

BOROUGH PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
12 OCTOBER 2010

(7.15pm -10.10pm)

PRESENT: Councillor Ian Munn (in the Chair);  
Councillors Philip Jones, Diane Neil Mills, Geraldine Stanford,  
Ray Tindle and David Williams.

ALSO PRESENT: Council Officers  
Tara Butler (Spatial Planning Manager- Interim);  
Ann Clarke (Spatial Planner); and  
M.J.Udall (Democratic Services)

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Item 1)

No declarations of interest were made.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3(a))

See also next Minute below.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee held on 22 October 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (Agenda Item 3(b))

(a) Formal/Informal Meetings - It was noted that following the previous meeting on 22 October 2009, the subsequent scheduled meetings of the Advisory Committee in 2010 had been cancelled for various reasons. A Member raised concerns about informal meetings being held since then in relation to the LDF (Local Development Framework), but that there were no published Minutes of those meetings.

It was noted that there had been meetings of the then Chair and Vice-Chair with officers to discuss documents such as the LDF text; and that previously there had been specific delegations to officers in consultation with Members similar to that proposed for the AMR (Annual Monitoring Report) elsewhere on this meeting's agenda (on page 21).

The Chair indicated that he intended that the Advisory Committee would meet as scheduled on the Corporate Calendar and that these meetings would be minuted and open to the public.

(b) Wandle Valley Regional Park (Min. 6/10/10) – Councillor Diane Neil Mills confirmed that meetings of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Development Board were open to the public, the next meeting was on 26 October 2010 in Wandsworth and that the meeting dates should be published by the four constituent Boroughs.

Tara Butler (Spatial Planning Manager- Interim) undertook to ensure that the dates of the Wandle Valley Regional Park Development Board (and its Management Board) would be published.

4 ORDER OF AGENDA

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After consulting other Members, the Chair brought forward consideration of Item 6 and then Item 5, as shown below.

5 MERTON COUNCIL'S ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2009/10 (Agenda Item 6)

(i) Tara Butler (Spatial Policy Manager - Interim) introduced the report including that - certain data was still awaited such as housing data from the GLA; the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) was due to be submitted to Cabinet on 8/11/10 and Council on 24/11/10; and Members were welcome to submit comments to officers on the draft AMR after this meeting, in addition to any comments they made at this meeting. Members then made the comments on matters outlined below.

(ii) The Chair indicated that he would submit detailed comments after the meeting including on para. 2.6 (page 5); para. 2.28 (page 13); para. 4.1 (page 29); table 4.1 (page 30) – possible need for an extra column; para. 9.1 (page 42) – possible need for extra appendix to list/name all of 67 Merton's parks; and para. 10.2 (page 47) - needed reference to "Merton Rule" in relation to climate change.

(iii) Councillor Philip Jones indicated that he would submit detailed (typo) comments after the meeting.

(iv) para. 2.23 & figure 2.3 (page 11) - Officers confirmed that the definition of the unemployment rate, which referred to claimants, needed to be clarified.

(v) para. 2.28 (page 11) – (A) The average house price should be the "median" average (instead of the "mean" average); and

(B) The Chair indicated that for the previous year's AMR he had requested that average house prices should be shown for both Wimbledon and Mitcham.

(vi) para. 3.17 (page 20) – Officers advised that the figures referred to the completion of new homes (not planning permission approvals).

(vii) para. 3.31 (page 26) (Planning applications for housing conversions) - Members requested that, in addition to the refusal figure (53.1%), figures be shown of the percentage of refused applications (a) submitted to appeal and (b) allowed on appeal.

(viii) Demand for family homes – Officers confirmed that demand exceeded supply as regards affordable housing. A Member asked that this be highlighted.

(ix) para. 8.3 (page 17) – A Member referred to this paragraph indicating that lack of car ownership was an indicator of multiple deprivation, but suggested that this was not the case.

(x) para. 3.20 & table 3.2 (pages 20/22) (New homes) – Members requested that (A) the meaning of the columns in table 3.2 needed to be clarified and further explanation given; and (B) cumulative and period data be added regarding provision/targets. Officers indicated that targets had changed over the last 10 years, and that in London housing targets would still be set.

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(xi) para. 3.19 (page 22) – Officers advised that the percentage of new dwellings built on previously developed land (PDL) was shown as 100% as the current AMR applied to 2009/2010; and the definition of PDL hadn't been changed to exclude back gardens until June 2010.

(xii) para. 3.25 (page 23) – Officers undertook to check that 100% RSL's affordable housing schemes accounted for 100% of all affordable schemes built in Merton in 2009/10. The Chair requested that it be clarified that this referred to completed homes.

(xiii) para.'s 3.27 – 3.29 (pages 23 - 25) – The Chair queried the figure of 49 completed homes in para. 3.27; and requested that this and other associated figures in paragraphs 3.28 & 3.29 be checked.

(xiv) Building on open space (page 42) – Officers advised that figures for developments were only included in the AMR where the scheme was completed.

(xv) Number of applications received/approved/refused in each Ward – A Member suggested that this data had been included in previous AMR's and should be included again. Officers indicated that this was being looked at.

(xvi) Schedules of Conservation Areas. Listed Buildings and Locally Listed Buildings – A Member suggested that such schedules (in the Unitary Development Plan) be included in the AMR.

(xvii) para. 13.10 (page 60) (Community Infrastructure Levy) – Officers confirmed that they were seeking further information to allow this paragraph to be redrafted.

Next Meeting - The Advisory Committee then considered whether there should be a further report on the AMR to its next meeting on 4 November 2010, and as indicated below concluded that an update report should be submitted to that meeting.

Officers advised that the AMR wouldn't be complete by then as housing data wasn't expected to be available until later in November and it was proposed to circulate a finalised version of the draft AMR to all Members in about mid-November and also make copies available via the Internet and Libraries.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Advisory Committee notes the first draft of Merton Council's Annual Monitoring Report 2009/10; and

(2) the Advisory Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Director for Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Borough Plan Advisory Committee be given delegated authority to agree and make any amendments required to Merton's Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Secretary of State by 31 December 2010; and

(3) an update report on the AMR be submitted to the Advisory Committee's next meeting on 4 November 2010.

6 SOUTH LONDON WASTE PLAN (Agenda Item 5)

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Tara Butler (Spatial Policy Manager - Interim) introduced the report, including that the Waste Plan was being submitted to this meeting primarily for information so as to allow Members sufficient time to study it prior to its consideration by the Advisory Committee at its next meeting on 4 November 2010.

A Member queried the strong wording of policy WP.4 (New Sites for Waste Management Facilities) (on page 44) which stated "Planning permissions will be granted....."; and suggested that less presumptive wording should be used such as "...will consider favourably....." be used. It was noted that the policy also required that any application must satisfy all other policy requirements of the Waste Plan. Officers advised that (Government) guidance required that policies be positive; but undertook to consider the issue.

Officers indicated that, for the next meeting on 4 November 2010, if any other Borough had raised issues by then, these would be reported.

There was discussion of how the Waste Plan, once implemented, would give the four Boroughs far greater control over applications for waste management facilities. It was also noted that the Waste Plan indicated that only about 7 hectares of extra land in total would be sought across the four Boroughs for new waste sites.

Officers confirmed that as part of research for the Waste Plan, the level/demand for commercial waste operations in the area had been investigated; and that Merton hadn't been satisfied with the figures initially provided but the GLA was reviewing the data, which was due to be published in November.

RESOLVED: That (1) the Advisory Committee notes the contents of the South London Waste Plan prior to its submission to the Borough Plan Advisory Committee on 04 November 2010; and

(2) the Advisory Committee expresses concern about the strong wording of policy WP.4 (New Sites for Waste Management Facilities) (on page 44) which states "Planning permissions will be granted....."; and notes this will be reviewed by officers.

7 RESPONSES TO CORE STRATEGY PRE-SUBMISSION PUBLICATION  
(Agenda Item 4)

1. Tara Butler (Spatial Policy Manager - Interim) introduced the report, including that -  
(a) the number of objections received (about 30) was relatively low;  
(b) Members, in addition making comments at this meeting, were welcome to submit further comments direct to officers for the next week or so;  
(c) one area of concern raised by objectors was out of town centre retail provision;  
(d) there would need to be changes made to the Core Strategy due to changes to various Government programmes and due to response awaited from some organisations, and the need in some cases, like the NHS, to seek a "statement of common ground", and, where available, such changes would be reported to the Advisory Committee's next meeting on 4 November 2010 (but indicated that the PCT had recently sought a meeting with officers on the same day); and

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(e) where possible, additional documentation would be circulated well in advance of the November meeting.

2. Members then made the comments on the Core Strategy and officers responded to queries as outlined below.

3. Strategy, page 207, section 7E (first column) – “Annual reactionary maintenance programme” should read “Annual responsive maintenance programme”.

4. Responses – Sections 17 & 20 (Out of town centre retail provision and use of industrial sites) – There was extensive discussion on this issue - including reference to Strategy policies CS.7 (page 84) & CS.13 (page 126) - particularly in relation to the location of some sporting/leisure uses (such as climbing centre), which a Member suggested would be inappropriate to locate in a town centre and might be more suitably located elsewhere. Officers confirmed that such uses would need to follow the usual “sequential test” to determine whether they should be located out of centre.

4.1. Officers advised that, in this context, the PCT had raised the issue of the need for pro-active measures in the Care Plan regarding health care. Reference was made to the PCT not being due to meet with officers to discuss relevant changes to the Strategy until about the time of the Advisory Committee’s November meeting (see also paragraph 1 above).

4.2. The Advisory Committee agreed to the setting up, if needed at that time, of a Working Group of Members to consider any issues arising from discussions with the PCT (as detailed in Resolution (2) below).

5. AFC Wimbledon – Responses, Sections 5 (page 1) and 9 (page 6) – There was extensive discussion on this issue including -

(a) the objection was from a Club supporter, whereas AFC Wimbledon itself had made no objections;

(b) AFC Wimbledon being currently located at “Kingsmead” in Royal Borough of Kingston, and the references in that Borough’s Core Strategy to the Club;

(c) the references to AFC Wimbledon in Merton’s Core Strategy in Strategic Objection 5 (page 35) and para. 21.18 (on page 133); and

(d) various proposals for para. 21.18 including amending its last sentence or moving it so as to indicate greater support by Merton for AFC Wimbledon to possibly relocate back into Merton.

5.1 The Advisory Committee agreed that Officers consider possible suitable amendments to para. 21.18 and circulate possible wording to Committee Members.

6. Evidence Base – Officers confirmed that the evidence base was complete apart from on (a) retail issues (see para. 4 above) and (b) conversions, the initial work for which was on the Internet. The Chair asked that relevant link to the Internet be circulated to Advisory Committee Members. *(NB. The link to the published planning research which has informed Merton’s Core Strategy is as follows -*

*<http://www.merton.gov.uk/living/planning/planningpolicy/ldf/planningresearch.htm> )*

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7. De-conversions – Members discussed the possible clarification of policy on de-conversions (where a single housing unit/property, previously converted into a number of units, is de-converted back to a single unit). In response to a suggestion that this could lead to the provision of large family houses, officers advised that the demand for large family houses related to the affordable sector, not the private sector. During discussions reference was made to Strategy policies CS.8(a) (page 18) (mix of housing) & CS.9 (page 99) (seeking no loss of residential units). Officers suggested that any amendments on de-conversions should be referred to on page 149 (dwelling conversions).

7.1 The Advisory Committee agreed that Officers consider possible suitable amendments regarding de-conversions.

8. Employment Sites –Other Uses – Officers advised that a consultants study had identified 4 very small employment sites as more suitable for other uses, and their details were on the Internet. *(NB. As promised by officers at the meeting, the relevant link is shown in these Minutes at paragraph 6 above.)*

9. Employment Policies – Officers advised that they were looking at possibly revising development control employment policies as the new planning system was likely to affect such policies; and undertook to report back to the Advisory Committee when the policies were due to be reviewed.

10. Responses – Section 18 (page 1) (Housing – minimum floor standards) – A Member referred to the objection against the lack of minimum floor standards in Strategy Policy CS.8 (page 92) and Merton’s current SPG specifying minimum room sizes. Officers advised that Strategy Policy 14(d)(a) (page 141) required development to comply to appropriate space standards (which Merton could then specify as those in the London Plan or other plans/documents) and was aimed at future proofing” the policy. A Member suggested that there should be some statement stating that the Council would wish to aspire to the highest standards.

11. Strategy Policy CS.15 (page 152) – A Member queried the phrase “not viable” at the end of the introductory paragraph. Officers advised that their research showed that it would possible to build homes across Merton to “Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4” except in areas with very low price homes; and that in order to not adhere fully to the policy, developers would have to prove that their scheme was not viable. The Chair suggested there needed to be a provision that the Council would only allow departures from this policy if an exceptional case had been made for less than full compliance. Officers undertook to look to consider the matter.

11.1 Officers undertook to send Councillor Diane Neil Mills an e-link to the formula used for the economic test for “Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4”.

12. Response 26 (page 4) (Footpath links) – A Member suggested that Strategy Policy CS.18 was vague and didn’t make direct reference to footpaths; and he supported the Wimbledon Society’s suggestion in relation to making walking more convenient, that a new part be added reading “Creating new footpath links and

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improving existing routes where these would provide better access to public facilities, and local communities.”

12.1 The Advisory Committee agreed that Officers consider a possible suitable way to include this amendment in an appropriate part of the Strategy.

13. Strategy Policy CS.19 (page 171) - Councillor Geraldine Standford indicated that she had received many representations to improve access to Mitcham Junction Station, and there needed to be reference in the Strategy to this station as well as Eastfields.

14. New Homes – Officers agreed that there needn't to be clarification on the numbers of new homes proposed for various different areas of Merton, and advised that a briefing note would be produced.

15. Affordable Housing Target – Viability Update – Officers undertook to circulate an e-link to this data to Advisory Committee Members. *(NB. The relevant link is shown in these Minutes at paragraph 6 above.)*

RESOLVED: That (1) the Advisory Committee notes the contents of this report including the responses to Merton's Core Strategy pre-submission publication and early proposals for changes (set out in Appendix A); and

(2) if needed, after the Advisory Committee's next meeting on 4 November 2010, a Working Group of Members (whose proceedings would be minuted), be set up to consider any issues arising from discussions with the PCT.

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