

# Health Impact Assessment adoption statement for Merton's Local Plan

November 2024



# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document serves as a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) statement, summarising how the HIA process has influenced the Local Plan, hereafter referred to as the 'Plan'. Producing an HIA statement is not a legal obligation, but the council has opted to create a brief HIA statement upon adoption to summarise how health impact assessments have informed the Plan's production.
- 1.2. The Plan has been prepared within the context of social, economic and environmental factors, to foster and promote good growth that supports Merton's residents, businesses and diverse communities. It aims to ensure development in the borough is sustainable, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 1.3. It sets out the council planning policy framework for development proposals in the borough, it includes a spatial vision and strategic objectives over a 15-year period. It looks to address the needs and opportunities in the borough covering policies including affordable housing, climate change, health and wellbeing, active travel, air quality, green and blue infrastructure and business growth. It also identifies areas for growth and regeneration.
- 1.4. The Plan and its supporting evidence were [submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2021](#), accompanied with HIAs. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2024, Merton Council received the Planning Inspector's Final Report on the Examination of the Plan. The Inspectors found the Plan to be 'sound'<sup>1</sup>. Upon its adoption, it will carry full weight in the consideration of all submitted planning applications and supersede the following Local Plan documents:
  - Core Planning Strategy (2011)
  - Sites and Policies Plan (2014)
  - Policies Map (2014)
- 1.5. The council undertook HIAs when required during the development of the Plan towards its adoption. The following HIAs were carried out:
  - Health Impact Assessment - submission ([OD11](#)) 2021
  - Health Impact Assessment of Merton's Local Plan dated January 2024 ([LBM35](#)).
- 1.6. The above HIAs were submitted to the Planning Inspectors and considered by them as part of their examination of Merton's Local Plan.
- 1.7. The HIA process ensured that the Plan had a regard and an understanding of the health issues affecting the borough and ensured the Plan direction would not have an adverse impact. The above HIAs concluded the Plan would not have any known adverse impact on health and wellbeing (including mental

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<sup>1</sup> The examination assessed whether the Plan was prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements and whether it is 'sound', in accordance with paragraph 35 of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#). A Local Plan is considered 'sound' if it is: Positively prepared, Justified, Effective and Consistent with national policy.

health).

## 2. Planning for health

- 1.8. The council engaged and consulted with several health bodies and organisations for example National Health Service (NHS) and health providers and specialist from the start and incorporated advice/recommendations received where appropriate, to the Plan. Furthermore, Merton's planning policy officers worked closely with Merton Public Health colleagues.
- 1.9. The Plan acknowledges the role planning can play in the improvement of health outcomes and tackling health issues such as, child and adult obesity and health inequalities. Shaped by adopting health and wellbeing best practices, embedding health, mental health, and wellbeing across various policy areas such as design, green and blue infrastructure, housing, transport, climate change, air quality and neighbourhoods.
- 1.10. A key driver of the Plan is to create healthier and safe environments for residents of all ages and backgrounds. In addition, it looks to improve access to green and blue infrastructure and nature which is, widely acknowledged to improve mental health, reduce stress, reduce loneliness, help with anxiety and depression. The Plan aligns with council priorities for example working toward becoming the London Borough of Sport by; supporting and encouraging more people to become more active and adopting healthier lifestyles.
- 1.11. Importantly, the Plan's Strategic policy HW10.1 acknowledges the importance of working with our strategic partners in tackling health inequalities, promoting and encouraging healthy lifestyles and creating healthy environments in Merton for all.
- 1.12. The council's, Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach is embedded throughout the Plan. Furthermore, the Plan aligns and supports council priorities for health and wellbeing, for example, working toward being [Borough of Sport](#).
- 1.13. The Plan has incorporated several approaches/best practices, which will have a positive health (including mental health) and wellbeing benefit for all for example:
- [Wider Determinants of Health](#).
  - [Transport for London Healthy Streets Approach](#).
  - [Sport England Active Design](#).<sup>2</sup>
  - [Town and Country Planning Association \(TCPA\) 20 Minutes Neighbourhoods](#).
  - Dementia design.
  - Active aging approaches.

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<sup>2</sup> The third iteration of [Active Design guidance](#), supported by [Active Travel England \(ATE\)](#) and the [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities \(OHID\)](#), has been produced to help create 'active environments'.

- 1.14. The above approaches are recognised by government, health professionals and developers as providing positive benefits for all, improving health and wellbeing, encouraging more social interaction and inclusion, encouraging active travel and assisting in tackling inequalities.

**Monitoring and review arrangements**

- 1.15. The Plan's monitoring framework table (*chapter 17: Monitoring framework*) sets out the monitoring indicators for the Plan, which are reported in the [Authority Monitoring Report \(AMR\)](#). The indicators will monitor the performance of the Plan. It should be noted that, the AMR is not the council's only monitoring tool. Separate monitoring arrangements and processes are in place for other council strategies, for example the climate change strategy with its action plan. The Monitoring Framework outlines the triggers for a review (partial or full) for the Plan.

- 1.16. If the council decides that a review of the Plan is necessary and changes are needed, a HIA will be undertaken (if required), to ensure there are no adverse or a negative impact to the health and wellbeing of Merton's residents by way of the Plan.

**Conclusion**

- 1.17. The HIA process found no known adverse or negative impacts of the Plan, towards adoption. Merton Council believes the Plan will assist in, improving health and wellbeing, reduce health inequalities in the borough and help tackle the health issues affecting communities.