

BOROUGH PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
4 NOVEMBER 2010

(7.15pm – 9.45pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Munn (in the Chair);
Councillors Philip Jones, Diane Neil Mills, Geraldine Stanford,
Ray Tindle and David Williams.

ALSO PRESENT: Council Officers
Tara Butler (Spatial Planning Manager- Interim);
Pip Howson (Principal Transport Planner);
Doug Napier (Greenspaces Manager); and
Eben van der Westhuizen (Planner – Spatial Policy Team);
and M.J.Udall (Democratic Services)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

Councillor Diane Neil Mills declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 (Wandle Valley Green Grid Area Framework) by reason that she was a member of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Development Board.

Prior to Councillors discussing Agenda Item 7 (South London Waste Development Plan – Proposed Submission), Councillor Ian Munn declared an interest in this item by reason that he is a member of the South London Waste Plan Members Working Party.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3(a))

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee held on 12 October 2010 be agreed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Agenda Item 3(b))

No matters were reported under this item.

4 SOUTH LONDON WASTE DEVELOPMENT PLAN – PROPOSED
SUBMISSION (Agenda Item 7)

After consulting other Members, the Chair brought forward consideration of this item.

Tara Butler (Spatial Policy Manager - Interim) introduced the report including advising that the Waste Plan had now been approved by the Cabinets of two of the other constituent Boroughs, Croydon and Kingston (but not yet by their full Councils).

Officers then responded to queries, including advising on the implications if Merton didn't proceed with the Waste Plan, and it was -

RESOLVED: That the Borough Plan Advisory Committee recommends that Cabinet agree the following recommendation.

“The Cabinet is requested to recommend to Full Council that it agree: -

A. To submit the Proposed Submission version of the South London Joint Waste Development Plan Document (Waste Plan) to the Secretary of State, understanding that this will be preceded by a statutory six-week pre-

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submission publication period.

B. That, prior to the six week pre-submission publication, to delegate powers to the senior officers of the Waste Plan Planning Officer Group to make minor amendments to the Proposed Submission version of the Waste Plan.

C. That, following the six week pre-submission publication and prior to the submission of the Waste Plan to the Secretary of State, that the Director for Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration be given delegated authority to agree a schedule of any minor amendments to the Waste Plan as necessary. Furthermore, that any schedule of amendments is also co-ordinated and agreed across the four partner boroughs through the Joint Waste Development Plan Member Working Group.

D. That if substantial amendments are considered necessary, these will be brought back to Cabinet across the four boroughs for consideration and recommendation of any amendments to ensure submission of the Waste Plan within the necessary timescales.”

5 WANDLE VALLEY GREEN GRID AREA FRAMEWORK (Agenda Item 4)

It was noted that colour hard copies of the Draft Wandle Valley Green Grid Area Framework had been circulated to all Advisory Committee Members in advance of the meeting, because it had been found that parts of text/plans in the black and white printed copy included with the original agenda papers were difficult to read.

Doug Napier (Greenspaces Manager) introduced the report including that
(a) this was one of 12 similar Frameworks, each broadly based on river catchment areas across London; and
(b) partnership working on Wandle Valley by the boroughs of Croydon, Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth was already happening via the Wandle Valley Regional Park Development Board and Management Board, and the Wandle Forum.

Reference was made to the recommendation to Cabinet made by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 2 November 2010, for lobbying to be undertaken for the precept payment made for the Lea Valley Regional Park (and paid by all London Boroughs) to be redirected to the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

(NB. The Scrutiny Panel recommended that Merton’s representatives on the Wandle Valley Regional Park Development Board ask the Chair of the Board to write to the MPs of areas represented on the Development Board (Croydon, Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth) to ask that the statutory council tax precept payment made for the Lea Valley Regional Park be redirected to the Wandle Valley Regional Park.)

The Advisory Committee generally supported the Scrutiny Panel’s recommendation for lobbying but -

- (a) noted that any change in the precept would require parliamentary legislation;
- (b) noted that considerable funds would be spent on the Lea Valley Regional Park

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area as part of the 2012 London Olympics; and

(c) considered the issue should be looked at on a London wide basis, particularly as there were other areas across London with (or about to have) a Green Grid Area Framework who may want a similar precept.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED: (1) subject to (2) below, the Advisory Committee has no comments on the Draft Wandle Valley Green Grid Area Framework; and

(2) the Advisory Committee recommends to Cabinet that officers be requested to formulate a strategy for lobbying on a London wide basis with other London Boroughs for the legislation needed to enable the statutory council tax precept payment made for the Lea Valley Regional Park to be redirected to the Wandle Valley Regional Park (and other similar Regional Parks across London) particularly having regard to the considerable funds that would be spent on the Lea Valley Regional Park area as part of the 2012 London Olympics.

6 MERTON COUNCIL'S ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2009/10 – UPDATE
(Agenda Item 5)

Tara Butler (Spatial Policy Manager - Interim) introduced the report including that -
(a) all the changes referred to in the October Minutes (on pages 4/5 of this agenda) had been incorporated;

(b) Councillor Philip Jones had submitted a response detailing various changes/typos and these had also been incorporated;

(c) the change detailed in para. (v) of the October Minutes, namely "*para. 2.28 (page 11) – (A) The average house price should be the "median" average (instead of the "mean" average)*" had now been included in the latest version of the AMR; and

(d) the information on housing conversions in the AMR (Annual Monitoring Report) in para. 3.4 (page 31) would be expanded.

Members then made the comments on the matters outlined below.

(i) table 3.5 and para's. 3.34 & 3.36 (pages 31/32) – Officers undertook to check the figures for residential conversions and to include the address details.

(ii) figure 2.2 (page 6) - Concern that figure 2.2 (showing a breakdown of Merton's population by age ranges 0-14, 15-44, 45-64 & 65+) should show the working age population and include figures for each age range. Officers undertook to adjust figure 2.2 so that 0-16 was treated as one category; and also as the pension age for women was 60 and for men 65, to also check that 65+ has been used as the non-working age in the AMR generally.

(iii) para.3.27 (page 27) – Officers confirmed that all the affordable schemes completed in 2009/10 were RSL schemes; and undertook to include the address details of the 3 schemes listed and e-mail the details to Councillor Diane Neil Mills.

(iv) para. 6.1 (page 43) – Add a breakdown of the employment figures.

(v) page 44 – Concern about lack of figures for the amount of employment land lost;

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and concern that the paragraph below table 6.2 (starting “COI BD3 identified.....”) was difficult to understand and should include figures/percentages for the employment land concerned. Officers confirmed that all this would be looked at.

(vi) para. 7.17 and 4th column, figure 7.7 (pages 53 & 54) – Officers confirmed that the town centre vacancy rates would be updated.

(vii) para. 13.5 (page 79) – Update the reference to the relevant Act/legislation.

(viii) para. 13.9 (page 80) – There were due to be further changes on (Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and previous drafts had included more about the Government’s intentions. Officers undertook to look at this.

It was noted that officers would circulate the changes now discussed to Advisory Committee Members.

Report otherwise received.

7 CORE STRATEGY – UPDATE (Agenda Item 6)

Tara Butler (Spatial Policy Manager - Interim) introduced the report including an update on the procedure for making changes to the Core Strategy (whereby these had to be included in a Schedule submitted to the Inquiry Inspector who considers Merton’s Core Strategy); and outlining the changes now proposed; and the current position in case law on de-conversions (see also para. (a) below). Members then made the comments on the matters outlined below.

(a) De-conversions – Members further discussed the possibility of having a policy on de-conversions (where a single housing unit/property, previously converted into a number of units, is de-converted back to a single unit). Officers confirmed that case law set the parameters on whether planning permission was needed for a particular de-conversion proposal; and that no specific policy on de-conversions had currently been included in the Core Strategy, as officers considered that such a policy would be easily challengeable.

(a1) A Member referred to the exception policy on de-conversions operated by LB Westminster, which included the aim of assisting with the provision of family housing. Members concluded that such an exception policy should be included in Merton’s Core Strategy, particularly where it would achieve another planning objective such as getting rid of sub-standard accommodation. Officers undertook to look at including appropriate wording in the Design section of the Core Strategy (via the Schedule submitted to the Inquiry Inspector.)

(b) Conversions – Policy CS 14 (pages 140/141) – During above discussions on de-conversions, reference was made to sub-para. (iii) of Section (d) (b) Policy CS 14 (on page 141) which required “the conversion of existing single dwellings into two or more smaller units of accommodation” to “(iii) not result in a net loss of units”. Members suggested that sub-para. (iii) was not needed and should be deleted. Officers undertook to include this change in the Schedule submitted to the Inquiry Inspector.

(c) Footpaths and pedestrian routes (para. 2.28, agenda page 87) – Officers

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confirmed that no further changes were proposed in this regard as existing policies were considered to be robust enough.

(d) NHS Sutton & Merton (PCT): Statement of Common Ground – Officers circulated a copy of the Statement (*subsequently put on the Council web-site with the rest of the agenda*) which had been agreed with NHS Sutton & Merton earlier the same day.

(d1) Wilson Hospital - Officers highlighted various aspects of the Statement, including that it proposed to amend the specific reference in the Core Strategy (in para. 12.9, page 53) to the proposal to expand the Wilson Hospital to provide a range of services as “Wilson Local Care Centre” because the PCT’s were due to be wound up in 2012 under the NHS reorganisation and it was unclear who would have responsibility and strategic overview to promote such facilities in future.

(d2) Figure 4.2 (page 13) – Officers advised that that Figure 4.2 as printed didn’t include various layers, and confirmed that (as indicated in the Statement) when the Core Strategy was reprinted, it was proposed to include the “neighbourhood renewal area”(NRA) layer (which indicates indices of deprivation). Officers undertook to look at also including NRA pockets, as well as the main NRA’s on this map, and the viability of enlarging this map.

(d3) Policy CS.7 & Table 17.2 (Summary of town centre aims) (page 85) - Officers explained that the table on the last page of the Statement, was an additional section, detailing “Other uses that can be found in town centres” that the PCT would like to see inserted in Table 17.2, possibly after the “Retail” section. Members queried the health benefits of some of the example uses listed, and officers undertook to review this list, including removing “betting shops” and “hairdressers”.

(e) Appendix B – Members made the following comments on Appendix B. Officers undertook to check each point (unless otherwise indicated).

(e1) Appendix B, page 22 –The wording in column 4 was difficult to understand, particularly lines 3/4 - “mostly all town or local centres and neighbourhood parades are within walking distance of all residential areas”.

(e2) Appendix B, page 26 (ref. CS.8 (c) (Proposed removal of reference to “London Plan draft replacement plan”) - Query as to whether the same housing target would apply if London Plan redrafted. Officers advised that Boroughs had to conform to the London Plan unless they specified an alternative target. Officers undertook to add text to clarify that Merton’s target of 320 affordable homes per year was based on the London Plan target.

(e3) Appendix B, page 36 (ref. Fig. 21.1) - Officers confirmed that the maps on pages 130 & 132 of the Core Strategy were being improved, including the provision of a better more relevant key in each case.

(e4) Appendix B, page 37 (ref: para. 21.5) – Suggestion that if more than half a front garden was left permeable, planning consent wasn’t needed.

(e5) Appendix B, page 37 (ref: para. 21.6) - Suggestion that there was no general presumption against creation of new dwellings.

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(e6) Appendix B, page 44 (ref: CS.14 Design i) – Need to define a family sized unit. Officers indicated that the London Plan definition was a unit of 3+ bedrooms.

(e7) Appendix B, page 45 (ref: CS.14 Design e) – Query as to the meaning of “comprehensible” in this context.

(e8) Appendix B, page 46 (ref. CS.15) – Officers confirmed that both sections in column 4 would be completed.

(e9) Appendix B, page 47 (ref. CS.15) – Officers confirmed that in column 4, line 2, “contends” should read “contests”.

(e10) Appendix B, page 48 (ref. Fig 24.1) - Query as to how flood map was to be regularly updated. Officers advised that the Environment Agency provided quarterly updates via their web-site. Officers undertook to clarify that the flooding information was regularly updated, and to include details of the relevant web-site.

(e11) Appendix B, page 50 (ref. Table 28.1, Policy CS.20) – Add wording to explain that “modal shift” in column 4 means a shift away from the private car use to other more sustainable forms of transport.

(e12) Appendix B, page 53 (Policy CS.20 (h) (Parking provision) – Officers advised that what had previously been called a “car-free” development actually referred to a development in a CPZ (Controlled Parking Zone) for which no parking permits were allowed, and so in the Core Strategy, such developments were now referred to as “permit free” development (but could still include some car parking provision on occasions).

(e12.1) Appendix B, page 53 (Policy CS.20 (h) (cont) – Officers explained that the text of Policy CS.20, sub-para. (h) had previously been amended from
(A) “Considering permit free agreements” to
(B) “Supporting permit free agreements”.
Members considered that the text should revert back to the original wording in (A) above. Officers confirmed that this would be done.

(e12.2) Appendix B, page 53 (Policy CS.20 (h) (cont) – Members indicated that it was unclear how the originally proposed change would have related to Wimbledon Society’s suggestions for amended wording to the text of sub-para.’s. (a), (b) & (j) of Policy CS.20. Officers indicated that it appeared that some wording was missing from column 4 and undertook to also check this.

(e12.3) Appendix B, page 53 (Policy CS.20 (h) (cont) – There was also discussion of the lack of criteria for minimum car parking provision for developments due to national and regional planning guidance.

(e13) Appendix B, page 58 (ref. Para.’s 27.2 – 27.9) – Unclear how the proposed change relates to Wimbledon Society’s objection regarding contact between the Council and local community groups. Officers undertook to look at clarifying the relevant text.

(e14) Appendix B, page 68 (ref. Appendix 1) - Officers confirmed that reasons for justifying the off-site provision of affordable housing were being compiled; and

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that the Affordable Housing Viability Study would be a separate document and not part of the Core Strategy (following advice from the Council's Development Control Team).

RESOLVED: That subject to the further changes detailed above, the proposed changes to Merton's Core Strategy (Appendix B), be referred (for approval under delegated powers) to the Director of Environment and Regeneration (in consultation with relevant Cabinet Members) for submission to the Secretary of State.

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