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# Planning for Future Police Estate Development

Guidance for local authorities on the need to make adequate provision through the planning system for police estate development – May 2005



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# Foreword

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is growing and evolving at an unprecedented rate. It is the single largest employer in London, with over 46,000 staff, and by necessity requires a large property estate across the entire Greater London area.



**Alan Croney FRICS**

This growth, together with the ever-changing built environment in London, places huge demands on the estate.

In response, MPS Property Services is taking forward an unparalleled programme of change. A detailed strategy, "Building Towards the Safest City", sets out our aims to modernise the estate and make it fit for use by the police, staff and Londoners alike. In essence, to make it fit for purpose in the twenty first century.

This estate strategy is different from previous ones. Simply upgrading or renewing our buildings, which comprise over 6 million square foot of premises, is no longer an option. "Building Towards the Safest City" is the first step towards a new strategic approach. It is forward looking but also capable of providing quicker solutions to current pressing problems such as increasing staff numbers and the changing nature of our work. It involves new and radical thinking to ensure solutions are affordable, deliverable and in line with diverse and often complex front-line policing needs.

The MPS operates across the whole of London and we are looking to all thirty-two boroughs to help us implement change as we modernise in our continual bid to reduce crime across the capital. The ethos of the new Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, is for the MPS to work together with London's communities and key stakeholders to effect real and sustainable change. MPS Property Services looks to work together

with local planning authorities to help make this a reality.

"Planning for Future Police Estate Development" sets out a London-wide planning policy to provide guidance to local authorities on the need to make provision through the planning system for police estate development. It outlines the key issues that need to be taken into account when formulating policies for police requirements and selecting suitable locations for them through the development plan system.

Planning Policy Statement 12 advises policies in their development plans, to take account of infrastructure requirements and to make provision for community facilities.

I believe it is vital that this agenda is adopted across London's local authorities to provide a London-wide planning policy for the MPS estate and to initiate discussion with Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to enable the MPS to deliver a co-ordinated, sustainable and cohesive pan-London estate strategy. I look forward to constructive and fruitful working relationships.

**Alan Croney**  
Director  
MPS Property Services

# 1. Summary of the Key Planning Issues

## **1.1 A general planning policy for police operations and services**

The MPS requests that Local Authorities include a general policy in the new Local Development Framework Core Strategy in support of the MPS estates strategy:

*“To provide for the requirements of the Metropolitan Police in the delivery of its estate strategy ‘Building Towards the Safest City’.”*  
(section 4.1)

## **1.2 Planning policy recognition for police ‘shops’ in retail frontages**

The MPS wants to develop police ‘shops’ within key retail units in areas that have high-footfall to provide services that are highly visible and readily accessible to the public.  
(section 4.2)

## **1.3 Planning policy recognition for police patrol bases in warehouse units, potentially in employment areas**

The MPS also wants to develop police patrol bases within warehouse units. These could be within allocated employment areas and they would employ a considerable number of people. (section 4.3)

## **1.4 Planning policy recognition for neighbourhood team bases for the Safer Neighbourhood strategy**

Safer Neighbourhood teams provide dedicated, high visibility policing at the local level. They require convenient accommodation within their operational area, some of which may cater for more than one team (section 4.4)



### **1.5 Planning policy recognition for custody suite clusters serving one or more boroughs**

Another MPS operational requirement is for custody suites which also accommodate associated legal and police facilities. These sites have specific security needs. (section 4.5)

### **1.6 Planning policy recognition for other specialist operational requirements**

MPS specialist operations operate across the whole of the London and can have a national role, and require specially adapted accommodation, ranging from customised office space to areas of open land for training purposes. (section 4.6)

### **1.7 Recognition of MPS requirements for key worker housing**

The Metropolitan Police Authority believes key worker housing schemes are important means of providing suitable and affordable accommodation in London for police staff, particularly new recruits. These requirements need to be addressed in housing policies and in the consideration of planning applications. (sections 4.7 and 4.8)

### **1.8 The recognition of police requirements in planning obligations**

The MPS requests local authorities recognise the MPS's essential estate development requirements when discussing obligations on major planning applications. LPA's are also asked to consult MPS Property Services directly. (sections 4.9 and 4.10)



## 2. Understanding the MPS Estate

The MPS estate makes a vital contribution to an efficient and effective police service for London. It comprises over 600 operational buildings, including 174 police stations, 1116 residential properties and training and support facilities, used by over 46,000 police officers and staff.

The estate is ageing, approximately 35% of the buildings pre-dating 1935, and many are inappropriately located for today's communities. Simply upgrading or renewing individual parts of the estate is no longer an option and there is an urgent need for major change.

“Building Towards the Safest City” is a new strategic approach to move the estate forward. The strategy aims to modernise the estate and make it fit for use by the police, staff and Londoners in the 21st Century.

Overall responsibility for the Metropolitan Police estate is vested in the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA), the statutory organisation responsible for ensuring an efficient and effective police service for London. Day-to-day management is delegated by the Authority to the MPS Property Services.

Buildings within the estate fall into four broad categories of use, as outlined below, and while each individual building will have its own requirements and characteristics, each category will share common features.



## 2.1 Operational

A large number of existing police stations pre-date 1935 and consequently do not meet the requirements of either the police or our communities in the twenty first century.

Today's policing is better suited to:

- Fewer core police stations
- A number of police 'shops' providing public interface functions in readily accessible locations such as local high streets, shopping centres, libraries and hospitals
- Police patrol bases in warehouse units on industrial estates or business parks
- Safer Neighbourhood team bases
- Custody suite clusters located strategically throughout London
- Specialist operational requirements across London

## 2.2 Residential

The MPS has a limited stock of residential accommodation available for its staff and priority is given to all new recruits once they have completed their induction training at Hendon Police Training College. Currently about a third of newly qualified recruits are provided with housing, 90% of whom are young officers.

The standard of a large proportion of available accommodation raises particular concerns. Although a limited refurbishment programme is being rolled out for some houses and flats to improve amenities, a long-term solution is required.

Some of the present issues are:

- Many existing section houses are old and outdated, and the facilities do not meet the needs and aspirations of staff
- There is a substantial shortfall in suitable, affordable, smaller flats for single staff or childless couples who cannot afford the market rates for such accommodation
- The estate has too many large family houses that no longer provide the type of accommodation required by staff

The estate would like to exploit economies of scale by substituting houses for individual/groups of flats. As an alternative to direct housing provision, the MPA believes that key worker initiatives, shared equity schemes and other similar options have a vital role to play. By helping MPS staff to establish themselves on the property ladder the organisation frees up existing accommodation for new recruits at the time they are most in need of this assistance.

The Authority has established 'Property Zone', an organisation which assists staff to find accommodation when they move out of directly provided accommodation. 'Property Zone' helps to identify and secure key worker housing in schemes across London and the surrounding areas, either on a rented or shared ownership basis.

## 2.3 Training

The provision of in-house training facilities is vital to ensure MPS staff are fully equipped to provide the services expected of them. The MPS is also one of the few constabularies to have its own dedicated police training college.

The range of training facilities required places a particular demand on the MPS estate, for example, the provision of:

- Dog handler training – requiring specialised buildings and open land
- Firearms and Public Order Training Centre, Gravesend – requiring open land and specialised temporary buildings
- Hendon Police Training College – requiring expanded educational facilities and accommodation
- Borough based training as appropriate

## 2.4 Support Services

There is an increasing need for general office accommodation for the full range of police staff who provide vital support for front line officers.

Many MPS units have already occupied state of the art offices in our new offices at Earl's Court in West London and further new, appropriate accommodation is required to enable staff to vacate other out-dated, poorly located premises.

# 3. Understanding the MPS Property Strategy

“Building Towards the Safest City” was published to demonstrate how plans for the MPS estate mirror wider MPS strategy and contribute to the vision of making London the safest major city in the world.





The requirements of the MPS estate are unique and demand high-specification, resilient, secure buildings. Most are based on 24/7 operations and need commuter access to meet shift patterns, as well as necessary security. They will also often require higher car parking ratios than the standards set out in planning policy documents to meet MPS service delivery plans.



The MPS is committed to borough-based delivery of its operations. But London is changing and there is a need to respond to areas of future population growth and shifting demographic patterns.

It is vital therefore that emerging local planning policies – especially new Local Development Frameworks – recognise and assist the estate requirements of policing London.

There are some London boroughs where the estate requires more urgent modernisation and expansion. These include Barking & Dagenham, Enfield, Haringey, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Lambeth, Merton, Newham, Richmond, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth. MPS Property Services will treat these as a priority.

The MPS has also embraced the environmental agenda and has just published the MPS Environmental Strategy 2005-10. This confirms 24 objectives under seven key themes, many of which relate specifically to the environmental performance of the estate, for example by improving the sustainability of building design and procurement, improving energy and water efficiency, reducing waste and increasing recycling.

It is hoped that this document, “Planning for Future Police Estate Development”, will help boroughs understand the needs of the MPS estate and enable us to work together to create a safer London for all our communities.

# 4. Key Planning Issues – the Detail

## A: Local Development Framework Planning Policies

The MPS requests local planning authorities to consider the following issues when drawing up their Local Development Framework (LDF) documents including The Core Strategy and Area Action Plans.

### The Core Strategy

#### 4.1 Policy Wording

The MPS is growing rapidly and constantly evolving its policies to tackle criminality in the capital. This requires a responsive estates strategy to provide modern, appropriate facilities for our staff, enabling them to carry out their duties efficiently and effectively and so contribute to the corporate vision of making London the safest major city in the world.

The MPS requests local planning authorities to include the following policy in the appropriate section of their LDF Core Strategy:

*“To provide for the requirements of the Metropolitan Police Service in the delivery of its estate strategy ‘Building Towards the Safest City’.”*

### Area Action Plans

#### 4.2 Retail Frontages / Police Shop Units

The MPS has a requirement for police ‘shop’ units within key retail frontages in town centres. These would typically be shop units which house police front office functions to provide the public with a readily accessible and visible police presence in the ‘high street.’

They may also be located in community buildings such as libraries, but they need a highly visible presence and to be readily accessible if they are to be successful. A typical unit would be 100m<sup>2</sup> and a number of these in each borough is envisaged.

Council policy for retail frontages may need amending to enable this non-retail use.





### 4.3 Warehouse Units – Patrol Bases

Warehouse units are required throughout London for police patrol bases. These could be sited in backland locations, on industrial estates or business parks. Excellent public transport accessibility and good vehicular access 24/7 are required, together with a reasonably high level of operational parking.

The buildings need to be as flexible as possible so that the internal layout can be adapted as necessary to suit changing police requirements. A typical unit will be 3,000m<sup>2</sup> and have a yard area.

Development policies should recognise the requirement for warehouse units as police patrol bases, effectively a sui-generis use, within potentially allocated employment areas. The level of employment generated within these bases is significant at around 500-600 each.

The requirement for such use should be identified in the Core Strategy and in Action Area Plans.

### 4.4 Safer Neighbourhood Team Bases

The MPS is currently establishing neighbourhood-based policing across the capital. Each team is comprised of six police staff and is dedicated to its specific area, patrolling on foot and bicycle to deliver a proactive

response to community issues. It is intended that a Safer Neighbourhoods team will be introduced in every neighbourhood across London by 2008 (subject to funding), totalling approximately 600 teams on a ward basis. About a third will probably be based in existing police stations, leaving a requirement for about 400 new sites, some of which may accommodate more than one neighbourhood team.

Space requirements will be approximately 70m<sup>2</sup> for a one team base, 100m<sup>2</sup> for a two team base and 125m<sup>2</sup> for a three team base. The bases need to be readily accessible to the public and they could be located within shop units, community buildings or other 'high street' or 'local centre' locations.

The requirement for such use should be identified in Action Area Plans.

### 4.5 Custody Suites

There is a requirement for new MPS custody suite clusters, located strategically across London. These may serve one or more boroughs and will also accommodate associated legal and police facilities. They will require a secure building and secure fencing around a yard. They will, ideally, be located for good vehicular access and public transport links but not for high visibility.

The optimum size will be dependent upon the size of the area served but will normally not be less than 25-30 cells.

The requirement for such use should be identified in the Core Strategy.

### 4.6 Other Operational Requirements

- MPS special operations, such as *Child Protection Teams* and *Witness Protection Units*, operate across the whole of the London or have a national role and require specially adapted accommodation.
- MPS *training facilities* are located across London, sometimes occupying large sites, some of which may be in the Green Belt. Examples include dog handler training; firearm training; horse stabling and training; and police recruit training. Each has specific building requirements and there may be a need to identify these activities as appropriate uses in the Green Belt.
- *Other activities* such as vehicle recovery, and examination centres and helicopter bases have very specific site requirements.

The requirement for these activities should be identified in the Core Strategy.

## **B: Key Worker Housing Issues**

The MPA believes key worker housing schemes are extremely important. In addition to helping attract and retain staff, enabling them to gain entry onto the property ladder, housing provision must be flexible to respond to changing circumstances. The MPS requests LPAs to consider the following points when establishing key worker housing schemes.

### **4.7 Discussions with Developers and Registered Social Landlords**

The MPS requests that its residential requirements are considered whenever LPAs are in discussion with property developers and housing associations about the provision of key worker accommodation. In addition, MPS Property Services would be delighted to discuss these issues directly with the developer or RSL and for the LPA to put them in contact with Property Services to explore possible collaboration in the scheme at an early stage.

This would be taken forward specifically through 'Property Zone', the MPS entity for focussing on external housing provision.

### **4.8 Housing Policy**

The MPA requests that:

- MPS Property Services is added to any borough lists of key worker housing providers; and that
- wording is included in LDF Core Strategy Documents to reflect MPS requirements for key worker housing.

## C: Planning Obligations/Section 106 Agreements

The new draft circular on Planning Obligations requires LPAs to incorporate a policy setting out what they expect planning obligations to achieve. This may often involve specific supplementary planning guidance. The draft circular specifically states that there should be a joining-up across all public sector infrastructure providers.

The MPA therefore asks planning authorities to consider the following.

### 4.9 Directly consult MPS Property Services

Consult MPS Property Services on major planning applications with a view to including site-specific requirements for the police, such as police shops, neighbourhood team bases and key worker housing in addition to any contributions for additional policing.

The MPA also requests that it be considered a consultee on all 'major' planned regeneration initiatives and development proposals.

### 4.10 Include Police Requirements

LPA's are asked to include police requirements in the general list of public sector infrastructure providers.



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Please also use these contact details to send all planning application consultation or other such material.

'**Property Zone**', the MPS entity for external housing provision, can be contacted directly on **020 7161 2323**, also based at the Empress State Building within Property Services.

