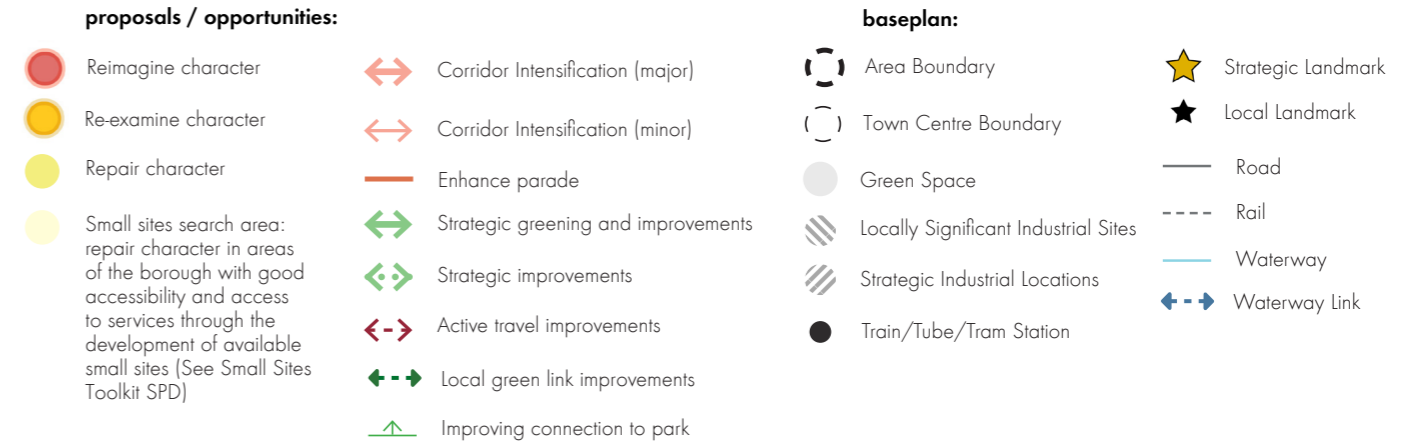




FUTURE MERTON

What does this mean for the borough?

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The nature of growth for Merton

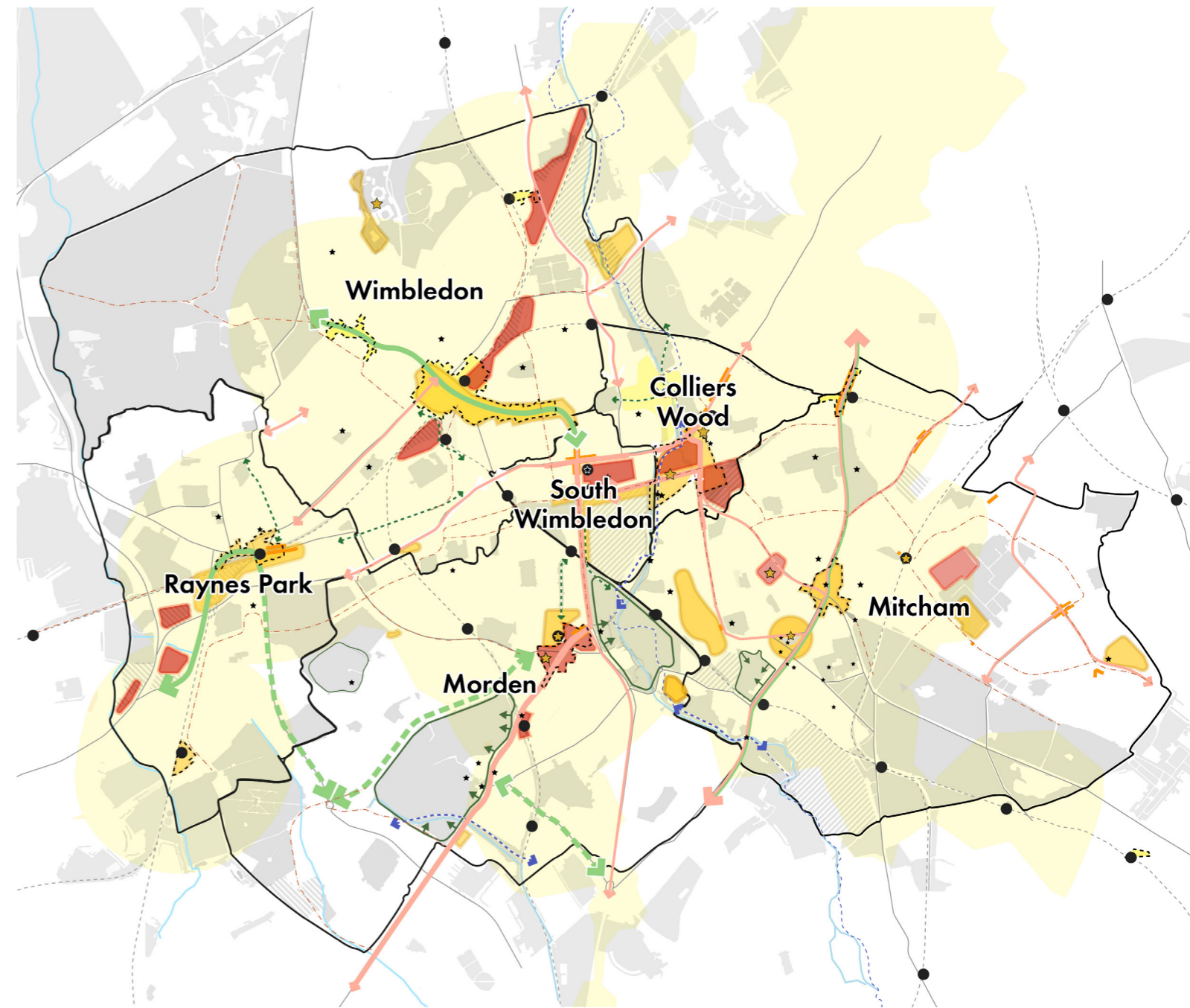
The pressure for growth and the need for homes applies to every London borough and Merton must play its part in supporting good growth. Every borough is different and the way in which it can accommodate targeted growth is also therefore different. As an outer London borough with a largely suburban character, Merton faces particular challenges in accommodating a step change in housing numbers.

This character study identifies how the growth needed can be absorbed in a way which reinforces local character and allows it to evolve in response to need. For Merton this means:

- An emphasis on **supporting and reinforcing the role and character of town centres** in the borough. This means reinforcing the existing character and qualities in most town centres whilst accommodating intensification - so allowing centres such as Wimbledon to intensify within acceptable limits and with a strong emphasis on environmental enhancement alongside growth.
- In two key centres, **Morden and Collier's Wood**, there is the opportunity to **shape growth in a way which supports an evolution of these places** with a more transformational impact. Both centres have elements of a strong bone structure and can use intensification to enhance and evolve existing character - enabling them to grow into vibrant community hubs for the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- **Restoring historic routes as the backbone of the borough**, emphasising their importance as sustainable corridors, attractive environments and logical locations for intensification. Many of these routes are ancient high roads and with investment can again be the focus for activity in the borough.
- **Celebrating the borough's green infrastructure** assets and network. The borough is blessed with a wealth of high quality green spaces that vary from wild commons to Green Flag Award winning recreational spaces that are cherished by residents. Many of the

housing neighbourhoods in the borough were planned around a network of green infrastructure, ensuring residents had access to sports grounds, formal gardens and biodiversity rich woodlands and heaths. Re-emphasising this inbuilt green infrastructure as well as promoting some of the avenue streets as green / active travel corridors could significantly enhance the character of the borough's neighbourhoods and their sustainability.

- **Revitalising waterways as blue corridors and continuous walking and cycling spines** could provide opportunities for both landscape restoration as well as new waterside development. Brooks and streams run through and alongside areas for future development and offer character-led opportunities for environmental enhancement and climate resilience.
- **Strengthening the role of local parades and smaller centres as local hubs of activity** has multiple benefits. Such an approach celebrates the identity and resilience of local neighbourhoods, allows intensification to happen in appropriate locations within suburban neighbourhoods, whilst also supporting local patterns of movement and the viability of commercial and community uses.
- **Overcoming the barriers created by rail and road infrastructure** through exploring opportunities for new development/uses and introducing new crossings could both enhance the accessibility and character of neighbourhoods and local centres. Improving existing crossings and introducing new bridges could transform how neighbourhoods are integrated.
- **Managing transitions between areas** through sensitive approaches to density and massing as well as environmental enhancements. This will be particularly important for centres such as Morden and Colliers Wood, but also between industrial and residential areas to better support both activities. It will be important to value existing industrial/employment spines such as along the River Wandle whilst looking for opportunities to ease the transition between areas and raise environmental quality generally.



Borough-wide proposed growth strategy to support the evolution of character

Next steps

The approach to growth set out in this character study provides a strong basis for the Local Plan. Embedding this strategy in planning policy will set the borough on course to meet its housing and jobs targets in a way celebrates and supports local character.

This document provides high level guidance and a selection of case studies for how different types of areas could best be intensified. To ensure the recommendations in this study translate into high quality context-led development and interventions on the ground, further support and guidance will be needed.

Masterplans for key areas of change: In locations where character will be evolving through intensification, masterplanning will form an important step to refining the direction of change and the appropriate grain and massing. Both Colliers Wood and Morden will need to be steered by overarching masterplans to help make the very best of the next phase of change and ensure the transition between surrounding neighbourhoods and the denser centres is comfortable.

Small sites guidance: A small sites toolkit (SPD) is under production and will provide invaluable guidance on how the potential of smaller sites can be optimised in a way that sits comfortably in each neighbourhood. This guidance will build on the themes and approaches set out in chapter J.

Further design guidance: The suburban nature of much of the borough makes intensification in many neighbourhoods a challenge. Over time it is likely that demand will grow to sub-divide suburban properties in the same way that more urban Victorian terraced areas experienced in previous decades. To ensure such a trend is managed appropriately and does not exacerbate existing problems, such as loss front gardens and greenery, there will likely be a need for design guidance, or at least a set of parameters or thresholds that should be adhered to in order to protect local character and support climate resilience. Further guidance may also be valuable to support local design coding as the planning system shifts towards this emphasis.