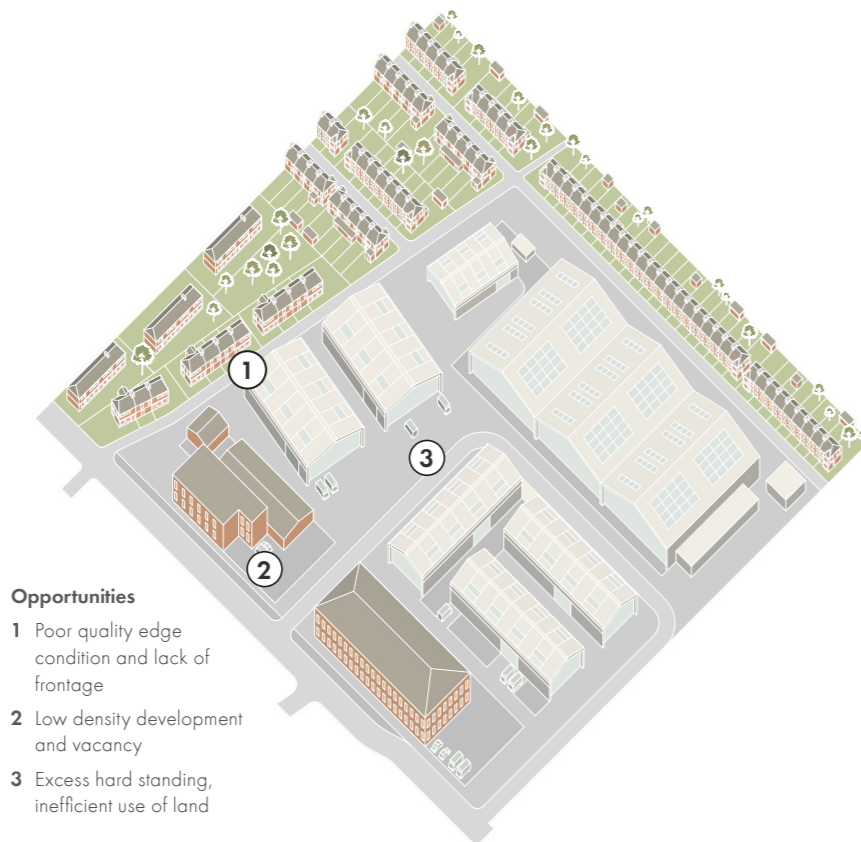
Key considerations should include:

- Strategic vision and masterplan required from the outset in order to successfully deliver long-term objectives and transformation
- Repairing the urban fabric through the creation of routes, streets, spaces and buildings that integrate with surrounding grain
- Soft edges - delivering public realm and movement investment outside of the red line boundary to blur the edges of development
- No net-loss of employment floorspace in designated Strategic Industrial Locations (SIL) and Locally Significant Industrial Sites (LSIS) required
- Overcoming severance of road and rail infrastructure is essential - strong pedestrian and cycle connectivity
- Resilience needed with masterplans demonstrating flexibility between uses and 'alternative futures'

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259. 2021)



This plan shows the spread of the three types of campus within the borough - big box retail, industry and institutions.



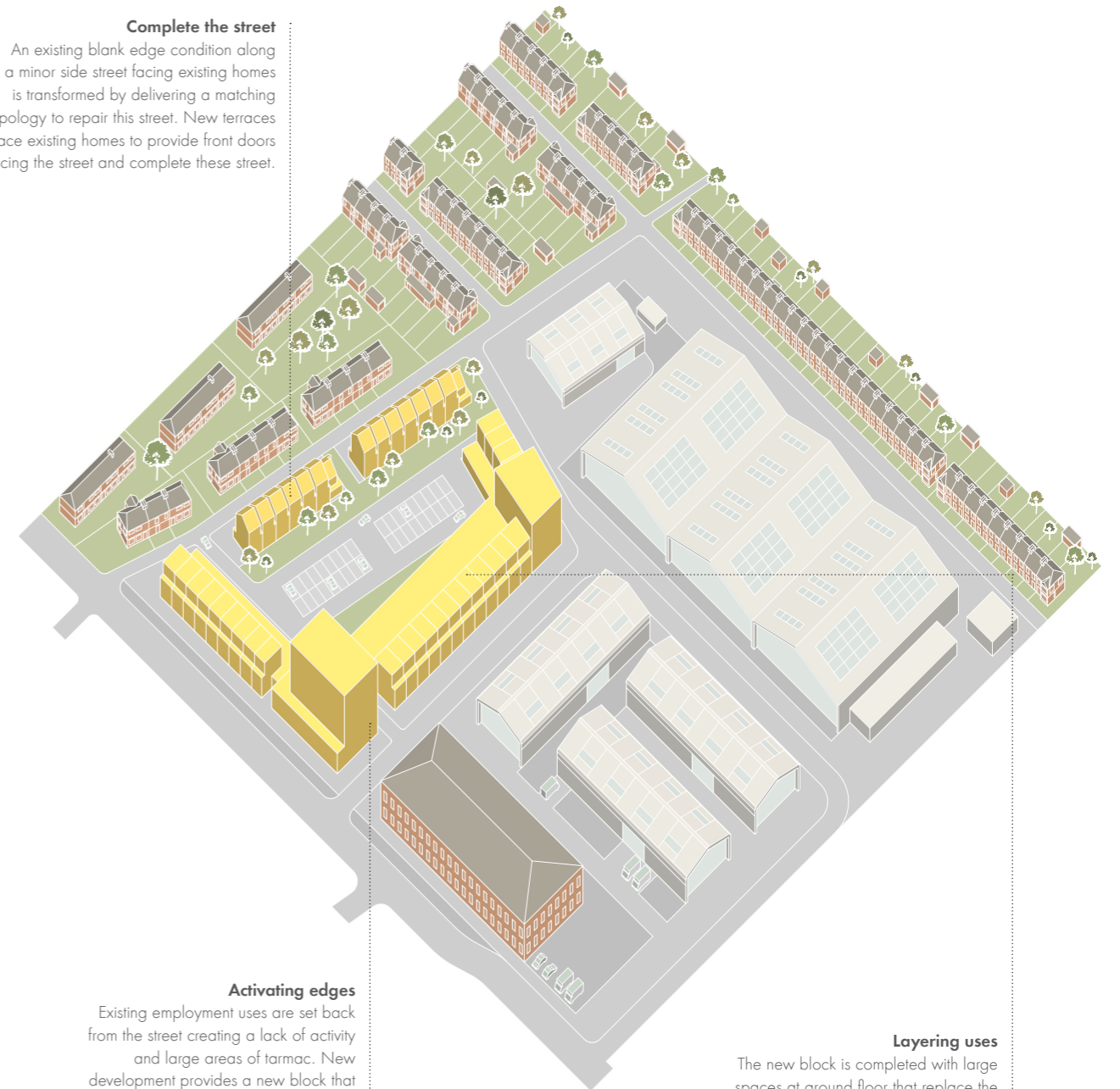
Opportunities

- 1 Poor quality edge condition and lack of frontage
- 2 Low density development and vacancy
- 3 Excess hard standing, inefficient use of land

Existing condition (illustrative example) showing big box retail and employment uses adjacent to homes

After: A potential range of opportunities for context-led growth within the campus typology. Yellow indicates indicative proposals

Complete the street
An existing blank edge condition along a minor side street facing existing homes is transformed by delivering a matching typology to repair this street. New terraces face existing homes to provide front doors facing the street and complete these street.



Activating edges
Existing employment uses are set back from the street creating a lack of activity and large areas of tarmac. New development provides a new block that addresses the street edge, with service areas behind. The scale of buildings step up at the corner of the plot to deliver residential units at this point.

Layering uses
The new block is completed with large spaces at ground floor that replace the existing employment space. These buildings could still be entirely employment in use, or have new residential units stacked above employment uses at ground.



1



BIG BOX RETAIL
Examples of context-led growth:

1. 440 homes arranged over four buildings, utilising a podium to accommodate a supermarket at ground floor, maximising land use efficiency. The podium courtyard responds to local historic landmarks and provides quality amenity space for residents. (Smithfield Square, Hornsey, LB Haringey. John Robertson Architects)
2. In Raynes Park a large Waitrose is accommodated on a former surface car park with almost 100 new apartments in the heart of the town centre - integrating a large store into the existing town centre



2



1

INSTITUTIONS
Examples of context-led growth:

1. The new Harris Academy provides a strong frontage to High Path - forming one of the important first steps in the regeneration of this estate (South Wimbledon, Merton)
2. Tidemill Academy is a two form entry Primary School and Nursery (480 Pupil capacity) delivered on an urban 0.53 ha site. The scheme delivers activity to the street and wider connections with the community including access to the schools library and hall out of school hours. The rooftop of the school accommodates a ball court (Deptford, LB Lewisham. Pollard Thomas Edwards).



2



1



INDUSTRY
Examples of context-led growth:

1. Stanmore Place is a successful scheme that delivers new homes at a higher density and uses an innovation/business centre to mediate or provide a buffer between the industrial uses to the south, and new homes to the north (Canons Park, LB Harrow)
2. At Caxton Works, light industrial uses are accommodated at ground floor as part of a separated and insulated podium with residential uses included above (Bow, LB Tower Hamlets)
3. Bennets Courtyard is a high quality designed residential scheme that successfully references and reinterprets its industrial context (Fielden Clegg Bradley, Merton Abbey Mills, LB Merton)



2



3



J.6 TALL BUILDINGS

The role of tall buildings

Tall and high density buildings can offer a range of benefits. For example, they can reduce the carbon footprint per dwelling by using district energy systems; they can help people live closer to local centres, reducing sprawl and retaining vital open land. When situated close to transport links, such buildings can reduce the reliance on cars and encourage healthier ways of getting around. Tall buildings can also improve wayfinding and add to the visual intricacy of neighbourhoods.

However, perhaps more than any other housing typology, tall buildings must balance the needs of individual homes with broader townscape considerations. This type of building can have a profound, lasting impact on the skyline and can significantly compromise the character of historic areas if they are situated inappropriately or poorly designed. A single tower inserted into an already well-connected site with significant activity at ground level is likely to be more successful as both a home and an integrated 'piece of city' than one on a more suburban or isolated site. This housing type is suited to areas on the 'reimagine' end of the spectrum (see p.30).

Building heights in London

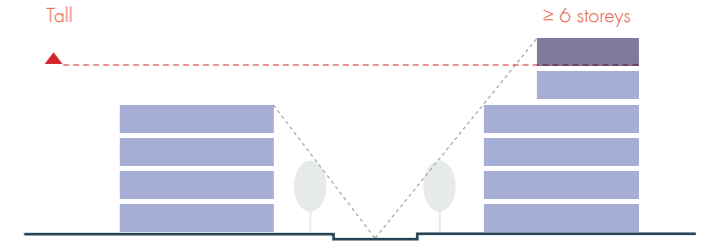
London has traditionally been known as a low to mid-scale city with inner areas of compact density and outer areas of suburban development interspersed by occasional, prominent markers on the skyline such as church spires or modern office buildings. This depiction has changed significantly since the regeneration of the London Docklands in the 1980s and, in recent decades, with the City of London's eastern cluster of towers leading the way and many high-rise developments in both inner and outer London boroughs following suit. What can be considered tall has varied across time and, understandably, still varies today across London. The prevailing height of buildings also varies between inner and London boroughs, meaning that the definition and impact of a taller building will vary accordingly.

The London Plan requires Local Planning Authorities to define what is considered a tall building based on local context. Furthermore, it states that tall buildings should not be lower than 6 storeys or 18 metres measured from the ground to the floor of the uppermost storey (see policy Policy D9 Tall buildings).

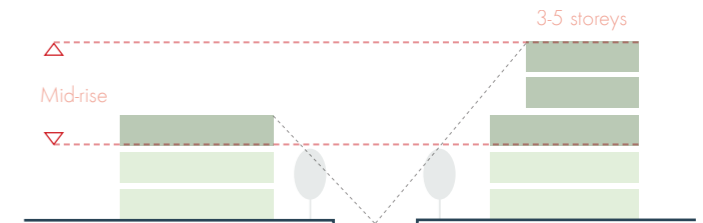
Defining tall (and mid-rise) in Merton

The London Plan definition of tall buildings (i.e. minimum 6 storeys or 18 metres) is appropriate for Merton as it accurately captures the scale of the tallest buildings in the borough which are concentrated within town centres or mixed-use areas, with few exceptions. It is highly unlikely that a tall building would be appropriate in low-scale, residential area (i.e. consisting of 2-3 storey suburban houses) which accounts for most of the borough (see land use map on p.12).

Instead, a more contextual definition is needed for these areas to describe new developments which 'appear tall' relative to their surroundings but are still below the London Plan definition. Developments such as these can be described as 'mid-rise' and range between 3-5 storeys. Mid-rise developments are suited to all areas on the repair-reimagine spectrum as they can effectively increase residential and employment densities of neighbourhoods without radically impacting their scale and built character. Applications for mid-rise developments will be judged on a case-by-case basis, however, they will not undergo the same level of design scrutiny as tall buildings.



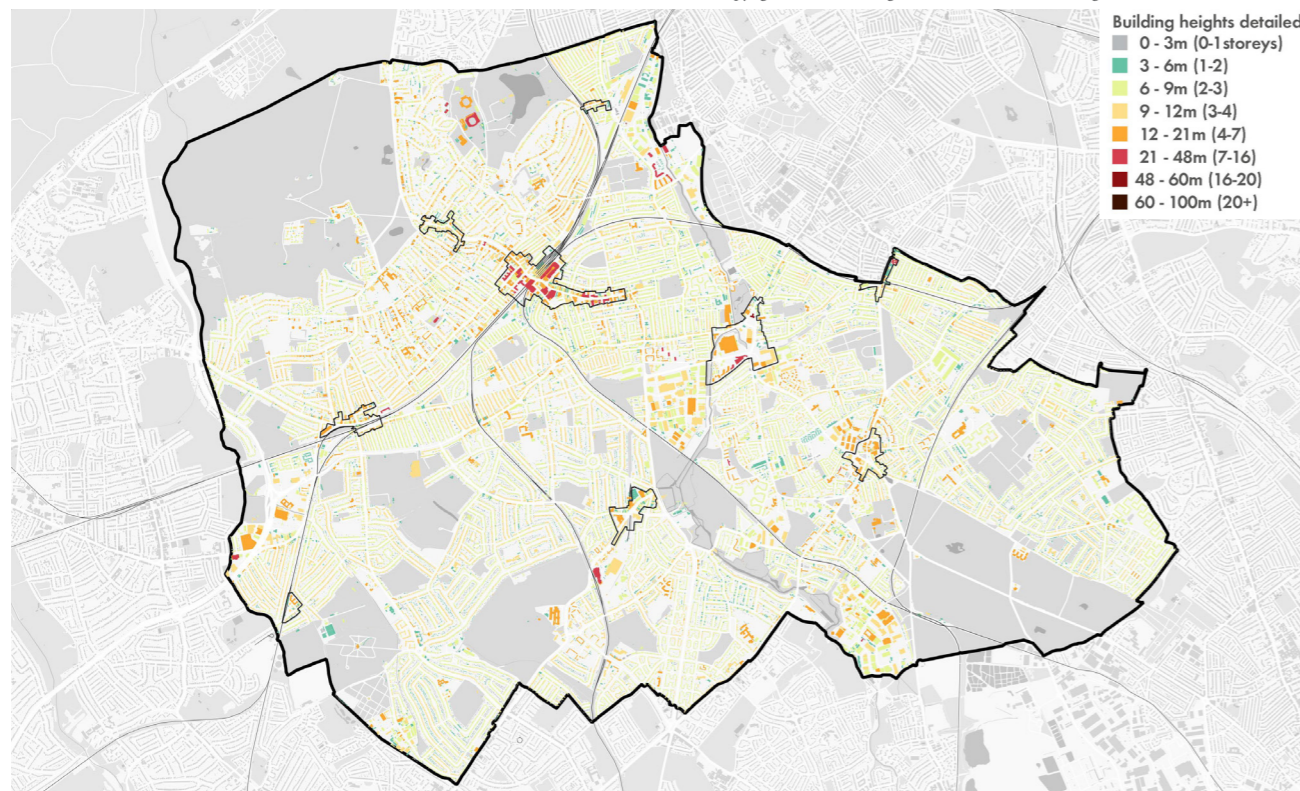
Cross-section of a street indicating what a tall building would look like in a town centre location



Cross-section of a street indicating what a mid-rise building would look like in a low-scale / residential area

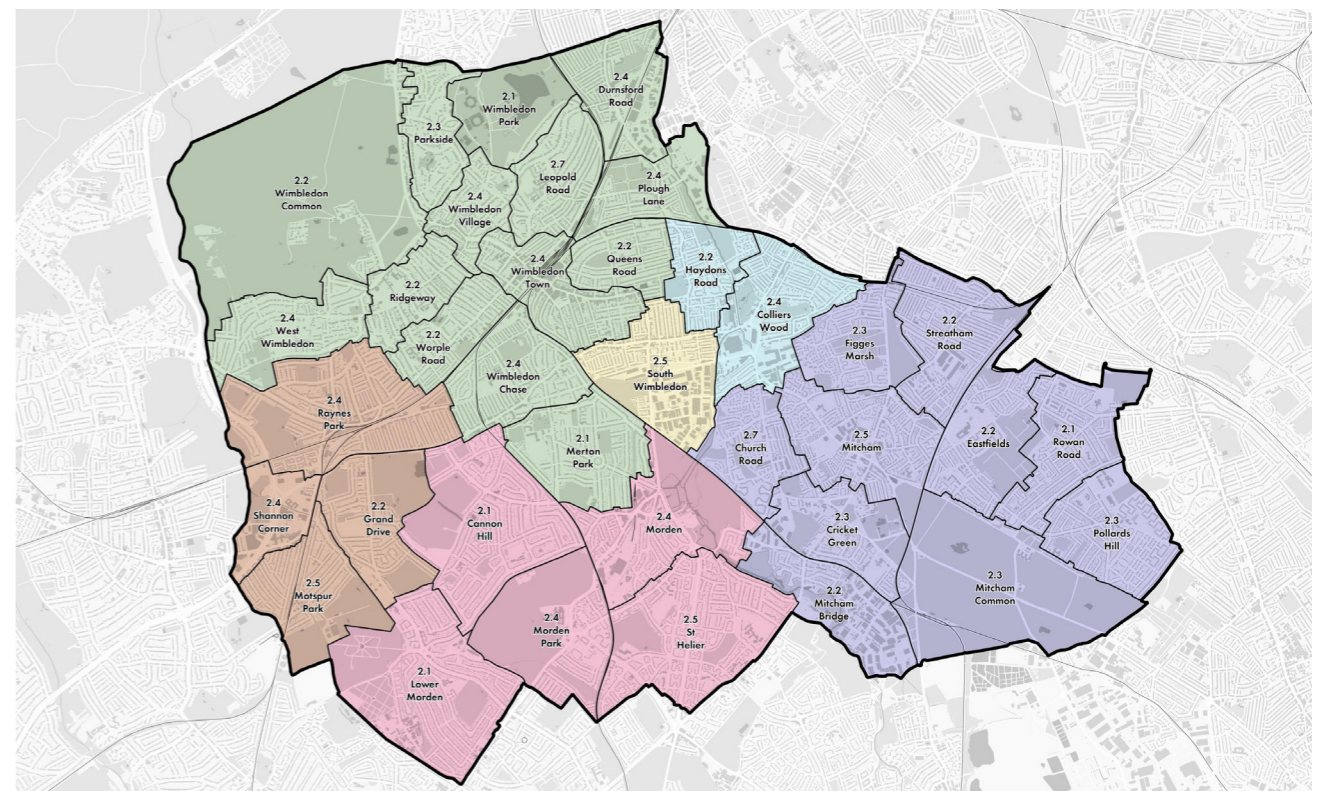
- Mixed-use building
- Residential building
- Tall
- Mid-rise

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)



Existing building heights and town centre locations across Merton

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)



Prevailing heights across the different sub-area of Merton, expressed in number of storeys

A framework for character-led tall buildings
 Applicants who are considering tall building proposals on their sites should consider the following issues and questions during the pre-app process and in anticipation of submitting their outline or detailed proposals to the Council.

A - Site selection
 As part of the initial development appraisal, it is important to review relevant policies and guidance for the site which may set out parameters and constraints for its future development. For example:

- Has the site been allocated by the Council? If so, does the allocation include any guidance regarding building heights or density?
- Has the site been highlighted in the Local Plan, Local Development Framework, Area Action Plan, Supplementary Planning Document or any other policy document which is considered material evidence for evaluating planning applications? If so, what guidance has been provided in relation to building height or density?

B - Sensitivity issues
 Some locations are particularly sensitive and, therefore, less suitable to tall building development for a number of reasons, typically regarding the setting of heritage assets or the potential for overbearing visual prominence. Due to these sensitivities, proposals which seek to exceed the prevailing height of surrounding buildings would require a strong urban design rationale for doing so. Applicants may wish to consider mid-rise forms of development (i.e. 2-3 storeys) on sites within low-scale suburban neighbourhoods where tall buildings would be inappropriate.

C - Suitability
 Using the overall suitability map as a guide (see pp. 112-113), applicants can assess whether their site is in a more suitable location for tall buildings. Proposals for tall buildings on such sites will be considered providing they are responsive to their surroundings and demonstrate exceptional design quality. Proposals must consider their immediate and local character, townscape and socioeconomic context as well as the natural environment.

D - The natural environment
 When considering the natural environment, proposals for tall buildings should aim to:

- Assess whether a site is liable to flooding and ensure that the flood risk may be properly managed and mitigated if it is not prohibitively high.
- Seek to protect and enhance the open quality and amenity of Metropolitan Open Land and other Public Open Spaces including parks, rivers and canals.
- Consider the existing ecosystems and surrounding site and demonstrate how the proximity of tall buildings to biodiverse woodlands or water bodies supporting notable animal species would not negatively impact on their upon their habitats and migration patterns.
- Limit excavation and work with the site topography and limit to exploit prospects and panoramas without impeding local views.

E - Considering context
 It is essential for applicants to demonstrate an understanding of the existing social and physical character of an area beyond the red line boundary of the site. Applicants should:

- Undertake a high-level analysis of the surrounding area, taking into account the urban form and character of existing buildings and their prevailing heights.
- Identify the appropriate character theme which has been assigned to the site (on the reinforce-repair-reimagine spectrum) and consider whether this supports the principle of tall building development.
- Identify the borough area and neighbourhood in which the site is located and to demonstrate how their proposals can contribute to the Council's specific objectives or priorities for that area.
- Demonstrate how the proposal aligns with the relevant planning policies and local character to achieve optimised capacity.
- The larger the site, the greater potential impact that its development will have on local character. Tall buildings on large sites should demonstrate their positive contribution to Good Growth.

F - Urban design principles
 Having established suitable locations for tall buildings, applicants must ensure that proposals:

- Consider alternative options for equally dense but lower / medium-rise forms of development as part of the design process.
- Present a clear townscape merit and justification for their height which ought to be proportional to their role and function in the immediate and broader context.
- Integrate taller elements within larger blocks with varied massing which can mediate between the scale of proposed developments and existing buildings.
- Seek to retain or improve the cross-sectional profile and character of existing streets.
- Reinforce the spatial hierarchy of the local and wider context by aiding legibility and wayfinding.

Proposals for clusters of tall buildings (i.e. three or more within close proximity) should:

- Be designed with varied heights to provide visual intricacy across the existing skyline.
- Position the apex of building heights closer to the centre and lower building heights towards periphery of the cluster.

G - Visual impacts
 Proposals for tall buildings should evidence how they respond sensitively to the local character through visual impact testing of nearby, mid-range and long-distance views. This can be achieved through:

- Zones of Theoretical Visibility Testing (ZTV)
- Accurate Visual Representations (AVR)
- Verified views analysis

These techniques can be used to ensure that tall building proposals have taken local heritage assets and historical settings into account and that no harm is done to the local character of the built environment. Such testing is particularly important within Conservation Areas, near listed buildings and in places where there is heritage at risk. In such areas, the choice of construction method and careful selection of materials, colours and outward appearance is key to ensuring that tall buildings enrich and reinforce rather than work against their historic settings.

H - Architectural design principles for tall buildings
 The following key principles should be considered in the design of tall buildings and their management.

L - Crown
 This includes the roof and uppermost storeys, provide opportunities for new inflection points in the skyline. The extent to which a tall building's crown is idiosyncratic or sympathetic to the local character should depend on the role of the building in relation to its position and wider context. It is preferable that the upper floors should be articulated and distinct in material and form to the middle. Roof-top telecoms and mechanical equipment (such as plants, BMUs and lift overruns) ought to be integrated and concealed by parapets. While publicly accessible viewing platforms are encouraged, any outdoor amenity spaces must ensure safety for persons at height and street level.

K - Middle
 The design of the main building volume should consider the impact on wind flow, privacy, light and overshadowing. The three-dimensional form should balance the internal programmatic requirements with outward elegance and appearance to and from surrounding buildings, streets and spaces. A direct relationship between the typical floor plate(s) and facade composition is desirable - as is the harmonious modulation of elements such as balconies, recesses, and fenestration. The selection of visible materials and lighting ought to reinforce or enhance the townscape, particularly at night-time.

J - Base
 The base of a tall building should be animated by active frontages and provide a welcoming arrival experience. Public spaces around the base should be generous, well-designed and contribute positively to the local context. Front of house areas such as entrance lobbies, circulation and shared spaces should be safe and well lit. Communal spaces should be easy to access, inclusive and visible from the surrounding streets. Back of house areas should be well organised and sufficiently large to accommodate essential functions such as bike storage, bin storage, car parking and refuse collection.

I - Safety and management
 Tall buildings benefit from a clear delineation of public and private space. Defensible spaces and active, street-facing frontages at ground floor can provide a sense of enclosure and safety. The security and management regime of communal areas should ensure that the operational use of the building follows best practice. Well-defined evacuation strategies will minimise the impact of fire, flooding and other situational hazards.

Sensitivity to tall building development

Part B of the framework for character-led tall buildings (p132) encourages applicants to consider a number of objective criteria that provide a general understanding of the relative sensitivity of different parts of the Borough for tall building development. These criteria relate to whether a site:

- is within or near a Conservation Area
- includes or is near Heritage at Risk
- is near Listed buildings
- is near Locally listed buildings

The following set of maps indicative which areas are affected by each criterion in turn. These culminate in a composite sensitivity map which overlays all the factors indicating areas which are most sensitive to tall buildings, with the darkest areas considered most sensitive.

Conservation areas

Conservation areas are a well-established designation employed by local planning authorities to manage areas of special architectural or historic interest. The historic environment is a vital part of creating a sense of place; not only do local people value the historic environment and historic assets, they often add financial value to the property.

Conservation areas can also be potentially suitable areas for tall buildings, they are not mutually exclusive attributes. However, proposals for tall buildings need to ensure that conservation areas and other historic assets continue to be preserved and enhanced.

Listed buildings and locally listed buildings

Special regard needs to be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Preservation in this context means not harming the interest in the building, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged. Site-specific analysis will be required to determine the potential impact of new tall building proposals on such heritage assets.

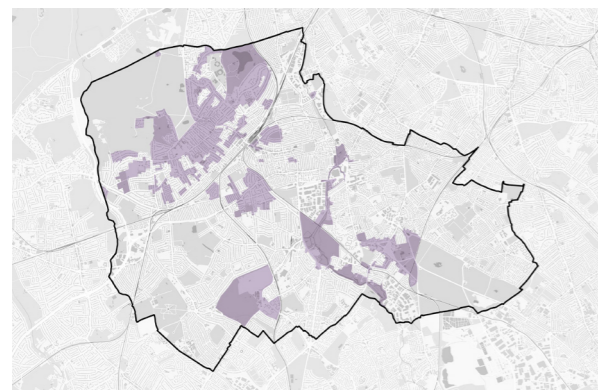
Heritage at Risk

Heritage Land is defined as open land of historic value, including sites listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England. Their open space character means developments from far away, inside and outside of the borough, could still negatively impact on their historic setting - they are therefore considered sensitive. Heritage at Risk (HAR) identifies those sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

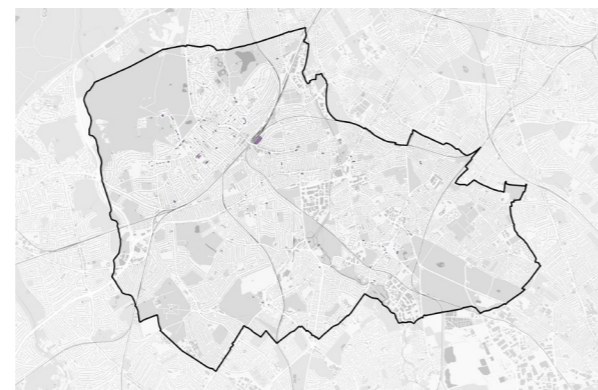
Example of a tall building in a sensitive location



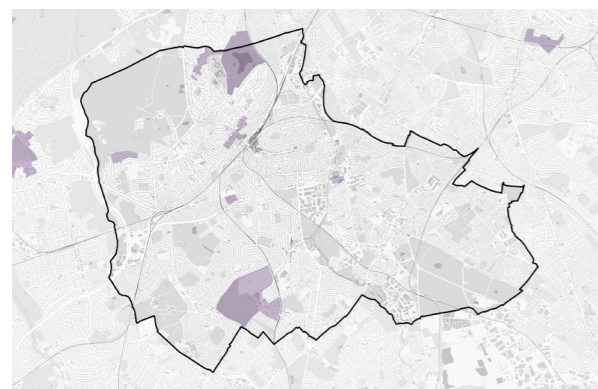
Goswin Street, Southwark. Image © Allies and Morrison. New build scheme of six storeys where the lower four storeys reinforce the scale of existing buildings across the street while the upper two floors are stepped back to accommodate a tall element.



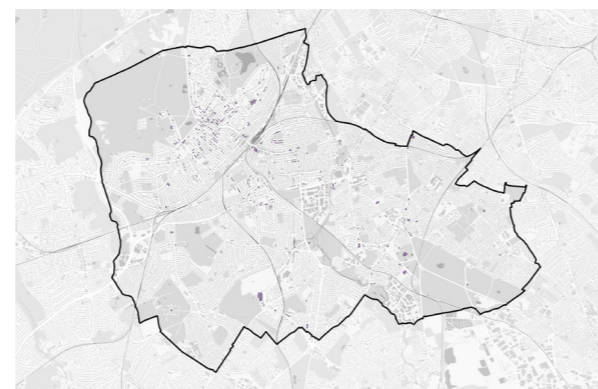
Conservation Areas



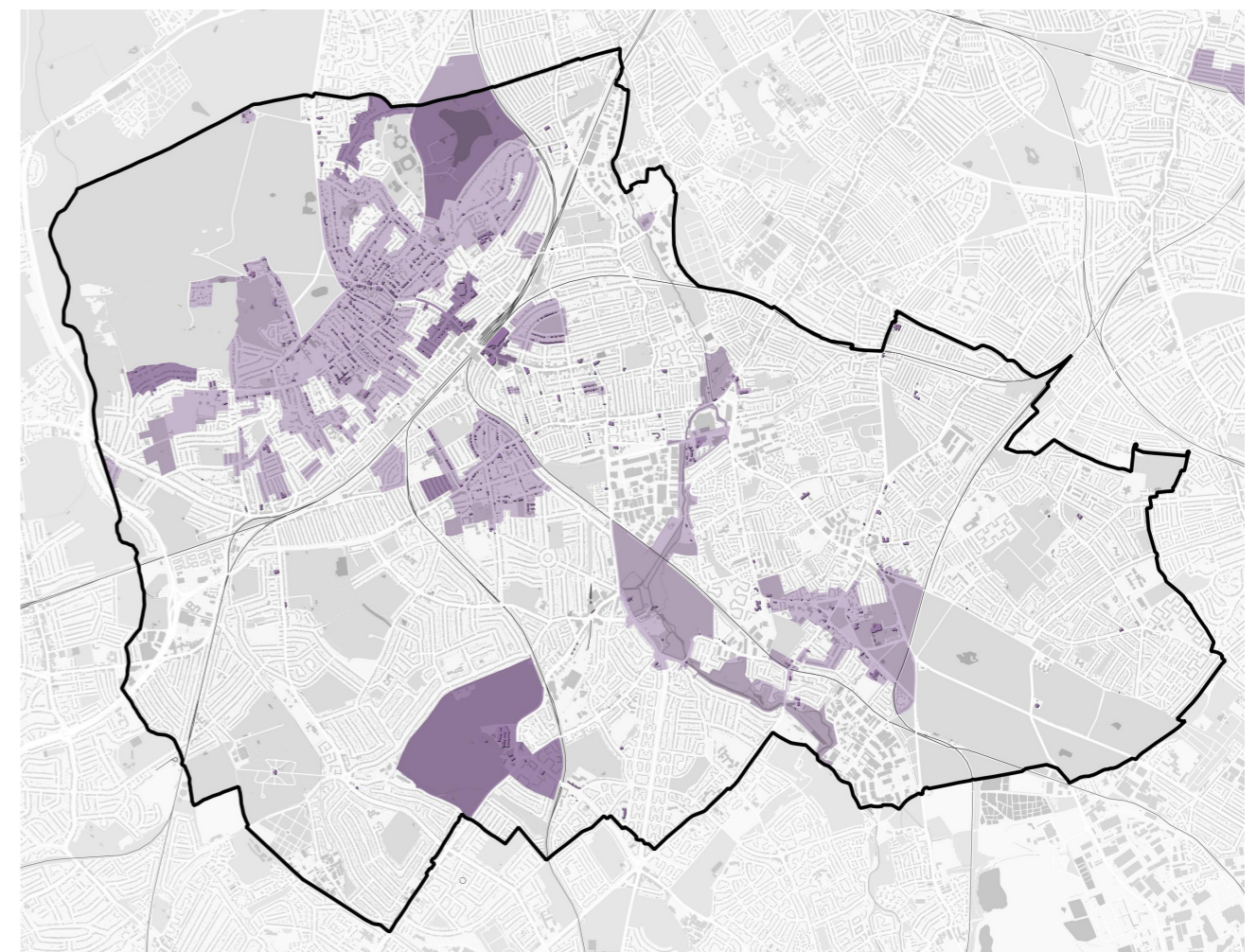
Listed buildings



Heritage at Risk



Locally listed buildings



Level of sensitivity heatmap based on all criteria overlaid

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)

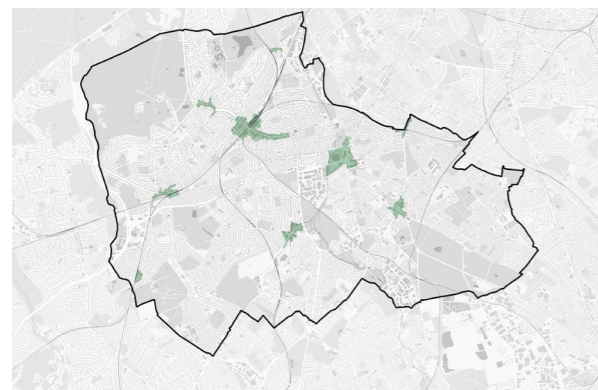
moderate high

Suitability to tall building development

Part C of the framework for character-led tall buildings (p132) encourages applicants to simultaneously consider other criteria that offer a general understanding of the relative suitability of different parts of the Borough for tall building development. These relate to:

- Proximity to a town or local centre
- Opportunity or Intensification Areas
- Proximity to a public park
- Accessibility by bicycle
- Accessibility to public transport
- Strategic area for regeneration

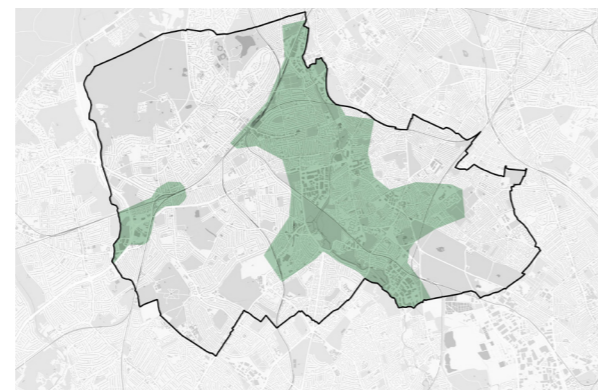
Each criterion is shown independently below and as a composite heat map.



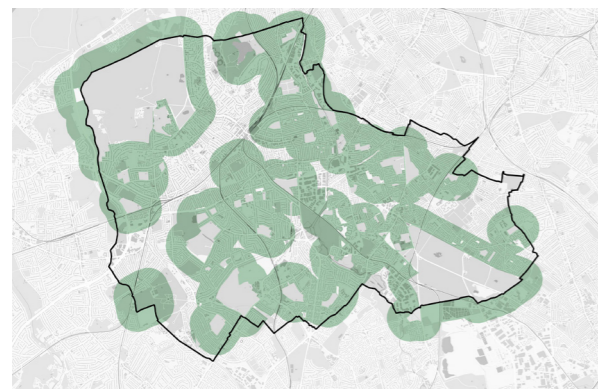
Town and local centres

Proximity to a town or local centre

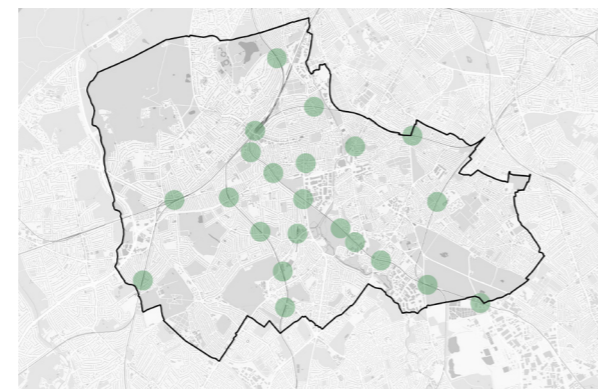
In addition to public transport accessibility, the NPPF also recognises the importance of commercial and shopping centres as locations best suited to making the optimum use of land. Merton borough has a network of town centres including Major, District centres (London Plan Town Centre Network) and Neighbourhood Centres. Town centres represent mixed use, urban environments with a range of shops and services provided, making them amongst the most sustainable locations for higher density development and therefore the most suitable for tall buildings.



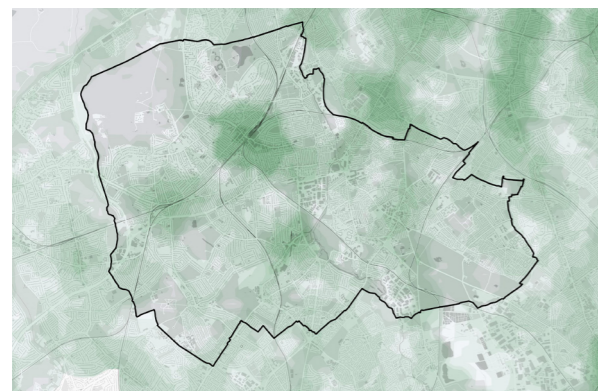
Opportunity Areas



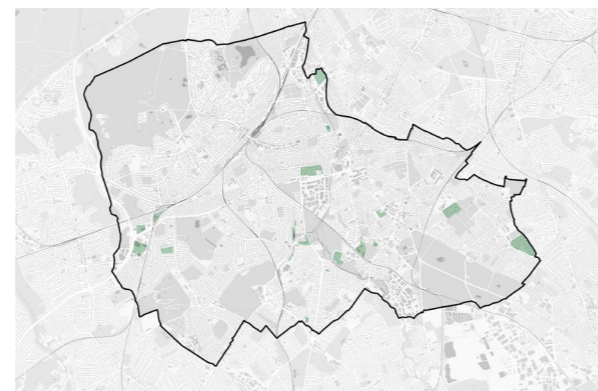
Proximity to a public park



Proximity to a station



Accessibility to public transport



Regeneration opportunities (potential estate regeneration opportunities and key site allocations suitable for residential development)

Opportunity or Intensification Area

Opportunity Areas are identified as significant regional locations with development capacity to accommodate new housing, commercial development and infrastructure (of all types), linked to existing or potential improvements in public transport connectivity and capacity. Taking maximum advantage of these sites being unlocked means delivering significant volumes of high quality, high density development including strategic housing growth. Merton Opportunity Area and the South Wimbledon/Colliers Wood intensification area are considered more suitable for tall buildings.

Proximity to a public park

Good access to open space is a key criterion for the suitability of tall buildings. The GLA stipulates that all homes should be within 400m of an open space of 2 hectares or greater.

Proximity to a station

Merton is home to a number of stations served by National Rail and Transport for London services, reflected in the large areas of high PTAL. In addition to taking advantage of the accessibility this affords,

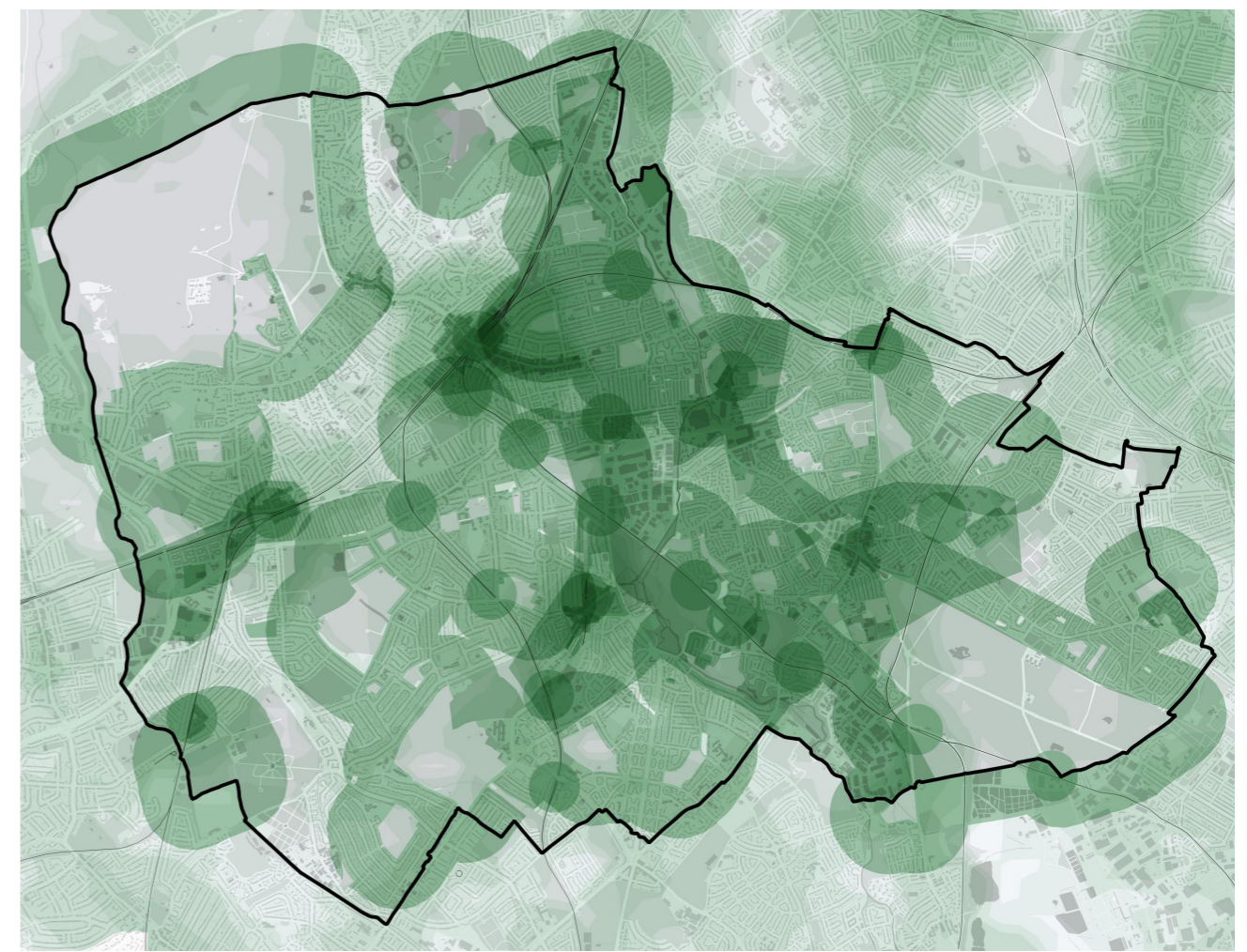
the immediate setting of stations tends to be urban in character and therefore more suitable for accommodating tall buildings. Often train stations can provide areas of focused regeneration, where tall buildings can help contribute positively to defining a new, higher density character.

Accessibility to public transport

One of the most important factors in determining a site's relative suitability for a tall building. This is underpinned by the requirement set out in the NPPF to make the optimum use of land, especially where there is an existing shortage of land for meeting identified needs, as there is across the capital. High density development is encouraged in areas well served by public transport (NPPF para 123). The assessment here is that areas with a PTAL rating of 3 or more are considered to be areas most suited to potential tall buildings.

Note

The existence of tall building clusters was discounted as a criterion, given that their presence is not considered an automatic indicator of suitability for further tall buildings nearby.



Level of suitability heatmap based on all criteria overlaid

© Crown copyright [and database rights] (2021) OS (London Borough of Merton 100019259, 2021)

moderate high

Examples of contextual, mid-rise intensification in low-scale / residential areas



Quicks Road, South Wimbledon. Image © Google Street View



Stage House, Wimbledon. Image © Google Street View



Flora Court, Croydon. Image © Pitman Tozer Architects



King Edward's Road, Hackney. Image © Hawkins / Brown



Essex Close, Waltham Forest. Image © Bell Phillips Architects



Great Eastern Buildings, Hackney. Image © Karakusevic Carson Architects

Examples of context-led, tall intensification in town centre locations



Mizen Heights, Colliers Wood. Image © Future Merton



Number One, Wimbledon © MATT architecture



Wellington House, Wimbledon. Image © MATT architecture



Agar Grove, Camden. Image © Hawkins / Brown



Westbourne Baptist Church, Westminster. Image © Allies and Morrison



Porters Edge, Southwark © Maccreanor Lavington