

Committee: Borough Plan Advisory Committee

Date: 03 March 2021

Wards: All

Subject: Initial summary of public consultation on Merton's Local Plan (stage 2a)

Lead officer: Director of Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing Transport, Councillor Martin Whelton

Contact officer: Future Merton: Tara Butler

Recommendations:

A. That the Borough Plan Advisory Committee considers the contents of the report.

1.1. This report summarises the feedback from Merton's Local Plan stage2a public consultation feedback which took place from 13th November to 1st February 2021

2 DETAILS

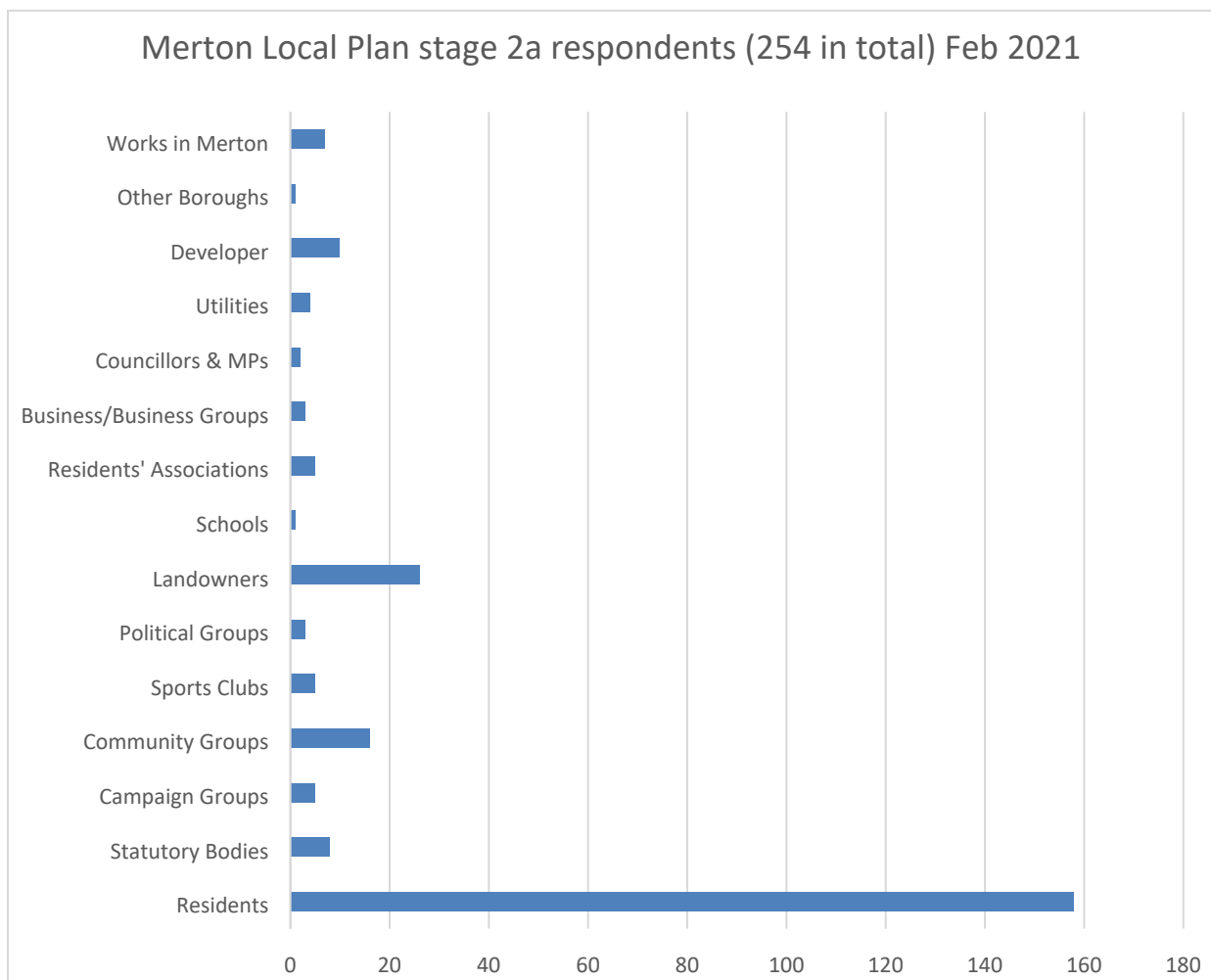
Consultation

2.1. Thank you to all respondents who took the time to read and reply to the Local Plan consultation which took place between 13th November 2020 and 1st February 2021 (although responses were accepted as late as 22nd February)

2.2. In total 254 valid responses were received, raising more than 3,000 points. 150 responses were received by email or letter and 104 responses were received via the online survey. Some responses were brief; about 30 respondents wrote more than 10 pages

2.3. A petition of 417 signatories was submitted relating to site CW2 (beside Britannia Point in Colliers Wood)
<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?id=1039>

2.4. The majority of people gave their names and contact details, however 250 respondents to the online survey did not supply any contact details. Officers have considered the anonymous comments and initial analysis shows that these anonymous comments are in the same vein as those who have supplied their names and addresses. However in general the council does not consider anonymous comments to statutory Local Plan consultations as there is no way of contacting these respondents if we have queries or checking if they are duplicates with other responses we have received. The analysis in this document relates to the non-anonymous responses



- 2.5. Broadly, there were some overarching strands to the consultation feedback:
- 2.6. **Embed climate change within every aspect of the Local Plan.** Many responses recommended that climate change be given a greater priority within all aspects of the plan – within the layout, within the vision, objectives and embedded within all policies.
- 2.7. **Covid19 recovery needs greater recognition.** Even since the start of the public consultation on Stage2a of the Local Plan, we know more about the devastating effects Covid19 has had on society and we are hopeful of a likely recovery, when compared to our knowledge when writing Stage2a earlier in 2020. Many responses recommended embedding Covid19 recovery to a greater extent within the Plan, although there were divergent views as to the effects on where and how people would want to live, work and travel and the consequential impact on Merton and London.
- 2.8. Appendix A summarises the initial consultation feedback under each policy area and responses are available online [Local Plan stage 2a consultation responses \(merton.gov.uk\)](https://www.merton.gov.uk/local-plan-stage-2a-consultation-responses)
- **Policy CW on Colliers wood and Site CW2, Colliers Wood, beside the existing Collier Wood tower**
- 2.9. A strong response was received to revert to the existing adopted Local Plan policy and the Stage 2 consultation policy of Britannia Point (the existing Colliers Wood tower) being considered as the pinnacle for height in the area.

417 people signed an e-petition (available online here: <https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?id=1039>) and numerous written responses were received, including from Colliers Wood Community Association and local Colliers Wood Councillors. (please note that at this time we have not cross checked the petition signatories with other correspondence received on the Local Plan so there is likely to be an element of duplication).

2.10. *Officers proposed next step:* officers propose to review the draft local plan to reinstate the wording that the existing Colliers Wood tower should be the pinnacle for height in the area. In making this change, the wording proposed in consultation responses will be considered alongside the new London Plan including the Secretary of State's recent directions on taller buildings.

- **Objection to transport proposal TN17 to develop a new access to Willow Lane industrial estate**

2.11. Merton's current (2014) and previous (2003) Local Plans contain a longstanding provision for a new vehicular access to be developed to Willow Lane industrial estate, subject to receiving land and funding from the redevelopment of sites within the industrial estate. This is because there is only one main vehicular access road (off Goat Road) to this business area, the largest in Merton and hosting the highest number of jobs and businesses. If anything were to happen to the existing access road off Goat Road (a flood, the collapse of the culvert, a fire etc) larger vehicles would not be able to enter or leave the Willow Lane estate. In particular, in this scenario, emergency vehicles such as fire engines would not be able to enter the Willow Lane estate. As well as the businesses and jobs supported by the estate, there are now people living in Connect House, which was converted to residential under prior approval.

2.12. The proposal for a new access road was explored in detail more than a decade ago. However it should be noted that the council's emerging Local Plan only proposed to safeguard the land for the new road; it doesn't propose the actual details of the design at this stage as these would be carried out at the time of delivery. The design or nature of the road prepared a decade ago would not be the same as one built today as design standards have changed in the last decade. It may be that a new access could be used in emergencies only as a safety consideration.

2.13. 66 respondents responded that they want this proposal removed, including Carshalton Road, Aspen Gardens and Goat Road Residents Association and the Friends of Mitcham Common.

2.14. *Officers proposed next steps:* Officers propose to remove the location for the Willow Lane Access Road (Proposal TN17) and investigate the access issues for the estate to consider if there are reasonable alternatives to improve safe vehicular access, particularly for emergency vehicles to and from Willow Lane in the event of access being closed unexpectedly at Goat Road.

- **Enquiries about the future of Whatley Avenue**

- 2.15. 11 responses were received that included enquiries about Site RP 9 Whatley Avenue, which is currently being used on a temporary basis for Harris Wimbledon schoolchildren. Most respondents identified themselves as affiliated with Joseph Hood Primary School next door and respondents included the head of Joseph Hood’s governing body. Some made general enquiries as to the site’s future, and others (including Joseph Hood school governors), clearly expressed a preference for the site to remain in educational use In Merton’s draft Stage2a Local Plan, Site RP.9 at Whatley Avenue is proposed to be allocated for *“Residential once it has been proven that there is no demand for educational use at primary or secondary level.”*
- 2.16. *Officer’s proposed next steps* The council is considering the provision of specialist education provision for children at this site to meet need in this sector. At their meeting on 10th February 2021, the council’s Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered a paper which included the reference to Whatley Avenue being used to provide education for children with special educational needs. Although there are no site-specific proposals at this stage, officers in the council’s Children’s Schools and Families dept have kept Joseph Hood primary school updated. Over the coming months the council’s Education team will clarify the needs for specialist education provision at this site. The proposed Site Allocation is that Whatley Avenue should only be used for residential if it is clearly established as not being needed for educational purposes. Should the continue to be needed for educational purposes, it will be removed from the Local Plan.
- 2.17. **Statutory respondents**
- 2.18. **London Plan update:** at the time of writing (end February 2021) the London Plan is due to be published on 2nd March 2021. The GLA’s response to Stage2a refers to the new London Plan. Although the GLA’s response was generally supportive on many issues in the London Plan, GLA officer’s view is that Merton’s Local Plan is not in general conformity with the London Plan on affordable housing issues. Both Plans propose a 50% borough-wide affordable housing target but Merton’s draft policy differed on site-specific matters. The GLA’s response states
- 2.19. *“Based on the evidence put forward, Merton should follow the Mayor’s threshold level of 35% [affordable housing] on privately owned land and 50% [affordable housing] on industrial land where development would result in a loss of industrial capacity as alternatives have not been justified. Affordable housing calculations should be based on habitable rooms, and in some cases, habitable floorspace, but should not be based on numbers of dwellings. Finally, affordable housing provision should be based on gross residential development and not on net affordable housing development as set out in Policy H5 of the PLP [London Plan]”*
- 2.20. In order to pass examination, Merton’s Local Plan must be in general conformity with the Mayor’s London Plan. The GLA also commented that Merton’s affordable housing viability study aligns well with the approach taken by the GLA.

- 2.21. *Officer's proposed next steps* . Merton officers will liaise with GLA officers with a view to amending Merton's local plan to follow the approach to affordable housing recommended by the GLA.
- 2.22. *Environment Agency* generally supportive with some detailed policy amendments to strengthen and clarify policies on flood risk management. These include emphasising that in Merton flood risk to homes and infrastructure occurs from surface water, ground water and sewer flooding and that developments that may be far from a river must be required to carry out a flood risk assessment and act on the results if they are at risk from any sources of flooding. The Environment Agency also support greater digitisation and sharing of data to streamline the planning process.
- 2.23. *Historic England* provided extensive details on Morden regeneration in particular, including on the evidence behind the Morden policy.
- 2.24. *Thames Water and Transport for London* provided site-specific comments on all of the site allocations on water, wastewater and transport grounds. *Sport England* also provided site-specific comments on current and former sporting sites.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purposes of this report.
- 3.2. During the consultation period (November 2020-February 2021):
- Central government ratified some earlier changes to the planning system and proposed further changes
 - The Mayor of London resolved to adopt a final London Plan following 14 Directions made by the Secretary of State, including Directions relating to housing numbers, taller buildings and permitting the conversion of business land. The new London Plan should be adopted before the end of March 2021 [News about the London Plan and associated London Plan Guidance | London City Hall](#)

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

Consultation undertaken

- 4.1. **A Stage 1 public consultation** took place between October 2017 and January 2018. This was the first stage, asking general questions about what sites or what policies the Local Plan might contain. Over 1,000 responses were received; far more than previous Local Plan consultations.
- 4.2. **A Stage 2 public consultation** took place between October 2018 and January 2019. It contained draft policies, potential sites for allocation and land designations (e.g. town centre boundaries) Approximately 240 respondents raised over 1,500 separate points. The feedback we received was reported to Merton's Borough Plan Advisory Committee in March 2019 (see link to report: <https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s26977/04%20BPAC%20Local>)

[%20Plan%20and%20FW%20masterplan%20summary%20of%20consultation%20responses%20Mar2019.pdf](#)

- 4.3. All responses received to each stage of the consultation are also available online (with personal details removed) www.merton.gov.uk/newlocalplan
- 4.4. A **Stage 2a public consultation** took place between 13th November 2020 to 1st February 2021. As set out in the report to the Borough Plan Advisory Committee in October 2020, Merton's Local Plan stage2a public consultation was conducted entirely online due to Covid19 restrictions. In line with the Coronavirus planning regulations, Merton's Statement of Community Involvement was amended to reflect this.
- 4.5. Although the consultation finished on 1st February 2021, the council continued to accept responses after the consultation date in recognition of the difficult situation people are going through with Covid19 and that the sustainability appraisal document was not visible without password protection online until 4th January 2021 due to an IT issue.
- 4.6.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. In July 2019 Merton's Cabinet resolved to amend the timetable for producing a Local Plan (known as Merton's Local Development Scheme) and for the next stage of consultation to take place in autumn 2020
- 5.2. As set out in this report and in Merton's Local Development Scheme 2019-22 the next steps are:
 - 1st February 2021 – consultation finishes, consider comments
 - Spring 2021 – pre-submission publication
 - Summer (Quarter 3) 2021 – submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination
 - Winter (Quarter 4) 2021 - adoption

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Funding to support the Local Plan production, including the consultations, comes from existing resources.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires at least two stages of engagement on local plan making. The consultation will be in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

