

MERTON COUNCIL  
futureMerton

Sustainable Communities  
Overview & Scrutiny Panel  
**Converting office to residential**

26 February 2014

[www.merton.gov.uk/ldf](http://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

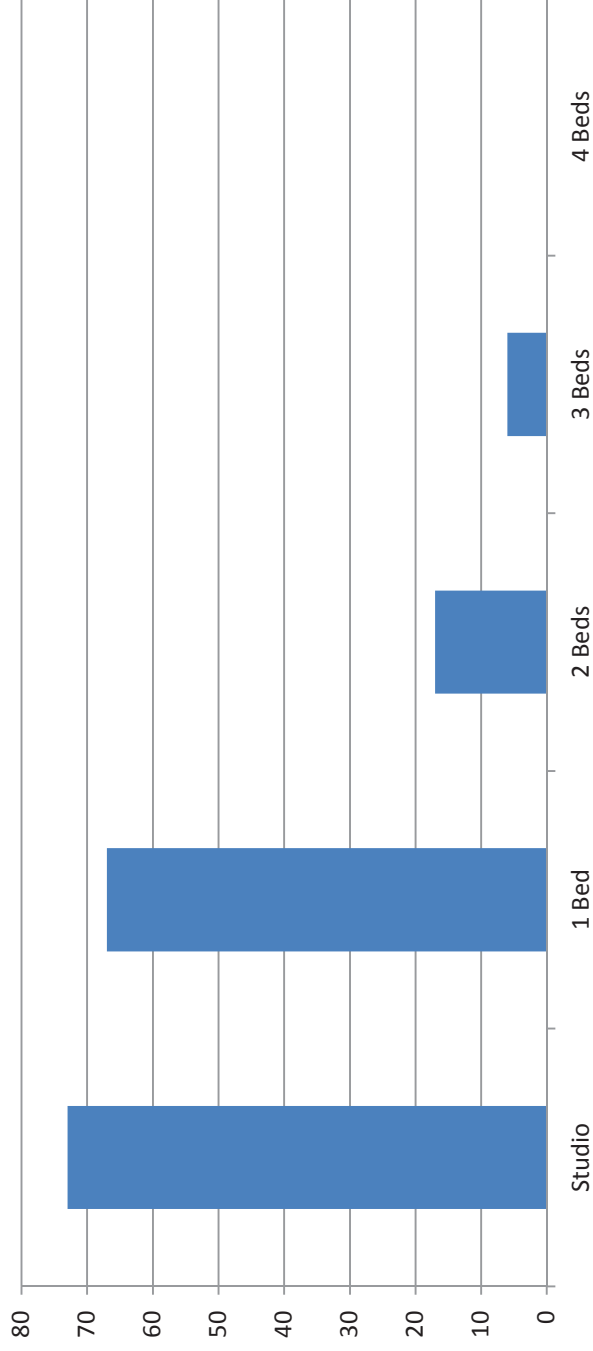
Offices do not have to be vacant.

## 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)

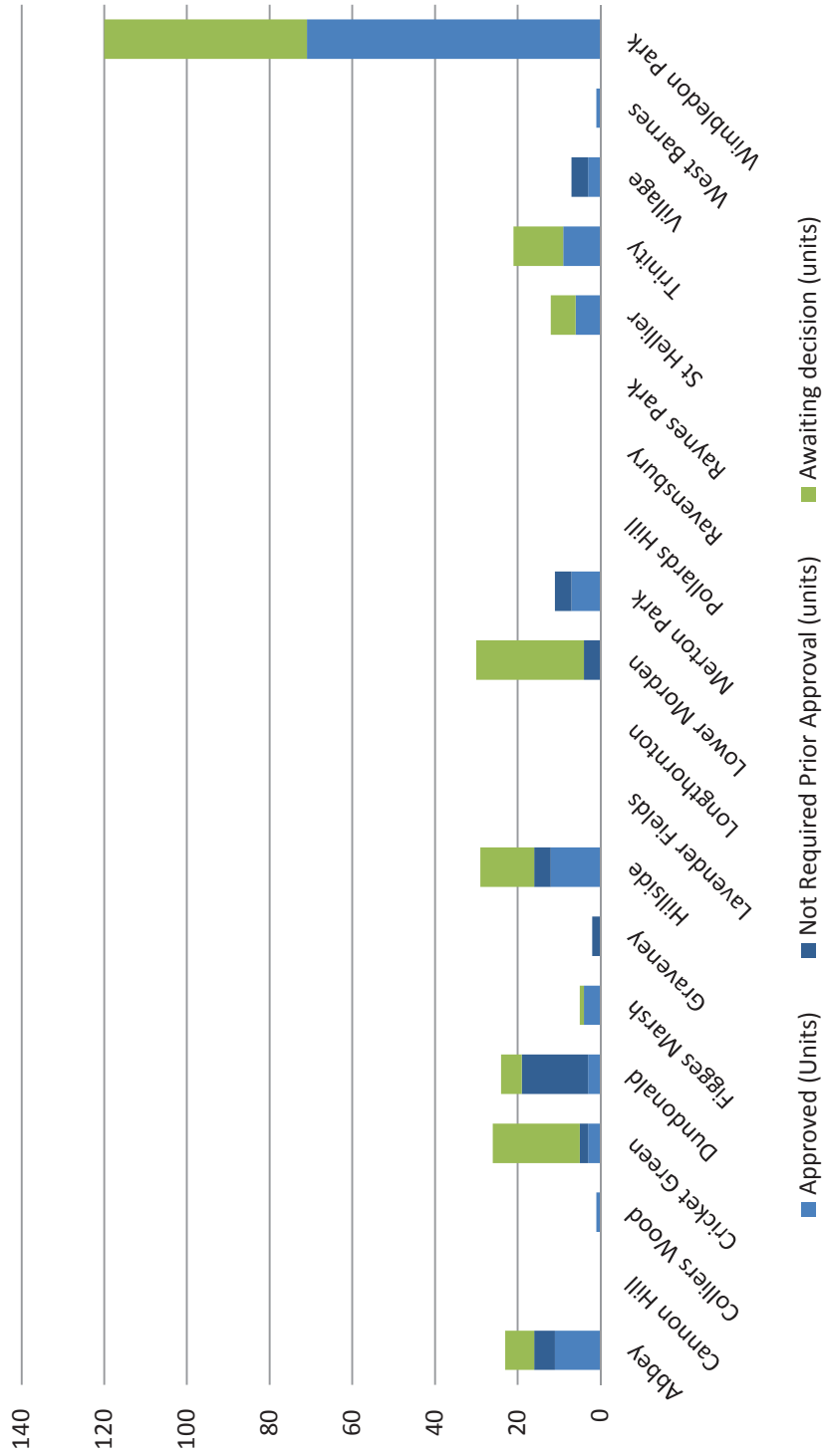




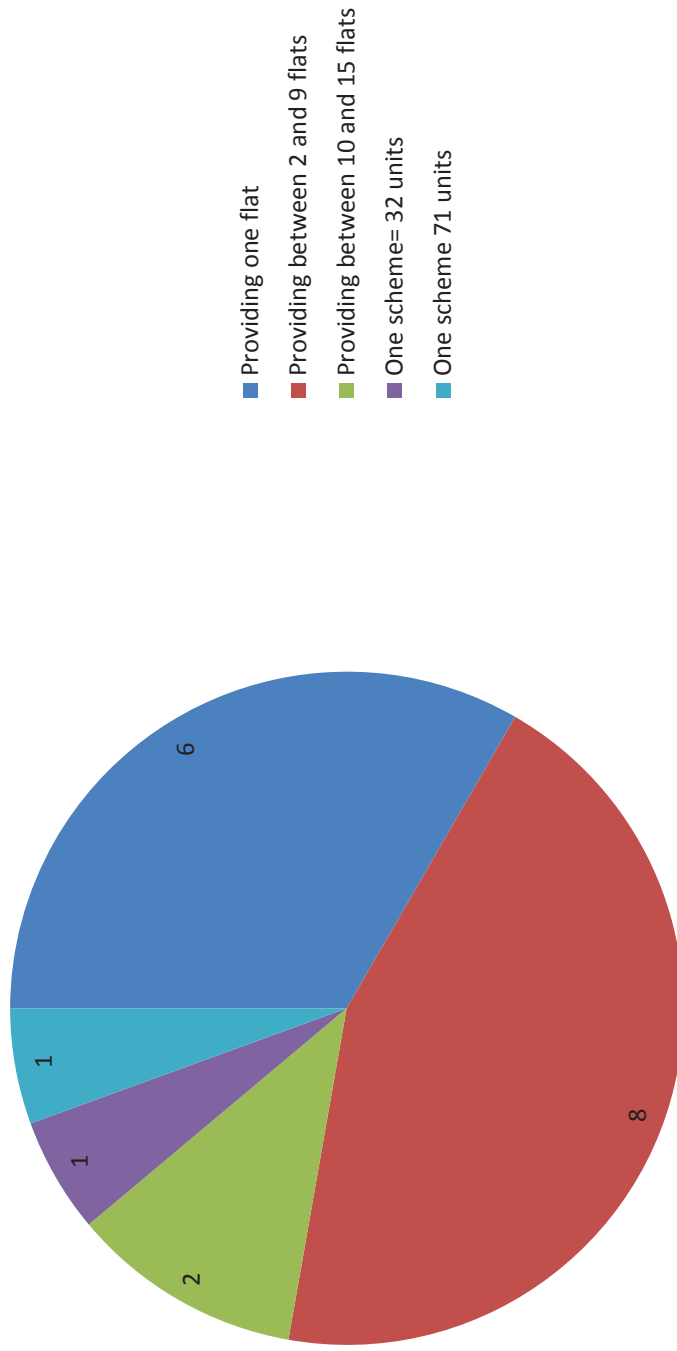


# Merton: number of units per ward

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

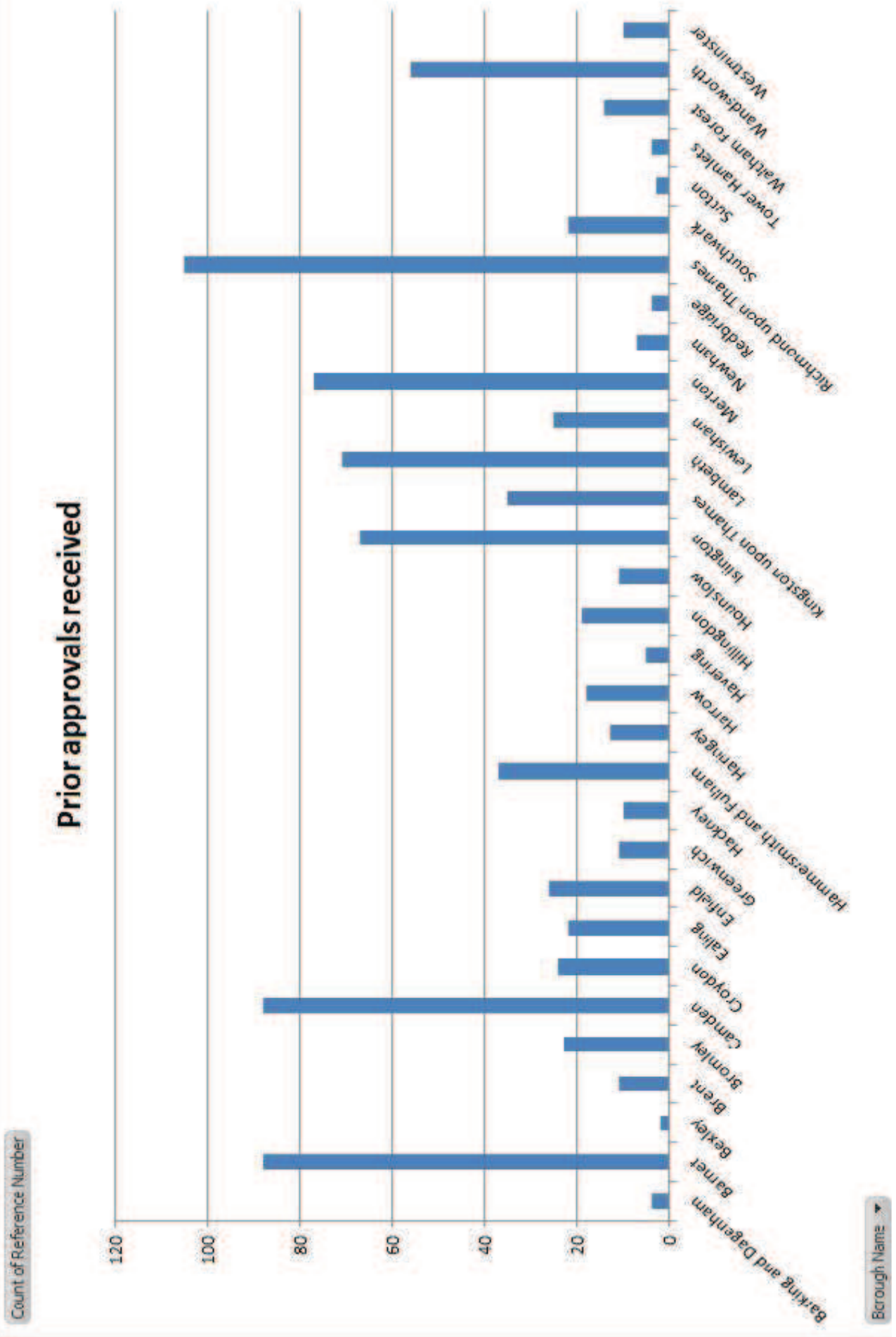


# How many flats per office lost?





# 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

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