

Policy N3.7
Wandle Valley



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-  Wandle Valley
-  London Borough of Merton
-  River Thames
-  Borough Boundary

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We are committed to protecting the Wandle Valley and maintaining it as a strategic and biodiverse corridor that runs through the borough. We will:

- a. Support the Wandle Valley Regional Park as one of London's major green networks, protecting biodiversity and providing opportunities for formal and informal recreation;
- b. Protect and enhance the river Wandle, including its green chains, biodiversity and wildlife corridors and recreational attributes;
- c. Conserve and enhance archaeological sites and protect conservation areas in the Wandle Valley and raise awareness of and access to this heritage including Merton Priory and Merton Abbey Mills;
- d. Work with the Environment Agency, GLA, landowners and developers to explore viable and appropriate measures that contribute to minimising flood risk;
- e. Improve the overall environment of Mitcham District Centre and surrounds by supporting businesses and enterprise, enhancing the public realm, and a more sustainable mix of new homes, including family housing;
- f. Regenerate the heart of Morden with the delivery of new homes, enhancement of the public realm and improvements to air quality;
- g. Create a thriving, attractive and coherent District Centre at Colliers Wood, addressing flood risk comprehensively and facilitating an improved range of town centre uses;

- h. Maximise business and job opportunities within the Wandle Valley and surrounding area, particularly working with the Business Improvement Districts in the South Wimbledon Business area, Willow Lane and Love Wimbledon;
- i. Seek improvements to the transport accessibility to and within the area.

Justification

- 3.7.1. The Wandle Valley runs through the centre of the borough dividing the east and the west. It is part of a corridor that extends from Croydon to the mouth of the Wandle on the Thames in Wandsworth.
- 3.7.2. Providing 10% of London's total employment, the Wandle Valley corridor encompasses several town centres and business areas. The area has a rich industrial heritage based around the river Wandle, which can be seen at Merton Abbey Mills where the waterwheel and some older industrial buildings are preserved to form an attractive marketplace. Recent investment in greater visibility of the Chapter House remains at Merton Priory nearby adds to the visitor attractions and local heritage.
- 3.7.3. The Wandle Valley has an important role to play in bringing together the initiatives that continue to contribute towards bridging the gap between the east and west of Merton; flowing through Colliers Wood and Morden where future change is envisaged.
- 3.7.4. Taken as a whole, the Wandle Valley Corridor represents a strategic opportunity for the whole region. The wider area has a vibrant and thriving business network including Durnsford Road, South Wimbledon Business Area, Willow Lane and Love Wimbledon.
- 3.7.5. Many businesses in the Wandle Valley are in a supply-chain relationship with the central London economy and increasingly with each other. The area is also a major source of important small and medium sized enterprises that provide vital services to the residents of south west London.

- 3.7.6. As explained in the Colliers Wood neighbourhood policy, the London Plan identifies Colliers Wood as part of the proposed Opportunity Area at “Wimbledon / South Wimbledon / Colliers Wood”, which is supported by the council.
- 3.7.7. Proposals in this area will have to have regard to Environment Agency advice on flood mitigation measures, while remaining viable and creating attractive and useful developments. We will continue to work with the Environment Agency, GLA, developers and landowners to explore viable and appropriate measures that contribute to minimising flood risk.
- 3.7.8. The Wandle Valley Regional Park integrates with the Wandle Valley Corridor as one of the strategic priorities for south west London. Rather than a single area of open land, the park is made up of a green grid of connected space with visual or physical links to the current or historic route of the river Wandle.
- 3.7.9. The Regional Park allows improved access to a linked network of open space, including parkland, wildlife areas, riverside walks and facilities for children and young people, which increases the quality of the environment and contribute to the identity of the valley as a place to live, work and visit.
- 3.7.10. The Wandle Valley is a key cultural and recreational attraction for the borough, as well as being a vital green asset delivering a wide range of improvements. This includes an attractive route for cyclists to encourage sustainable commuting patterns. The park also provides opportunities to address the flooding constraints identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and is recognised for maximising the value of the river Wandle green corridor.
- 3.7.11. The river Wandle, part of London’s network of waterways (also known as the Blue Ribbon Network) in the London Plan, is an important green chain for species movement throughout south London with a number of protected species that are found along its length. In line with our open spaces policies, we will continue to protect and enhance our waterways and the accessibility to and from these areas.
- 3.7.12. The Wandle Valley area contains a number of Conservation Areas that represent the historical value of the area. The Wandle Valley Conservation Area contributes to Merton’s rich architectural heritage and diverse built environment. It includes Merton Priory, a monastic complex first established on the site in 1117 AD and continuously

rebuilt, extended and occupied until the Dissolution in 1538. The remains of the Priory are a Scheduled Ancient Monument and these have recently been opened up for greater visibility.

3.7.13. The site now contains visible and buried remains of Merton Priory, including a purpose built Chamber housing the foundations of the Chapter House of the Priory as well as a number of objects associated with the original building.

3.7.14. Although, much of the site of Merton Priory has been redeveloped, the chamber and the surrounding area generally, provide a resource for research, education and inspiration by virtue of its historic value and connections. We continue to work with appropriate local partners to see if we can improve the interpretation and presentation of the remains and will engage with the local community to raise awareness of the historical significance of the site.

3.7.15. The nearby Merton Abbey Mills site contains a wealth of visible remains of the water based and water powered industrial works developed on the site of the Priory from the 17th century, some of which continued to operate in the 20th century. This includes two early industrial buildings originally associated with the fabric printing works of Edmund Littler and Liberty & Co and the site of the design workshops and works of William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

3.7.16. In accordance with our policies on the Colliers Wood area and design, regeneration and development proposals must play a positive role in relation to the heritage assets and respect the heritage values and close physical relationship with the Wandle Valley conservation area and in particular the Priory and Merton Abbey, as a means of enhancing local distinctiveness.

3.7.17. There are a number of overhead network power cables within the Wandle Valley area which include 20 pylons on the Beddington to Wimbledon overhead. We will support the relocation of existing power lines, pylons and other visually intrusive servicing as part of planning agreements in relation to new developments where it is technically, practically, environmentally, and economically viable.

3.7.18. New transport is needed to improve access, particularly by road and public transport to industrial areas and to improve pedestrian access from existing facilities, with potential for a tram route in the future. As outlined in our transport policies, improvements

should enhance linkages with the Wandle Corridor, to address access, environmental quality and biodiversity, employment and leisure uses.