

## OPEN SPACE

A chain of public parks running the length of the Wandle from Mitcham to Colliers Wood and beyond provides a significant green swathe running the length of the conservation area that defines its character. The Wandle Trail, a designated walking/cycling route, follows the River through the Borough. The London Plan also identifies the River Wandle as forming part of London's "Blue Ribbon Network". It is the range of linked open spaces straddling the river along the length of the conservation area that defines the areas character and has influenced the areas development through history.

### LANDSCAPED PARKLAND

The conservation area has a number of remnants of landscaped parkland surviving from the former estates including Morden Hall, the now demolished Ravensbury Manor House and Wandle Park House. Morden Hall Park is included on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens as Grade II.



Morden Hall Park in particular is reminiscent of an informal 'picturesque' landscape characteristic of late 18th - early 19th Century estates. Formerly a deer park the character of Morden Hall park is largely attributable to Gilliat Hatfeild who built Morden Hall. The park is landscaped around the Wandle and a number of leets that cross the area and

contains a number of historic features including Lodges and ancillary buildings such as stables, a water mill, a variety of bridges, walled gardens, decorative iron screens and statues. The park is now maintained and managed by the National Trust and through the use of traditional management techniques the park is now a haven for wild life and is freely open to the public.

Other landscaped parks include Wandle Park in Colliers Wood and Ravensbury Park which also have the river as their focus and contain historic features including two drinking fountains in Wandle Park and the surviving remnants of Ravensbury Manor House in Ravensbury Park.



Ravensbury Park is almost entirely hidden from view being surrounded by housing and other development. Morden Hall Park is also largely hidden behind by timber fences and high walls.

Green features, including parkland, riverside and aquatic vegetation and mature tree planting are significant contributing features to the character of the conservation area.

## NATURAL LANDSCAPE ENVIRONMENT

The riparian habitats and associated natural landscape environment along the river and its tributaries such as the Pickle Ditch forms a green chain running through the Borough which links the chain of green open spaces, many of which are included within the Conservation Area. There is a great variety of plants, birds and other wildlife along the banks and much of the area adjoining the river, particularly where it passes through National Trust Lands, including their Watermeads property at the southern end of the conservation



area is of metropolitan ecological significance.

There are local Nature Reserves at Bennets Hole and also within Ravensbury Park.

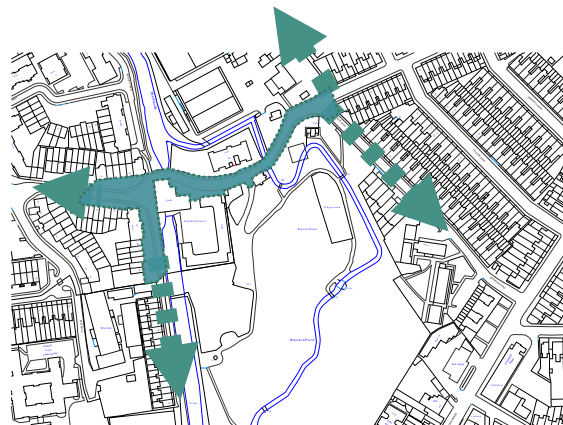
The riverside trail provides public access to the Wandle, and the council is keen, along with other landowners and other organisations to preserve and enhance the main features of interest along its banks. Recent works have included the improvements to the wetland area in Morden Hall Park and major works to open up the river channel and creation of reed beds in Wandle

Park and introduction of new bridges over the Wandle in Ravensbury Park and at Merton Abbey Mills.

## URBAN SPACES

In addition to the parks and green spaces there are also a number of spaces of townscape quality that also contribute to the character of the conservation area. These mainly comprise informal spaces that are defined by the building that enclose them. Main spaces include; -

1. Area around Connolly's Mill at junction of Bygrove Road and Wandle Bank. This is an informal space defined by the offset of the junction and the relationship between roads and buildings creating a more open, yet urban character in contrast to the more tightly knit and formal layout of surrounding streets.



2. Area in front of Colliers Wood Underground Station at the junction of Christchurch Road and High Street, Colliers Wood, informal

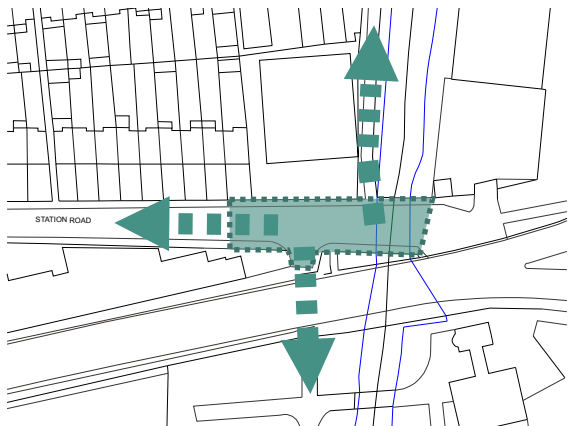


space of good urban potential fronted by shops and cafes.

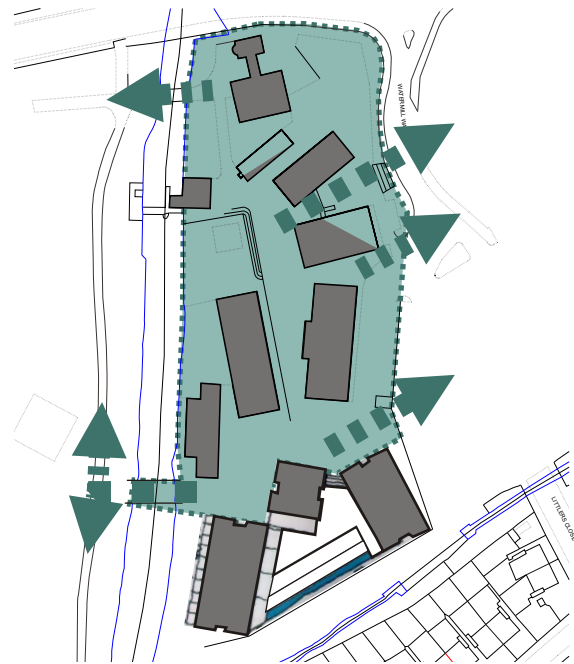
3. Space adjacent to (24) Merton High Street. Small fairly formal space that provides a break in the urban frontage and a pedestrian link to the residential area behind.
4. South side of Merton High Street, along the Wandle including the bridge link over the Wandle to Savacentre and also recently landscaped areas along the Pickle adjacent to the new retail development at Priory Park.



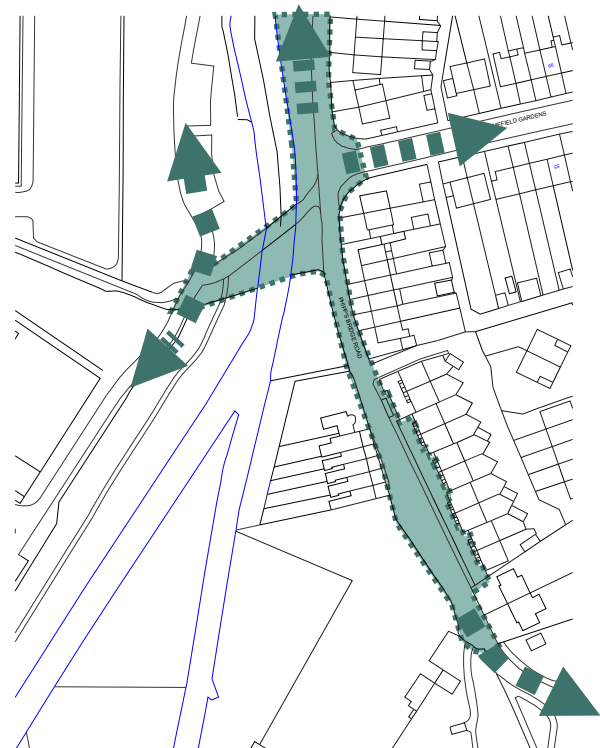
5. Area at the end of Station Road at junction with Wandle Path.



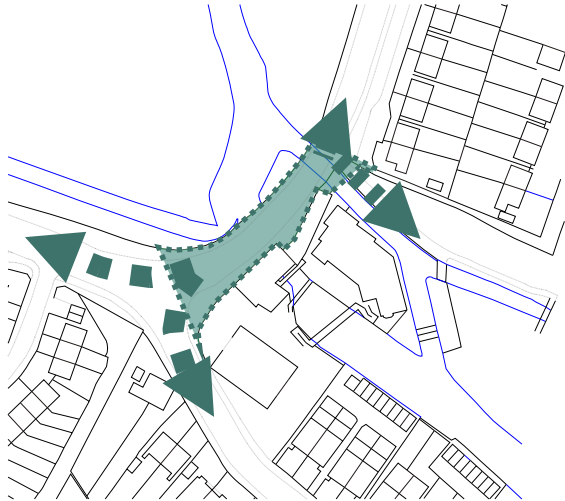
6. Open areas within Merton Abbey Mills.



7. Area around footbridge across Wandle from and including Phipps Bridge Road.



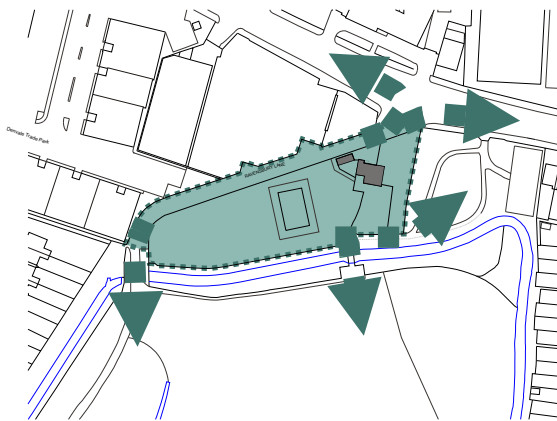
8. Areas around Ravensbury Mill



9. Areas around Grove Mill and Watermeads cottages



9. Childrens Play Area and Paddling Pool, Ravensbury Park



10. Area around former Mitcham Station.



## BOUNDARIES AND GROUND SURFACES



The conservation area displays a wide range of boundary treatments ranging from low walls and fences defining the boundaries of the smaller cottages to tall brick walls, dating from the late 18th century, enclosing parts of the Morden Hall Park. Some of the grander

Georgian buildings in London Road, Mitcham and Wandle Villa in Phipps Bridge Road would have had iron railings which were removed during the second world war, some of these have now been reinstated enhancing the character of the conservation area.



Ground surfaces are also varied and have been resurfaced in a variety of materials over time. Materials range from large format concrete paving slabs, modern small format paving slabs, concrete and clay blocks and tarmacadam. There are no surviving

examples of stone pavings, although there are surviving sections of granite kerbs and large granite quadrants sets. Traditional kerb details incorporate rows of granite sets forming a gutter to the edge of the road.

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## STREET FURNITURE AND MATERIALS

There are a wide variety of different styles and ranges of street furniture and materials within the conservation area. There are a couple of early electric street lights that survive in Station Road, Colliers Wood and these have been listed Grade II. Street furniture has been replaced with different styles over time in connection with streetwork programmes and in many cases inappropriate styles have been introduced.

A more detailed analysis of street furniture and materials has been carried out in connection with the more detailed sub-area appraisals.



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## ELEMENTS THAT DETRACT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The area around Copper Mill Lane has suffered from a poor environment due to the adjacent electricity transfer station, the greyhound stadium and the Plough Lane car dealership. The area is also cut off from the River Wandle due to the disposition of land ownership and uses adjacent to the river. There is scope for improvement with new development and introduction of new pedestrian links to the river. The conservation area generally is also dominated in many areas by the power lines and electricity pylons which extend the length of the river.

Some more recent developments detract from the areas character such as 1-3 Wandle Bank and infill developments comprising buildings that do not reflect the character of the area such as at 14 Wandle Bank.





Buildings which themselves contribute to the character of the conservation area in terms of their scale and form have had detrimental alterations such as replacement windows of inappropriate design and poorly designed replacement shopfronts.



Whilst the retention of the former mill building in the Connolly's Mill residential development is a welcome contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area the replacement of the original warehouse windows with domestic style double-hung sash windows gives the building an incongruous appearance and is detrimental to the special character and architectural interest of the building as a locally listed building.

The areas to the south of the surviving section of Priory wall in station road,



whilst of interest in terms of the activities it supports has a number of ad hoc buildings and structures, many attached to older buildings and structures which have a detrimental impact to that part of the conservation area particularly in close vicinity to historic structures.



The current Merton Priory Chapter House enclosure and the large pylon immediately to the south combine to create a negative impact on both the conservation area and scheduled ancient monument. Proposals to



improve this situation are currently being developed by a charitable trust set up to improve access to and understanding of the historic remains.

The late twentieth century terrace on the east side of Phipps Bridge Road does not reflect the style and character of development within the Wandle Valley conservation area. The terrace is in close proximity to significant buildings that do make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and as a result its visual impact on the locality is detrimental to its special character and appearance.

The semi-detached houses further up Phipps Bridge Road, also on the east side retain few if any of their original windows. Most have been replaced with a wide variety of different and inappropriate styles many have been replaced in uPVC. This has had a detrimental impact on what would otherwise have been a unified group of buildings and as a result has a very harmful visual impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.



In some areas the loss of front boundaries has resulted in poor definition of the boundaries between the public domain and private spaces, particularly along Merton and Colliers Wood High Streets.



The vacant site in Colliers Wood High Street, opposite the underground station and adjacent to Baltic Close is surrounded by hoardings and advertising panels and makes a negative contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This also represents an opportunity for a quality new development.



The inconsistent approach to paving, street signage and furniture, particularly excessive numbers of traffic signs and extensive use of guard railing has a particularly detrimental impact on the townscapes in Colliers Wood.



The layout of the roads and the volume of traffic particularly in Colliers Wood has resulted in poor pedestrian linkages through the area, particularly between the underground station, Croydon Tramlink and Merton Abbey Mills.

London Road, Mitcham cuts a swathe across the southern end of the conservation area and is detrimental to the areas character.

Whilst not within the conservation area itself the modern developments on and around the Savacentre site, the housing to the east of Merton Abbey Mills and the tall office building opposite the Underground station are visually intrusive as viewed from the conservation area and the surrounding infrastructure fails to address the inherent circulation

problems within the area and contributes to problems of poor pedestrian linkages.

Landscaping around the Priory Retail Park on the Colliers Wood High Street and Christchurch Road frontages has a negative impact on the setting of the conservation area.



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## NEUTRAL AREAS

Areas considered to make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area include the terrace of shops to the west of the Kings Head public house. Although they contribute to the townscape in terms of their relationship to the street and the overall size and scale, they are, however, of a fairly conventional design typical of many parts of London.

The parades of shops to the south of the tube station similarly make a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area. Although if original Art Deco style shopfronts were reintroduced to the station parade this would positively contribute to the character of the area.

Areas immediately adjacent to the conservation area also affect the area's character and setting. Particularly the area of land to the

north of the office block opposite the Underground station is poorly laid out and underutilised and in its current condition makes a neutral contribution. It does however have the potential with some new landscaping and tree planting to combine with the area in front of the station to make a significant urban space that could create an important sense of arrival in Colliers Wood.

The large industrial building adjacent to the conservation area on the east





bank of the Wandle, currently used as play facility at the end of Station Road is also considered to have neutral impact on the character of the conservation area.

The large area of car parking to the east of Merton Abbey Mills that extends over the site of the scheduled monument is also considered to make a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area.

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## REVIEW OF CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

The Wandle Valley conservation area was last reviewed in May 1998 no major additional changes are, therefore, proposed at this stage. Consideration has been given to possibly extending the conservation area to cover areas of Merton Place and the former sites of some of the older Priory buildings that once fronted Merton High Street. These areas are predominantly of historic and potential archaeological significance. However, architecturally these areas comprise fairly conventional terraced housing development typical of large parts of London and is not considered to sufficiently reflect the character of development within this particular conservation area. The character of this area has also been marred by the inappropriate scale, proportions and detailing of the new residential development fronting Merton High Street.

Consideration was also given to de-designating areas around Phipps Bridge Road, mainly due to the extent to which the character of buildings have been undermined by insensitive piecemeal changes including inappropriate replacement windows.

The buildings do however contribute to the enclosure of the spaces around the Wandle in terms of their scale, massing and relationship to surrounding spaces. The area should, however, be reviewed for any further detrimental changes and consideration be given to targeted use of an Article 4 Direction to bring small scale alterations under planning control possibly supported with a grant aid package to secure the re-introduction of original windows and other architectural features. A more detailed review of the conservation area boundary and the need for additional planning controls is carried out in conjunction with the sub-area appraisals

The only boundary change that this document would recommend, at this stage, is a possible adjustment of boundaries around Colliers Wood Underground Station and Singlegate School to include the whole of the space in front of the underground station and also extend the area as far as the locally listed Christ Church in Christchurch Road.

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## ADDITIONAL READING, REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Records of Merton Priory edited by Major Alfred Heales of 1898 and The Environs of London Vol. 1 by Revd Daniel Lysons of 1796.

'Reminiscences of Old Merton - Chamberlain - 1925

A History of Merton and Morden - Evelyn Jowett MA (Oxon) - 1951

Merton Priory - Penny Bruce, Simon Mason - MoLAS publications - 1993 and 2005

The Archaeology of Greater London - Museum of London 2000

A Brief History of Merton - John Precedo

History and Heroes of Old Merton - Kathleen Denbigh - 1975

Interim report by Judie English & John Leveson Gower, Sussex Archaeological Society Newsletter No. 47, pp. 456-7, Dec 1985

Archaeological reports by Museum of London Archaeology Service and other Archaeological Organisations copies of which are held in the Merton Local Studies Centre at Morden Library

Eric Montague - Historical notes on Mitcham and Colliers Wood

**There are a number of web sites containing historical information relevant to the Wandle Valley**

Merton Priory Trust web Site <http://www.mertonpriory.org>

Wandle Industrial Museum Web Site

<http://www.curator.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/common.htg/frameb.htm>

Croydon Online History: <http://www.croydononline.org/History/>

London Borough of Croydon History web pages

<http://www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/artsentertainmentculture/culture/localhistoryheritage/>

The Croydon Caving Club website has some Historic Notes on the Surrey Iron Railway by Allan Ockenden.

# APPENDIX A: LIST OF BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST STATUTORY GRADE II

## Area 2: Colliers Wood

Colliers Wood Underground Station - Corner of Christchurch Road and High Street, Colliers Wood.

Singlegate School and gatepiers, Christchurch Road (including Singlegate School, South Gardens)

Drinking Fountain in Wandle Park, Merton High Street, Colliers Wood.

Nos 16 and 17 Wandle Bank, London SW19

Nos 9-13 (consecutive) Wandle Bank, London, SW19

## Area 3: Merton Priory

Portion of former precinct wall to Merton Priory on west side of River Wandle, Christchurch Road, Colliers Wood

Section of Priory Precinct wall running along south side of Station Road, London SW19  
Wheel House at Merton Abbey Mills, Watermill Way, London SW19

Two street lamps outside no 12 and 34 Station Road, London, SW19

The Colour House, Merton Abbey Mills, Watermill Way, London SW19

Section of Priory precinct wall to rear of flats at 9, 11, 15 and 17 Windsor Avenue, London, SW19

Section of Priory precinct wall to rear of flats at 27, 29, 31 and 33 Windsor Avenue, London, SW19

## Area 4: Phipps Bridge

Wandle Villa, 98 Phipps Bridge Road, London SW19

## Area 5: The Parks

### 5.i: Morden Hall Park

Morden Hall, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Gates and gate piers to main entrance to east of Morden Hall and attached wall to north, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Walls to walled garden to south of Morden Hall, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Morden Cottage, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Snuff Mills (Eastern Block), Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Snuff Mills (Western Block), Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Milestone opposite No 92 Morden Hall Road, Morden, Surrey

Pedestal and Statue of Neptune, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Pedestal and Statue of Venus, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Morden Lodge, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Bridge to Rear of Morden Hall, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

White Cottage, Morden Road, Morden, Surrey

### Area 5.ii: Ravensbury Park

Ravensbury Mill, Morden Road, Mitcham

## Area 6: Mitcham

### Area 6: Station

Former Station, 409-411 London Road, Mitcham

470 and 472 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey

482 and 484 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey  
Wandle House, Riverside Drive, Mitcham, Surrey

### Area 6.2: Watermeads

Mill Cottages, 475-479 London Road, Mitcham

Wandle House, Riverside Drive, Mitcham

# APPENDIX B: NON-STATUTORY LIST OF BUILDINGS OF HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST

## Sub-Area 1: Copper Mill Lane

**Former Workshop, Copper Mill Lane, London SW19**

## Area 2: Colliers Wood

Connolly's Mill, Wandle Bank, Colliers Wood, SW19

Lodge, Wandle Park, Colliers Wood, SW19

Stone Sculpture near footbridge, Wandle Park, Colliers Wood, SW19

180-182 High Street (Royal Standard), Colliers Wood, SW19

220 High Street (Millers Mead), Colliers Wood, SW19

222 High Street (former Royal Six Bells), Colliers Wood, SW19

**4-8 Merton High Street, Colliers Wood, London SW19**

18 Merton High Street (Former Kings Head), Colliers Wood, SW19

## Area 3: Merton Priory

Showhouse, No 6 Watermill Way, Colliers Wood, SW19

Coles Shop, No 12 Watermill Way, Colliers Wood, SW19

Apprentice Shop, No 14 Watermill Way, Colliers Wood, SW19

Long Shop, No 16 Watermill Way, Colliers Wood, SW19

1929 Shop, No 18 Watermill Way, Colliers Wood, SW19

Block Shop No 20 Watermill Way, Colliers Wood, SW19

**Bennett's Courtyard, Watermill Way, Colliers Wood, SW19**

## Area 4: Phipps Bridge

84-94 (Evens) Phipps Bridge Road, London SW19

96 Phipps Bridge Road, London SW19

## Area 5: The Parks

### Area 5.i: Morden Hall Park

Wall and Gate Piers adj Morden Cottage, Morden Hall Park, Morden Surrey

The Gardens, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Ivy Lodge, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Lodge at Central Road roundabout, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Lodge at Morden Road roundabout, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Mill Cottage and the Bothy, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Sadlers End and Red Cottage, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

The Stables, Morden Hall Park, Morden, Surrey

Lodge adjacent to Surrey Arms, Morden Road, Mitcham

### **Area 5.ii: Ravensbury Park**

Brick Wall, Ravensbury lane, Mitcham

Remains of Ravensbury Manor House, Ravensbury Park, Mitcham

## **Area 6: Mitcham**

### **Area 6.ii: Watermeads**

Grove Mill, adjacent to 473 London Road, Mitcham







# **Wandle Valley Conservation Area Character Appraisal**

## **Plans and Projects**

### **Conservation and Design Team**

**Post Consultation Draft February 2007**

