

Cabinet

Date: 16 January 2012

Agenda item: 6

Subject:– Approval for public consultation on the council's preferred options for site allocations (Part 2 of Sites and Policies DPD).

Lead officer: Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

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

Forward Plan reference number: 1108, 1076

Contact officer: Programme Manager - Strategic Policy and Research, Tara Butler

Recommendations:

That, having had regard to any comments from the Borough Plan Advisory Committee, Cabinet:

- approves six weeks of public consultation on the Preferred Options Sites and Policies DPD and accompanying Proposals Map from January-March 2012.
 - authorises the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration to approve changes to the documents prior to public consultation and other consequential matters in accordance with the appropriate Regulations
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 As set out in Merton's Local Development Scheme 2011, the Sites and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Proposals Map will be part of Merton's Local Development Framework (LDF). These two development plans are key in helping the borough to realise its regeneration objectives as set out in the Core Planning Strategy and the Regeneration Delivery Plan.
- 1.2 The Sites and Policies DPD and Proposals Map have been divided into three parts:
 - **Part 1** contains the **draft new detailed planning policies** for managing development in Merton.
 - **Part 2** contains the **preferred options for site allocations**, the subject of this report
 - **Part 3** contains the **draft Proposals Map** which is the representation on a map of policy matters and site allocations, such as town centre boundaries, shopping frontages, open space and nature reserves.

- 1.3 On the recommendation of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee, in November 2011, Cabinet approved Part 1 (draft detailed policies) and Part 3 (draft Proposals Map) for public consultation for six weeks between January and March 2012.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to recommend that Members approve public consultation on Part 2 of the DPD - the council's "Preferred Options" for new site allocations. Consultation would take place for six weeks between January and March 2012 alongside Part1 (draft detailed planning policies) and Part 3 (draft Proposals Map).
- 1.5 Once completed in early 2013, the Sites and Policies DPD and Proposals Map will replace the remainder of Merton's Unitary Development Plan and Proposals Map 2003.
 - Appendix 1 contains the sites with their preferred options for new uses (Part 2 of the DPD)

2. DETAILS

- 2.1 In accordance with Merton's submitted Local Development Scheme 2011, and following Cabinet approval in June 2011, Merton Council undertook borough-wide community engagement between July and September 2011, known as the "Call for Sites".
- 2.2 The purpose of this consultation stage was to ask people and organisations if there were sites in Merton that they wanted to be considered for change of use or redevelopment and to raise policy issues they want to be considered. Dialogue with landowners and developers as part of the consultation also helped ascertain market demand for regeneration proposals in Merton.
- 2.3 Approximately 45 responses were received from organisations and individuals. Out of these responses approximately 63 sites were proposed for new allocations to be considered, a third of which are council-owned sites. Between September and December 2011 officers considered the responses and are recommending preferred options for the sites.
- 2.4 During the same period, officers prepared new development management policies to give detailed guidance on development in Merton. These proposed policies have been guided by research, consultation results (including feedback from the Core Planning Strategy and the London Plan) and also in the light of emerging national guidance.
- 2.5 Merton's Proposals Map has also been reviewed to ensure that its designations are based on up-to-date research and reflect the new policy framework.
- 2.6 Members are asked to consider the preferred approach for public consultation, which is proposed for six weeks between January and March 2012. This stage is known as "Preferred Options". Here the council sets out the following:

- detailed planning policies (already approved for consultation by Cabinet on 28 November 2011),
- preferred approach to site redevelopment,
- Proposals Map changes, for example, town centre boundaries (already approved for consultation by Cabinet on 28 November 2011).

2.7 Delegated authority is being sought for the Director of Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member to approve changes to the documents prior to public consultation.

NEW SITE ALLOCATIONS

2.8 At the “Call for sites” public consultation from July to September 2011, 63 sites were submitted for change of use, a third of which are Council owned. All of these 63 sites have been assessed by the Future Merton team and their preferred use in planning terms is now being recommended to Councillors.

2.9 Appendix 1 contains the assessment of each site for public consultation.

2.10 By looking at sites across the borough collectively, it allows for a more practical and efficient consideration of how sites could be redeveloped and where community services could be provided than by considering sites reactively on a case-by case basis.

2.11 Many of Merton’s community centres have been put forward within the report. These are within older buildings that don’t serve their purpose as well as they could. Some are in town centre locations (e.g. Colliers Wood and Wimbledon Community Centres). Redevelopment of any or all of the Council owned community sites has been proposed to either:

- Provide a mix of uses on each site: e.g. community with commercial / residential functions, similar to Raynes Park library for example, which has the library service and community rooms on lower floors and apartments on the upper floors. In this way, the commercial or residential floorspace can help fund the redevelopment of the whole scheme including the revitalised community space. For longer term management, having a building occupied throughout the day and night can help to minimise risks of vandalism.
- in particular, library sites at Wimbledon, Mitcham and West Barnes sites have been assessed on current service need to reprovide library services on the same site in a modern setting, with more publicly accessible floorspace than currently exists.
- Or, where Council-owned sites are reasonably closely located (e.g. in the Colliers Wood / South Wimbledon area), the community functions could be combined onto one or more sites, which would allow the other sites to be considered for disposal or redevelopment to other uses.

2.12 If a site is allocated for a new use, it does not mean that the site will be redeveloped immediately. To be allocated in the final plan, the site must be deliverable within a 10-year period. In other words it must be suitable for its proposed use, and with landowner / developer interest and available funding to

redevelop it. This is a different approach from sites allocated in Merton's UDP 2003, which were not required to be deliverable.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Until the public consultation starts in mid January 2012, there will be opportunity to propose alternative options such as changing or removing any of the proposed policies, sites, or proposals map designations. Amendments could either to be considered at a later date or to be removed from the plan completely.
- 3.2 The alternative option of halting production of the Sites and Policies DPD is not recommended as it would not allow the council to make effective use of resources, for the reasons set out in paragraph 6.1 below.

4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

Consultation undertaken

- 4.1 The "Call for Sites" public consultation between July and September 2011 encouraged landowners to put their sites forward for change of use to be considered.

Consultation proposed

- 4.2 This report recommends Members approval for the Preferred Sites and Policies DPD to be published for consultation between January and March 2012.
- 4.3 At the same meetings, Members are also being asked to approve the following documents for simultaneous public consultation between January and March 2012
 - **Borough Character Study for Merton:** helping development proposals to complement the public realm in each neighbourhood
 - **Preliminary Draft Community Infrastructure Levy proposals for Merton:** setting out the potential Community Infrastructure Levy charge viable for Merton.
- 4.4 Due to the nature and volume of the work for consultation, officers are preparing a consultation approach to try and improve residents, landowners and businesses understanding of what is being proposed and how to respond.

Potential additional public consultation – summer 2012

- 4.5 Landowners are already contacting officers with requests for additional sites to be considered as part of the Sites and Policies DPD. In addition, ongoing discussions with landowners as part of the Regeneration Delivery Plan are likely to bring forward more sites for consideration.

- 4.6 In order to consider these new sites as part of the DPD, it is likely that a second round of “Preferred Options” will be undertaken in summer 2012. This has been accounted for in the project plan and will not affect the timetable.

5. TIMETABLE

- 5.1 The timetable for the production of the Sites and Policies DPD plus associated Proposals Map is as follows:
- **January-March 2012:** 6 week consultation: “Preferred Sites and Policies DPD”, alongside drafts of Merton’s Design SPD, Borough Character Study and Community Infrastructure Levy charge
 - *(June-July 2012: potential 6 week consultation on additional sites or policy changes)*
 - **December 2012-February 2013:** 6 week consultation prior to submission to the Secretary of State
 - **March 2013:** Submission to the Secretary of State.

6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Undertaking the Sites and Policies DPD at this time makes efficient and effective use of council resources.
- It allows the council to consider the changes to the national planning system and if necessary, adapt local planning policies to best interpret national matters in a Merton context. It will mean that Merton Council will have an up-to-date development plan under the new planning system and the London Plan 2011, supporting local decision-making in Merton;
 - most of the supporting research has already been undertaken for the Core Planning Strategy;
 - Preparing the Sites and Policies DPD, Regeneration Delivery Plan, draft Design SPD, Borough Character Study and draft Community Infrastructure Levy simultaneously allows information and resources to be shared and ensures consistency across Merton’s guidance for development in the borough.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) plus associated Regulations currently set out the parameters for the production of Development Plan Documents.
- 7.2 In line with the proposed reforms in the Localism Act, Government has consulted on new local planning regulations. The consultation Local Planning Regulations are generally similar in nature to the existing Regulations for this stage of plan-making. In producing the Sites and Policies DPD, officers have had regard to both existing and proposed Regulations.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None for the purposes of this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment is being carried out on the proposals in the Sites and Policies DPD.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None for the purposes of this report. The crime and disorder implications for the Sites and Policies DPD proposals have been assessed through sustainability appraisal.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None for the purposes of this report.

11. APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- Appendix 1: sites with their preferred options for allocation (Part 2 of the Sites and Policies DPD)
- As Part 2 of the Sites and Policies DPD is a long document, only a few copies have been printed at this stage. From Friday 06 January 2012, copies will be available in the Cabinet office, in the four party group offices and available to view on the Council's website.
- Paper copies will be circulated to Cabinet on Wednesday 11 January 2012.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet report to 28 November 2011 on draft detailed planning policies
- Cabinet report to 28 November 2011 on draft Proposals Map
- Responses to "Call for sites" public consultation July-September 2011