

Chapter 1 Local Socio-Economic and Demographic Context

1.1 Introduction to the Borough

1.1.1 The London Borough of Sutton, which occupies a total area of 4,453 hectares, forms part of the South London sub-region identified in the Mayor’s London Plan. The Borough is bordered to the north, east and north-west by the London Boroughs of Merton, Croydon and Kingston-Upon-Thames and adjoins Surrey to the south.

1.1.2 The southern parts of the Borough are suburban in character, consisting predominantly of relatively affluent low-density residential areas built around former Surrey towns and villages. By contrast, the Northern Wards, including Rosehill, St Helier and the Wrythe, along with Roundshaw, South Beddington and Wallington towards the south-east, share many of the characteristics of inner London, with significant pockets of social deprivation, environmental degradation and poor access to employment, social infrastructure, community facilities, housing and transport services.

1.2 Political Boundaries

1.2.1 There are two national constituencies in the Borough:

- Carshalton and Wallington
- Sutton and Cheam Constituency

1.2.2 The local elections in May 2006 returned 54 councillors 22 Conservative and 32 Liberal Democrat. There are four area committees made up of eighteen wards detailed below.

Area Committee	Ward Name
Beddington & Wallington	Beddington South Beddington North Wallington North Wallington South
Carshalton & Clockhouse	Wandle Valley St Helier Carshalton Central Carshalton South and Clockhouse The Wrythe
Cheam & Worcester Park	Nonsuch Stonecot Worcester Park Cheam
Sutton	Belmont Sutton Central Sutton North Sutton South Sutton West

1.2.3 The Council operates an overview and strategy system of reporting covering the following areas:

- Strategy Committee
- Community Engagement, Equalities, Partnerships and Public Health
- Environment, E-government and Efficiency
- Children, Young People and Learning
- Resources
- Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration
- Leisure and Libraries and Community Safety
- Adult Social Services and Housing

1.3 Sutton's Population

1.3.1 According to the 2004 mid-year estimate, there are 181,461 people living in the Borough of which 21% are under 16, 60% between 16-59, and 19% aged over 60. Of Sutton's resident population aged between 16-74, 67.9% are employed, 2.6% are unemployed and 5.5% are students, with the remaining 24.1% economically inactive.

1.4 Biodiversity

1.4.1 Sutton's natural character is influenced by its geology. In the southern half of the Borough the underlying geology is chalk. Chalky soils are always alkaline and very free-draining which restricts the type of plants that can grow on them. In the north-west river terrace gravels predominate. These gravels are important in the building industry, and their extraction has had a huge impact on the landscape of the area.

1.4.2 The north east of the Borough is dominated by London clay, a heavy, neutral soil that holds a lot of water and is again colonised by characteristic plants. The chalk spring fed river Wandle, the Beverley Brook and Pyl Brook support a rich diversity of invertebrate life and fish species.

1.4.3 Chalk Rivers are subject to a national Biodiversity Action Plan, because of their characteristic plants and animals and threats to their vitality. The mainly urban setting in the northern half of the Borough does not prove to be an obstacle for many forms of wildlife to live and flourish.

1.4.4 Key nature conservation sites:

Sites of Metropolitan Importance
Beddington Sewage Farm
River Wandle
Roundshaw Downs
Therapia Lane Rough
Woodcote Park Golf Course

Sites of Borough Importance, Grade I
Banstead Downs
Beddington Park and St Mary's Churchyard
Big Wood and Ruffett Wood
Carshalton Road Pastures and Grove Lane
Cuddington Golf Course and Cuddington Hospital
Greenshaw Wood
The Oaks Park and Golf Course
Sutton Ecology Centre

Sites of Borough Importance, Grade II
Anton Crescent Wetland
Beddington Lane Paddock
Carshalton Ponds, The Grove and All Saints Churchyard
Devonshire Avenue Children's Playground
East Surrey Railway Lines (The Warren)
Lambert's Copse
Little Woodcote Wood
Old Belmont Hospital Site
Perretts Field and Sutton Water Works
Queen Mary's Hospital Wood and Wellfield Plantation
St Mary's Court, Bute Road
St Philomena's Lake
Sutton to St Helier Railway Line
Water Gardens Bank
Woodcote Grove Wood
Worcester Park Sewage Works

Sites of Local Importance
All Saints Churchyard, Benhilton
The Avenue Primary School Nature Garden, Belmont
Beverley Brook and Back Green, Worcester Park
Cheam Park
Cuddington Recreation Ground
London Road Edge, North Cheam
Mill Green
Pyl Brook, Stonecot
Radcliffe Gardens Woodland
Revesby Road Wood
Royal Marsden Hospital Grassland
St Nicholas Churchyard, Sutton
The Spinney

1.5 Economic Development and Areas of Regeneration

Sutton Town Centre

- 1.5.1 Sutton Town Centre, ranked the 8th largest in London, offers a high level of attractive and accessible shopping, employment and leisure activities with good public transport links. The town centre boasts over 400 retail outlets occupying more than 120,000 square metres of floor space within an attractive pedestrianised shopping environment. A range of arts, culture and entertainment activities, pavement cafes and a vibrant evening economy all contribute towards a lively and successful town centre environment. With over 200,000 square metres of office floorspace, Sutton Town Centre is also a significant office location within South London.
- 1.5.2 Following publication of the London Plan, with its emphasis on Metropolitan Town Centres as areas of intensification and future growth, the Council is seeking to further enhance the strategic role of Sutton Town Centre to enable it to compete successfully with other regional centres. The Sutton Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in 2003, identifies Sutton Station and adjacent land as a major 'Opportunity Site' within which the Council will promote comprehensive, large-scale town centre development, including retail, leisure, office and residential uses. The redevelopment of this area will be supported by major improvements to public transport interchange facilities and provide for the proposed extension of Tramlink into the town centre.
- 1.5.3 Further Opportunity Sites within Sutton Town Centre, suitable for a range of travel-generating town centre uses including higher density residential development, exist on the land east of Throwley Way, the Robin Hood School Site; the former Gas Works Site; and the Times Square shoppers' car park. Within the context of Sutton's new Local Development Framework (LDF), the Council is currently preparing an Area Action Plan for Sutton Town Centre aimed at integrating the future development of all five Opportunity Sites into a comprehensive planning framework in order to ensure the long-term success and vitality of the centre and providing for major transport improvements.

District Centres

- 1.5.4 In addition to Sutton Town Centre, there are six district centres at Wallington, Worcester Park, North Cheam, Rosehill, Cheam and Carshalton along with a large number of local centres distributed throughout the Borough. The UDP identifies four major Opportunity Sites within Wallington town centre at Wallington Square, Old Wallington Town Hall, Wallington Library Public car park and the former Sainsbury's site in Beddington Gardens. Significant potential exists for achieving the comprehensive redevelopment of these sites for suitable town-centre uses supported by improved pedestrian access and bus-rail interchange facilities at Wallington Station and measures aimed at reducing the impact of through traffic on the retail core of the centre.

Industrial Locations

1.5.5 Industrial and commercial development in the Borough is concentrated in three strategic industrial areas at Beddington (108 ha), Kimpton (21 ha) and Imperial Way/ Purley Way South which are each located close to key radial road transport routes into London and to the M25. Both the Beddington and Kimpton Industrial Areas, have substantial potential for sustainable economic regeneration provided that the necessary investment is found for transport and environmental improvements. There are also a number of long-established industrial sites throughout the Borough. These include the Restmor Way/ Felnex industrial estate, which have been identified as a priority for achieving regeneration and improved access as part of a wider package of proposed transport and environmental improvements to Hackbridge district centre.

Wandle Valley Regeneration Corridor

1.5.6 The London Borough of Sutton forms an integral part of the Wandle Valley, which is highlighted in the London Plan as the key regeneration corridor within South London offering the best opportunities to provide competitive locations for business and industry, attract new economic sectors and secure the development of vacant or underused land. The Wandle Valley within the Borough extends across the northern and eastern parts of the Borough to include the Beddington Strategic Industrial Area on the eastern boundary with Croydon and areas of social deprivation and environmental degradation within the Northern Wards and further to the south at Roundshaw, South Beddington and Wallington. The Sutton UDP identifies an 'Area of Regeneration and Growth' reflecting the boundaries of the Wandle Valley in Sutton, within which the Council seeks to promote the aims of social and economic regeneration and attract further investment for transport and environmental improvements.

1.6 Community Involvement

The Sutton Partnership

1.6.1 The Sutton Partnership is the borough's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), set up to help meet the wide range of challenges our borough faces both now and in the future.

1.6.2 The Partnership brings together hundreds of local groups and businesses to create and deliver exciting new strategies to boost economic growth and improve our overall quality of life. Government advises all local councils take the lead in forming LSPs to improve public services, deliver sustainable growth, regenerate depressed areas economically, socially and physically, and most importantly involve a wide range of people from within the borough in deciding how to achieve those aims.

1.6.3 The Partnership is managed through a board of 34 members, meeting five times a year. The Sutton Partnership Board is made up from the following organisations and partnerships:

- Business representatives from manufacturing and commercial sectors
- Community Engagement Network Representatives for; people with disabilities, children and families, youth, black and minority ethnic groups, faith organisations and older people
- Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust
- Education representatives for schools and training and colleges
- Greater London Authority Member
- Jobcentre Plus
- Learning and Skills Council
- London Borough of Sutton
- Members of Parliament for Carshalton and Wallington and Sutton and Cheam
- Metropolitan Police Service
- Safer Sutton Partnership
- South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust
- Sutton & Merton Primary Care Trust
- Sutton Centre for Voluntary Service
- Sutton Environment Network
- Sutton Housing Association Group
- Sutton Town Centre Management Group

1.6.4 A Community Engagement Network managed by the Sutton Centre for Voluntary Services runs elections to provide the community representatives to the Sutton Partnership Board. They also provide support to these representatives ensuring community views are taken notice of in the work of the Partnership.

1.6.5 All councils must lead the production of a Community Strategy for their area, in consultation with the local community. The Sutton Partnership Board has the responsibility for the borough to oversee the preparation, implementation and review of our Community Strategy. This strategy will include the Partnership's priorities for improving quality of life and creating a sustainable future in the borough for the next three years and beyond.

1.6.6 Sutton has a good track record of working in partnerships. However the challenge in our Community Strategy is to deal with problems in those areas that really matter to local people such as crime, unemployment, deprivation, health, education and housing. The Council's "Corporate Equality and Diversity Action Plan" Action 7b - Ensure that Sutton's website and intranet are compliant with current accessibility benchmarks.

Crime

1.6.7 Sutton's Crime and Disorder, Drug and Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy (2005-08) has been developed by the Council with the police and other local organisations to reduce crime levels within the Borough and make Sutton a

safer and more attractive place. The Safer Sutton Partnership Board brings together Council officers, the Police, health workers, the Fire Service, probation officers and local magistrates to implement an ongoing programme of actions aimed at reducing crime across the Borough.

- 1.6.8 Sutton, in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, is the first council in the country to integrate its community safety staff with local police under a single management structure. Headed by the Police, it brings together everyone involved in community safety, from both police and the council, to form a single unit for the benefit of local people.

Unemployment

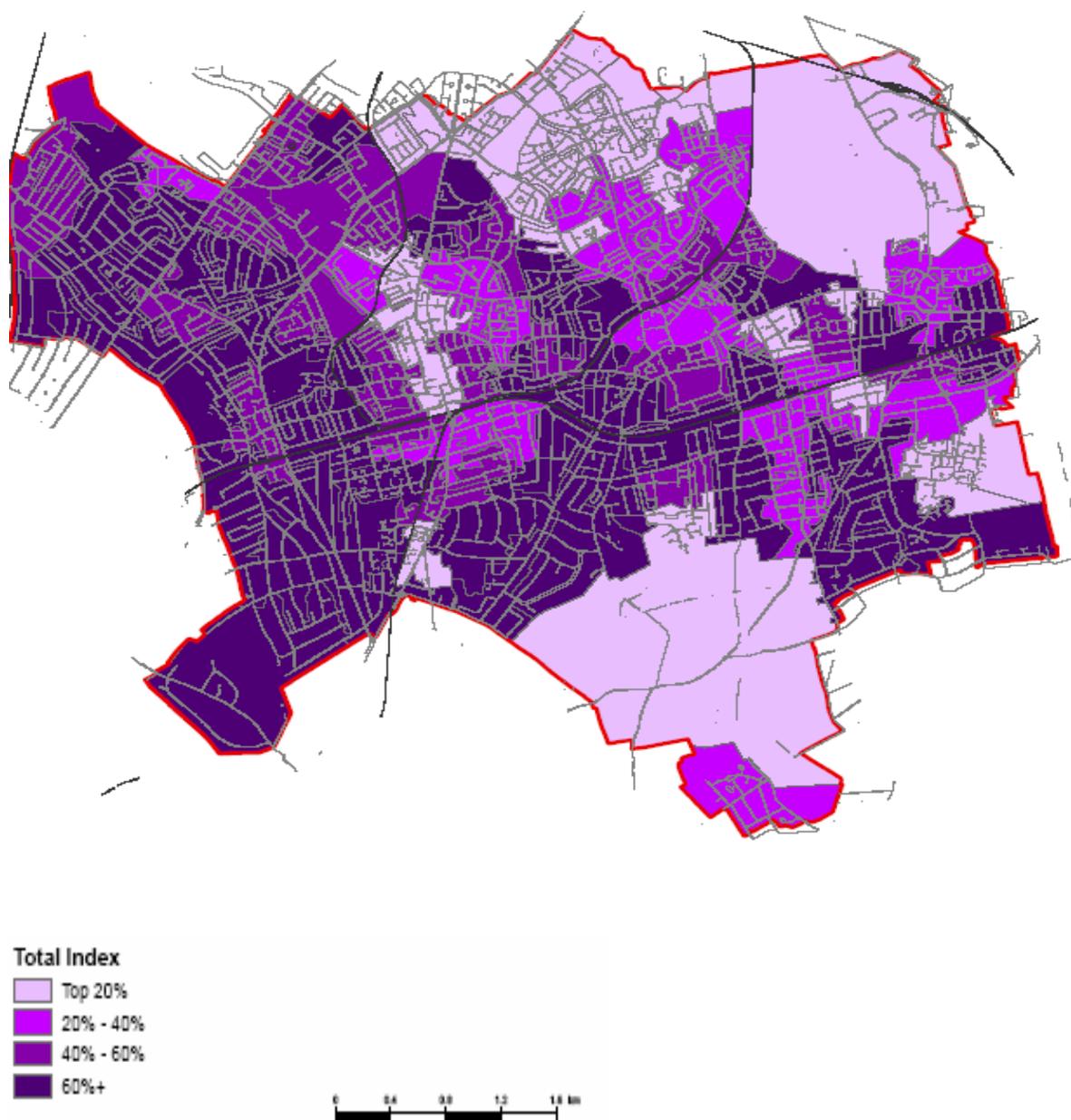
- 1.6.9 Local jobs are concentrated in retail, professional and other service areas with smaller clusters of employment in the construction and manufacturing sectors. 61.3% of the Borough's 64,000-strong workforce is professional, managerial or skilled non-manual - the highest percentage in London.
- 1.6.10 There are some 6,000 businesses in Sutton, employing around 62,000 people. Most of these businesses are small, with 80% employing four people or less. Around 11% of those who work in Sutton are self-employed, slightly above the London average (9%).
- 1.6.11 The Sutton unemployment rate of 4.1% is one of the lowest in London. In addition our economic activity rate is high: 80% of the borough's working age population is economically active, compared to a London average of 74.6%. The key area affected by unemployment is 16-24 age group.

Social Deprivation

- 1.6.12 The ODPM's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2004 shows that LB Sutton ranks very low in terms of overall social deprivation compared to other London Boroughs (30th out of 33 where one is the most deprived) and the rest of England (236th out of 354). These rankings are based on average deprivation scores of individual Super Output Areas (SOAs). The IMD is made up of scores for the seven 'domains' of income, employment, health & disability; education, skills & training; barriers to housing and services; crime & disorder and living environment. Despite the strength of the IMD scores for LB Sutton as a whole, the statistics conceal local concentrations of disadvantages. (The gap between the wealthiest and poorest postcode sectors within the Borough, or 'the local income gap', is within the top five local authorities in England and Wales and equal to that of North Tyneside.)
- 1.6.13 Overall, there are three Wards within the Borough identified as deprived, with IMD scores of 50 or more: St Helier (67.9), Wandle Valley (64.1) and Beddington South (50.4). There are three wards identified as affluent, generally to the west of the Borough, with IMD scores of under 20: Cheam (10.9), Nonsuch (15) and Belmont (19.3).

1.6.14 Four of the 121 SOAs in the Borough are amongst the most deprived 20% in England. Three of these are in Beddington South, clustered around the Roundshaw estate, and the fourth is in Wandle Valley. Twelve out of the twenty most deprived SOAs are located in Wards identified as deprived: St Helier (5), Wandle Valley (4) and Beddington South (3). One SOA is located in Belmont, a ward identified as affluent overall, and the other 7 are located within The Wrythe, Sutton Central, Carshalton and Clockhouse, Wallington North and Sutton North. Figure 1.1 shows the distribution of deprivation in the Borough based on SOAs.

Figure 1.1: Index of Multiple Deprivation (ODPM 2004): Borough Distribution



Health

1.6.15 Slightly more Sutton residents feel they enjoy good health compared with the average respondent in Britain. The 2001 census found that most people in Sutton described their health over the previous year as 'good' (71.5%) - slightly above the London and England & Wales average (70.8% and 68.6% respectively). Given our low unemployment, green spaces, our low noise pollution compared to the rest of London and our excellent leisure facilities perhaps this is not surprising.

1.6.16 Those with health needs are well served in Sutton by the two main hospitals of Sutton and St Helier which offer a comprehensive range of diagnostic facilities and day surgery and inpatient, mental health and accident and emergency services. St Helier also incorporates Queen Mary's Hospital for Children. Specialist services are provided by the Royal Marsden Hospital, one private hospital and a hospice for people facing life-limiting illnesses and one community hospital - the War Memorial at Carshalton.

Education

1.6.17 In 2004 Sutton was the third best performing LEA for exam results. There are 61 schools funded by the LEA and 11 Independent schools. There are three specialist status schools for science and engineering and a sports college. There are also three special schools for children with higher levels of educational need.

Housing

1.6.18 Our borough still faces big challenges on housing with over 3,000 households on the waiting list and more than 300 households accepted as homeless during 2003/04. Demand for social housing remains high and access to affordable private housing - to buy or to rent - is becoming increasingly difficult, as prices are now out of the range of the large majority of new households. With an ageing population and a growing demand to support independent living we also face an increasing need for specialist, supported homes.

1.6.19 The council's five-year housing strategy, published 2004, set out five priorities:

- To maximise the supply of affordable housing
- To make best use of Sutton's existing housing stock
- To improve the condition, energy efficiency and sustainability of Sutton's homes
- To tackle homelessness and provide support to vulnerable people; and
- To improve housing services and quality of life for residents by increasing choice and access and addressing diversity.

1.7 Conclusion

- 1.7.1 This chapter set out key information about the local socio-economic profile. The next chapter summarises the local transport environment.