
22 March 2021

Thank you for the Character Study and the considerable work that has gone into it. The study highlights the strengths of Merton which have been built up over many years. The Covid crisis has shown how strong and caring the Merton community is and the love we have for the area.

We live in Merton Park and so our comments are concerning our immediate area but are no doubt relevant for many other parts of Merton.

Changes to the London economy since the writing of this report

The targets for housing set by the Mayor of London a couple of years ago might well be too high in the light of changes to working patterns accelerated by COVID and also population changes arising from Brexit. Furthermore a number of government departments are to be re-located out of London which will free up buildings for other use e.g.housing and probably impact on housing direct as some employees may wish to re-locate. Retail is also in a state of great change and retrenchment in terms of a physical presence in high streets as recognised in other proposed planning changes.

Already some companies in central London are not renewing leases when the opportunity arises. Therefore the pressure on housing space in areas such as Merton will likely be reduced

Grants of planning permission for intensification will need to be given at a pace commensurate with the way these trends develop.

The Study has the hallmarks of a desk-based project, due we think to the COVID restrictions on being out and about. This study will have intricate effects on all areas of Merton. There can be no substitute for getting out and looking - and meeting local organisations on the ground. **The work should have been delayed until this was possible and, as a result needs much more work.**

Conflict of the Policy of Infill and intensification with the Merton Policy of Greening the Borough and Climate Emergency

The options described in the study for the use of land for building is at odds with the Merton Climate Change Strategy. Areas described as surplus land are havens for wildlife and provide pleasant areas for walking and cycling and act as soak away for rain fall to prevent flooding. In the Character Study these areas are described as Opportunity Areas (in particular on page 108) for building but in the Merton Climate Change strategy are described as wildlife havens and green areas which are good for the climate.

Additional infill/intensification will also cause additional pressure on parking and in turn lead to further loss of front gardens. The council made an error making residents parking charges so high that people paved over gardens to make hard standing in the past. To remedy and prevent this happening in future perhaps a levy on paving gardens could be introduced.

Social Character

The study does not cover the social character of the area. The Daybrook Road Whatsapp group is lively and has 70 members out of 94 households. Page 6 of the study judges the Character of an area and proposes areas for improvement but these strong social ties are not be taken into account.

Daybrook Road, Sandbourne Avenue, Windemere etc Opportunity Area

It is hard to see the logic in describing this part of Merton Park as an area of Opportunity for intensification. These roads are an integral part of Merton Park with very similar character and social bonds as the rest of the area.

We can only imagine that the boundary of the Opportunity area is meant to include the industrial areas of London Road rather than residential areas.

Thank you

Yours faithfully,