

Borough Plan Advisory Committee

Date: 10 January 2012

Agenda item:

Subject: Draft Design Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation

Lead officer: Director for Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration, Councillor Andrew Judge

Forward Plan reference number: 1091

Contact officer: Urban Design Officer, Paul Garrett

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That members of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee

1. Note the content of the report outlining the proposed content of the Draft Design SPD, including the completed Introduction and Design Principles chapters;
2. Support the recommendation that Cabinet agree that the remaining chapters are completed in line with the Introduction and Design Principles chapters and, once finalised, the Cabinet Member and Director have delegated authority to approve the draft for public consultation.
3. Agree that a final draft of the Design SPD (post consultation) be presented to Cabinet for adoption early 2013.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks BPAC endorsement of the Introduction and Design Principles chapters of the new Design SPD. The remaining content of the SPD is summarised in the contents section. This first draft of the remaining chapters is currently being prepared. The draft SPD is attached as Appendix 1.

2. DETAILS

- 2.1 The new Design SPD aims to do the following:

- Establish a clear set of principles on which design decisions should be based.
- Fully integrate the findings of the borough character study into design policy guidance including aiding interpretation of regional density guidance based on character, prevailing density and housing typology.
- Provide, for the first time, fully integrated guidance on the public realm with planning guidance on design.
- Update and replace existing outdated Council SPG policy guidance on a number of topics, including: Design (2004), New Residential Development (1999), residential Extensions, alterations & Conversions (2001), Accessibility (2003), Shop-front Design & Designing out Crime (2000) – and bringing them together into one supplementary planning document.
- Provide up to date guidance on elements of detailed design that respond to every day issues encountered by Development Control case officers.
- Create a document that is comprehensive, easy to read and navigate around, with clear and concise guidance for prospective developers and for development control purposes alike.

2.2 At a strategic level, the content of the Design SPD supports all the strategic objectives in the Adopted Core Strategy to a greater or lesser degree. Summarised very briefly, it is relevant in the following ways:

- It supports Objective 1 as good urban design creates an urban form that is complementary to a reduction in use of resources.
- It supports Objective 2 as it provides guidance that will aid regeneration, community safety and cohesion by, amongst other things, providing high quality development with longevity.
- It supports Objective 3 by showing how effective use of land and intensification can be achieved without undermining existing successful parts of the borough and its suburban character.
- It supports Objective 4 by directing intensification to town centres and supporting enhancement of industrial areas.
- It supports Objective 5 by providing guidance on housing quality and community safety and accessibility.
- It supports Objective 6 by promoting new and enhanced urban open space and enhancing the Wandle Valley.
- It supports Objective 7 by promoting an urban form and public realm that supports public transport and sustainable travel.

- It supports Objective 8 by promoting a high quality built environment, open spaces and public realm that will inherently enhance and protect the character of the borough.

2.3 The Design SPD will contain 5 key chapters on the following subjects:

- Introduction & Policy Context
- Design Principles
- Detailed Design Guidance
- Design Guidance for the Public Realm
- Borough Character Study – including residential density & typology

2.4 The Draft Design SPD as currently presented includes the Design Principles guidance. This, as with the remainder of the SPD, will draw out clearly the elements of the text that constitute the specific policy guidance of the document. This will be similar to that done in the Borough Character study

Role of the Design SPD

2.5 As with previous SPG and SPD guidance, the Design SPD will assist in the development control process by providing detailed, Merton-specific policy guidance for use in the determination of planning applications. The guidance on the public realm will also provide guidance for council officers involved in making changes to the public realm – such as the improvements currently implemented in Wimbledon and Raynes Park, and planned for Morden and Mitcham, as well as smaller schemes.

2.6 The SPD will also be a tool for use in planning appeals and inquiries by demonstrating that a robust approach has been taken to formulating design policies for the borough. The policy guidance in the Design SPD will be cross referenced to relevant adopted policy and backed up by assessments and interpretations of good practice and, where necessary, case law. It will also be backed up by established and new evidence based research, such as that already produced for tall buildings and dwelling conversions.

2.7 The Design SPD is being produced in conjunction with Planning and Public Protection and advice from the Design Review Panel and heritage groups.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

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- 3.1 Two alternatives exist to the planned approach. Firstly is do-nothing and secondly is to individually update the current existing documents.
- 3.2 The risk to the do-nothing approach is that, as the planning system changes and existing guidance becomes older, it becomes less effective and relevant. This will undermine the borough's ability to ensure high quality sustainable design in the future. The council will be less able to resist poor quality development as the guidance will become more susceptible to successful challenge. New and changing thinking will also not be able to be reflected in retained guidance. Doing nothing will also forgo the opportunity to improve upon existing guidance, better integrate it with other guidance (eg. climate change, borough character, public realm) and ensure it is robust and fully effective. It will also forgo the opportunity to strengthen areas of weakness that have been identified over years of using existing guidance and to ensure new guidance is easily accessible and understandable to all.
- 3.3 The risk to updating documents individually is this makes it more difficult to successfully cross reference related subjects, cut down on repetition, and produce a single point of reference that is easily accessible and can clearly demonstrate how various subjects are closely related. There would also be time and cost issues related to this approach as it would take longer and cost more and be more difficult to keep up with changes in the planning system. Combining several documents into one makes sense in terms of time, money and content.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 The remaining chapters of the SPD will be completed by Summer 2012, with a full consultation in Summer / Autumn 2012.
- 4.2. Local residents will be notified of the Draft Design SPD along with amenity groups, ward councillors and local businesses.
- 4.3 As the draft document evolves, it will be presented to Design Review Panel, Heritage and Design Forum, as well as Highways and Development Control teams.

5. ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

- 5.1 It should be noted that there are currently no visuals within the document. The final draft document will have high level of visuals in the form of photos, sketches, maps, diagrams etc in order to illustrate the text and provide example of good and bad practice. As with the Core Strategy, the content is being written first, and the graphics will follow later.

- 5.3 Many of the subjects covered in the SPD are connected and overlapping and some repetition may be inevitable. However, as the document is progressed it will become apparent where repetition can be removed without losing the overall message. It should also be noted that this document is intended to replace a number of existing documents, some of them quite lengthy in themselves. The initial consultation draft of the whole document is likely to include a degree of explanation and justification for proposed policy approaches that will be able to be significantly reduced or summarised in the final document.

6. TIMETABLE

- 6.1 Following consultation on a full draft of the Design SPD in Summer / Autumn of 2012, it is currently expected the SPD will be adopted in spring 2013.

7. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 At present it is envisaged that the commitment to the completion of the Draft Design SPD can be achieved through existing financial and staffing resources. During the consultation periods, the document will be made available on the Council's website in an electronic version.

8. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Following adoption of the completed SPD, it will become a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals. The findings of the Borough Character Study will form an integral part of the SPD and, by virtue of this, the content of the study will also become a material planning consideration.

9. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The content of the Design SPD will enable the council to effectively improve the quality, attractiveness and safety of the borough, contributing to improving the lives of all residents and supporting and helping enable the delivery of regeneration projects in the borough.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Designing out Crime and community safety issues in relation to the built environment and public realm are embedded into the content of the Design SPD.

11. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

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11.1 None for the purposes of this report.

12. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

12.1 Appendix 1: The Draft Design SPD: Chapters 1 & 2 and outline of content for remaining chapters

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 Merton's Adopted Core Planning Strategy 2011 and consultation Draft Sites & Policies DPD.

14. OFFICER CONTACTS

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**Appendix 1 to Cabinet report of 16th
January 2012 on the Draft Design SPD**

**London Borough of Merton
Supplementary Planning Document**

DESIGN

This document consists of completed
Chapters 1 & 2 and summaries of the
contents for each of the sections in
Chapters 3 to 7

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1 Introduction

1.1 Foreword

- 1.1.1 Foreword by Councillor Andrew Judge, Cabinet member for Regeneration & Councillor John Bowcott, Design Champion & Chair of the Merton Design Review Panel
- 1.1.2 Merton Council has a proactive, can-do attitude to development and regeneration. This is evident in the new planning documents the Council is producing, such as the Core Strategy and Sites & Policies DPD. The Council sees great opportunity in building on the borough's strengths of a green suburban borough and encouraging development and regeneration in areas of opportunity and need. This is part of the Council's long term 15-year vision set out in the Core Strategy.
- 1.1.3 A key element of this strategy is to encourage development, regeneration and inward investment with all key stakeholders, including land owners, developers, employers, house-builders and public sector agencies. In order to deliver this change and to ensure it enhances and develops the borough to the benefit of its environment and residents, the Council must ensure it has the right tools to do this job.
- 1.1.4 Therefore detailed policy guidance such as this Design SPD, is a key tool in this delivery process. This guidance is about how to implement the Council's vision at the detailed level, guidance that is to be used on a daily basis, to assess whether development meets our aims and aspirations.
- 1.1.5 A key characteristic of our borough is the amount of high quality green space we have. Access to this is important to everyone, especially those who do not have their own garden. Intensification in parts of our borough is desirable and necessary for its improvement and growth. But this does not have to be to the detriment of its character.
- 1.1.6 High quality development at the right density can provide homes of good size and layout, with their own gardens or balconies, that are fit for purpose and encourage long term living and the development of stable and sustainable communities. Intensification in appropriate locations will lead to some taller buildings. However, this does not translate into a need for inappropriately tall buildings. The guidance in this document will help ensure, through good design, that new development respects and enhances the cherished character of the borough.

- 1.1.7 We commend the use of this guidance and believe the design agenda is central to making Merton a successful and attractive place to live, work and enjoy.

1.2 Purpose

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this document is to provide detailed guidance on the design of buildings and spaces in Merton. This builds on policies in the Council's Core Strategy and Sites and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD). It expands on these policies, and the research included in a range of documents that make up the evidence base for the Council's planning policies.
- 1.2.2 This document is the Council's detailed interpretation of national level planning policy guidance statements (PPS) relating to design and the range of companion guides that accompany them, as well as regional and local guidance contained in the London Plan, Merton Core Strategy and Sites and Policies DPD. The quality of the places we live, work and play in is central to our quality of life and how successful and sustainable our borough is. This is reflected in the importance given to design in planning policy at all levels.

1.3 The Need for Design Guidance

- 1.3.1 There is therefore a need to interpret this guidance at a local level to ensure the borough provides the highest quality development possible. Good design is central to ensuring we have not only a physically attractive borough, but one that is sustainable economically and socially, meets the needs of its diverse population and is resilient to change. It is thus important the borough has sound and responsive policy guidance on design.
- 1.3.2 Good design is a fundamental element of achieving a number of Council planning objectives, including housing mix, type and density, sustainable development, climate change targets, heritage, biodiversity, accessibility, community safety, sustainable transport and regeneration. Guidance on design provides the policy tools to deliver good design that supports and complements these policy objectives.
- 1.3.3 Good design guidance can ensure the need to intensify development in the borough is done sensitively and appropriately, without recourse to uncharacteristic tall buildings in inappropriate areas. It can provide guidance on housing layout and design to ensure land is efficiently used and the right types of houses are provided. Principles of good urban design can provide the framework for sustainable and adaptable forms of development for larger sites, regeneration areas and inform the development of masterplans.

1.3.4 Merton is largely an attractive residential suburban borough with a high level of good quality open space and good quality housing stock. The sustainability and climate change agenda places particular challenges on suburban areas to ensure they adapt to meet these needs without undermining the positive characteristics of the borough that make it an attractive and desirable place to locate. Good design guidance can help manage this balance by directing change and intensification to the most appropriate areas.

1.3.5 This design guidance helps provide the tools needed to protect and enhance the assets that define the borough's character, to ensure the changes required to enhance the areas in need and intensify key areas with potential, are appropriate to maintaining and enhancing this overall character. There is a lot of potential for positive change that can improve the quality, vibrancy and success of the borough. Good design guidance can help ensure that new development is the right development and will become long lasting assets to the borough's future success.

1.4 Scope

1.4.1 This document provides guidance at a number of levels, from promoting principles of good design to detailed guidance on alterations to buildings. It includes guidance on the character of the borough, building on a detailed character study undertaken of the whole borough. This includes research on areas that are of high quality to areas in need of improvement and a detailed assessment of density and housing character. These form a strong and fundamental policy framework for designing new development.

1.4.2 The document also provides guidance at the more detailed level, covering site layout, building design, materials, alterations, landscape and biodiversity, as well as space standards. This detailed guidance also concentrates on the spaces between the buildings – the public realm, an area which, as highway authority, the Council is able to influence the quality of directly. It does not attempt to unnecessarily repeat guidance given elsewhere, but does interpret it in the local context to ensure it is as specific to Merton as possible.

1.4.3 Although the guidance is primarily concerned with the physical environment, it is not simply about how it looks – although this is important in many respects - but about how it works. If a place is laid out in a way that is easy to use, provides facilities that are needed for a community to function, and means of getting around that are easy and convenient, then this lays the foundations for a successful place. This links the physical environment to the economic and social context. Good design is simply one of the tools used to ensure the development of successful places.

1.5 Status

- 1.5.1 This document, when adopted, will form part of the overall Development Plan for Merton Borough. This consists of the London Plan at regional level (Adopted July 2011), and the Local Development Framework (LDF) at the borough level. The LDF consists of a number of documents, the key ones being the Core Strategy (Adopted July 2011) and Sites and Policies DPD (in preparation).
- 1.5.2 The status of the document will be as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – one of the documents making up the Local Development Framework (LDF). When adopted, this guidance will be a material consideration for determining planning applications. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and associated regulations and guidance.

1.6 Consultation

- 1.6.1 The current status of this document is as a first draft, with approval for a first stage of consultation given by the Council's Cabinet on 16th January 2012. Consultation on this first draft will take place for a period of six weeks from January to March 2012. Exact dates will be published nearer the time. Following this, the responses will be collated and published on the Council's website. The responses will then be used to inform the completion of the document over the summer of 2012, followed by a further consultation in the autumn of 2012.

1.7 Audience

- 1.7.1 This guidance is intended for a wide audience, and is therefore written in plain English as far as is practicable. To aid the reader, the References chapter includes a glossary of common technical terms, document references, further reading and useful websites and contacts.
- 1.7.2 The guidance is intended for those wishing to undertake development of buildings and spaces in the borough. It is also intended to be used as a reference tool for those with an interesting commenting on any proposals for development.
- 1.7.3 The guidance is also to be used by the Council and its officers in shaping its own proposals for buildings and spaces in the borough and for officers and elected councillors in determining planning applications and approving other plans for change, such as policy documents, promotional material regeneration initiatives and masterplans.

1.8 Policy Context

- 1.8.1 The Planning & compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Localism Bill 2011 form the current and emerging statutory basis for planning policy in England. National planning policy is produced by the Government in the form of Planning Policy Guidance Statements (PPS) and previously Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG). National guidance relevant to this document is as follows:
- PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development, January 2005
 - PPS 3 Housing, June 2011
 - PPS 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, December 2009
 - PPS 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, March 2010
 - PPS 12 Local Spatial Planning, June 2008
 - PPG 13 Transport, March 2001
 - PPG 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation, July 2002
 - PPG 19 Outdoor Advertisement Control, March 1992
- 1.8.2 Supporting national planning policy are a number of ‘companion’ guides, giving guidance on implementation. These are also important documents in the policy context for this document, and in producing high quality design and successful places. Key documents relevant to this guidance include the following:
- By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System – Towards Better Practice, May 2000
 - Urban Design Compendium I, August 2000
 - Urban Design Compendium II, September 2007
 - Car Parking: What Works Where, March 2006
 - Manual for Streets 1, March 2007
 - Manual for Streets 2, September 2010
 - Safer Places, February 2004
- 1.8.3 In July 2011, the Government published a Draft National Planning Policy Framework. Consultation on this document closed in October 2011. This new Framework is intended to replace all current PPS and PPG guidance. This guidance document on design will need to reflect the progress of this draft guidance accordingly as it passes through the process towards adoption. Currently, existing PPS and PPG guidance is referred to.
- 1.8.4 Regional planning policy is provided by the London Plan, adopted in July 2011. Also particularly relevant to this guidance is the Interim London Housing Design Guide, published in August 2010, following the consultation draft published in July 2009. The interim version was published whilst the London Plan was progressed to adoption, thus setting a clear policy framework for adoption of the Design Guide. It is envisaged the London Housing Design Guide will be incorporated into a new SPG on Housing, and adopted by the end of 2011.

- 1.8.5 Local planning policy is currently in transition. Elements of the adopted 2003 Unitary Development Plan (UDP) are still in use and relevant. However, many of the UDP policies have now been superceded by the new policies in the Core Strategy, adopted in July 2011. The Council is currently in the process of preparing a Sites and Policies DPD, which will replace the remaining UDP policies. This will be consulted upon at the same time as this draft Design SPD document.
- 1.8.6 Supporting the UDP, Core Strategy and Sites and Policies DPD policies are a number of Council SPG, SPD and other guidance documents. This design guidance, when adopted, will supercede and replace a number of these documents. These are listed below:
- Design SPG, September 2004
 - New Residential Development SPG, December 1999
 - Residential Extensions, Alterations & Conversions SPG, November 2001
 - Designing out Crime SPG, September 1999
 - Public Realm Strategy, January 2009
 - Merton Street Design Guide, May 2006
 - Vehicle Crossover Information Pack - updated April 2011
 - Car Parking in Front Gardens Design Guidance, undated
 - Shop-front Design SPG, October 2000
 - Accessible Environments SPG, June 2003
- 1.8.7 Once adopted, this guidance should be read in conjunction with remaining relevant local policy guidance documents. Planning briefs, masterplans and Area Action Plans produced for specific sites will be developed for specific sites and areas will, in turn, interpret the guidance in this document as well as that in the core Strategy and Sites and Policies DPD.

1.9 Using this Guidance

- 1.9.1 Achieving high quality design should be considered from the outset in any proposal for development. This guidance is relevant to development proposals of all types, irrespective of land use or size. It is relevant to proposals for new buildings and also for minor alterations. Depending on the type of development being considered, only parts of this guidance may be directly relevant.
- 1.9.2 However, all development, no matter how small, must adhere to principles of good design and respect the character of the local area. Therefore the chapters on Good Design Principles and Borough Character should always be referred to. The guidance is ordered simply into four key chapters, covering the following general subject areas:

- Good Design Principles
- Detailed Design
- The Public Realm
- Borough Character

1.9.3 The chapter on Detailed Design is likely to be relevant to most new development, and the chapter on The Public Realm relevant in any new development fronting a highway or public right of way. Principles of good design apply equally to an extension as they do to a new building.

1.9.4 This guidance should be used in conjunction with other documents that make up the Development Plan, notably the London Plan, Core Strategy and Sites & Policies DPD. Also likely to be relevant are other SPD documents the Council has produced, be they subject based or site specific. This includes documents such as development briefs, masterplans, conservation area character statements and Area Action Plans. The guidance should also be used in conjunction with other relevant documents such as supplementary guidance to the London Plan and documents and guidance produced by other relevant agencies such as English Heritage, The Environment Agency and Transport for London.

1.9.5 Supplementary Planning Documents are able to be updated from time to time within the LDF plan period, as long as they remain in conformity with policies in the Core Strategy and Sites and Policies DPD. It is likely this guidance will evolve in this manner to take on board policy changes and relevant research. Such amendments to this document will be advertised and posted on the Council's website for users to download.

1.9.6 This guidance brings together in one document guidance currently found in a number of separate documents. Once adopted, this document will replace and supercede all the following guidance documents:

- Design SPG, September 2004
- New Residential Development SPG, December 1999
- Residential Extensions, Alterations & Conversions SPG, November 2001
- Designing out Crime SPG, September 1999
- Public Realm Strategy, January 2009
- Merton Street Design Guide, May 2006
- Vehicle Crossover Information Pack - updated April 2011
- Car Parking in Front Gardens Design Guidance, undated
- Shop-front Design SPG, October 2000

- Accessible Environments SPG, June 2003

2 Design Guidance - Good Design Principles

2.1 Principles of Good Design

2.1.1 Building successful places based on sound and established principles of good urban design is a fundamental element of successful placemaking. It is a holistic approach to the physical arrangement of our environment. It encompasses issues of layout, land use, security, economic development, regeneration, access, community and social life and the general appearance and attractiveness of places.

2.1.2 It is also key to achieving the sustainability of our environments by building places that have inherent longevity and the ability to endure changing circumstances – such as economic decline – without expensive interventions from the public sector. It is the public sector's role to ensure this happens through strong policy, co-ordination and partnership with other bodies.

2.1.3 Well designed places feel safe because they have built-in natural surveillance through the design of buildings and spaces, as well as having a complementary mix of uses and activities. Places that work well and look good also help engender a sense of belonging and local pride. This itself encourages community participation and helps keep a place safe. Excessive and overt manifestations of security features often have the opposite effect.

2.1.4 It is therefore important that guidance on design is underpinned by sound and clear principles of good urban design. The idea of designing our towns and cities according to a set of holistic principles, based on people, emerged from the failures of the 'brave new world' of motorised transport, that saw much of our town and city centres succumb to well intentioned redevelopment based around high rise living and new road building. Some of the thinking that developed is referred to in the 'further reading' section of this guidance.

2.1.5 This people-based approach has now found its way into mainstream planning policy. The importance of good design is enshrined in numerous national planning guidance documents. This was most apparent with the creation of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in 1999 (now merged with the Design Council) and the production of the key urban design guidance document – ***By Design, Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice***, a companion guide to the then PPG1 General Policy and Principles (now replaced by PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development).

2.2 By Design

- 2.2.1 By Design is the key Government guidance document on urban design principles and is as relevant today as it was when it was published in 2000. It represents a concise and accurate culmination of urban design thinking from the preceding decades since the 1960s. This SPD guidance on design therefore refers to and summarises elements this document as the key reference tool on principles of good urban design. All new development in Merton should be designed according to the design objectives set out in By Design. Whilst Government planning guidance will evolve and change, these design principles are well established, and will remain valid as design guidance.
- 2.2.2 This guidance refers in detail only to the ‘Objectives of urban design’ as set out on page 15 of By Design, although the whole document is relevant. As successful places tend to have characteristics in common - not the same as a common, homogenous character - these principles can be applied in almost all places at all levels. Thus this part of the document provides a degree of generic guidance. However, the summary text on each objective that follows the table below, is drawn from relevant design policies in the Site and Policies DPD and then related back to the Merton context. The objectives of urban design in By Design are set out in the table below:

BY DESIGN: OBJECTIVES OF URBAN DESIGN	
CHARACTER	A place with its own identity
CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE	A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguishable
QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM	A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas
EASE OF MOVEMENT	A place that is easy to get to and move through
LEGIBILITY	A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand
ADAPTABILITY	A place that can change easily
DIVERSITY	A place with variety and choice

- 2.2.3 Below, the objectives are explored in a little more detail as outlined above.

CHARACTER	A place with its own identity
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- 2.2.3 This objective is to *promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, landscape and culture.*
- 2.2.4 The start of the design process for any proposals should always begin with an assessment of local character and context. The distinctive elements of a building or area or that contribute to its character in a positive manner should be important elements in informing a new design. This includes the surrounding buildings and landscape, topography, building typology, form, bulk, scale, massing, building components and materials. *(DPD Policy Ref DM D1 i, ii & iv, Dm D2 i-v & vii-ix)*
- 2.2.5 Design that is informed by positive and relevant aspects of an areas local character reinforces local distinctiveness and allows an area to develop its own identity. This is particularly important in developing community identity. Places people can relate to and identify help to engender community spirit and cohesion. People then become more willing to look after areas they have a sense of ownership of. This can help places feel safe and deter antisocial activity.
- 2.2.6 The borough character study provides guidance which is integrated into this document in Chapter 5. This is based on a detailed assessment of the character of the whole borough. It identifies parts of the borough where character and identity is strong, could be improved and where it is lacking. New development must respond to the findings of the character study in order to reinforce local distinctiveness and character.
- 2.2.7 In areas that lack an identifiable character, or that have a negative one, new development and regeneration initiatives will need to develop an appropriate new identity. This will still need to be based on an assessment of local context, but should also be informed through identifying new opportunities, local needs, social and economic factors and reflecting relationships with other areas to ensure longevity and avoid unnecessary competition. Council regeneration initiatives will plan an important role in addressing the needs of such areas.

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguishable

- 2.2.8 This objective is *to promote the continuity of street frontages and the enclosure of spaces by development which clearly defines private and public areas.*
- 2.2.9 The streets and routes we create must have a clearly understandable transition between public and private areas. This is what establishes and defines the public realm and creates what we understand as streets - as opposed to roads, bypasses and roads assessing

individual buildings. This clarity between public and private space creates natural surveillance from buildings and the concept of 'defensible space'. (DPD Policy Ref DM D4 vii (v in latest draft))

- 2.2.10 For the public realm to be clearly defined, and defensible space to work, buildings need to be set close to the street edge and to have doors and windows that look out onto the street, providing activity and visibility between building and street. A clear and understandable transition between the public street and (usually) private building gives clarity to people about legitimate use of space and ownership and responsibility for it.
- 2.2.11 This helps with security and surveillance and, together with buildings close to the street edge, reduces the occurrence of ambiguous space and unnecessary 'landscaped' areas. An example of a transition from public to private space would be street – garden/forecourt – hall/lobby – rooms/offices – rear garden/service yard. This is also an effective means of using scarce urban land efficiently.
- 2.2.12 Laying out buildings in this manner in relation to a street also enables a continuous frontage to form, which restricts access to the more private rear areas, and so increases security. Developing our streets in this manner leads to a layout called a perimeter block – where the streets define a 'block' of land and the buildings are arranged around its 'perimeter' or edge – facing the street. This can be done rigidly or loosely depending on the character and density of the location.
- 2.2.13 Most of Merton's streets are based on a form of perimeter block. These areas tend to work well in terms of security and generally feel safe. Gridiron terraces are a good example of this. There are however, many areas where this form is not strong and other approaches are used. Certain Council estates and retail parks are examples of this. These areas often feel less safe and have a less clear sense of ownership. Opportunity must be taken, when development or regeneration in these areas is proposed, that development is based on the clear definition between public and private space that a perimeter block provides.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

A place with attractive and successful outdoor areas

- 2.2.14 This objective is to *promote public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe, uncluttered and work effectively for all in society, including disabled and elderly people.*
- 2.2.15 The public realm should be based on a clearly identifiable network of public streets and spaces with a clear distinction between public and private space based on the concept of 'defensible space'. Development, particularly in town centres, should interact positively with the public realm through the creation of active and attractive

frontages that promote natural surveillance. The creation of blank walls, and windows obscured by advertising undermined this and should not be allowed. (*DPD Policy Ref DM D4 vii (v in latest draft)& ix (vii in latest draft)*)

- 2.2.16 The key to a successful public realm is in the buildings and activities that define it. Achieving natural surveillance and defensible space requires a balance between achieving a clear signal about what is public and private – particularly for residential and office uses – and achieving a clear visual relationship between the activities in the buildings and activities in the street.
- 2.2.17 It is important in all streets to ensure sufficient activity to provide natural surveillance. Therefore the incidence of windows and entrances should be maximised. In town centres, high streets and shopping areas it is also important to maximise the visibility between the inside and outside of the buildings to ensure people can see what is going on in each. This is good for natural surveillance as well as for advertising goods, being inviting to customers and for legibility in buildings – having clarity about entrances and clearly visible reception and lobby areas.
- 2.2.18 In town centres it is also important to have a mix of uses to provide activity throughout the day and evening and to create vibrant and interesting areas that will be attractive places people want to be in. Parks, squares and other open spaces are also part of the public realm and should be provided in new developments as well as having clear and well overlooked routes and spaces. The public realm is the setting for our daily lives – it is how we get around, how we access facilities, where we socialise. It is used for civic occasions, entertainment and protest. It should therefore remain public. A lack of mix of uses in commercial areas and gated residential developments are not appropriate.
- 2.2.19 The quality of the public realm is also defined by its appearance, attractiveness and durability. The materials used for road surfaces, paving and public spaces must be attractive, relate well to the setting and be long lasting and not unduly expensive or difficult to maintain to a high standard. Repairs must be undertaken swiftly and vigilance given to ensuring the public realm is made good after works by utilities companies.
- 2.2.20 The quality of the public realm is also defined by the quality and quantity of infrastructure it contains, as well as its utility and convenience. A balance needs to be struck between providing facilities that are needed and avoiding unnecessary street clutter. This includes infrastructure such as traffic lights, lighting and road signs, as well as trees, seating, cycle parking and public art. The public realm chapter explores these issues in more detail.

- 2.2.21 Much of the borough is built with a traditional layout of streets that supports a good quality public realm. Most new proposed development adheres to this form. However, issues relating to the quality of entrances to upper floors in commercial and retail buildings, and dead frontages to ground floors – especially in food retail uses and some non-retail uses in town centres remain issues that need to be addressed.
- 2.2.22 This is important in maintaining a high quality public realm. Some areas have also been developed entirely contrary to these requirements, such as out-of-town style retail areas and some industrial areas. In addition, much of the physical fabric of the borough's town and local centres streets is tired and in need of renewal and de-cluttering. Enhancement schemes are being implemented and more are needed. Individual projects as well as larger scale regeneration initiatives must address these issues.

**EASE OF
MOVEMENT**

A place that is easy to get to and move through

- 2.2.23 This objective is to *promote accessibility and local permeability by making places that connect with each other and are easy to move through, putting people before traffic and integrating land uses and transport.*
- 2.2.24 Urban layouts should be based on a permeable and easily navigable network of recognisable streets, routes and spaces that link in seamlessly with surrounding development and facilitate walking, cycling and use of public transport. *(DPD Policy Ref DM D4 i)*
- 2.2.25 Developments that are inward looking, with poor links lengthen trips, make walking and cycling less attractive and encourage travel by car for short distances. A network of interconnected routes allows for the dispersal of traffic and a range of alternative routes. This makes them more flexible, able to adapt to congestion and change, and makes for a richer experience of the public realm. The perimeter block is the most permeable form of urban layout for all users and modes.
- 2.2.26 Isolated communities and gated developments are exclusive and limit people's ability to move freely around our environment – the public realm – a place for all. Safe places are those where people do not feel trapped or able to escape from trouble. This applies to the majority of people and should be the overriding factor in decisions on the safety of our streets.
- 2.2.27 The majority of streets and routes in Merton are well connected, being developed mostly before mass car ownership. There are however, more recent areas of housing that were developed based around the convenience of car use. These areas are usually poorly

connected to their surroundings. They present barriers to movement, not only for pedestrians and cyclists, but also to developing convenient bus routes. Where routes are provided, they are often afterthoughts and of poor quality.

- 2.2.28 Irrespective of whether a through vehicular route is desirable or planned, a wide route such as a proper street has good natural surveillance and is clearly visible as a route to somewhere. Proper streets can be used by emergency vehicles, buses and if circumstances change, other types of motor traffic in the future – it is safe, convenient and adaptable to change. There will be a number of future development and regeneration sites in Merton where this principle will be particularly relevant, particularly on larger sites. Some initiatives will be proposed based largely around improving connectivity.

LEGIBILITY

A place that has a clear image and is easy to understand

- 2.2.29 This objective is to *promote legibility through development that provides routes, intersections and landmarks to help people find their way around.*
- 2.2.30 Our urban environments should be easy to understand and navigate through, by provision of legible routes, spaces and landmarks and clearly defined buildings and spaces. *(DPD Policy Ref DM D4 ii)*
- 2.2.31 Developments that are inward looking often provide little or no visual cues to navigate by. Layouts based on cul-de-sacs usually require tortuous and indirect routes to get between places, making orientation difficult and forcing reliance on formal signage. Accessible streets based on a perimeter block layout are inherently legible and easy to navigate in conjunction with the buildings that line them.
- 2.2.32 Land uses, architecture and building heights and density can be used to aid peoples orientation around our streets. Taller buildings, distinctive architectural design and mixed uses provide for landmarks to orientate by and mark out main streets from side streets. Community and retail buildings often provide local landmarks, such as churches, shopping parades, community centres and schools. Transport interchanges and stations also act as orientation points and landmarks in themselves. Inward looking development does not provide this richness of visual cues, nor a richness of activity.
- 2.2.33 A permeable network of streets combined with a clear hierarchy of building types, uses and visual cues such as local landmarks makes for easier navigation around our borough. The ability to navigate without the need to rely on signage, and to easily find alternative routes should be the basis of a good urban layout.

2.2.34 Much of Merton's streets are residential, and often homogenous. But even most of these have permeable streets and local landmarks in the form of pubs, shops, churches and community buildings. New development must maintain this balance. The borough also has some landmark buildings that are disliked and considered unattractive. New development and regeneration initiatives need to address this and improve these. Other places in Merton, such as stations and transport interchanges, do not make the most of their connectivity to provide landmark buildings that contribute to a legible environment.

ADAPTABILITY A place that can change easily

2.2.35 This objective is to *promote adaptability through development that can respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.*

2.2.36 The buildings and spaces we create must be economically and socially sustainable, by offering variety and choice. They must be able to adapt physically to changing social, technological and economic conditions with minimal disruption, cost and without the need for future remedial intervention. *(DPD Policy Ref DM D4 iii)*

2.2.37 Adaptable environments are sustainable environments, as they require less resources to change, and are able to change gradually. Large areas built as a single entity, or according to a rigid design format, are often unable to change incrementally. This often means decline sets in before change happens. This has a negative effect on an area and often public sector intervention is necessary. Adaptable and robust areas, both at the area and building scale – including the interior of buildings, are less likely to require this financial burden on the taxpayer. Adaptable environments are also ones that better enable historic buildings to be reused economically and reduce pressure for their demolition.

2.2.38 A physical fabric that is able to change incrementally is likely to be able to change gradually this can happen most easily if the environment is laid out in a permeable manner, with a network of streets. This enables the land in between to be developed and occupied by a range of uses, users and owners. They will be able to adapt to change as and when it affects them, and not have to rely on a single large landowner. The perimeter block is the most adaptable form of urban layout and should be the basis for all larger development sites and regeneration area initiatives in Merton.

2.2.39 A diverse social and economic mix similarly contributes to a more resilient community that can respond to change as it happens. If an area is able to respond incrementally but as circumstances change, communities are able to remain intact, survive and evolve. At the building level, changes in family circumstances and communications

technology need to be able to be accommodated without the need to move or rebuild. This, building to Lifetime Homes standards and creating accommodation that can be extended, and altered individually will enable communities to develop and remain stable.

- 2.2.40 Although much of the borough is residential and made up of individual houses and small blocks of flats, there are a number of areas that are less adaptable. This includes a number of Council housing estates and parts of our town centres. Some of these areas will require regeneration by the Council in the future, with a range of partners. The future success of these areas must be secured by making them as adaptable to future change as possible.

DIVERSITY

A place with variety and choice

- 2.2.41 this objective is to *promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.*
- 2.2.42 New development must provide a mix of uses appropriate to the location that promotes vitality, vibrancy and viability in the borough. It should support the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities, successful town centres and Council regeneration initiatives, whilst protecting and enhancing the prevailing character of the borough. (*DPD Policy Ref DM D4 vi (removed from latest draft – needs to be reinserted)*)
- 2.2.43 The key to successful town and local centres is the coming together of a mix of uses that support each other to create an attractive and diverse environment. Such areas will be places where people work, live and entertain themselves, places where people want to be. To achieve this there needs to be a critical mass of development to ensure commercial viability and a diverse range of facilities. This means town centres need to be able to achieve higher densities of development without undermining local character.
- 2.2.44 For a centre to be vibrant it needs to offer a range of choices, in an attractive setting, that is easy to get to, in order to attract people in numbers that will create a positive atmosphere and level of activity that creates vibrancy. It needs to do this throughout the whole of the day and into the evening. Dead town centre in the evening can become 'ghost towns' and offer poor natural surveillance and security for people and premises.
- 2.2.45 Accessibility is important for successful town and local centres as it allows more people to visit the area, makes it a more attractive place to live and supports a safe and flexible working day and evening economy. Higher densities and mixed uses in town and local centres and areas of high transport accessibility are important in creating safe and vibrant places and efficient and effective use of land.

- 2.2.46 In areas outside town centres such as residential and industrial areas, achieving high density and mixed use is less important. However, residential areas should be of a sufficient density to be able to support public transport, local shops and community facilities as well as providing open space. If a place is not able to provide the range of uses and facilities its residents need to live their lives, then it will not operate or be perceived as a distinct place. This will make it hard for a place to develop and a sense of community to evolve among its residents.
- 2.2.47 This affects the viability of an area, both as an identifiable place or community, and economically, as a place that can provide a critical mass of people and facilities that will feed off each other and generate enough income. For an area to be stable in this respect it needs a range of people with a range of needs and requirements. A diverse population will provide a greater variety and richness of facilities to the benefit of everyone. It will also be more resilient to external forces of change.
- 2.2.48 In Merton there are many vibrant areas but there are also areas that are suffering decline. Local facilities are being lost or are in need of rejuvenation. New facilities need appropriate places to locate. Some town and local centres are in decline due to changing retailing patterns and the effects of economic change. New development needs to address these issues and ensure diversity of use, activity and community is 'built-in' to new development proposals and regeneration initiatives.

2.3 Building for Life

- 2.3.1 Building for Life (BfL) is the national standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods. It is led by CABI (now merged with the Design Council) and the Home Builders Federation (HBF). It is backed by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Design for Homes and the Civic Trust.
- 2.3.2 Building for Life is a set of 20 criteria designed to be used to test the quality of residential developments – a '20 question audit'. Although designed for residential development, many of the criteria are relevant to all types of development. The criteria embody a vision that housing developments should be attractive, functional and sustainable.
- 2.3.3 The principles underpinning the criteria are based on government policy and on guidance developed by CABI and Design for Homes. Design for Homes is a not-for-profit company promoting good design in housing. It organises the Government's national Housing Design Awards scheme.

- 2.3.4 The awards are based on BfL assessments of schemes put forward. The HCA only funds developments that have a BfL score of 14 or higher. CABE has organised and trained accredited assessors in the public sector to use the 20 BfL criteria to assess development proposals. The BfL criteria can also be used by anyone as a quality check tool.
- 2.3.5 The Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) publish requirements on planning subjects that Council are required to monitor annually – ‘core output indicators’. In 2008, the CLG introduced a core output indicator for assessing the quality of housing (H6) and cited Building for Life as an approved means by which this could be done. The Council’s Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) will include an assessment of completed housing development using the BfL criteria.
- 2.3.6 The full set of 20 design criteria can be found at the Building for Life website www.buildingforlife.org. This includes more detailed information on the criteria and advice on how to assess quality. It also includes information on the history and development of Building for Life. The 20 criteria should be used in conjunction with the objectives in By Design and CABE guidance on Design and Access Statements as complementary tools for designing high quality, well designed and sustainable development. The 20 criteria are summarised below:

ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY

1. Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as a school, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafes?
2. Is there an accommodation mix that reflects the needs and aspirations of the local community?
3. Is there a tenure mix that reflects the needs of the local community?
4. Does the development have easy access to public transport?
5. Does the development have any features that reduce its environmental impact?

CHARACTER

6. Is the design specific to the scheme?
7. Does the scheme exploit existing buildings, landscape or topography?
8. Does the scheme feel like a place with distinctive character?
9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around?

10. Are streets defined by a well structured building layout?

STREETS, PARKING & PEDESTRIANISATION

11. Does the building layout take priority over the streets and car parking, so that highways do not dominate?

12. Is the car parking well integrated and situated so it supports the street scene?

13. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?

14. Does the scheme integrate with existing streets, paths and surrounding development?

15. Are public spaces and pedestrian routes overlooked and do they feel safe?

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

16. Is the public space well designed and does it have suitable management arrangements on place?

17. Do the buildings exhibit architectural quality?

18. Do internal spaces and layout allow for adaptation, conversion or extension?

19. Has the scheme made use of advances in construction or technology that enhances its performance, quality and attractiveness?

20. Do buildings or spaces outperform statutory minima, such as building regulations?

2.3.7 Scores are given of 0.0, 0.5 or 1.0 for each question, depending on whether the criteria have been met. These are then added up to give a final score. The scores are graded – 9.5 or less = POOR, 10-13.5 = AVERAGE, 14-15.5 = GOOD and 16-20 = VERY GOOD. The HCA uses Building for Life to assess the quality of the housing development it funds. It will only fund development with a BfL score of 14 (good) or more. When using BfL, the Council will use similarly high standards.

2.3.8 The Council will expect all residential developments and mixed use developments with a residential element to perform positively against BfL criteria. Applicants who submit their own BfL assessments may have them tested by an accredited assessor. The Council will use BfL to assess developments as necessary as a legitimate tool in assessing design quality and in negotiating with applicants to ensure delivery of high quality design and residential quality.

2.4 Adaptable Buildings and Lifetime Homes

- 2.4.1 By Design refers to the objective of adaptable environments. This objective also translates to the interior of buildings. This applies to all types of buildings, for whatever use. This is important in terms of building sustainability, and also in terms of housing it is also important for quality of life and maintaining stable social communities. Housing that is able to adapt to changing needs of occupants enables them to stay in homes longer. This avoids personal upheaval, allows independence to be maintained, has physical and mental health benefits and enables people to stay in their established communities – helping maintaining the strength of the community itself.
- 2.4.2 An adaptable home is also one that can accommodate internal changes according to differing needs of occupants. This could depend on household size and type, different lifestyles and cultures and the ability to work from home (as distinct from live-work development). This therefore requires sufficient quantity of rooms of good sizes, rooms that are suitable for different uses, and with respect to houses, the ability to extend or adapt the house – such as providing adaptable roof space.
- 2.4.3 The concept of Lifetime Homes was developed in the early 1990s by a group of housing experts, notably the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Habinteg Housing Association. Lifetime Homes is now part of mainstream planning policy and building regulations. All public sector funded housing in England must be built to the Lifetime Homes standard (HCA policy). Meeting Lifetime Homes standards is also one way of meeting Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) requirements. By 2013, all homes will need to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards. Lifetime Homes is a set of 16 design criteria that are applied to ordinary homes to ensure they meet a minimum level of flexibility. This applies to the approach as well as the interior.
- 2.4.4 Full information on Lifetime Homes can be found on the Lifetime Homes website at <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk>. The concept of Lifetime Homes is based on changing circumstances in personal mobility, due either to disability or becoming elderly. The Lifetime Homes 16 design criteria are summarised below:

1. Car Parking Width	A wider parking space improves access to and from a vehicle for a wide range of people.
2. Access from Car Parking	A car parking space close to the home and a level or gently sloping footpath makes getting between the home and the car convenient and easy.
3. Approach Gradients	Using a level or gently sloping approach to the home avoids the access difficulties that steps can present.
4. Entrances	A level threshold gives easy access to everybody - wheelchair users, parents with children's buggies, bikes and toys, older people, people with shopping, young children and is generally safer when entering or leaving a house.

5. Communal Stairs & Lifts	Narrow stairs can limit access to other floors in a home or between homes - wider, shallower stairs (easy going) are easier to climb and for some people a lift may be more convenient.
6. Doorways & Hallways	As a measurement, if a wheelchair user can approach and use a door, most other people with or without reduced mobility, can.
7. Wheelchair Accessibility	Basic wheelchair access throughout the property is not only essential should this need arise, but also creates sufficient space for other households and as a space standard.
8. Living Room	An entrance level living room provides an accessible space to socialise with the household for any visitor regardless of their level of mobility.
9. Entrance Level Bedspace	The potential for an entrance level bed space is very useful if a member of the household is temporarily unable to access other levels of the house.
10. Entrance Level WC & Shower Drainage	Providing drainage for a future accessible shower means that accessible washing facilities for the household, should they need it, is a simple and low-cost adaptation.
11. Bathroom & WC Walls	Bathroom and cloakroom walls should be strong enough to support grab rail and other fixings if these adaptations are required.
12. Stair Lift/Through-Floor Lift	Bathroom and cloakroom walls should be strong enough to support grab rail and other fixings if these adaptations are required.
13. Tracking Hoist Route	The potential structure for a ceiling tracking hoist makes it easy to install should it be needed. If mobility is reduced due to illness or disability it is particularly helpful to have the bedroom and bathroom close to one another.
14. Bathroom Layout	Bathrooms require a certain amount of space to be functional; cramped, inaccessible conditions prevent efficient use of the facilities. Space either in front of or beside WC facilities are essential for ease of access.
15. Window Specification	Window control is essential for ventilation and temperature control. Handles and windows at a usable height improves access to window controls and a low cill in the living room ensures a view for people at sitting-height.
16. Controls, Fixtures & Fittings	Sockets, switches and controls used on a day to day basis by the household located at heights that are not too high, or too low, to be reached comfortably by any potential occupant of the home.

2.4.5 The Council will use Lifetime Homes standards in assessing the quality of all new residential developments, in conjunction with other means of assessing design quality of development. This is particularly so in relation to internal housing design in general and meeting space standards. This is covered in more detail in the chapter on detailed design guidance. The Council will encourage applicants to maximise the number of proposed dwellings meeting Lifetime Homes standards.

2.5 Sustainable Development

- 2.5.1 Good urban design is synonymous with sustainable development. Following the objectives found in By Design will produce development that is more sustainable. Generally it achieves this at a structural level, in terms of providing an urban layout and buildings that are long lasting and adaptable to change. Providing environments that are permeable, legible and adaptable is key to achieving this. Development is more efficient in terms of the energy and resources required to construct it if it lasts longer.
- 2.5.2 This complements the Council's climate change policies which ensure new development minimises its energy requirements, through construction, operation and use of renewable resources. Major regeneration proposals in the borough, particularly in the Colliers Wood/South Wimbledon Area for Intensification (AFI) also provide the opportunity for implementing District Heat and Power (DHP) networks, providing renewable, cheaper energy resources.
- 2.5.3 The Council will use its planning powers and policies to achieve development that meets its climate change and urban design objectives and create sustainable, attractive and successful places. It will do this to meet its Strategic Objectives 1 and 6 in the Core Strategy in relation to climate change.
- 2.5.4 In addition to urban design principles being complementary to sustainable development, energy and carbon can be massively reduced through site appropriate design. Basic design principles such as orientation, natural lighting, and building fabric, have a huge impact on the level of space heating, cooling, and power required by a building. Whilst Merton supports the development of low energy and carbon buildings through the use of accredited building schemes such as the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), for non domestic buildings, and the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH), for domestic buildings, it is important that developers to take these basic design principles into consideration from early on in the design process.

Building Orientation

- 2.5.5 The orientation of a building has a huge impact on its performance and energy use over its entire life span. Orientation can maximize solar gain, keeping the building warm in winter, and minimize overheating, keeping the building cool in summer. Orientating the main living spaces to the south will help to reduce the level of heating and lighting required to use these spaces whereas solar shading measures, like louvers and blinds, will help to prevent over heating in the summer. Whilst the optimal orientation is desirable, existing street patterns, building forms and other constraints may dictate a compromise is made on the optimal orientation for a building.

Natural Lighting

- 2.5.6 Artificial lighting accounts for approximately 20% of energy use within the UK. Recent studies show that access to sufficient natural lighting is important to the occupant in terms of health and well being. Small windows, a small number of windows and poor, north facing light are likely to provide a poor quality environment and have a negative effect on occupants' health and well being.
- 2.5.7 The size and position of windows specified for a building has also to be balanced against the effect on the level of solar gain, heat loss, ventilation and acoustic control. Whilst there are minimum levels of natural light recommended for specific interiors and tasks, overexposure to natural light can led to excessive solar gain and overheating. The design and specification of windows should be adequately considered.

Low Impact Materials

- 2.5.8 Consideration of building materials is important for a number of reasons. It takes energy and resources to produce a building material and carbon emissions are produced as a result of the manufacturing process. Whilst some materials can be recycled or reused at the end of their lifespan others are difficult and expensive to dispose of.
- 2.5.9 Some materials contain Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and organic chemicals contaminants (such as formaldehyde) which can have an adverse effect on the health of the building occupants (also known as sick building syndrome). It is now possible to specify products that are VOC free or contain low levels.
- 2.5.10 Merton encourages the specification of materials which have a lower environmental impact. An established method of scientifically rating the environmental performance and impact of materials has been developed by BRE and is called The Green Guide to Specification. Transportation of materials also uses energy and where viable, local sourcing of materials is encouraged.

Fabric Efficiency

- 2.5.11 One of the ways in which heat is lost from a building is through the building fabric. Good thermal insulation helps to stabilize the internal temperature of a building by slowing down the heat loss, helping to conserve energy use and reduce heating costs. It can also help to minimize the risk of overheating by restricting the flow of heat into a building when the outside temperature is higher than the inside temperature.
- 2.5.12 The *U*-Value is the measure of the rate at which heat is lost through a material. The lower the *U*-Value of a material the less heat can be

lost through it. Building Regulations call for minimum u-values for each building element (such as walls, floors and roofs) and both BREEAM and CSH encourage the reduction in building energy demand through the careful use of materials before resorting to technological solutions.

- 2.5.13 Another way in which heat is lost from a building is through air leakage paths in the building envelope. These are unintentional gaps in the building fabric which allow the warm air to escape. This is then replaced by cold air from outside, which must then be heated. It is believed that poor air tightness is responsible for up to 40% of heat loss from buildings. Air leakage paths can be avoided by careful design and good quality construction practice. As of 2006 all new non-domestic buildings over 500 m² and a sample of new built dwellings are required to undertake an air pressure test as part of Building Regulations.

Ventilation

- 2.5.14 Building ventilation is necessary to continuously remove contaminated air and provide occupants with a new, clean air source. Natural ventilation can be achieved by a variety of methods, such as opening windows (to provide cross ventilation – as in dual aspect dwellings), building vents and stack ventilation (where air rises). Whilst naturally ventilated buildings generally use less energy than those with mechanical ventilation it is not suitable for all building types, where mechanical or mixed mode ventilation (a combination of both mechanical and natural ventilation) may be more appropriate. Minimum ventilation rates are required by Part L of the Building Regulations.
- 2.5.15 Issues of environmental and building sustainability, as well as climate change, are explored in more detail in the Council's SPD on sustainable Design and Construction. This guidance document sets out in detail the Council's policy on these matters.

2.6 Safe Environments

- 2.6.1 Physical safety and freedom from crime are fundamental concerns of all people and are rightly an important consideration in designing our environment. Some places feel, and are, safer than others. This is not just an attribute of social decay, anti-social behaviour or impressions about people's behaviour. It can be, in large part, due to the way a place is designed – its layout and the mix of people and activities there are. Of course design on its own doesn't offer a complete solution. Other factors will always come to bear - one cannot design-out individuals' propensity to criminal acts.
- 2.6.2 However, it is possible to design places that make criminal activity physically difficult and deter people from risking criminal acts. Good

urban design can help shift the balance away from places that have a lower perceived risk of being caught towards ones where the risk is considered too high, or the effort involved too great, to warrant undertaking criminal activity.

2.6.3 Often, if a place feels safe, it is because it deters crime and thus is safe. Designing according to principles of good urban design – as in the objectives of By Design complements and supports the desire to have places that feel safe and where crime and anti-social behaviour is low. ***Safer Places – The Planning System and Crime Prevention***, published by ODPM and the Home office, provides guidance on this issue.

2.6.4 Safer Places provides detailed guidance on issues relating safety in the built environment. A key element of this guidance consists of a set of seven attributes of community safety that are relevant to crime prevention. These are compatible with and overlap principles of good urban design. They are as follows:

1. Access and Movement	Places with well defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security
2. Structure	Places that are structured so that different uses do not cause conflict
3. Surveillance	Places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked
4. Ownership	Places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community
5. Physical Protection	Places that include necessary, well-designed security features
6. Activity	Places where the level of human activity is appropriate to the location and creates a reduced risk of crime and a sense of safety at all times
7. Management and Maintenance	Places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future

2.6.5 When addressing issues of community safety, it is important to design from the viewpoint of the safety & convenience of the citizen – not any one agency. This should lead to passive and self-policing measures, rather than measures designed to be seen. Overt security measures often highlight opportunities for crime or can send out messages that suggest the area is unsafe because of the visibility of measures – so making people feel less comfortable. Security measures can often add to the visual clutter of places and so make them less attractive.

2.6.6 A place should not design-in security by exclusive means such as gated developments and security cameras, but use inclusive means such as high levels of activity throughout the day, natural surveillance, good lighting and provide environments people take pride in and are willing to look after. Designing for people’s safety

should consider the citizen first – therefore should look at providing escape routes so people can escape from danger, rather than limiting perpetrators potential escape routes. Overt and conspicuous security measures should only be used where absolutely necessary and other softer measures have been proven to be ineffective.

- 2.6.7 Understanding this difference is fundamental to understanding perceptions of safety both from the citizen's viewpoint and in the use of urban design principles to design out crime. When trouble is encountered, the overriding need is usually for people to be able to move to a safer place. If the layout does not provide escape routes the perception, and reality, is that it is less safe. Of secondary importance is the ability to minimise escape routes for perpetrators. When crime occurs, in most instances the citizen does not take on the perpetrator and the police are often unable to be present soon enough for there to be benefits in designing in this manner.

2.7 Design & Access Statements

- 2.7.1 Design and Access statements (DAS) are a communication tool to help assess the design quality, access issues and sustainability credentials of an application. A DAS is a report accompanying and supporting a planning application to illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal and explain it in a structured way. It should explain the thinking behind the proposal and explain why it is appropriate. The level of detail required in a DAS will depend on the scale and complexity of the application and should be proportionate to this.
- 2.7.2 Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires most planning applications for development to provide a DAS. Government Circular 01/2006 – Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System, the General Permitted Development Order 2008, CLG Guidance on Information Requirements and Validation (of planning applications) and the CABI document Design & Access Statements, How to Write, Read and Use Them all provide detailed guidance on producing and using DAS including what development is exempt from providing a DAS.
- 2.7.3 DAS are intended to help ensure development proposals are based on a thoughtful and sustainable design approach. DAS enable the Council to better understand the analysis which has underpinned the design and how it has led to the particular scheme proposed. Thus the content of the DAS should clearly show this analysis and indeed, that a thorough analysis has been done. It should show that thinking about design, access and sustainability underpin the proposals and have been thought about from the start. This is what is meant by a design-led process.

- 2.7.4 DAS is a key Development Control tool to assess the design, access and sustainability quality of new development. Applicants should use it in conjunction with other qualitative measures such as Building for Life and Lifetime Homes. The Council is able to refuse to register planning applications that do not include a DAS, or applications where the DAS does not contain sufficient information to enable the application to be properly assessed.

3 Design Guidance – Details

Introduction

This will give a brief overview of the chapter content and outline the reasons the guidance is needed and what the guidance aims to do.

Good Site Layout & Design

This section will provide guidance on how to go about good site layout and design, from the concept to the details. This will support the London Plan policies on sense of arrival and home as a place of retreat. It will also deal with the importance of the relationship with the street and building entrances that are safe and attractive. It will refer to providing well designed entrances to flats above shops.

The Context of New Development

This section will provide guidance on how to go about relating new development properly to the surrounding context. It will cover how to identify and relate to positive elements of the surroundings and interpret them in new buildings. It will also give guidance on enhancing damaged character and create appropriate new character

Sustainability & Biodiversity

This section will build on the issues raised in Chapter 2 and give advice on these in more detail. It will also cover design policy in relation to green roofs and walls, how design can facilitate the viability of DHP and CHP systems, the importance of gardens and good drainage and un-culverting of watercourses, and particularly how to building in renewables in visually sensitive ways that support high quality innovative design.

Intensification & Density

This section will explain issues of intensification and density in relation to good design. It will show how good design and site layout can facilitate intensification that produces high quality urban environments that are not over-development, do not undermine valued character and do not need to result in inappropriately tall buildings. This section will refer to the London Plan density matrix

and identify the areas of the borough which fall into its categories of Central, Urban and Suburban for interpretation of the matrix. This will form part of a detailed current residential density map of the borough, based on gross dwellings per hectare and identified housing typologies. These will be based on the neighbourhood and character areas defined in the Borough Character Study

Mixed Uses & Viability

This section will introduce the concept of mixed use and its importance in creating vitality, vibrant and viable environments, linking this to economic prosperity and community cohesion. It will identify the most appropriate locations for different levels and types of uses and activities that support the Core Strategy sub-area policies. It will make the distinction between mix of uses over areas and mix of uses within buildings and their relative benefits and drawbacks and where each is most suitable.

Architectural Quality

This section will give guidance on how to achieve architectural quality without being subjective. It will refer to different ways this can be done at different levels of detail. It will show how detailing on contemporary buildings is important and how it can be achieved in buildings of apparently simple or plain elevations. It will give guidance on how elements of local context can give cues to creating a locally distinctive architectural solution for a new building.

Building Design & Materials

This section will concentrate more on the general design of buildings, such as proportion, massing, scale, use of materials in relation to each other and local context. It will look at individual building layout on site and internally. Also covered will be how sustainable building and construction can be designed-in to new buildings and how it can encourage innovation in design.

Residential Space & Amenity Standards

This section will form a key element of this Chapter. It will make reference to the London Plan residential space standards. It will take forward and interpret in a Merton context the design advice contained in the London housing Design Guide. Much of this will be incorporated into the new GLA SPG on housing. However, there remains scope here to draw out the elements that are particularly important for Merton. This includes dual aspect dwellings, separate kitchens and amenity space standards. There are also guidance requirements that are prioritised and Merton will need to take a view on what is most important for itself. Merton's space standards are more generous than those in the London Plan and a case will be

made to retain these based on the borough's suburban, green character. Evidence such as the detailed density and typology maps of the borough will be important in making this case.

Tall Buildings

This section will draw on the recommendations in the Tall buildings Background paper, part of the evidence for the Core Strategy. It will take these and develop them into detailed policy guidance for the appropriate location of tall buildings. It will also define what tall buildings are in detail.

Important Views & Vistas

Policy guidance on this subject will also be written derived from the Tall Buildings Background Paper. A map will be produced showing the important views and vistas in the borough and why they are considered to be an important element of the borough's character.

Backland & Rear Gardens

This subject will build on Relevant London Plan policies and advise on how to assess whether backland development will have a detrimental effect on an area's character – referring where necessary to the Borough Character Study and prevailing density map. It will look at how good site planning and design can contribute to ensuring development is appropriate to the setting.

Building Extensions & Conversions

The content of this section will be based largely on the Residential Extensions, Alterations & Conversions SPD and the more recent Dwelling Conversions Background Paper. It will give practical guidance on good and acceptable design for alterations to buildings – not just residential buildings, including conversion of offices to residential, entrances and the issue of shared service cores.

4 Design Guidance - The Public Realm

Introduction

The introduction will introduce some over-arching principles for design in the public realm and make clear that, as highway authority, the Council has a major role to play in shaping the quality of the public realm and setting a good example to others. The main principle will be based on keeping things simple and de-cluttering, with emphasis also on the importance of not over-engineering, controlling the cumulative things and good maintenance and enforcement. It will state that creating a high quality public realm can aid regeneration (showing commitment, investment and facilitating

investor confidence) as part of a wider package of measures, but cannot regenerate on its own. It will establish that whilst the quality of the public realm is important, it is essentially the setting or 'stage' for the buildings and activities they create.

The Street

This section will go on to define what the street is in terms of its uses and spatial characteristics and how we use it to go about our business and daily lives. It will look at it in terms of traffic and as a social space. It will establish the importance of the street as a space for all users and the need to create an appropriate balance of priority depending on need and character. It will also establish - when looking at improvements - the need to look at streets as a whole, rather than individual issues or users. It will recommend a change to a culture of inter-disciplinary working in designing and implementing changes and improvements and in assessing and reviewing plans and proposals.

Activity & Vitality

This section will give guidance on the importance of appropriate levels of activity in the public realm – streets and spaces – to create high quality spaces that are successful socially and economically. It will give guidance on where different uses and levels of activity are appropriate and why, and how they are important for creating a successful public realm.

Security & Safety

Following from the above, this section will give guidance on how the public realm can be designed to feel inherently secure and safe through the right levels of activity and appropriate types of use and times of day they take place. Design principles of perimeter blocks, public-private definition, defensible space and clearly defined ownership boundaries will be used to show how they can create an environment that feels comfortable for all.

Shop-fronts

This section will show the impact of shop-front design on the quality of the public realm and how it affects its character and people's perception of it. It will give examples of good and bad shop-fronts and what their positive and negative effects can be. The section will then give guidance on what is good shop-front design and how the council can prevent poor shop-fronts from appearing. The section will also give clear guidance on the appropriate use of shutters.

Advertisements

This section will look at the effects of advertising on the quality of the public realm – positive and negative, including the economic and social effects it has on the character of an area. It will state what the council's powers are in relation to regulation. This section will also establish the extent of advertising in the borough based on an evidence base survey of billboards, and cover the subject of A boards. The section will also refer to research undertaken on effects on driver safety. The section will give clear policy guidance on controlling advertising and the reasons for it. Examples will be given of where improvements have been made through effective enforcement action as part of wider enhancement initiatives.

Public Art

This section will give promote the use of public art in our streets and spaces and their importance of making it accessible, understandable, thought provoking, exciting and delightful. It will give guidance and examples on what is appropriate and where.

The Public-Private Interface

This section will describe in detail the concept of defensible space and the successful definition of the change between public and private space. It will show why it is important to have this clear definition in terms of maintenance, ownership, community pride, safety, crime prevention and character. This will relate strongly to the London Plan policies about sense of arrival and home as a place of retreat.

Front Gardens & Crossovers

This section will look at the role front gardens play as important contributors to the public realm. It will look at the impact on them made by owners, in terms of trends in garden design, maintenance and the desire to have private, off-street parking. The effects on the public realm will be explored, also in the context of the effect of crossovers on parking provision and management. The section will provide policy guidance on these issues and provide an updated version of the current crossover information pack. Policy will be based on protecting character and maximising the ability of the council to manage on-street parking whilst allowing residents to park off street where suitable. Guidance will be based on research into case law where appropriate.

Parking Provision

This section will cover the general issue of how cars are dealt with in the public realm and how best to design for them, in terms of good urban design, safety, crime reduction and personal convenience. It will draw on guidance by English Partnerships in the document Car

Parking – What Works Where. The section will explain reasoning for taking the particular approach given in guidance in terms of efficiency and development potential as well as good urban design. It will include reference to parking standards and their interpretation and cross reference to relevant other policy documents. The section will also make reference to the benefits and dis-benefits of CPZ schemes in terms of the public realm. The section will also discuss the issue of pavement parking (both legal and illegal), its effects on the public realm and practical and legal ways the council can address the issue and enhance the public realm – including effective enforcement and traffic management and enhancement schemes. Policy guidance will also be given on underground and multi-storey parking and releasing access to back land for parking to improve the public realm and reduce demand for front garden parking.

Traffic Management

This section will look at the impact on traffic calming measures (including 20mph speed limits) can have on the quality of the public realm. This will also include small scale traffic management measures to improve safety. It will raise issues about design and give guidance that is based on natural and passive means of controlling behaviour that encourage less erratic behaviour and reduce the need for excessive signage and direct physical control. Also covered will be CPZs, traffic lights & crossings, and gyratories and policy guidance on these that supports both effective traffic management but minimises the amount of intrusive infrastructure needed.

Trees, Landscape & Open Space

This section will promote the greening of the less green town and local centres with pocket parks and street trees as part of development proposals and enhancement schemes. It will give guidance on general tree planting and landscape design in both urban centres, open spaces and the borough in general. Guidance will link this to the quality of the public realm and particularly the pedestrian environment and the success of town centres. It will look at how design guidance can contribute to and help implement the Wandle Valley Regional Park and Colliers Wood in particular. It will refer to pylons and promoting their removal. Guidance will also make reference to the quality of spaces, appropriate design for locations, practical issues of utilities and the importance of maintenance and how to secure funds for it. Guidance will be provided on sustainable urban drainage and taking the opportunity to un-culvert streams and brooks.

Signage, Road Markings, Street Furniture & Materials

This section will replace the Streetscene Design Guide produced for the Council by consultants in 2009. This needs to be simpler and more Merton-specific. Opportunity will also be taken to ensure it covers comprehensively the key aspects of the use of signage, quality and quality of road markings, the use of street furniture and surface materials such as road surfaces and paving materials (including tactile paving). The section in the main document will contain the policy guidance and the background justification for it, whilst an appendix will give more detailed technical specifications. The general policy approach will be to minimise clutter and provide quality infrastructure whose maintenance is commensurate with the profile and importance of the location. This section will also promote inter-disciplinary working based on robust new policy guidance and adherence to it as a key part of council working to ensure a high quality public realm.

Public Realm Enhancements

This section will promote a policy approach to public realm enhancements based on area-wide or whole corridor enhancements where all aspects of the public realm are looked at in one go. This will propose the multi-disciplinary officer approach to designing and implementing enhancements, including a review process for designs.

Utilities

This section will establish the legal situation regarding how utilities can work in the public realm and what their and the Council's obligations and powers are. It will highlight the effects on the quality of the public realm that utilities can have and the conflict of priorities that can often arise. It will provide clear guidance on how the council will deal with situations where reinstatements are poor and with the process for prior-approval of equipment above ground.

Maintenance & Enforcement

This section will outline why creating a high quality public realm will mean little without designing it with maintenance in mind. This does not mean using the cheapest materials and most uninspiring designs, but to ensure designs and materials are chosen with care so they do not become maintenance liabilities, and to design layouts and spaces that do not create unnecessary maintenance – i.e. left over land that does nothing. It will address how funds for maintenance can be procured and where and when higher quality, more expensive materials will be justified.

5 Design Guidance - Borough Character

Introduction

This will introduce the Borough Character Study as a document and the needs and benefits of having a borough-wide assessment of borough character

The Borough Character Study

This will outline the content of the Study, its constituent parts and what it aims to do

Neighbourhood & Character Areas

This will summarise the concept of neighbourhood and character areas based on the Core Strategy sub-areas. It will include the borough-wide map showing the qualitative character of the whole borough.

Housing Typology

This section will divide up the residential areas of the borough into different housing typologies to give a further dimension to the borough character. These will then be divided into Central, Urban and Suburban, based on the categories in the London Plan housing density matrix. This will be used to interpret appropriate densities for development in different areas of the borough. This information will be shown on a map and used to help define and justify the borough's amenity space standards.

Residential Density

This section will use the character areas in the Character Study and calculate the prevailing residential density in each character area. This will also be used to inform the division of the borough into Central, Urban and Suburban areas and assess the suitability of the density of proposed new development. The density of the borough will be shown on a map and used to help define and justify the borough's amenity space standards.

Character Area Guidance

This section will list the guidance statements in the Character Study and show in map form which areas of the borough they relate to. There will be justificatory text on this.

6 References

Glossary of Terms

This will be a list of the more technical terms used in the document and clear explanation of their meaning.

Document References & Further Reading

This will be a list of related documents used as background research to the production of the Design SPD

Evidence Base Documents

This will list the key evidence base documents either used or produced as research for the production of the SPD

Useful Websites

This will contain a list of useful websites, ranging from government departments, interest groups and locations where background documentation and research can be found.

Image Credits

Where applicable image credits will be given here.

Useful Contacts

Any other useful contacts will be referred to here.

7 Appendices

This section will include all the appendices referred to in the main SPD document either in full, or information will be given about where they can be found or obtained, depending on their length.