

Merton Council
**Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny
Panel**



Date: 26 February 2014

Time: 19:15

Venue: Committee rooms B & C - Merton Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

AGENDA

		Page Number
6.	Update on the housing stock transfer to Circle Housing Merton Priory	1 - 28
7.	Verbal Presentation - Policy Developments (converting commercial properties to meet residential housing need)	29 - 38

**This is a public meeting – members of the public are very welcome to attend.
The meeting room will be open to members of the public from 7.00 p.m.**

For more information about the work of this and other overview and scrutiny panels, please telephone 020 8545 4035 or e-mail scrutiny@merton.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Press enquiries: press@merton.gov.uk or telephone 020 8545 3483 or 4093

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Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel Membership

Councillors:

Russell Makin (Chair)
Stan Anderson
David Dean
Samantha George
Ian Munn BSc, MRTPI(Rtd)
Dennis Pearce
John Sargeant
Ray Tindle (Vice-Chair)

Substitute Members:

Philip Jones
Peter Southgate
Geraldine Stanford
Miles Windsor

Note on declarations of interest

Members are advised to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting. If a pecuniary interest is declared they should withdraw from the meeting room during the whole of the consideration of that matter and must not participate in any vote on that matter. If members consider they should not participate because of a non-pecuniary interest which may give rise to a perception of bias, they should declare this, withdraw and not participate in consideration of the item. For further advice please speak with the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny describes the way Merton's scrutiny councillors hold the Council's Executive (the Cabinet) to account to make sure that they take the right decisions for the Borough. Scrutiny panels also carry out reviews of Council services or issues to identify ways the Council can improve or develop new policy to meet the needs of local people. From May 2008, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Panels have been restructured and the Panels renamed to reflect the Local Area Agreement strategic themes.

Scrutiny's work falls into four broad areas:

- ⇒ **Call-in:** If three (non-executive) councillors feel that a decision made by the Cabinet is inappropriate they can 'call the decision in' after it has been made to prevent the decision taking immediate effect. They can then interview the Cabinet Member or Council Officers and make recommendations to the decision-maker suggesting improvements.
- ⇒ **Policy Reviews:** The panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or issues that affect the lives of local people. At the end of the review the panels issue a report setting out their findings and recommendations for improvement and present it to Cabinet and other partner agencies. During the reviews, panels will gather information, evidence and opinions from Council officers, external bodies and organisations and members of the public to help them understand the key issues relating to the review topic.
- ⇒ **One-Off Reviews:** Panels often want to have a quick, one-off review of a topic and will ask Council officers to come and speak to them about a particular service or issue before making recommendations to the Cabinet.
- ⇒ **Scrutiny of Council Documents:** Panels also examine key Council documents, such as the budget, the Business Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan.

Scrutiny panels need the help of local people, partners and community groups to make sure that Merton delivers effective services. If you think there is something that scrutiny should look at, or have views on current reviews being carried out by scrutiny, let us know.

For more information, please contact the Scrutiny Team on 020 8545 4035 or by e-mail on scrutiny@merton.gov.uk. Alternatively, visit www.merton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Circle Housing Merton Priory Delivering Our Promises - Progress So Far

Pauline Ford
Regional Operations Director (Southern Region)

Wayne Hainsworth
Managing Director, Circle Housing Merton Priory

26th February 2014

March 2010

- Low levels of housing investment
- Homes in poor condition - 62% did not reach the decent homes standard
- Backlog of major repairs
- Sheltered bedsits where residents had to share bathrooms and toilets



Changing Environment

- One Million new affordable homes needed by 2021
- Continued reduction in Govt Grant for new homes
- House prices in the capital are predicted to rise by 24.4% in the next 5 years
- Migration from inner London due to rent and property price increases
- 33% of privately rented homes are unaffordable by low income families
- Housing benefit increasingly supporting people in work
- Welfare reform is impacting on incomes and changing our relationship with residents
- Number of over 65s projected to increase by 23% by 2018



Delivering Our Promises

- 91 promises to deliver in first five years
- 80 promises delivered already
- 11 promises in progress
- Neighbourhood renewal obligations under the transfer agreement being delivered



Promises Delivered

- 80,891 repairs delivered (Dec 2013)
- £15m spent on day to day repairs up to Dec 2013
- Over 700 homes have had major adaptations since transfer to meet the needs of older and disabled residents
- New handy person and gardening service for elderly and vulnerable residents
- Apprenticeships and jobs for local people
- £1m community fund for years 1-5
- Local budgets for estate and block improvements



Promises Being Delivered

- Achieving decent homes standard by the end 2015
- £60.2m invested in homes by Dec 2013
- Tackling fuel poverty - energy efficient boilers, cavity wall/loft insulation, new windows
- Improvements to sheltered housing blocks



Resident Involvement

- Refreshed Resident Involvement Strategy
- Resident board members
- Continues support of the Glebe Court T.M.O.
- Increased number of TRAs
- Introduction of Service Improvement Groups
- Resident Scrutiny Panel
- Residents involved in recruitment of staff



New Sheltered Housing

Gresham House Before:

- Bedsits - hard to let
- no private bathrooms
- expensive to heat



Gresham House After:

- 18 self contained flats with private and shared outdoor space, fully accessible, HAPPI standard
- Moving in- Feb 2013
- Low heating costs



Enhancing Life Chances

Developing New Homes

All of the new homes are self-contained and are due for completion in 2014

The Oaks, Morden
26 x 1 bedroom flats
25 x 2 bedroom flats



26 homes in development on garage sites
Bidding for AHP2 currently



Doliffe Close, Mitcham
16x 1 bedroom and 7x 2 bedroom flats for older people
18x 1 bedroom flats for people with learning difficulties



Enhancing Life Chances

Merton Regeneration

- Stage 1 consultation throughout Summer 2013
- Spoke to 95% of people across all 3 estates
- Spoke to local stakeholders including local businesses, Community leaders and faith groups
- The CHMP reviewed all the feedback and made a decision to move to stage 2 of the consultation process.
- 2014 - Currently procuring Master planners
- 2nd stage formal consultation
- Design and Place shaping done with residents
- We are in this for the long haul!



Maintaining and Investing in Homes

- Decent Homes Compliance moved from 38% to 73%
- 30 year rolling investment programme in place
- New challenges – communal electrics, changes in legislation (fire risk and asbestos), condition of service supplies.



Maintaining and Investing in Homes

- 2013/14 change and mobilisation of new providers
- 5 year contracts with 5 year option to extend
- Keepmoat Property Services - repairs and empty homes
- United House Ltd - gas contract and Merton Standard works



Maintaining and Investing in Homes

Issues – Repairs

- Technology problems with appointments setter (lost/missed appointments)
- Supply chain – too many sub contractors
- Level of misdiagnosis still too high (can require more than 1 visit to resolve)



Maintaining and Investing in Homes

Opportunities – Repairs

- Resident satisfaction with repairs
87.4%
- Extended choice of timed appointment slots
- 6 apprenticeships created
- Improvement Plan to embed the service by end of May



Maintaining and Investing in Homes

Issues - Investment Works

- 33% refusals of work 400+ this year
- Validation surveying required
- Pricing of remaining blocks & consultation with leaseholders
- Complications with roofing at Cherry Tree estate



Maintaining and Investing in Homes

Opportunities – Investment works

- Less complexity and greater consistency with a single supplier
- Economies of scale realised through joining with two other CH providers
- Employment & training opportunities for residents



Investment is a continuous process

£245m to be spent by 2044



Enhancing Life Chances

Welfare Benefit Reform

- A significant challenge for CHMP and our customers
- We're using profiling information on our customers to tailor services and our financial inclusion advice and assistance to their specific needs
- Using research and intelligence to understand how best and when to reach our customers effectively
- Communications plan in place
- Right information and help in place at the right time
- UC will be the biggest challenge



Enhancing Life Chances

Response to Welfare Benefit Reform

Under Occupation penalty- 394 households affected

- 66.7% fully paying
- 32.9% partially paying
- 0.4% no payments (just 1 resident)

Benefit Cap- 28 households affected

- 67.8% fully paying
- 32.2% part payment



Neighbourhood Renewal

To address the inequalities that exist in health, community safety, worklessness, housing and the environment. We have worked with partners developing Neighbourhood Partnerships to deliver local neighbourhood action plans in:

Morden
Mitcham Central
East Mitcham
Merton Central

We invest over £250k in neighbourhood projects bringing a social return of £5 for every £1 invested



Enhancing Life Chances

Merton Training and Employment Centre

Since opening in October 2012 construction training delivered to over 150 local residents with 58 entering employment or an apprenticeship

Extending the programme to include:

- Customer Services
- Health and Social Care



Employment and Training Support

Through our Routes2Work programme we have:

- Assisted 175 people into paid employment
- Engaged over 600 people into training
- supported 320 young people into employment or training
- Employment advice to over 1400 people
- developed 52 and business enterprises through our Start Your Own Business and small business support programmes

“It feels good to be useful again and put my skills and knowledge to good use. I feel proud of what I have achieved through this programme and I want to be a role model for my son,” Luke 25 secured an apprenticeship with Keepmoat after completing a construction course at MTEC.



Financial Inclusion Highlights

- Over 1,800 residents have accessed debt, welfare benefits and money advice services through online, telephone, face-to-face support at Money Matters events
- Over 700 local residents have joined the Credit Union
- Croydon, Merton and Sutton Credit Union's outreach service has seen 91 new joiners and 72% of all account transactions have been from CHMP residents showing an active use of accounts by existing members
- The Money Advice Service has returned to Merton offering fortnightly advice surgeries
- 60 CHMP staff have received Financial Inclusion Awareness Training
- Contracts with Grenfell Housing and Citizens Advice Bureau to provide in-depth support to tenants with significant areas



Community Fund

- 163 grants have been agreed for Community Projects since 2010
- To date, well over 15,000 local residents have benefited from a Community Fund Project
- 114 local groups have received one-to-one advice and support on grant application processes since 2012, building capacity in our communities
- Positive impact on small BME and resident-led groups as 60% of our successful grant applications in 13/14 were from this sector
- Worked in partnership with Merton Voluntary Service Council to ensure our grant application processes and monitoring are robust, transparent and meet nationally accepted Compact Standards.



Community Fund

Examples of Funded Organisations

- **Friends in St Helier:** Supporting older people, reducing isolation, including the introduction of home visiting for housebound people.
- **Rethink:** Reducing isolation for people with Mental Health issues and their carers, they received a grant to fund their Wednesday social group
- **Merton Home Tutoring Service:** One-to-one and group tutoring for adults to learn English to improve their ability to engage with with local services
- **St Mark's Family Centre & Merton Voluntary Service Council –** working as partners to support small resident led activity groups in Mitcham
- **Volunteer Centre Merton:** The Aspire project supporting young people using volunteering as a route to work
- **Merton Unity Network:** To train and support local people to be Community Leaders to support other local residents
- **Merton Centre for Independent Living:** Advice and Advocacy services for disabled people



Supporting Mobility

- House Exchange
- Speed dating event
- Downsizing incentive scheme
- Direct matching (under-occupiers with Overcrowded households)
- New sheltered schemes



Valuing Diversity

- Customer segmentation- 95% profiling data
- Action on hearing loss accreditation
- Working in partnership with Merton Centre for Independent Living
- Working with Merton Public Health- Live Well, Community Health Promoters
- St Georges- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies partnership for access to employment and skills



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MERTON COUNCIL
futureMerton

Sustainable Communities
Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Converting office to residential

26 February 2014

www.merton.gov.uk/ldf



Government prioritizing new homes

- Fiscal incentives: Help to Buy
- Cutting Red Tape / speeding up the planning process

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- “to significantly boost the supply of housing..”
- Requires development plans and sites to be viable
- Must meet “objectively assessed housing need”



Cutting red tape: “prior approval” to turn offices into residential

- No need for planning permission so no design standards, space standards, support for necessary local infrastructure etc.
- Introduced May 2013; homes must be built by May 2016
- CLG refused Merton’s request for exempting Wimbledon town centre and the main industrial estates

Only three tests:

- Transport and highways impact of the development
- Contamination risks on the site
- Flooding risks on the site

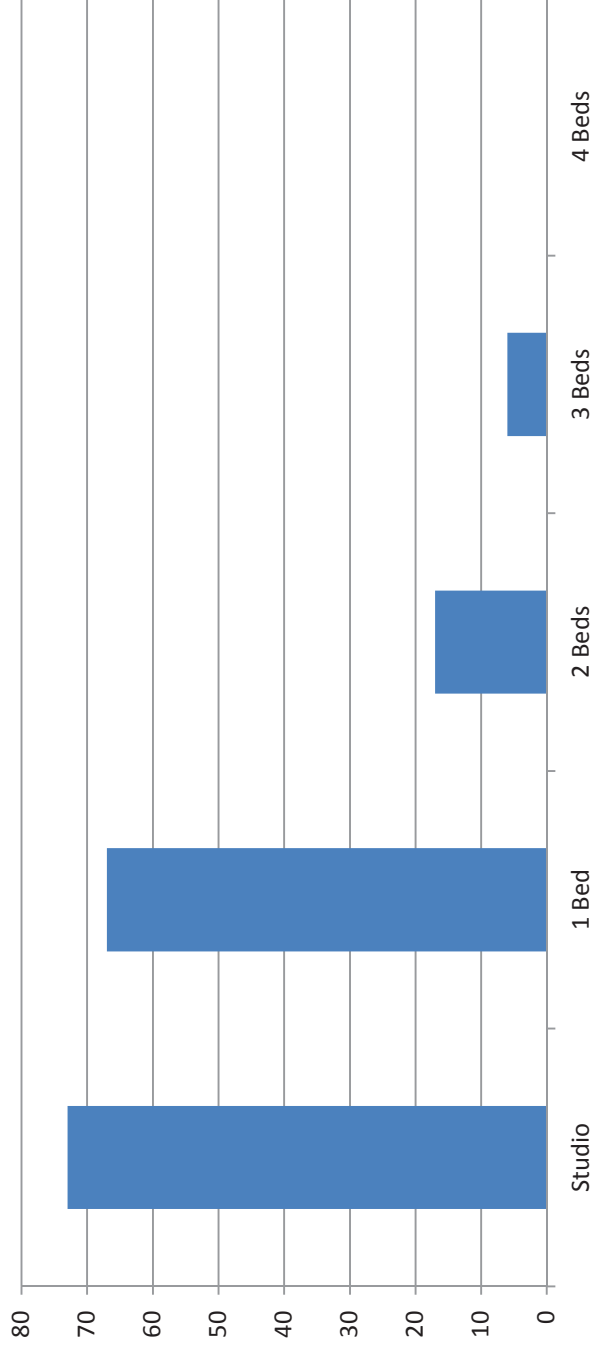
Offices do not have to be vacant.

Prior approval in Merton - office to residential

As at 18 February 2014

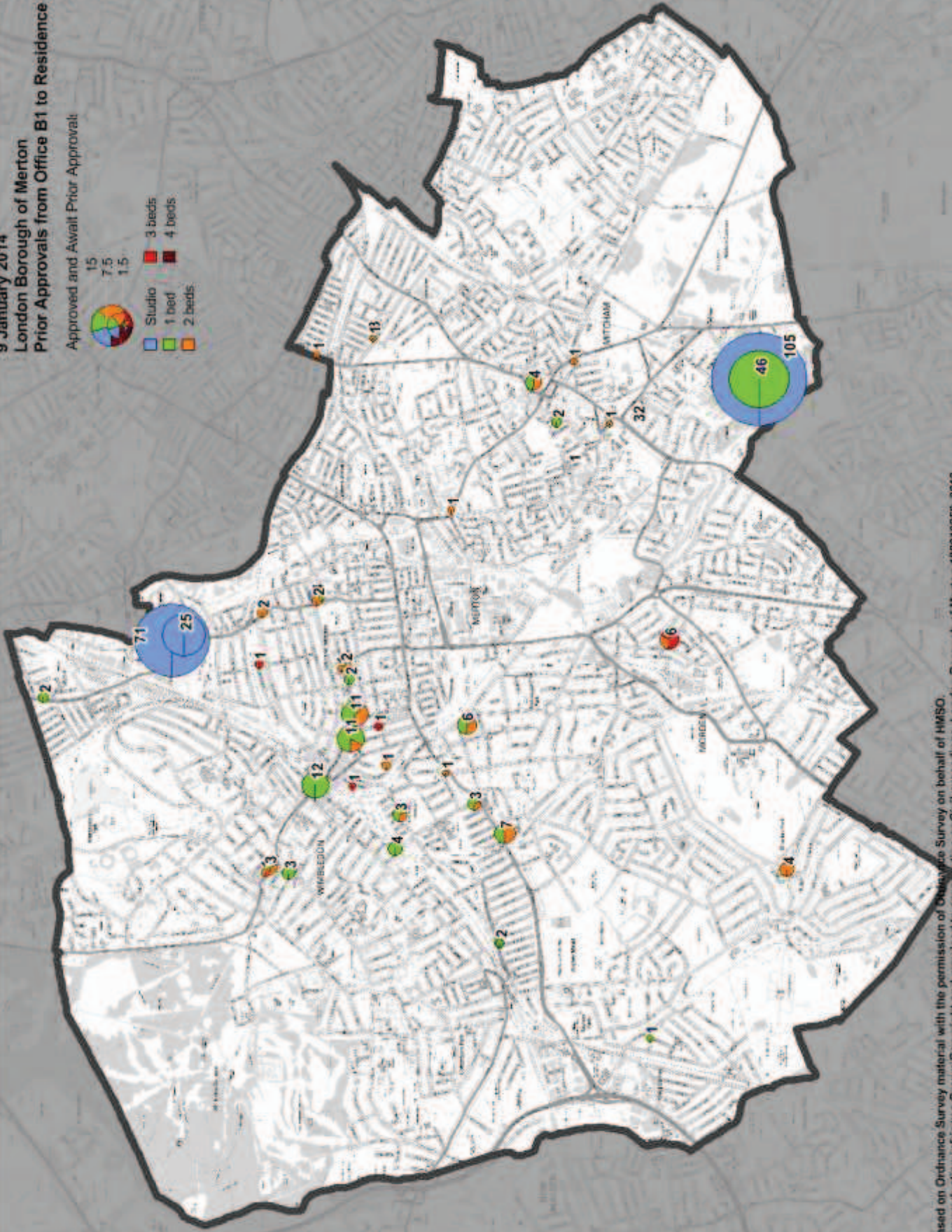
- 77 schemes submitted,
- 19 schemes granted, creating 131 flats in total
- 17 refused
- 7 awaiting a decision, if granted will create an additional 140 flats

Graph – size of home granted through prior approval (19 February 2014)



9 January 2014
 London Borough of Merton
 Prior Approvals from Office B1 to Residence C3

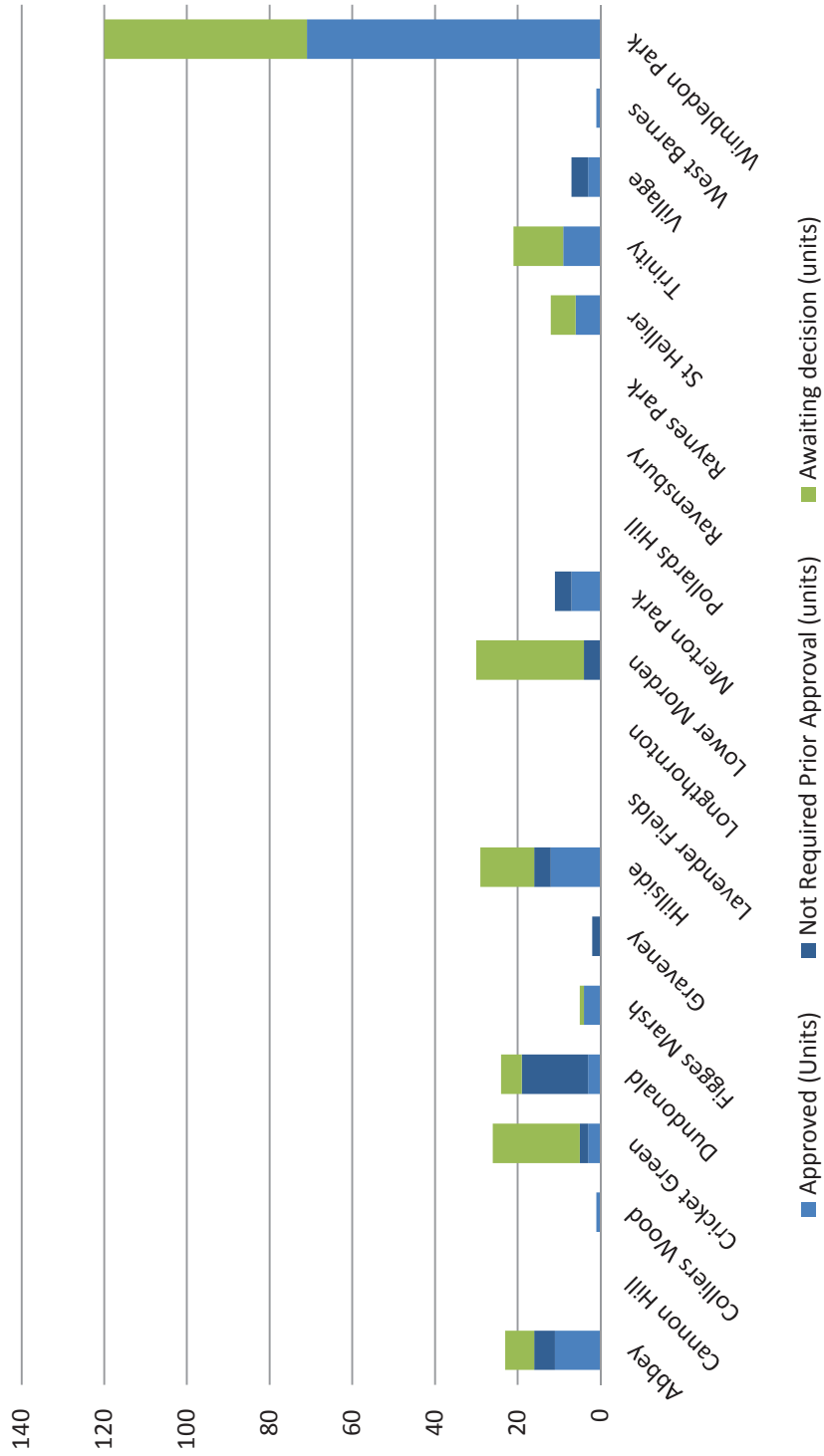
Approved and Await Prior Approvals



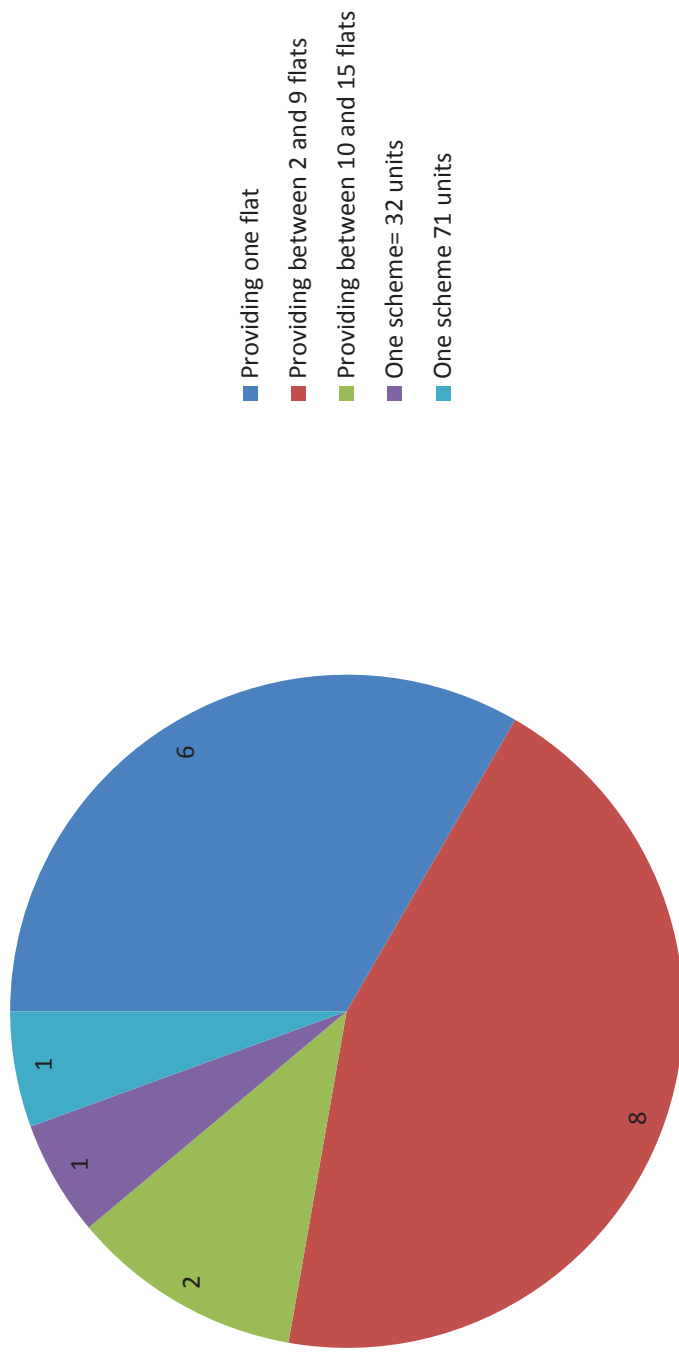
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Merton: number of units per ward

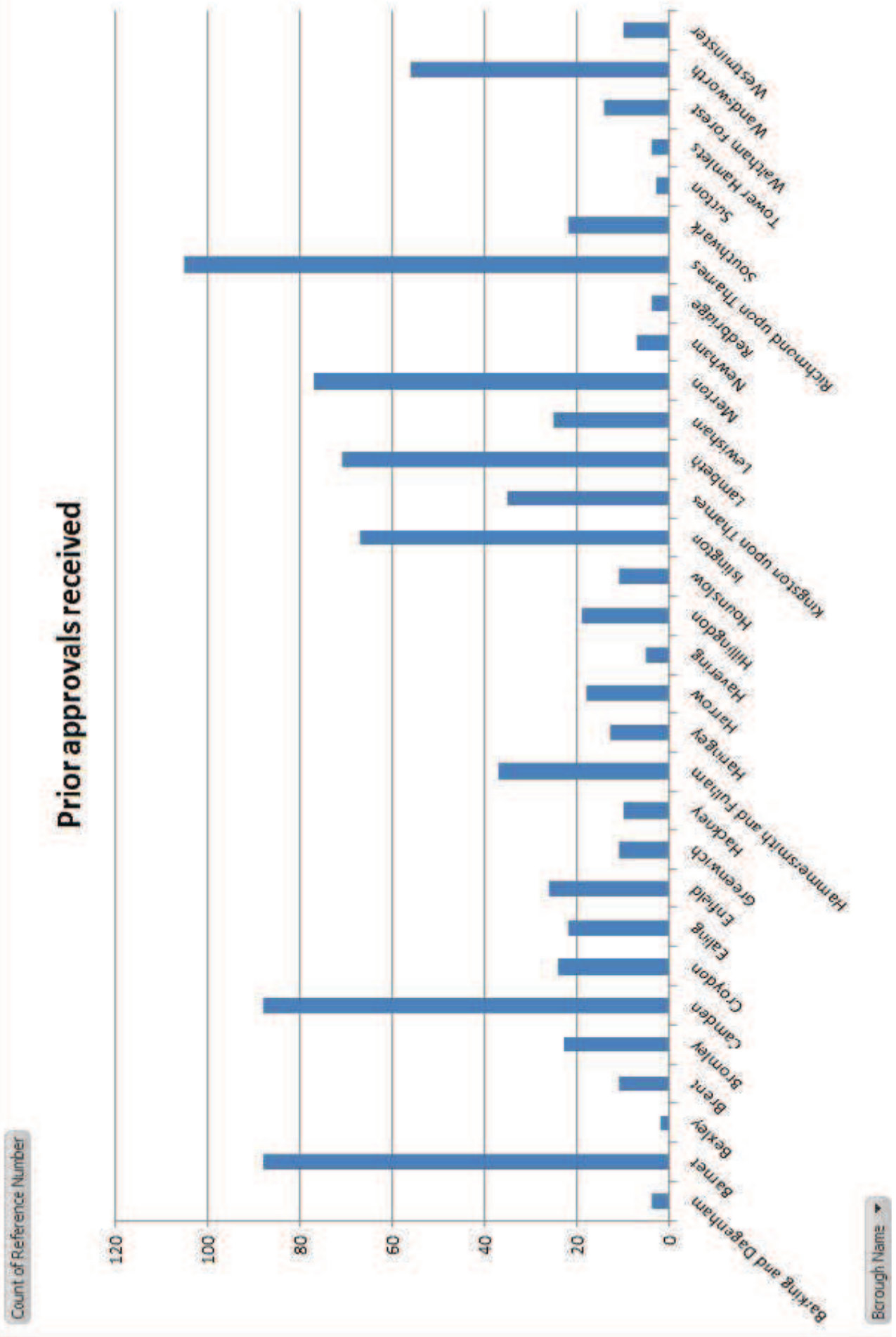
Prior Approvals by ward from Office to Residential (May 2013-February 2014)



How many flats per office lost?



London: prior approval schemes received



Actions

Article 4 direction for offices to residential

- Will require offices in Wimbledon town centre and Merton's industrial estates to seek planning permission if they want to convert to residential
- Effective from April 2015

Monitoring with the Mayor of London

- Impact on London's economy

Retail to residential?

- Government consultation (August 2013) to include more permitted development: small shops and financial services to residential
- Quasi planning permission: *economic health of area, loss of essential services, impact on local character, design, materials, outlook*
- Officers examining where this might affect Merton

www.merton.gov.uk/futureMerton

