

Part 02 Background



Merton Abbey Mills

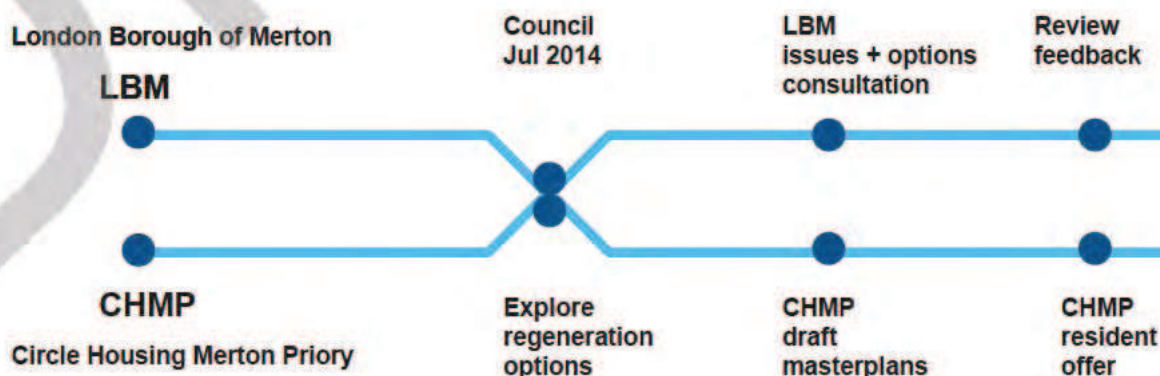
Background

2.1 The Estates Local Plan area is made up of three existing housing estates within Merton: Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury. The council transferred its housing stock to Merton Priory Homes (now Circle Housing Merton Priory - CHMP), including the three estates in March 2010. The Transfer Agreement included a legal obligation for CHMP to undertake a programme of property improvements known as Decent by December 2015.

2.2 The Decent Homes works are underway across the transferred housing stock. However in preparing the plans to undertake these works on the three estates, CHMP have come to doubt the case for investing in what CHMP regard, in some instances as homes and neighbourhoods of a poor standard. As a result CHMP have been exploring regeneration based alternatives for the three estates via preparation of masterplans in consultation with their residents since summer 2013.

2.3 Should regeneration go ahead, this Estates Local Plan will be an essential part in shaping the redevelopment process of Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury Estates, to create new well designed high quality neighbourhoods aimed at fundamentally improving the quality of life for existing and future generations living in the area.

2.4 The Plan's purpose is to guide any redevelopment proposals, for the three estates that may come forward over the next 10 to 15 years. This Plan is wholly design led and pitched at a high level, with detailed scheme proposals being determined by the council at the planning application stage, should regeneration go ahead.



The diagram above illustrates the preparation stages undertaken by the council for the Estates Local Plan alongside those stages undertaken by Circle Housing Merton Priory in developing their masterplans for the three estates.



Ravensbury Estate



Eastfields Estate



High Path Estate

**LBM
first draft
consultation**

**Review
feedback**

**LBM
second draft
consultation**

**LBM decide
on regeneration
option**

**Publication of
final plan for
Inspector**

**Submission
to Planning
Inspector**

**to agree
pending
CHMP/Circle
Boards
sign off**

**CHMP Planning
Application**

Key drivers

2.5 In preparing the Estates Local Plan we have had regard to a number of relevant considerations including responses received from the Council's initial consultation during September 2014 and November 2014 and the following key drivers.

The Community Plan

2.6 Merton has a Sustainable Community Strategy, which is also known as Merton's Community Plan (2009-2019). This is the overarching strategic plan of the Merton Partnership. It was published in 2009 and refreshed in 2013. This sets out the Partnership's long term vision and priorities for the borough up until 2019, which is:

"a great place to live and call home, where citizens are also neighbours and take responsibility for improving their own lives and neighbourhoods."

2.7 The Community Plan has four strategic themes, each of which has a vision. These themes are:

- Sustainable Communities and Transport
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities
- Children and Young People

2.8 In addition, the Community Plan recognises a number of cross-cutting themes including working to bridge the gap between the east and west of Merton and helping to promote Merton's economy.



Merton's Core Planning Strategy strategic objectives

2.9 The Estates Local Plan embodies and accords with Merton's strategic objectives as set out in Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 which are as follows:

- To make Merton a municipal leader in improving the environment, taking the lead in tackling climate change, reducing pollution, developing a low carbon economy, consuming fewer resources and using them more effectively.
- To promote social cohesion and tackle deprivation by reducing inequalities.
- To provide new homes and infrastructure within Merton's town centres and residential areas, through physical regeneration and effective use of space.
- To make Merton more prosperous with strong and diverse long-term economic growth.
- To make Merton a healthier and better place for people to live, work in or visit.
- To make Merton an exemplary borough in mitigating and adapting to climate change and to make it a more attractive and green place.
- To make Merton a well connected place where walking, cycling and public transport are the modes of choice when planning all journeys.
- To promote a high quality urban and suburban environment in Merton where development is well designed and contributes to the function and character of the borough.

A review of the Estates Local Plan policies against Merton's Core Planning Strategy Objectives is located at Appendix ????

Sustainability Appraisal

2.10 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been undertaken in the preparation of the Estates Local Plan and has assisted in the shaping of the document. The purpose of SA/SEA is to promote sustainable development by integrating social, economic and environmental considerations into the preparation of the new Local Plan.

2.11 The SA/SEA is also an important tool for developing sound planning policies which are consistent with the government's sustainable development agenda and achieving the aspirations of local communities. The findings of the appraisal ensure that the policies will facilitate sustainable development throughout Merton.

Health Impact Assessment

2.12 The purpose of the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is to promote sustainable development by integrating health (including mental health) and wellbeing considerations into the preparation of plans or strategies; by identifying the key health and wellbeing issues and the groups that are likely to be affected by the implementation of the Plan. The HIA, like the SA/SEA is an important tool in developing sound planning policies and assesses each stage of the Estates plan making process.

Key drivers

Equality Impact Assessment

2.13 An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Estates Local Plan has been undertaken as required by the Equality Act 2010. This examines the impact of policies on certain groups, to identify and combat discrimination and serve the needs of disadvantaged groups in the community.

2.14 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 Merton Council has carried out an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) report to identify the likely impact of the Plan on Merton's diverse communities and to recommend any changes to mitigate against any identified impacts or to recommend other changes to the Plan, where appropriate.

Habitat Regulation Assessments

2.15 In accordance with the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening exercises have been undertaken for the Plan. The HRA assesses the potential effects of land use plans to ensure that the protection and integrity of European Sites namely Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park is considered by the planning process at a local level.

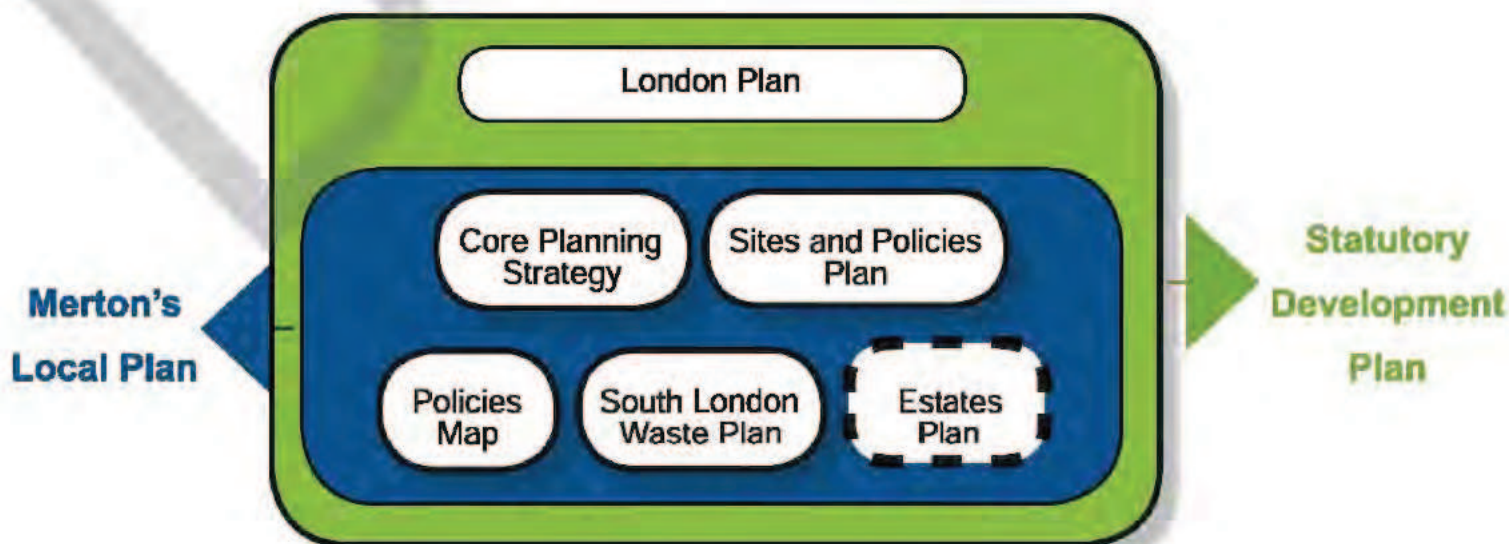
Policy context

2.16 In the wider planning policy context, there are a number of documents that make up what is known as the 'Development Plan' for the borough. These are as follows:

- The Mayor's London Plan 2015
- Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011
- The South London Waste Plan 2012
- Sites and Policies Plan 2014
- Policies Map 2014

2.17 The above five documents - Merton's Local Plan and the Mayor's London Plan – make up the Statutory Development Plan for the borough. These contain the planning policies that guide development in Merton. The Estates Local Plan, once adopted, will sit alongside these documents and form part of Merton's Local Plan.

2.18 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) sets out the Government's policy on planning matters in England and Wales. All local plans should be in conformity with this national policy.



2.19 The Mayor's London Plan March 2015 contains planning policies that guide all London boroughs on issues for the benefit of the whole of London, such as the number of new homes to be built, the size of town centres, and transport issues. All other planning documents have to be in general conformity with the Mayor's London Plan.

2.20 The Sites and Policies Plan and Policies Map contains

- the detailed planning policies which guide planning applications for development in Merton, implementing the more strategic principles set out in Merton's Core Planning Strategy 2011 and the London Plan 2015
- sites for allocation for new uses
- maps which illustrate where certain planning policies apply in Merton, for example town centre boundaries, nature reserves, neighbourhood shopping parades. This is known as the Policies Map.



Key drivers

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

2.21 When considering development proposals the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

2.22 Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

2.23 Government legislation requires development plan documents to be appraised for sustainability to ensure that planning policies are developed to achieve the optimal balance of positive social, environmental and economic outcomes for residents. This is known as a Sustainability appraisal.

2.24 In accordance with an EU Directive, councils are required to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessments of new plans. Government guidance allows both assessments to be combined. An assessment of Merton's Sites and Policies DPD has been conducted, which integrates both a Sustainability Appraisal and a Strategic Environmental Assessment and is referred to by the single term 'Sustainability Appraisal'. A summary of the appraisal results of each of the draft detailed policies is provided in this report. Merton's Sustainability Appraisal Report 2013 contains the full assessment of the draft detailed policies and the potential sites.



Case for regeneration

2.25 As part of the commitment to improving the quality of accommodation to Decent Homes Standards, since 2010 CHMP have undertaken technical surveys and financial planning work towards achieving this commitment. This work in CHMP's view indicated that significant refurbishment, maintenance work and financial investment would be required to the housing stock to achieve the required standard.

2.26 CHMP advise that residents of Eastfields, High Path and Ravensbury have told them about the problems with their homes and outside spaces, which include homes that are expensive to heat, suffer from leaking roofs, poor noise insulation, condensation and damp and issues with refuse collection and unsafe pathways. Some of these issues were also raised by residents during the council's consultation in the autumn of 2014, particularly concerns around unsafe pathways, damp and poor internal conditions. Having undertaken an exploration of reasonable options CHMP have decided that regeneration is the most cost effective way of delivering longer term sustainable Decent Homes through the provision of new, well-designed, energy-efficient homes that will meet the needs of residents now and in the future.

2.27 For Eastfields and High Path CHMP propose regeneration of the whole estates and for Ravensbury a mixture of partial regeneration refurbishment and retention. The council has asked CHMP for evidence to support CHMP's view that regeneration is the best way forward including:

- Case for regeneration
- Housing needs studies
- Socio-economic analysis
- Stock condition surveys
- Urban design studies

2.28 It is the council's view, supported by CHMPs evidence that whilst incremental refurbishment and Decent Homes works would improve the internal housing quality in the short to medium term, regeneration provides an opportunity to deliver comparatively more significant positive changes to the three neighbourhoods and a once in a generation opportunity to improve the quality of life for current and future residents.

2.29 Regeneration will be expected to provide a range of choices and benefits including high quality well designed neighbourhoods, wider housing mix, more private space for residents, better quality green spaces and community facilities and job creation opportunities. It will also be an opportunity to provide much needed new homes by making more efficient use of brownfield land, improving the quantity, quality and mix of new homes on each of the three estates.

2.30 A key expectation of any regeneration proposals that comes forward will be a commitment to keeping the existing community together in each neighbourhood, and for existing residents to have a guaranteed right to return to a new home in their regenerated neighbourhood.



Borough wide map showing location of the three estates

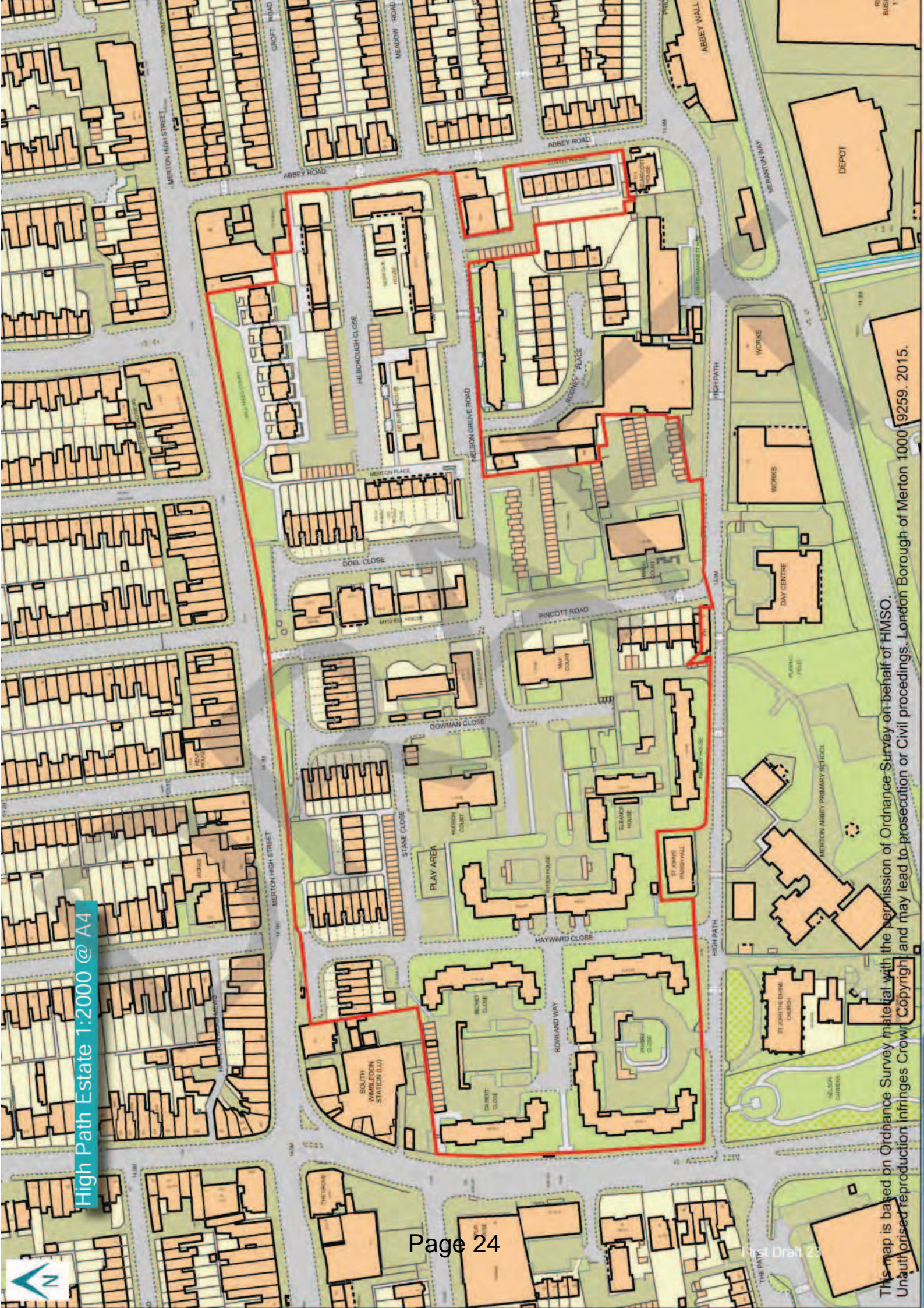


STREATHAM

PLAYAREA

Eastfields Estate 1:2000 @ A4









The vision

2.31 This section sets out the vision for the regeneration of the estates. This provides the framework for the Local Plan. This vision is informed by a number of other documents and requirements that are detailed in the following sections.

Overarching vision

2.32 The overarching vision underpins the whole Local plan and is applied to all of the estates. It is:

“The creation of sustainable, well designed safe neighbourhoods with good quality new homes, that maintain and enhance a healthy local community, improve living standards and create good environments.”

The visions for each estate

2.33 The positive characteristics within and surrounding the estates have informed the individual vision for each estate. These are as follows:

Eastfields: Contemporary Compact Neighbourhood

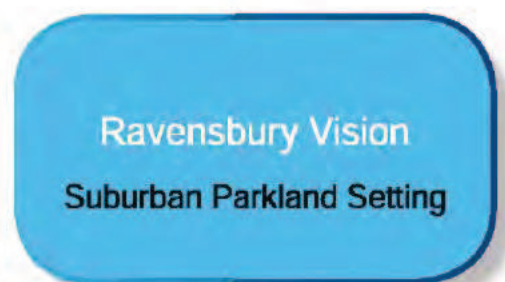
A new neighbourhood which recognises the existing estate's experimental design and maintains a distinctive character through the creation of a contemporary architectural style encompassing a variety of types, sizes and heights for new homes overlooking traditional streets and the improvement of links to the surrounding area.

High Path: New London Vernacular

The creation of a new neighbourhood with traditional streets and improved links to its surroundings, that supports the existing local economy. Buildings will be of a consistent design, form and character, using land efficiently to make the most of good transport services and create a distinctly urban character based on the "New London Vernacular" of traditional terraced streets, front doors to streets, use of brick and good internal design and access to quality amenity space.

Ravensbury: Suburban Parkland Setting

The creation of a new neighbourhood that is part of the wider parkland and which protects and enhances landscape quality and biodiversity. Characterised by buildings arranged as traditional streets and spaces that improve links to the surrounding area, allow for the landscape to penetrate the site whilst simultaneously improving flood mitigation and increasing the number of homes whilst retaining the character of its suburban parkland setting.



Design principles

2.34 This section outlines a set of broad design principles. All development proposals will be expected to adhere to these principles in order to achieve the highest standards of design, accessibility and inclusive design. Proposals must be accompanied by Design and Access Statements (DAS). Full definitions of the terms used for the principles can be found in the Glossary.

Perimeter blocks: Buildings arranged so that the fronts face outwards towards the street.

2.35 New development will be expected to be built using the principle of perimeter blocks. This is where the public entrances to buildings face the streets and the more private elements are less visible and accessible to the rear. Perimeter blocks are a flexible approach to development and need not create a uniform layout. This approach creates a strong and easy to understand layout. Importantly, it also creates a clear arrangement of public and private space that builds in natural surveillance and security.

Active frontages: Buildings with many entrances and windows onto the street.

2.36 New development must be designed to have buildings with entrances and windows facing the street (active frontages) and no blank walls or gable ends. This provides long-term flexibility of buildings, creating activity and vibrancy in commercial areas and supporting a level of activity on quieter streets to create a good level of natural surveillance to deter criminal activity. This is particularly relevant to ground floor frontages, where maximising windows and doors is particularly important. In commercial frontages, views into shops and businesses, whether open or closed is also important.

Clear building lines: Clear boundaries defining where the fronts of buildings should be.

2.37 New development must connect easily with the surrounding area, not present barriers and be easy to get around. Traditional streets with buildings lining each side of the street, will contribute to defining space and the creation of clearly defined routes. Irregular building lines and building heights undermine this and should therefore be avoided.

Open space: The provision of public and communal amenity space.

2.38 All private, communal and public amenity space must be of a high quality of design, attractive, useable, fit for purpose and meet all policy requirements, including addressing issues of appropriate facilities, replacement space or identified shortfall. High quality designed amenity space will have good levels of privacy or public surveillance depending on their purpose and generally have an open aspect, good sun/daylighting, be of a single regular shape and have easy and convenient access for all potential users.

Defensible space: The space between the back of the footway and the front of the adjacent building.

2.39 Defensible space is the area or feature created to separate the public street and the buildings accessed from it. This space functions to provide adequate privacy for the private areas from the public ones. It is important in creating successful perimeter blocks and buildings with entrances and windows facing the street (active frontages) and no blank walls or gable ends. New development will be required to ensure all buildings fronting onto streets have successfully designed defensible space that are appropriate to the uses in the buildings.

Promoting biodiversity: Promoting the variety of plants, animals and other living things found in an area.

2.40 Development proposals should incorporate and promote biodiversity, through open space, street trees, green chains, SuDs and a variety of other means, including those more directly related to mitigating the effects of climate change. Biodiversity also adds visual attractiveness and local distinctiveness, which can also provide recreational facilities.

Promoting active design: Promoting design that enables healthy lifestyle choices.

2.41 The design of new development must promote Active Design. This approach incorporates local facilities that are easily accessible on foot or cycle and create good quality, well maintained and safe places with convenient and direct routes throughout the development. Active Design provides opportunities for people to be naturally active as part of their daily life, and so improves health and wellbeing.

Promoting sustainable development: Promoting the efficient use of resources that does not prejudice future generations from meeting their own needs.

2.42 New development should be designed to minimise emissions arising throughout their lifetime by making efficient use of land, resources, materials and energy. Such principles can include use of energy efficient building materials, appropriate design and construction methods and use of low-carbon technologies and renewable energy generation. New development should be sustainable in terms of supporting local social and economic development to support community development, making use of sustainable travel modes the first choice and facilitating improved health and well-being such as enabling local food growing and are encouraged to implement aims set out by the Merton Food Charter.

Permeable, legible and accessible layouts: Arrangements of streets and buildings that offer a convenient choice of routes that are easy to understand.

2.43 New development should connect easily with surrounding neighbourhoods and not be seen as a separate place or result in restricted access. New neighbourhoods must be easy and convenient to get around, and be accessible for all users. Streets must be safe and look like they lead somewhere, be clearly and visibly connected to other streets. Well connected street layouts should encourage walking and cycling as well as allowing for convenient and clear vehicular access.

Density: The amount of development that is provided on any given site.

2.44 The London Plan density matrix should be applied in determining an appropriate density for each estate. Development that is too dense may result in cramped internal layouts, overlooking or daylight issues, or a high number of single (or nearly single) aspect dwellings. Development that is not dense enough will not use land efficiently and effectively or provide sufficient good quality homes.

Design principles

Parking provision: The amount of development that is provided on any given site.

2.45 On-street parking should be the initial choice for the way parking is provided. It is essential that on-street parking is well managed and integrated into the rest of the street. On-street parking creates activity, vitality and ensures a good level of natural surveillance. Only when on-street provision cannot accommodate all parking needs should other methods of parking be used. All methods of parking provision should be of a high quality design that is attractive, convenient and safe for both people and vehicles. The council follows the parking standards set out in the London Plan and residential standards reference should also be made to the London Housing SPG and subsequent updates.

Local context (buildings, materials interpretation, art): Using local good quality design to inform the design and appearance of new development.

2.46 The design, layout and appearance of new development must take inspiration and ideas from the positive elements of the local built, natural and historic context. This must include an analysis of what local characteristics are relevant and why, and which are less so. Opportunity must be taken to strengthen local character by drawing on its positive characteristics.



