

## DISTINCTIVE AND TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS AND LOCAL DETAILS

The varieties of building materials that are found in the area provide evidence of the different phases of the area's development.

The very earliest surviving examples date from the Medieval period mainly comprising surviving fabric from former Merton Priory complex and include: -



- Flint and rubble stone, which typify the construction of surviving remnants of the perimeter wall to the medieval Merton Priory
- Clay bricks also found in early sections of the Priory Wall



- Flint and random ashlar stone, originating from the ruins of Merton Priory, examples are found in later sections of wall.
- Brick and flint with random rubblestone blocks - an example of which includes the Colour House at Merton Abbey Mills.

The majority of surviving historic development within the Wandle Valley conservation area, however, dates from the 18th Century onwards. Examples of late 18th Century and early 19th Century construction include:-

- Softwood framing and weather boarding - a particularly common form of construction from the 18th Century onwards used in both domestic and industrial buildings. There are a few surviving of examples within the Wandle Valley Conservation Area usually clad in feather-edged weather boarding and painted white. Examples include Morden Cottage and the snuff mills in Morden Hall Park, White Cottage in Morden Road and Watermead cottages in Mitcham.



- Part brick/part timber construction typical of a number of buildings in the area including timber-framed buildings, possibly originally weather boarded, with either an external brick skin or render on

lathes to give the impression of a more solid construction, of which nos 4-8 Merton High Street are examples.



- Brick construction, usually laid in “Flemish” bond with lime mortar. became far more prevalent in later buildings and is by far the most widespread building material in the area, early examples include Millworker cottages in Wandle Bank. Some brick buildings have been rendered externally, an example is Morden Hall in Morden Hall Park.



- Roofs to early buildings were pitched and there are examples of double-pitched “London” roofs with central valley gutters, usually



parallel with the front of the building, for example White Cottage in Morden Road. Roof coverings include a few examples of red pantiles mainly to timber framed buildings. Plain clay tiles and Welsh slate, however, became increasingly widespread from the later part of the 18th Century onwards. Flashings are predominantly of lead.



- Windows to domestic buildings are predominantly timber-framed sash windows with slender glazing bars, usually recessed with their frames fixed behind the masonry. There are a variety of glazing bar patterns and profiles and good examples exist in Wandle Bank, particularly Nos 17 and 18, which have distinctive semi-circular headed sash windows, with radiating glazing bars.
- There are examples of dormer windows set into the roofs of early 18th Century buildings such as 4-8 Merton High Street, Wandle Villa in Phipps Bridge, 470-472 and 482-484 London Road, Mitcham. The dormers are mainly small, flat roofed with timber casements or

sash windows set behind parapets. Detailing of dormer roofs and cheeks include leadwork to roofs and dormer cheeks.



- The old mill buildings mainly retain their original large steel casements and fixed light windows sub-divided into small panes with steel glazing bars and large close boarded timber doors. Some industrial buildings retain their original high level loading bays.



- Traditional front doors to residential properties are typically timber panelled occasionally with decorative fan lights over, examples of which survive in Wandle Bank. Other features



include decorative canopies with timber brackets such as at the Watermead cottages.



Later domestic buildings from the late 18th Century onwards are predominantly built of London Stock brick. Buildings often incorporate detailing characteristic of the Victorian and Edwardian periods, such as gauged

brick arches, often in contrasting red brick, exposed stone lintels and other stone details and contrasting bands of brickwork. Roofing materials vary between plain tiles, and increasingly during the 19th Century, Welsh slate often with red-tile ridges.

Later windows have larger panes and slenderer glazing bars to reflect improvements in glazing technology during the 19th and early 20th Century.

Industrial and commercial buildings from the late 19th Century are similarly built of predominantly stock brick with gauged brick arches. Roofing materials are predominantly Welsh slate. There are also examples of pan-tiles that can be found at Merton Abbey Mills. Until the advent of the railway in the mid 19th century most of the bricks and roofing materials used in the construction of buildings within the Wandle Valley conservation area came from local brickworks.



The latter part of the 19th and early 20th Century saw the emergence of new architectural styles including the Gothic, Arts and Crafts and Art Deco styles. In the Wandle Valley conservation area the most notable examples of the Gothic style include Singlegate School, by H. P Burke-Downing, with its half-timbered gables, stone dressings, stone windows with Gothic tracery, square stair tower culminating in pyramidal roof with louvres and pinnacle, and steeply pitched slate roofs culminating in timber

cupola; and the Lodge to Wandle Villa in Phipps Bridge Road with its Tudor arched windows and crenellated parapets.

There are few examples of stone buildings in the Wandle Valley conservation area apart from the use of stone in architectural detailing, for example at Singlegate School and the bus garage frontage to Wandle Bank and the more extensive use of Portland Stone in the construction of the 'Art Deco' frontage to Colliers Wood Underground Station designed by Charles Holden.



The main area of inter-war housing development can be seen within the Phipps Bridge sub area on the east side of Phipps Bridge Road, which forms part of a wider area of residential development to the east. The buildings comprise semi-detached pairs of houses with large central shared gables with half-timbering. These properties are included within the conservation area primarily because of their relationship to the Phipps Bridge Road and the River Wandle beyond. Architecturally and historically these buildings are not of any particular significance.



With respect to the use of more modern construction materials and techniques the most significant example is the Local Authority designed “Watermeads” housing at Octavia Close, Rawnsley Avenue in Mitcham. The main significance of this development is the layout of the housing and its relationship to the surrounding landscape and the river Wandle, which reflects the character of the development within the conservation area. The buildings are built with prefabricated panels with horizontal bands of hardwood windows. Developments in the later part of the 20th Century include the redevelopment of some of the former industrial sites, particularly the Mill complexes at Ravensbury and Connolly’s Mills. These developments do respond to the character of the conservation area in reflecting the scale of the original industrial buildings and both these developments have retained the most significant original buildings, although in the case of Connolly’s Mill alterations have been made.



The most recent development within the conservation area is the new housing development to the south of Merton Abbey Mills, this is a high quality modern development designed to reflect the informal layout of buildings that characterises this part of the conservation area. This is a good example of a new development that has both preserved and enhanced the character of the conservation area through the imaginative combination of traditional and modern materials and sympathetic scale of built form.



Development has also occurred in the vicinity of Phipps Bridge Road at “The Nook” off Liberty Avenue. This is also of a scale and design that reflects the conservation area’s industrial origins.

