

H

**MITCHAM**

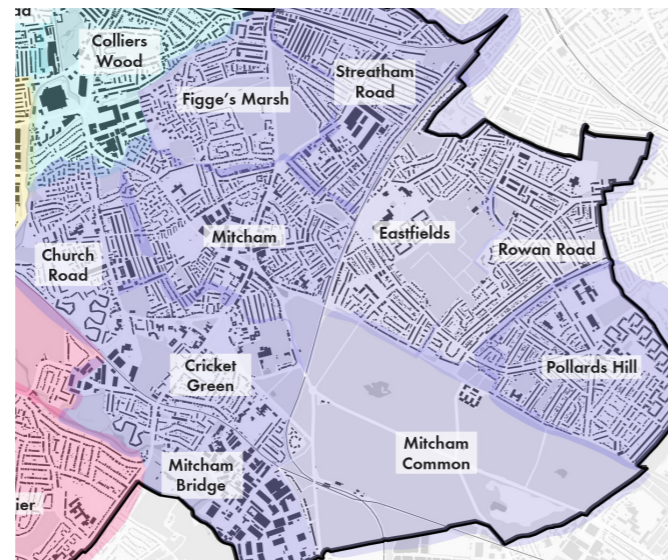
# H MITCHAM

## H.1 INTRODUCTION

Mitcham means 'big settlement'. It's big in the sense that it grew as two parts - Upper and Lower, which formed on the low-lying plains by the river, centred on two village greens. It's also big in that it has played a significant role for Merton over the years - the area's lavender fields and soothing air attracted residents to settle in this part of the borough before industrialisation took off. Mitcham's identity transformed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century from a rural retreat into an industrial powerhouse, first as a Calico cloth printing centre, and later a manufacturing hub, with companies producing a range of products into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from confectionary to fireworks to paint. Housing expansion transformed the character of the borough in the interwar years, and again after the war with the emergence of low density mid-rise blocks like at Pollards Hill and Eastfields. More recently, Mitcham is leading the way in providing new, award-winning sustainable forms of development, like at Brenley Park and along Rowan Road.

The Mitcham sub-area is divided into 10 neighbourhoods. The areas share a consistent scale but are diverse in their built form and character. Mitcham's dominant typology is suburban housing with historic fragments interwoven in, including pockets of Victorian terraces, shopping parades and old industrial buildings. Mitcham Town Centre is its main commercial centre, although places outside of the borough like Tooting, Streatham and Norbury play an important role for shopping and other services. The area is characterised by a string of green spaces, from Figges Marsh in the north, to the historic Upper and Lower Greens in the centre, and Wandle Valley to the south. Mitcham Common and its edge has its own unique character to the southeast. Adjacent to the common is The Willow Lane Trading Estate, a significant piece of industry for the borough.

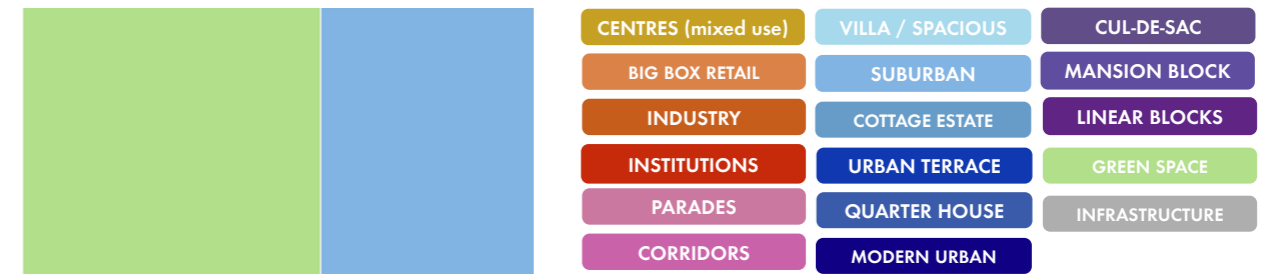
It's easy for Mitcham's 'big pieces' to steal the limelight, but just as important to Mitcham's identity are the smaller, more hidden 'yokey' spaces in the borough, and the diverse communities that value them. Leisure and



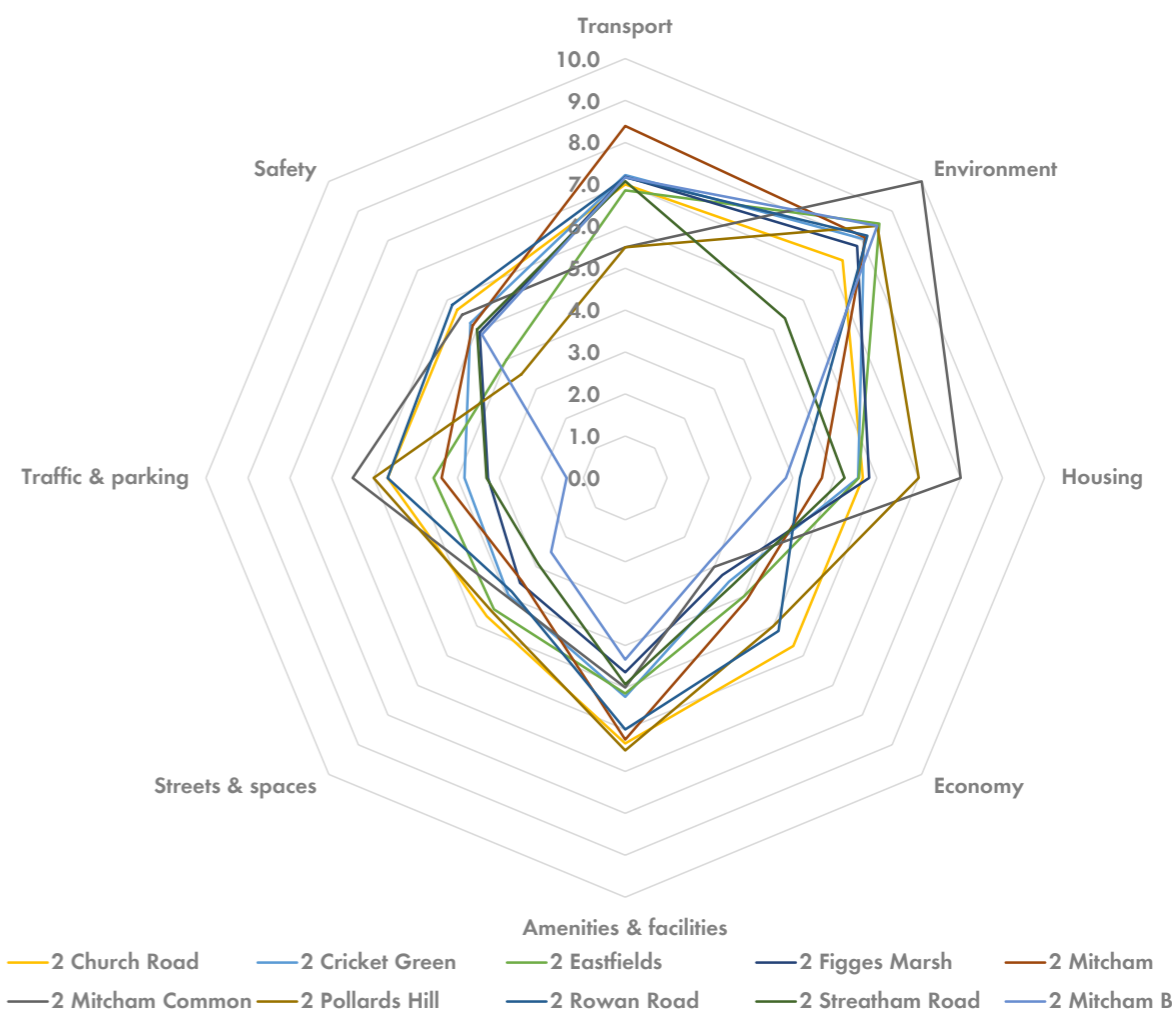
A plan illustrating the neighbourhoods within the area

community uses like the Rowan Road and Oakleigh Way recreation grounds, Mitcham tennis courts and the BMX track, are often unassuming and tucked away behind suburban streets but are vital spaces for Mitcham and its residents.

The area faces its own distinct challenges. Parts of Mitcham are far more deprived and disconnected than elsewhere in the borough, with poor public transport access to the town centre and other neighbourhoods. A key part of the strategy for Mitcham is about strengthening the role of local neighbourhoods, and improving connections between these and Mitcham town centre.



A graphic to illustrate the dominant types of development within the area. Mitcham is one of the areas within the borough which has the greatest mix of typologies. Large amounts of green space (35% of the area) and suburban housing (25%) of the area are the most prevalent.



Over 400 people responded to the survey for the Character Study. The graphic below illustrates the average of how satisfied residents were with the particular theme in their area.



**What you said was special**

Close community feel, small green spaces, heritage, diverse community, zone 3 location



**What you said was special**

Easy commute to work, small shops and historic features, diverse, green spaces everywhere, village feeling of the town centre

**FIGGES MARSH**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Centred on Figges Marsh, a historic triangular green space, and London Road, a busy movement corridor
- Victorian and Edwardian 3-4 storey gabled terraces with shops by station including locally listed terrace
- Later infill along London Road
- Rest of area predominantly residential - late Victorian / Edwardian terraces, 1930s housing and 1990s cul-de-sac
- London Road cemetery also an important green space and landmark
- Mature trees important landscape asset

**key issues / opportunities**

- Fragmentation of character due to poor quality infill along London Road
- Traffic dominance and poor pedestrian environment along London Road
- Few trees, loss of green verges
- Loss of original features / poorly maintained commercial buildings
- In residential streets, poor paving / road quality, poor boundary treatments and loss of front gardens
- Poor alterations / extensions in places
- Strengthen western edge of London Road and create 'green spine' - tree planting, landscaping, reduce traffic dominance
- Opportunities around Myrna Close car park area

**MITCHAM**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Historic mixed use town centre, focused on Upper Green with tight urban development surrounding it which still retains the typical medieval form of narrow house plots on north and eastern side of the Green
- Diverse range of building heights and styles
- Looser development along the key routes with a fragmented character - mainly retail interspersed with community uses
- West of London Road - large industrial / commercial footprints and more residential to the east of the area (1930s short terraces and blocks of six-storey flats)
- London Road runs north-south through the area and A236 intersects - both busy movement corridors
- Gasholder a key landmark

**key issues / opportunities**

- Original focus of the Upper Green has been lost to some extent
- Poor shopfront quality
- Car dominated along the key corridors - poor pedestrian environment in places
- Pedestrian and cycling links to residential areas poor
- Infill development e.g. housing above shops, underutilised sites to reinforce area
- Improve connections to wider area
- Public realm enhancements - create green spine and enhance gateways
- Opportunity to improve the market



**What you said was special**  
Great public transport + access to London, friendly neighbours, growing community feel, close to Tooting, grid street layout

**What you said was special**  
Trees and grassy areas, polite and welcoming people, historical, sense of community

**What you said was special**  
Green spaces, quaint houses, long-standing neighbours and sense of belonging, places to play and have fun

**What you said was special**  
The library and community centre make Pollards Hill special

**STREATHAM ROAD**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Mainly residential area with Streatham Road forming the main thoroughfare through the neighbourhood
- Large shopping parade along Streatham Road and housing further south
- 1930s tight terraced streets to the east of Streatham Road up to railway line in contrast with more fragmented housing typologies on its western side
- To west - mix of late Victorian / Edwardian terraces and interwar cottage-style housing along curved streets
- 1980s/1990s cul-de-sacs contrast with the consistent low rise character
- Mitcham Industrial Estate - large industrial / big box retail footprint off Streatham Road
- North East Mitcham Community Association and green space a key asset

**key issues / opportunities**

- Streatham Road a busy thoroughfare - traffic dominated
- Poor public realm in places e.g. uneven pavements / sparse planting - opportunities for tree planting and upgrades to public realm
- Potential to strengthen character around key transport node of Tooting Overground Station
- Strengthen the role of shopping parades (such as Streatham Road and London Road leading into Tooting) intensify and improve public realm away from large landscape features to north - future adaptation to climate change will need street greening and smaller spaces

**EASTFIELDS**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Railway line forms western boundary, Eastfields Station a major gateway
- Used to be an area known as East or Common fields, used for the cultivation of herbs, roses and lavender
- Mitcham Great Wood used to occupy the site of the Streatham Park Cemetery
- Predominantly residential character - mix of tight Victorian terraces, 1930s semi detached suburban housing (some art-deco style), post-war cul-de-sacs and free form blocks and contemporary development like at Brenley Park
- 1960s Eastfields Estate has distinctive layout from the surrounding built form
- Spacious, quiet and suburban character with curving street layout and high proportion of green open spaces

**key issues / opportunities**

- Poor public realm in places e.g. uneven pavements / sparse planting - opportunity to reflect the area's history as a horticultural centre
- Barrier of the railway line to west
- Loss of front gardens to parking
- Strengthen the role of shopping parades - intensify and improve public realm
- Eastfields estate regeneration

**ROWAN ROAD**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Bounded by cemetery, Northborough / Manor roads to east with Rowan Road running through the middle
- Mainly residential area with interwar low rise terraced streets
- Small pockets of light industrial
- More recent award-winning sustainable development on Rowan Road with homes, community facilities and park
- Rowan Road key movement corridor in this part of the borough

**key issues / opportunities**

- Can feel like a 'backland' area
- Rowan Road a busy thoroughfare - car and traffic dominated
- Poor public realm in places e.g. uneven pavements / sparse planting - tree planting and improving public realm
- Strengthen the role of shopping parades - intensify and improve public realm
- Loss of front gardens to parking

**POLLARDS HILL**

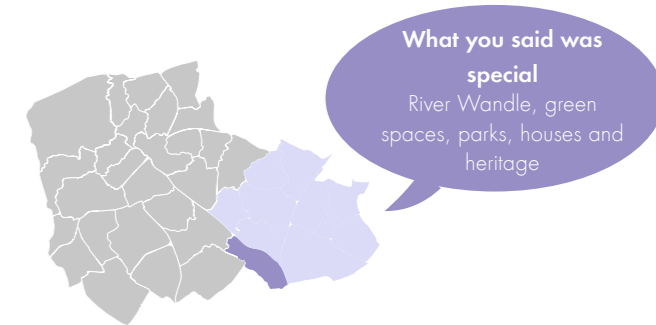
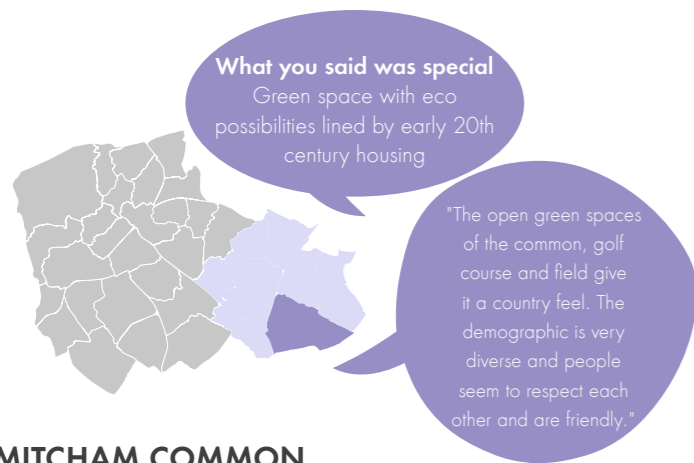
**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Developed from 1930s, formerly farmland and Pollards Hill Wood
- Open grain of the post war Pollards Hill housing estate to north - high density low rise scheme of 3 storey houses and flats zigzagging around edge of large open space and community uses
- Rest of area characterised by cohesive rows of interwar suburban houses with front and back gardens
- Southwest of neighbourhood radiates out from central roundabout with interconnecting streets between
- Pollards Hill and Sherwood Park recreation grounds are green spaces
- Trees and front gardens key feature to be celebrated

**key issues / opportunities**

- Can feel like a 'backland' area
- Poor public transport accessibility
- Lack of tree planting in places
- Loss of front gardens to parking and large areas of estate given over to parking
- Inappropriate alterations to buildings
- Poor quality public realm in places
- Tree planting to celebrate former wooded character of parts of the area
- Improving public transport accessibility and links to Mitcham town centre
- Public realm improvements





**MITCHAM COMMON**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Large proportion of area is the historic public open space, comprised of heathland, grassland, woodland, scrubland and ponds, enclosed and intersected by network of busy roads and railway / tram lines
- Undulating topography a key feature and numerous panoramic views
- Housing and commercial development face the common to north and southwest
- Industrial uses on its edges turn its back on the open space and are self-contained
- Mitcham Garden Village is a distinct locally listed enclave - early 1930s
- Large Golf Course creating sense of green

**key issues / opportunities**

- Managing the impact of new development on views from Mitcham Common
- Pedestrian access to common impeded by heavy traffic flow and cycling provision poor
- Improve footpaths, crossing points and cycling infrastructure around the common
- Opportunity to make more of it - to use its historic features to shape leisure and recreation activities
- Opportunity to strengthen the role and function of Mitcham Junction
- Explore provision of food outlet / pop-up coffee van or cafe - good for walkers and encourage the community to mix a bit more

**CHURCH ROAD**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Formerly industrial use prevalent, now mainly housing with a varied character
- Post 1945 council housing to south - large modernist blocks set in open space, 1980s cul de sacs to north
- Early 20th century grid iron terraces to east
- Wandle Valley conservation area and listed buildings - key green corridor
- Phipps Bridge Estate a key part - built in 1960s, redevelopment since
- Industrial/business uses off Church Road
- Everetts Place - old workers cottages - insight into earlier rural character
- Allotments, recreation space and nature conservation green route - leafy character along western edge

**key issues / opportunities**

- Busy traffic corridor that creates east-west disconnect
- Permeability hindered in places
- Pockets of underutilised space
- Poor wayfinding
- Loss of front gardens
- Ambiguity between public and private
- Reduce vehicle dominance of Church Road and strengthen edges
- Adoption of underutilised space to green space / infill opportunities
- Higher quality pedestrian routes
- Tree planting to enhance public realm

**CRICKET GREEN**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- Area centres on the historic Cricket Green (played on as early as 1707) and quality of development around it
- Mainly residential and institutional - larger plot sizes to southwest and low rise institutional buildings to north
- Much of the area is within the Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area - number of listed and locally listed buildings including Mitcham Parish Church, Mitcham Court and the Canon House
- Sense of openness and small scale character - semi rural in parts with its green spaces key to its character
- Housing varied in scale from blocks of flats to 1930s detached housing and small scale Victorian cottages

**key issues / opportunities**

- Heavy traffic along London Road, Church Rd and Madeira Rd
- Pedestrian movement between open spaces hampered by the roads
- Sensitive infill opportunities that reinforce historic setting and strengthens key views into the conservation area
- Reveal significance of Tramway Path
- Explore opportunities to bring vacant pubs on Cricket Green back into good use

**MITCHAM BRIDGE**

**Distinctiveness - heritage and key features**

- The Wandle is a key historic waterway shaping the character of this area
- Two halves linked by footpath - large self-contained industrial land to southeast and enclaves of housing between Wandle and tramline to northwest - mix of semi-detached interwar housing, 1970s freestanding low rise blocks e.g. Watermeads and 1980s/90s housing
- Open and leafy character of the Wandle, Watermeads Nature Reserve and Ravensbury Park alongside it
- Major movement corridors of London Road and Morden Road run through part of the area - varied in character - big box units opposite open space and low rise housing
- Historic remnants of Wandle's industrial character - Wandle Valley Conservation Area covers some of the area

**key issues / opportunities**

- Disconnected within and between neighbourhoods - tramline to north and green space to south act as barriers
- Lack of local shops
- Protect the strategic industrial land and encourage new employment uses
- Protect historic industrial buildings
- Strengthen walking and cycling links along the Wandle
- New pedestrian links across Wandle and tramline



"Church Road has plenty of open spaces close by. Steeped in local history and heritage. Multi-cultural community. Community Centre in the heart of the Phipps Bridge Estate. Most high-rise blocks have been removed. Some good schools. Local children's play-park is one of the best in Merton. Good bus and tram links. Deen City Farm is excellent. Some local shops. Lots of larger shops nearby."



**Growth themes**

**Intensifying Mitcham town centre and improving connections to it from nearby neighbourhoods**

The town centre is one of the most historic parts of Mitcham and is a vibrant and resilient hub of activity. It has some really lovely assets, including its Victorian shopping parade and historic green. Post-war infill development has filled gaps where the original fabric has been lost, some of which has harmed the prevailing character of the area. There are significant opportunities to repair and intensify, including on underused sites or single storey units where building upwards could accommodate new housing. The history, existing scale, grain and massing of the town centre should inform a tailored and place-based strategy for growth which will help Mitcham town centre to be the beating heart for the area again. Part of the parcel of achieving this is to reduce the impact of the busy road network and improve walking and cycling connections to the town centre from nearby neighbourhoods.

**Establishing London Road as a key corridor in need of improvement**

London Road is the main route through the sub-area and connects a series of green spaces and local centres that help to characterise the area. There is an opportunity to establish this route as a green spine and intensification corridor that stitches these pieces together through the creation of a network of green infrastructure, including extensive tree planting and improvements for walking and cycling. Development of sites along London Road should help achieve this vision by prioritising a high quality and sustainable environment and by strengthening the edge condition along this corridor.

**Celebrating the identity and resilience of local neighbourhoods**

Mitcham's shopping parades and local centres are really important, particularly around Rowan Road and Pollards Hill which are located a considerable distance from a major town centre. Many are in poor condition with poorly maintained buildings, vacant shops and a low quality public realm. The Covid-19 government lockdown has given people a renewed appreciation for their local corner shop. There is an opportunity to strengthen the role of local parades through exploiting intensification opportunities (corner sites, upward extensions and redevelopment of single storey units), shop front improvements and public realm enhancements, including improved crossings.

**Regeneration of Eastfields to provide new homes and bring community benefits**

The regeneration of Eastfields Estate will help to create an integrated and sustainable residential neighbourhood in the heart of Mitcham that helps to enhance the character of the area. New community facilities will bring wider benefit to the local community.

**Reinforce the character of Lower Mitcham and Cricket Green**

The architectural and historic qualities of this area are protected by conservation area status and new development must be of an exceptional standard and integrated well with its context in order to contribute to its special character. The residential development on the Cricketers Pub, adjacent to the former Fire Station is a good example of this.

**Strengthening edges and repairing sites along key corridors**

The A216, A236 and Church Road are key routes, which in parts have a poor quality street environment that encourages faster traffic at the expense of street activity and pedestrians. Gaps in the frontage along these routes provide a good opportunity to repair the condition of these routes, alongside improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure and greening enhancements, to contribute to an overall more positive pedestrian experience.

**Celebrating Mitcham's significant industrial heritage**

As well as its old houses and greens, Mitcham has a rich industrial heritage which grew around the Wandle. There are still significant pieces of industry which play an important role for Mitcham and London more widely. Employment uses within industrial areas and historic industrial buildings should be protected and celebrated, whilst also allowing employment typologies to evolve by integrating new types within housing-led development schemes.

**Backlands and corners intensification at Pollards Hill south**

There may be opportunities for suburban intensification on the backlands and corner plots within the Pollards Hill south area. A small sites design guide will help inform what development should look like within this suburban setting to encourage development that is in keeping with the existing character. This will set out guidance for the material palette, scale and features to help reinterpret the suburban character for new development.

**proposals / opportunities:**

- Reimagine character
- Re-examine character
- Repair character
- ↔ Corridor Intensification (major)
- ↔ Corridor Intensification (minor)
- Enhance parade
- ↔ Strategic greening and improvements
- ↔ Strategic improvements
- - - Active travel improvements
- - - Local green link improvements
- ↑ Improving connection to park

**baseplan:**

- Area Boundary
- Town Centre Boundary
- Conservation Area
- Green Space
- Locally Significant Industrial Sites
- Strategic Industrial Locations
- Train/Tube/Tram Station
- ★ Strategic Landmark
- ★ Local Landmark
- Road
- Rail
- Waterway
- Waterway Link

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