

Ravensbury RA Response to Merton Council's Draft Local Plan

1.0 Background:

Residents have been asked by Merton Council to provide their responses to the Draft Local Plan. 55 residents have signed to say they support the submission of this report style response.

2.0 RA Response to design of the Council's own "Have Your Say" document:

This document could have employed a much better form of construction. There were no page numbers to coordinate the readers comprehension of the huge booklet. Simply opening the envelope and not being able to immediately understand the general direction of how they were supposed to respond put most people off responding. Consultation questions repeatedly choose not to refer to actual pages in the main booklet or those in the Have Your Say pamphlet. Residents Name & Address should have been nearer the start not buried away at the back of the pamphlet. Question 1,2&3 should have also been nearer start. Document seems to have been rubber stamped by the council's cabinet but proof read by no-one.

3.0 Residents Response based on Stage 1

Ravensbury residents queried why the process moves onto Stage 2 when the overwhelming response to Stage 1 was against the redevelopment. Little mention made of this in the pamphlet and little attention seems to be paid to the overwhelming response to stage 1.

4.0 Question 1 (Having read and considered the council's draft Estates Local Plan and supporting document please indicate your preference at this stage for regeneration:

It is the Ravensbury RA's considered opinion that "Option 3: invest in existing properties to bring them to minimum modern standards" would be best for the Ravensbury community based on the response from residents. Too few options were delivered to residents with honest integrity. Self build should have been on offer possibly. It would be preferred that the Ravensbury homes could be properly maintained, long before they are modernised or possibly enhanced.

5.0 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aspects of the council's draft Estates Local Plan? Please select one of the following ratings for each topic area

We find this table effectively unworkable as a proper response, even in reply to the shortened paragraphs on pages 2 & 3 of the consultation pamphlet and especially to the extensive information given in the main booklet (pages 146-167).

In each of the Site Specific Policies, it appears that the "Policy Box" is given greatest weight, with "Further Guidance" having secondary weighting. Justification appears to be either an explanatory section or a potentially minor policy weighting depending on response by the general public and bodies such as ourselves. In each of these three subdivisions on Policy, there are several paragraphs to which a resident might have differing opinions. To ask a respondent to give a single rating to between 1 & 3 pages of policy information renders this table unfit for purpose.

6.0 Please tell us if you have any other comments about the council's draft Estates Local Plan?

We will use the following pages to respond to this section & to the relevant policies detailed in the council's Ravensbury extract of the London Borough of Merton Draft Estates Local Plan booklet between pages 146 and 167 therein.

Through discussions on doorsteps and in the general community, we find that there is an overwhelming number of residents still against regeneration through demolition because of the fact that this is not a resident-led regeneration with redevelopment on their own terms with proper access to design professionals rather than paltry access on the developers terms. Many residents speak of what can only be politely described as an arrogant method of consultation met out by the housing associations officers during this push for redevelopment.

Therefore our response is in the assumption that regeneration through demolition goes ahead despite the residents being against it both from the start and during the present time.

7.0 Policy EP R1 Townscape

a) Proposals should provide widening and landscape improvements into Ravensbury Park entrance adjacent to Ravensbury Mill whilst providing clear views into the park from Morden Road.

Currently there does seem to be sufficient views into the park for passers-by, however if demolition of the adjacent residents homes does go ahead, enlarging and enhancing the park entrance could be perceived as beneficial subject to proper design analysis being carried out. For example, Morden Road is a relatively main artery between Mitcham, Morden and even onwards towards Croydon - traffic volumes can be both heavy and with considerable speed at all times of day. The area of Morden Road by Ravensbury Park has poor visibility due to it's curved nature resulting in inadequate sighting lines for pedestrians negotiating crossing a road with fast traffic, especially at 6.30am on a wet winter's morning. Inadequate speed attenuation will otherwise result in this area becoming an accident hot spot.



Image above: Ravensbury entrance near the Mill building

Much has been said locally with regards to the concept of why locals and others enter the park in the first place: relaxation plus peace and quiet seems to be the main reason. Any opening up of the front of Ravensbury needs to make proper consideration of this feature.

In addition, wildlife (mammal, invertebrate and fish) passage between the two parks is effectively prevented by the main road as well as the waterfalls. This would therefore been a convenient occasion to

make provision for some kind of underpass (read "animal subway", "badger tunnel" or "critter crossing") possibly alongside the River Wandle itself or in close proximity to the junction of the two parks, thereby increasing provision for all wildlife and lowering their mortality rate.

Due to the limited clearance between the water level of the River Wandle and the underside of the road bridge at this location, it does appear that the current road bridge serves to restrict the flow of the River Wandle in times of high flow. A proposal to replace the current bridge with one that serves both higher capacities during flood and the current limiting effects on wildlife could therefore be proposed. The correct design might also serve as both a landscape feature and a traffic management feature, allowing better views into both parks whilst also applying speed attenuation measures on its approaches.



Images showing Ravensbury Park around exit onto Morden Road.

b) The corner of the estate adjacent to Ravensbury Park will be expected to make an architectural statement which sensitively addresses the park entrance, river and mill buildings.

We hope that all new buildings planned for the Ravensbury Estate (although this same area is known to many local residents as the Ravensbury Village), will be designed with sensitivity and relevance to the local architectural focal points such as the Ravensbury Mill buildings, the Surrey Arms PH and especially the weather boarded cottage. The use of bricks on all facades is preferred over any form of render, both due to the architectural relevance and the fact that render stains quickly and needs regular maintenance to keep it looking reasonable.

We would prefer that a major part of the sensitivity expected will be in respect to the scale of the buildings. Ravensbury Mill makes for a good demonstration of scale in regards to building height versus tree line. On our opinion, three storeys plus a tiled pitched roof would be the maximum building height if the character of the Ravensbury area is to be maintained. Four storeys with a flat roof would not be in keeping with the character that is prevalent in the area.

Roof design is of great importance for Ravensbury's character. All the roofs in Ravensbury are tiled pitched roofs, which serves as a unifying theme for the entire area. We would hope that all new roofs, even those of any proposed flats utilise this theme, potentially as a mansard roof if this serves to both

accommodate increased building heights and serve to unify the overall architectural designs for any new buildings to be built in Ravensbury.

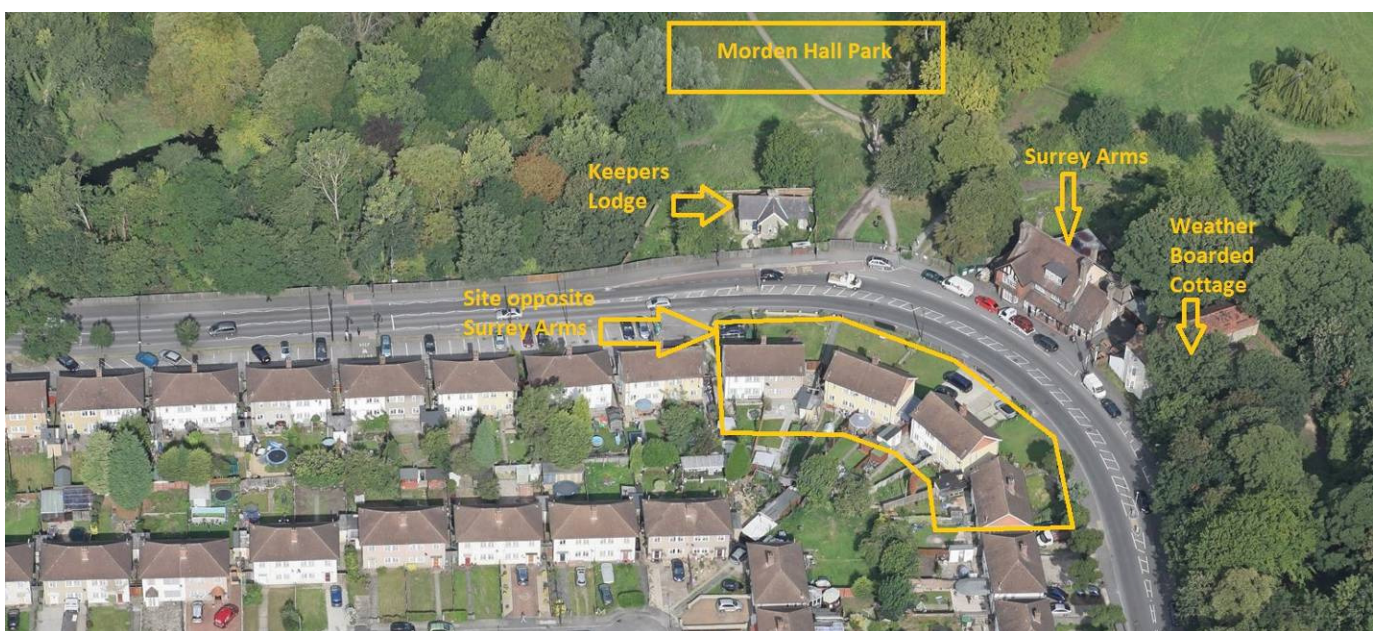
c) Proposals should reinforce the corner of the estate opposite the Surrey Arms Public House as a space and a place. Proposals should have a sensitive relationship to the pub particularly in terms of massing and height.

We agree that this area of Ravensbury needs very sensitive treatment in order to prevent any sense of overwhelming the current buildings. The pub is of three storeys in height, employing a dormer window on the main facade which softens its actual height and improves the viewers relationship with the building from the ground. The Surrey Arms' overall height maintains a good relationship with its surroundings, both on the main road and from within Morden Hall Park.

A new building that occupies the site directly opposite the Surrey Arms effectively serves as the key corner building potentially defining the character of Ravensbury. Standing at the gateway for the general public exiting Morden Hall Park, any building in this location should not significantly impact the surrounding environment. This site has the potential for overwhelming the key buildings and Morden Hall Park, therefore it should be restrained to the Ravensbury maximum of 3 storeys plus tiled roof. Any identikit architectural approach will have the potential to destroy a significant architectural opportunity for sensitivity.



Image above: Corner of Morden Road at the Surrey Arms, Image below: Aerial image of same



d) The setting around the entrance to Ravensbury Park should be improved and enhanced. The architecture and design of buildings should draw upon from the surrounding good quality townscape such as Ravensbury Mill, The Surrey Arms and White Cottage.

As described previously, we agree that this area is another key location for Ravensbury, defining an impression for passers-by and potentially significantly impacting on surrounding buildings of high architectural quality and character. As described previously, scale is of importance, particularly in relation to the setting between two parks and the relationship with the surrounding trees. therefore, we would expect a three storey maximum plus tiled roof in this location, and a preference to avoid flat roof construction. Mansard roofs and dormer windows could allow for increased height without overwhelming the surroundings.



Images above: Ravensbury Park entrance onto Morden Road

e) There is also scope to utilise local history as a point of reference in the development of the scheme for example drawing on the sites past associations with industrial water mills and the estate of Ravensbury Manor.

It is important to utilise local history in the same way as the current place names have: Hatfeild Close being a case in point. Please note spelling in such situations. If roads are possibly moved or added to in a regeneration, we would prefer that existing place names be retained in the first instance. A similar historical naming convention for buildings that house multiple dwellings would also be desirable.

Further guidance

3.244 Proposals should investigate working in conjunction with the National Trust to consider the replacement of boundary treatment around Morden Hall Park to improve views into the park from Morden Road.

Whilst we would expect that passers-by could enjoy better views into Morden Hall Park if wooden fencing were to be replaced with railings, there is also potential for the tranquillity of the park itself to be impacted upon and for wildlife/waterfowl to stray into the main road. Improving the setting around the entrance to the park beside the Surrey Arms may be a better suggestion, with a decorative brick wall forming the base to railings, as per another entrance, thereby allowing visibility into the park and a better appreciation of the park within.

We would expect the National Trust to respond in detail to this proposal and we assume that this proposal has been made in expectation of regeneration funds being allocated to improving the surroundings.

3.245 Proposals may investigate working in conjunction with The National Trust to strengthen the Wandle Trail and ensure there is a unified approach to surface finishes, boundary treatments and materials used along the Trail.

No comment.

3.246 Proposals could investigate the scope to uncover and display the remains of Ravensbury Manor. The addition of interpretation panels could create a heritage focal point in the park.

Whilst it would be nice to display the remains of Ravensbury Manor, the remains that were left until relatively recently were effectively demolished by repeated vandalism. Therefore a degree of restoration would probably be needed in order to fully appreciate this site. Information panels within the park would probably be of great benefit if this idea were to bear fruit.

We would expect that the Friends of Ravensbury Park be fully consulted on these proposals.

3.247 Development proposals may consider alteration of the internal layouts of the ground floor flats, proposed for refurbishment to re- orientate the front doors onto the pleasant open space in front of the block. Changes to the layout of the rear of these retained flats could also improve car parking and provide some private back gardens.

We are greatly against this suggestion and are somewhat awestruck at its inclusion. This seems to be a misinterpretation of a suggestion to provide incidental access onto the pleasant grassed areas adjacent to Hengelo Gardens and Ravensbury Grove or patio areas in the same position.

This suggestion came as a shock to many Ravensbury Court residents and also to the wider Ravensbury community. It seems that this suggestion has been dreamt up by a council officer in total exclusion of the residents themselves, which is almost equally shocking.

Ravensbury Court is in itself a very secure building, despite the lack of gated entrances. Its very design infers a private space and courtyard that belongs to the residents without needing to exclude entry by visitors or passersby through a gated community. There is and has always been a sense of neighbourly living and of a good neighbourhood, unlike many modern estates or even some established communities in other areas. This sensation of combined privacy, safety and community is one that pervades Ravensbury as a whole and has served the community extremely well over time. Crime rates have always been much lower than its surroundings, probably due to this very design. Within Ravensbury Court, there is a sense of community. Having the main entrances of both levels, upstairs and downstairs, serves to bind the community together. Passing people at the entrance to the stairwell reinforces this.

To suggest rendering a design such as this as potentially unviable seems ridiculous in the extreme. This is a design that has served the community well, over several decades. The design enforces the sense of place & private space within Ravensbury Court. The washing line areas are often used during the warmer months, the grassed areas to the front of the flats provide for a green and pleasant feature directly in front of the residents homes. The reasonably limited parking proves to be beneficial in terms of room for people to exist rather than communities. There is little negative effect, seen in many other post-war estates, through overprovision for the motor car.



Images above: Ravensbury Court

The internal designs of the Ravensbury Court maisonettes lend themselves to proper surveillance of both the courtyard within and of the grassed areas fronting Ravensbury Grove and Hengelo Gardens. This has benefited many families whilst raising young children. Children have happily "played outside" in Ravensbury for many generations, whilst in other areas of London there has been a steady decline.

If anything, residents have observed a decline of repairs and maintenance standards from their housing association landlord. Repairs have been badly managed all around Ravensbury, serving to reinforce the housing associations argument for regeneration through demolition. During the run-up to the initial announcement of regeneration, residents had been told that their area wasn't being repaired due to the coming regen project. Together with this suggestion, residents are being potentially failed at every turn it seems.

Justification

3.248 The townscape of the estate is somewhat secondary to the landscape. However, it does have the feel of a quiet and pleasant residential neighbourhood, as the housing on Morden Road prevents much of the traffic noise from penetrating within. The flats and housing to be retained are generally pleasant in appearance, though the larger block of flats suffers from a rather dead frontage due to a lack of entrances on the frontage.

Townscape discussion:

The design of housing fronting Morden Road does indeed serve to prevent much of the road noise from penetrating the interior of Ravensbury. This concept should be preserved in any future plans for the area.

The landscape both surrounding Ravensbury, and also within it, is a defining feature of our area. This is why many residents regard it as the Ravensbury Village; the community feel part of the landscape and it benefits their sense of belonging. Ravensbury is a unique location because of its sense of proportion and relatively low density in relation to the rest of Merton and even London as a whole.



Despite the landscape of Ravensbury forming such an important feature in the overall character of the area, it is important to note that the design, scale, relative proportions and general impact by the townscape is subtle and succinct, thereby enhancing the area. Tiled roofs, two storey construction and a reasonable density lend themselves towards promotion of the landscape. The tree-line is viewed with ease from within the estate and from Ravensbury Court also, enhancing the experience of the environment and greenery for a broad section of Ravensbury Residents. A significant feature of Ravensbury is that the tree-line is seen with ease, and remains unobstructed by any development. This should be retained. New developments should not force views from within Ravensbury to be marginalised and viewed from selected viewpoints.



Above: Aerial view of Ravensbury as a whole



Above: The significant tree-line when observed from Ravensbury Court & Hengelo Gardens

Appearance discussion:

Describing the Ravensbury Court frontages as "somewhat dead in appearance" seems a somewhat ridiculous description for a neat and tidy facade that allows for significant daylight through large windows that are very unusual for a 1950's post-war building and even rarer for more modern blocks. The significant design advantages that have been included in Ravensbury Court should not be trivialised.

We find that Ravensbury Court & Hengelo Gardens are very pleasant in appearance. The brick construction employed along with the "market garden" appearance of large green spaces is very attractive, and the moderate scale enhances the mood of Ravensbury.

What has been lacking was proper communication by the housing association with their residents, and proper empowerment of those self-same residents by being included in matters forming their future. An example in this instance includes the removal of rose bushes by the housing association which practically no-one on the estate were actually consulted upon. This kind of landscaping had enhanced the appearance of Ravensbury and served to also prevent anti-social behaviour close to the flats themselves. High-handed methods of building management have served the Ravensbury residents extremely poorly in recent years. Ravensbury Residents Association has tried to begin a process that we hope will serve residents well in future years.

Some residents in the flats began small gardens in order to enhance the area themselves. This approach should be encouraged rather than, as sometimes been the case, have poorly managed garden teams strip these self-same gardens into non-existence and have the managers of these teams complain that residents shouldn't be helping to improve the area anyway. Residents have experienced the latter on occasion but we hope that may have changed after residents voices have become louder.



Patios: A suggestion has been made to install a patio area along with glazed doors allowing access into that area as part of the regen works by the housing association. Some residents enjoy the concept of what would effectively be a garden door into the green space bordering Ravensbury Grove and Hengelo Gardens and some prefer the security and privacy of the existing arrangement. In both instances however, the concept of exiting onto what would now be a hard-landscaped space possibly defeats the idea of enjoying the garden area, "with feet on the grass" as some describe it. Residents should be given options and freedom of choice rather than be continually bullied. If some choose to retain grass if the regen goes ahead, then they should be allowed to make that choice. If they wish to tend a small area for gardening then they be applauded as these kind of activities are beneficial for both residents and the area as a whole.

The potential for flooding in the Ravensbury area is very high: displacing more water through hardlandscaping a patio zone seems ridiculous and counter-productive. The idea of installing front doors has no basis in support by residents and walking into what is now the rear of the property would require more tarmac to be placed, and a vast redesign of the interiors of the flats.

3.249 The Orlit houses fronting Morden Road provide a strong building line edge to the estate which, helps define the character of Morden Road, reinforcing the curved shape of the road. This winding nature creates prominent points along the route defined by the corners and the buildings at them – such as the mill and pub. There is scope to improve the quality of these spaces and better link the estate with its surroundings without compromising its quiet character.

The Orlit houses do indeed provide a strong building line that helps define the curved nature of Morden Road and lend it a degree of character in regards of neighbourhood. It should be noted that a very large number of residents appreciate the seclusion that Ravensbury's design affords them and have vociferously stated that they did not want any more vehicular or even pedestrian access routes into the internal network of streets.

3.250 On Morden Road the entrance to Ravensbury Park is obscured from view and highlighting the park entrance will strengthen visual links into the park from the surrounding area.

There are two entrances to Ravensbury Park on Morden Road. One is next door to the new surgery and the other is practically beside the mill building. Of the two entrances, the doctors surgery entrance is the one that is set back slightly from the road and therefore possibly more obscured from view. The mill entrance however is directly on the main road, has several pedestrian signs and cannot be missed by anyone, possibly asides from passing motorists that have their eyes on the road more than anything. However, it could prove beneficial to enhance this entrance if suitable suggestions are made. A steel arch along the lines of the other entrances is probably what the planners have in mind and would probably be a nice addition to the area. We would expect the Friends of Ravensbury Park to be consulted extensively on this.



Image: Ravensbury Park Entrance onto Morden Road

3.251 The architecture of the adjacent mill building provides inspiration which can be creatively interpreted in the design of buildings at this prominent corner of the estate adjacent to Ravensbury Park. Cues should be creatively interpreted to inform the design of new homes whilst ensuring proposals integrate well into a high quality landscape setting.

We would encourage a traditional interpretation that is consistent with the design of the mills buildings, utilising the brick facades and tiled roofs. As previously noted, mansard roof designs could be utilised to improve the overall impact on the immediate environment if the overall building heights are to be higher than existing.

3.252 The Surrey Arms Public House and adjacent weather-boarded cottage are key elements in the surrounding townscape, their location adjacent to Morden Hall Park entrance is a key focal point. Development proposals provide opportunity to reinforce these key elements.

It would be preferred if these architectural elements are used in any future designs for new buildings in the Ravensbury area. This would have the potential of creating a sense of cohesion and reducing the impact of new builds on what is a mature and sensitive environment.

3.253 Ravensbury Mill occupies a prominent location on the approach to the estate. Improving and enhancing the setting around the entrance to Ravensbury Park will help to highlight the Mill as a potential new heritage destination.

The Ravensbury Mill is indeed a significant site in the Ravensbury area. We would like some kind of height restraint and design code on new buildings that are situated in relatively close proximity to it in order to prevent unnecessary impact on both the park environment and the mill's location.



3.254 Currently visibility into Morden Hall Park on Morden Road is poor due to boundary treatment. Regeneration of the estate provides an opportunity to work in conjunction with the National Trust to enable views from the estate to this high quality landscape. Replacing timber fences with railings and improvements to the park entrance could increase visibility and accessibility of the park whilst improving the physical environment on Morden Road. Adding a new entrance opposite the Mill may also be a possibility.

Please refer to our answer to para 3.241. It is our understanding that the sighting lines for traffic negotiating the blind corner from Morden would negate the location of a traffic crossing here. Reference should be made to Merton Council's Highways department as well as any suitable guidance from TfL.

The effect on wildlife and waterfowl as well as the interior of Morden Hall Park itself should be considered. Some of the tranquillity within the park is afforded by the wooden fencing in visual and acoustic terms. A significant brick base to any new railings may serve to preserve or even enhance the tranquillity within the park.



Image: Blind corner for traffic coming from Morden

3.255 The remains of Ravensbury Manor are hidden from view amongst dense vegetation within Ravensbury Park. Uncovering remnants of these ruins will highlight the local history of the area and the park as part of the former estate of Ravensbury Manor.

Please refer to our answer to para. 3.246.

3.256 The retained large block of flats could be enhanced by the changes to their internal layouts which would enable entrances on the ground floor flats to overlook Ravensbury Grove Road.

As described in our answer to para. 3.247, we consider that there is significant potential for Ravensbury Court to be ruined by this proposal and we believe it has no substantiation in resident support. This suggestion would not be an enhancement and would in fact achieve the exact opposite.

We think that the consequences for the courtyard area of the building would be that the area would become a segregated zone used for car parking and rubbish. We think that this suggestion has not been thought through. If in terms of sketching out possible layouts, Merton Council has thought this through, would they please pass the designs to the resident association for proper scrutiny.

Page 148 - R1 Townscape Map.

We have annotated the map below accordingly:

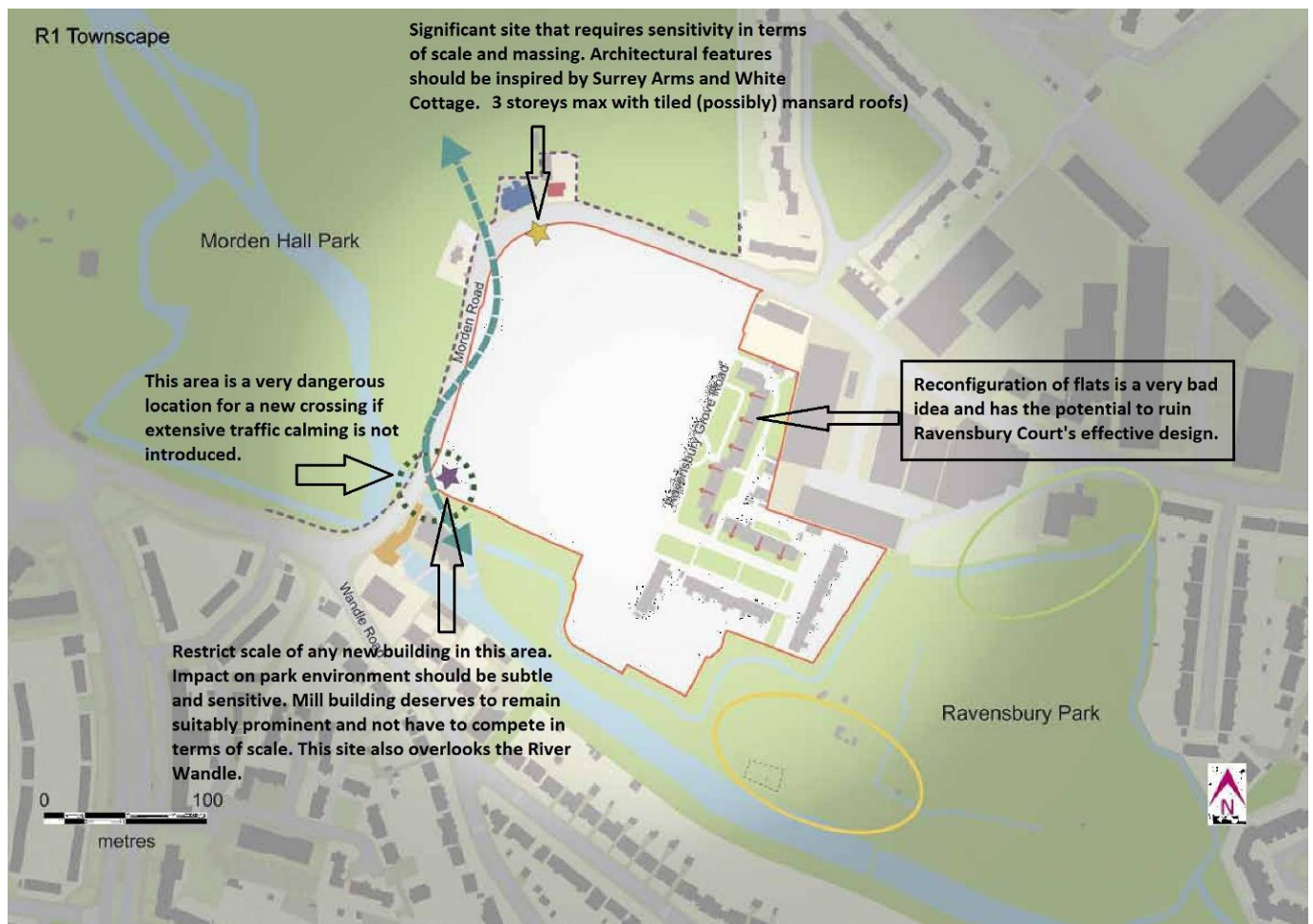


Image: Page 148 - R1 Townscape Map.

8.0 Policy EP R2

a) The historic street pattern of Ravensbury Grove should be retained as the main route into and out of the estate and the basis of an internal network of streets.

We agree that the historic street pattern is the best framework on which to base the future design of Ravensbury. Mature trees border the sides of Ravensbury Grove and green areas enhance the experience of initially entering the Ravensbury from the main road. The mood is welcoming and peaceful due to the layout of these elements.

In any new development there is always potential to make mistakes that eventually prove to be a significant downgrade whilst attempting to modernise an existing area. One of these could be the potential to make Ravensbury Grove completely linear, ie minus the current curve at its southern extremity and minus the slightly crooked element at its centre. We find that the crooked element has served to slow traffic down, being of the chicane design in terms of speed attenuation. In an area that has served children well for outdoor incidental play spaces, low traffic speeds have always been key in the safety of children who may cross the roads unsupervised. We would encourage the preservation of the current layout for this purpose and expect to see further measures introduced in order to improve safety through the control of speed.

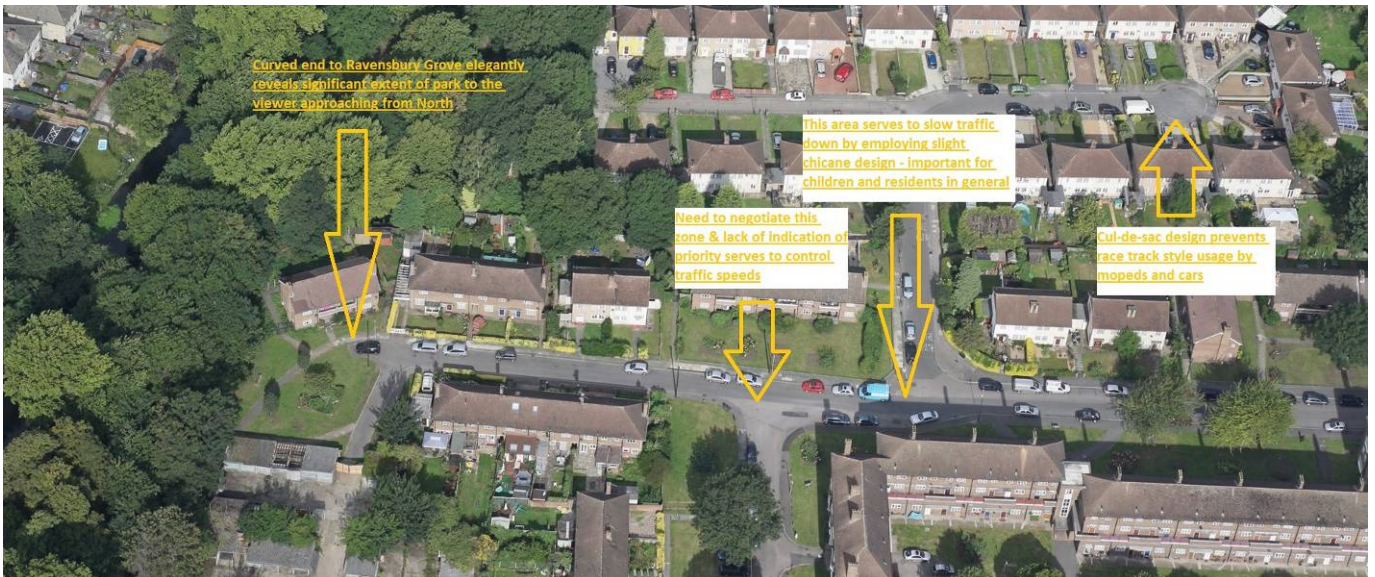


Image above: Southern part of Ravensbury Grove with effective traffic measures

The significant length of straight section in Ravensbury Grove can lead some drivers to accelerate far in excess of what should be a "Twenty's Plenty" zone. Speed attenuation measures would be helpful in this area.



Image above: Northern part of Ravensbury Grove with significant straight stretch of road

b) Ravensbury Grove should be extended fully to the boundary of the Ravensbury Park providing clear views along its whole length into the park.

We think that this could be a mistake. Currently the glazed area indicated in the image below serves as a green transition between built environment and the park itself. This area once had a greater number of large trees attractively arranged within the grassed area and served as a pleasant introduction to the park. The non-linear arrangement of this area with respect to the rest of Ravensbury Grove makes for an attractive line-of-sight as one walks southwards down Ravensbury Grove and encounters the park entrance. A sheltered area such as this is usually also a potential haven for wildlife, and should be retained and enhanced.



Image above: Southern extremity of Ravensbury Grove on approach to park.

c) Hengelo Gardens should be retained and enhanced, particularly with respect to arrangement of car parking, general landscaping and the potential for flood attenuation measures.

We think that Hengelo Gardens should be retained. We think that the grassed area in front of the houses on Hengelo Gardens needs to be considered with great care as it currently forms a pleasant swathe of green that is pleasantly coupled with the area alongside Ravensbury Court itself. Introduction of swale areas could degrade the overall appearance of this area if the current rose beds are removed or the grassed areas are diminished in favour of large gravel-based beds. The current arrangement of the car parking is pleasant - if there is scope to improve existing facilities without detriment to the overall appearance and residents are happy with the proposals, then there maybe be scope for introduction of alternative layouts. We must stress that proper consultation is important to get agreement from residents of Hengelo Gardens and Ravensbury Court who share this area in terms of parking and visual amenity.



Image above: Hengelo Gardens & grassed areas with parking facilities.

d) New proposals should include a network of streets that provide clear connections from Ravensbury Grove to Morden Road and views to Ravensbury Park.

When residents were asked about this during the Circle Housing consultations, practically all of them argued that opening up access onto Morden Road was extremely unwanted. They made mention of privacy, security & safety, through the lack of through traffic. This was a very strongly voiced opinion due to the overall advantages experienced by the current layout since its construction.

We would also like to make mention of the disadvantages of a potentially more permeable layout. Introduction of access points can lead to more crime and a reduced sense of security. This area is in need of a degree of defensive layout due to its position near the parks and a main road. The current arrangement of homes and street patterns seems to have had a definite positive effect on the reduction of burglary style crime relative to other areas, so we would hope that connections onto Morden Road from Ravensbury Grove are limited.

Further guidance

3.257 The estate is bounded by Morden Road, which is a busy traffic route. There is scope to implement targeted traffic management measures along Morden Road at key points to improve pedestrian connectivity to the surrounding area, reduce severance caused by traffic and improve road safety.

This sounds like a good idea and should improve the lives of people on Ravensbury. Focus should be made on the park entrances and pedestrian passage to the nearby tram stops.



Image above: Pedestrian Movement from Ravensbury towards park & tramstops

3.258 The access lane and parking for the houses fronting Morden Road should preferably be removed and used for tree planting and a new cycle route. This approach could also accommodate flood attenuation measures, such as a swale or uncovering of the historic watercourse. Some parking may be retained but should be better integrated into the layout.

We think that this access lane is very useful for residents adjacent to Morden Road. It currently serves as a parking area, play area and cycle path for people cycling between Morden Hall Park & Ravensbury Park. It allows for a larger degree of separation for children playing in front of their homes, and has effectively become a shared space with the addition of speed humps. It would be a mistake to remove this area as it has proved to be of benefit to residents.

Justification

3.259 The estate is physically isolated from its surroundings in a number of ways, including its street layout. There is only one access for vehicles into the estate and a minor cul-de-sac serving properties fronting Morden Road. The streets are set out in the form of a traditional cul-de-sac layout.

Residents have voiced the positive aspect of this relative isolation. The area is tranquil and sufficiently local to afford a strong sense of neighbourhood. The residents impression is that this is a very positive feature for them.

3.260 Despite the relative isolation of the estate and its physical constraints of the river and park, there is significant potential to improve links towards Morden town centre, by opening up the frontage onto Morden Road via new street and footpath connections.

Residents feel that the idea of opening up the village layout has greater negatives than positives. They prefer the limited access onto Morden Road as this provides security, limits noise from traffic on Morden Road, results in no through traffic, and improves their sense of a quiet neighbourhood where they know their neighbours and passersby. The existing footpath prevents motorbike usage with its railing arrangements and also is very well lit. These are the reasons why residents have said that this is more than sufficient.

3.261 New street network proposals should be well designed to provide clear connections that will reduce the current detached make-up of the estate, whilst ensuring that the estate does not become a through route for vehicular traffic from Morden Road. Any new East-West streets should form clear connections from Ravensbury Grove to Morden Road with active frontages onto public space. A new access from Morden Road with flexibility for vehicular movement may also be considered, subject to an assessment of potential impacts.

Residents have argued against any new East-West streets on the grounds of through traffic not being wanted within the estate. They argue that the very reason why this area has been so successful as a neighbourhood is partly due to the lack of through traffic and the limited access onto Morden Road.

9.0 Policy EP R3

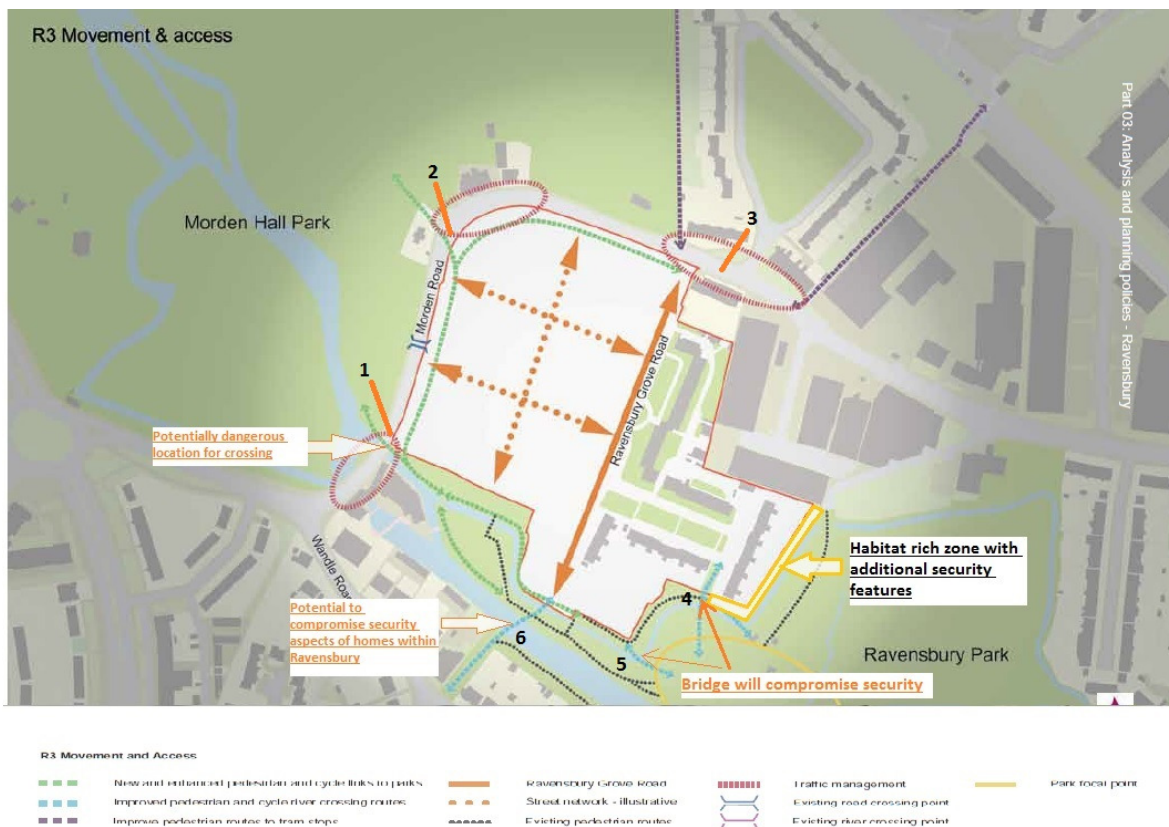
a) Proposals should improve pedestrian routes across the estate and to nearby parks, bus and tram stops. Routes should be linked into the proposed/existing street network along active frontages or existing walking routes, which should be well surveyed. Entrances into the park should be carefully designed and located to ensure accessibility into the park without undermining safety and biodiversity.

The advantages of these proposals seem exaggerated. Whilst this sounds initially attractive, residents have experience of increased pedestrian routes merely serving to make anti-social & criminal access that much easier. An example of this is to be found at the old park gate between 10 & 11 Hengelo Gardens. In previous years when access along the river channel was much easier, this area was used by people committing acts of burglary to escape via the park. Anti-social behaviour sometimes results in occupants within the park boundary targeting the Hengelo Gardens houses & their windows with stones. It is for these reasons that residents (of Hengelo Gardens especially) feel that an increased number of bridges into the park will be at the detriment of their existing home life.

We also understand that the habitat alongside the river bank to the rear of Hengelo Gardens is rich in biodiversity and something of a haven for wildlife, probably due to the lack of access by the general public & possibly dogs.

We would consider that if much of the area to the rear of Hengelo Gardens remained closed off, the benefits would be twofold: that of continued security and that of continued wildlife habitat, ie biodiversity.

b) The relocation of crossing point from Morden Hall Park to the estate to a position which allows for direct link to park route and new pedestrian / segregated cycle way along Morden Road should be investigated. Proposals should create a clear legible route from Morden Hall Park to the entrance of Ravensbury Park.



Images above: R3 Movement & Access with annotations

In the annotated image of R3 Movement & Access, we think that a crossing in Position 1 has the potential for an accident black spot being on a blind bend. This corner is notorious for speeding traffic where neither the driver nor the pedestrian can see around the corner.

Position 2 is potentially the better location as the bend is relatively much more open.

c) Improvements to cycle links along Morden Road should create stronger links between Morden Hall Park and Ravensbury Park. Proposals should investigate the creation of a segregated cycle way along Morden Road which feeds into Ravensbury Park from Morden Hall Park. Additions to the cycle network should be integrated into wider cycle network.

The current slip road off of Morden Road currently performs exactly this task and we think makes good use of the space available. Shared spaces are currently very fashionable: this slip road has been in existence for some time and has always performed as a shared space. Surely even a new stretch of road in this area would be better employed as a shared space assuming speed control measures such as road humps are employed also.

d) The main route for vehicles into the estate is Ravensbury Grove. There is also scope to retain the existing slip road access off Morden Road as a secondary entrance into the site should this be required. Any new East-West links from the estate onto Morden Road should be clear and designed as traditional streets, irrespective of whether they are for vehicular use.

We think that retaining the slip road is an idea for creating access for residents onto Morden Road, but not if it is to be used as another East-West vehicular link with Ravensbury Grove itself. Consideration of creating any kind of East-West link and thereby creating through traffic will be at the detriment of Ravensbury as a whole. The community has enjoyed relatively safe passage within Ravensbury Grove precisely because of the lack of through traffic. Traffic would tend to use any short cut available if there is a jam on Morden Road so this would result in a rat run effect in such situations.

Further guidance

3.262 Proposals should consider introducing physical features at key focal points along Morden Road to better manage the speed and flow of traffic and to improve road safety. To enhance pedestrian links there is also opportunity to build a new bridge to Ravensbury Park, creating a new North-South pedestrian link from Wandle Road to the Ravensbury Estate.

Speed management along Morden Road would be advantageous and probably highly necessary if density is increased with the Ravensbury area. There should be certain reservations in regards to the installation of another pedestrian bridge as past experience has shown the park to be used as an escape route at night.

3.263 Within Ravensbury Park there is potential to add additional bridges/walkways across the river and back channel which would allow for a better connection between the Ravensbury Estate and the play area in Ravensbury Park.

Existing residents are very unhappy about news of additional bridges and walkways to the park as they are only too aware of the kind of anti-social behaviour that can be reside within the park both by night and day. Based on past resident experience, these new connections would severely increase the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour. There are occasions when people throw stones at house windows from the park and the park is sometimes used as a means of escape for those committing crime within the Ravensbury area. Over-enhancing access to the park in these areas will only enhance the likelihood of these kind of events for residents bordering the parks perimeter.

3.264 To strengthen cycling there is scope to develop cycle links further along Morden Road for night time cycling when Morden Hall Park is less accessible.

If space allows, this could be a good idea, although there may be a need for speed attenuation measures if the cycle lane is within the carriageway.

Justification

3.265 Whilst the estate does have links to the surrounding area, they are generally poor and few in number. Morden Road is a busy road that creates severance between the two parks and the estate, as well as to the tram-stops to the north. To the south the River Wandle presents a barrier to the residential area to the south. Whilst there is a footbridge, it is not conveniently located for north-south movement and is poorly overlooked.

It is true that traffic on Morden Road does effectively create a barrier to be crossed, but the River Wandle is an attractive feature rather than a barrier. We feel that through-passage for pedestrians to the south of Ravensbury ie Wandle Road is being somewhat overstated.

3.266 There are two tramstops a short walk away that provide frequent services between Wimbledon and Croydon town centres. Bus routes also pass close to the estate providing access to Morden town centre, connections with other bus routes and the London Underground Network.

The two footpaths to the tram stops could be safer if the paths were directly overlooked by homes, but this will require the demolition of the homes in Deer Park Gardens and the demolition of the industrial estate on the East side of Ravensbury Path. We feel that the extended pedestrian routes via Ravensbury and onwards to Wandle Road are somewhat exaggerating the case for advantages of regeneration.

3.267 There is significant potential to improve direct links towards Morden by opening up the frontage onto Morden Road through new street and footpath connections. Proposals should create an easy to understand street layout for the estate including improved links to the Wandle Trail and Ravensbury Park supported by way-finding signage.

There is not really significant potential to improve links towards Morden. Perhaps there are certain limited advantages for moving the footpath access from alongside the park to align with Hatfeild Close, but this is not as dramatic as is being suggested. Besides from the fact that the footpath would have to remain in place due to general law regarding footpaths as we understand them, residents feel that the advantages for more connections to Morden Road do not outweigh the disadvantages: namely increased access to interior Ravensbury roads (such as Hatfeild Close) will increase the potential for crime and will increase the feeling of insecurity for their families, homes and possessions. Residents also feel that the ambience of the interior will be jeopardised with increased access to Morden Road. The current layout creates an oasis of calm away from the main road. Introducing the main road into the interior will destroy that.

3.268 Links from within the estate towards Morden consist of either a back alley or detour to the north. The pedestrian routes between the parks and cycling facilities on Morden Road are also unclear. The paths through Ravensbury Park are poorly overlooked with few escape points into the surrounding street network. It is therefore easy to get lost or disorientated in the area.

Once again, there is a degree of overstatement here. The back alley is a footpath that runs alongside the park and it is extremely well lit. The chicane arrangement prevents access by motorbikes also. If the footpath were wider, this might create a better feeling when walking down it and if vegetation were trimmed this would improve the situation also, but the latter is a maintenance issue.

3.269 There is potential to improve movement and access around the estate in a way that is relatively low-key whilst retaining the quiet feel of the estate. The crossing from Morden Hall Park to the estate is a key link in the Wandle Trail in connecting Morden Hall Park to Ravensbury Park. There is scope to improve this crossing through enhancements to footways and crossing point which ensure pedestrians and cyclists have sufficient space to move in a comfortable environment.

We see no need in improving movement around the estate itself as this is a very small area that has an interesting layout with considerable advantages over many other areas within Merton. The crossing points on Morden Road should be improved without recourse to regen funds. The Wandle Trail skirts the Ravensbury estate area and balance should be struck between overprovision for the trail versus important space for residents.

3.270 The amount of traffic using Morden Road makes for a unfriendly environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Measures to better control traffic and improve pedestrian and cyclist safety could be achieved by a range of methods, including surface treatments, raised crossing points, cycle paths, width restriction or build outs and pedestrian refuges. The most appropriate measures should be investigated whilst ensuring the road blends into the area making it feel like a place rather than dominating the space. A new bridge across the river linking Ravensbury Grove Road to Wandle Road would improve pedestrian links to nearby tram stops and bus stops.

The volume of traffic is something that will not be controlled or even subdued by any traffic control measures. Speed attenuation measures would help at the zebra crossing location near Deer Park Gardens due to the long straight of road coupled with limited pedestrian visibility on the approaches. At the Surrey Arms however, the corner itself helps to control excess speed to some respect. The open nature of the curve allows better visibility for both road users and pedestrians. The small pedestrian crossing island could be improved. If it is assumed that the regen will go ahead and that monies will be available for improving the streetscape as a whole, then we presume this will be implemented appropriately.

As stated previously, we feel that the case for another bridge is being overstated relative to the potential negative effects of anti-social behaviour and the effects of crime. It is important to design out crime and antisocial behaviour. These proposals suggest it will be designed into Ravensbury.

10.0 Policy EP R4

a) The predominant land use for this estate is to be retained as residential with the re-provision of the existing community room.

We agree that the only land use should be residential, with a community meeting hall for the residents usage only.

Further guidance

3.271 The applicant may propose other land uses, though these must be appropriate to the site and comply with local planning policies. There may be scope for improving facilities for enjoying and interpreting the River Wandle.

This sentence is somewhat vague and delivers little valid information for us to properly qualify it.

Justification

3.272 The estate is essentially wholly residential, with the exception of a small community room. There are some local shops nearby to the east on Morden Road, the Surrey Arms Public House opposite and soon to open Wandle Industrial Museum. Morden town centre is a 15 minute walk away.

The estate is indeed wholly residential and should remain that way.

3.273 Ravensbury is located within an area with a low level of Public Transport Accessibility. Taking account of these factors, and application of the London Plan matrix a range of 106 - 288 (gross figure which excludes land occupied by housing to be retained or refurbished) new homes are anticipated on this site. The council's expectation is for development proposals to be at the higher end of this range.

We feel that the council's desire for as many new homes as possible relative to the design matrix is at odds with maintaining the character of Ravensbury. The tree-line is an important element of the character of Ravensbury, and the potential for flooding is extremely high (Zone 3, the highest in terms of flooding according to the Environment Agency), therefore these factors imply a need to both raise the ground floors of new properties and lower the rooflines also. Being in the midst of two parks, an attempt to ramp up densities along the lines of a true brownfield site is at odds with the landscape, townscape and setting of Ravensbury. We would encourage a figure at the lower end of the range given.

3.274 Development proposals should contribute to the provision of a greater choice and mix of housing types sizes and tenures, including affordable housing provision, in accordance with relevant Local Plan policies (e.g. Core Planning Strategy Policy CS8 and CS9 and Sites and Policies Plan Policies DM H1, H2 and H3. Proposals should seek to provide a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures to meet the needs of all sectors of the community. In accordance with policy DM E4 (Local Employment Opportunities) major developments proposals will be expected to provide opportunities for local residents and businesses to apply for employment and other opportunities during the construction of developments and in the resultant end-use.

On the surface, this sounds like a good statement but the residents experience has not been a good one in the regen consultation process. Therefore there is great concern about the lack of true scope for retention of Ravensbury residents. For example, some resident families need more than one car space but have been told that they can't have one. We find this kind of situation problematic in that there is a lack of scope for retaining valued members of the community. The concept of choice is far from that conceived within the council's offices.

It should be noted that a number of the Ravensbury community have been practically encouraged to leave since this regen was first mooted: older people, those privately renting from leaseholders who have been bought out by the housing association, and those who would be unable to continue living their lives properly due to the reduction in home facilities.

Residents in Rutter Gardens have been told that if they don't like the homes being offered (ie the new location within Ravensbury and the restricted parking allocation) then they would have to leave via a house swap (mutual exchange) with another family probably from outside the area - however this could result in them losing their secure lifetime tenancy status if the other family had a 5 year tenancy.

A family in Ravensbury Court (a mother with children who needs to move to a more suitable property due to her children's specific needs) has been told that there aren't any other homes for her to move into in Ravensbury or in Merton despite the fact that there are several empty homes scattered around Ravensbury. Members of the community have not been prioritised during this push for regeneration.

It would be important for local people to be offered work if the redevelopment goes ahead.

3.275 It is unlikely there will be any demand for other non-residential uses. The only exception could be some leisure uses associated with the Wandle Way walking and cycle route. However, this is a demand not yet established and facilities such as cycle hire, and interpretation centres may be more appropriately located in Morden Hall Park or the potential new museum at Ravensbury Mill.

We would like to point out that establishing cycle hire or similar usually requires car parking facilities which are practically non-existent in Ravensbury. Therefore, Morden Hall Park would be a far better location for such schemes.

11.0 Policy EP R5

a) Proposals should enhance access and links to existing public open spaces particularly the widening and improvement of access into Ravensbury Park from Morden Road.

No additional comment.

b) Proposals should retain and enhance existing public open spaces on Hengelo Gardens and Ravensbury Grove principally for flood mitigation measures. New landscaping should connect to and complements these existing spaces.

The open spaces on Hengelo Gardens and Ravensbury Court are very important for Ravensbury. The massing of the Ravensbury Court flats is reduced by the amount of set-back from the road and this also allows for the enjoyment of the green space for the residents of the flats. We would hope that any flood mitigation measures do not result in the actual loss of green space: swale areas should retain the grass, rose or flower beds if at all possible. Resident participation should be explored and validated with potential proposals.

Circle Housing has included a number of street benches in their proposals. We would like the opportunity to present these ideas to the residents who live near the proposed locations before these ideas are set in stone. Due to possible anti-social behaviour considerations, we think it highly likely that seating areas directly in front of private homes will not be to the residents liking.

c) Suitably designed plays space(s) for all age groups need to be provided in accordance with the Mayor of London's 'Play and Informal Recreation' supplementary planning guidance document (2012).

If any play spaces are proposed, we would prefer that the residents living beside the areas concerned are consulted before ideas are put into action. Residents must have proper opportunity to consider and reject proposals that are not to their liking.

d) All new houses and flats should have gardens or amenity space that meet or exceed current space standards.

In order to retain some members of our community, we believe some homes with two car parking spaces will be necessary. In discussions with the residents concerned, Circle Housing's regen team seem to have dismissed this completely, thereby effectively encouraging that resident to leave the area. We do not want this kind of approach and need proper contact with the architects outside the regen events in order to fully explore all avenues for retaining our community.

Further guidance

3.276 Any new public open space should link into a network of swales and the surrounding parkland landscape.

Utilising swale areas within the landscaping with hopefully create attractive areas, but we need to be shown the possibilities before we can form an opinion.

Justification

3.277 The estate is adjacent to a public park and not in an area deficient in access to public open space. Subject to meeting appropriate minimum standards concerning the provision of outdoor amenity space and play space, there is no requirement to provide additional public open space within the development. The estate is essentially surrounded by high quality public open space in the form of Ravensbury Park and Morden Hall Park. There are also pleasant linear open spaces with mature trees on Ravensbury Grove and Hengelo Gardens that should be retained.

Residents have stated this in the consultations also: there is no need for further provision of public outdoor amenity space due to the two large parks on either side of the estate.

Residents have requested that mature trees are most definitely retained in and around Ravensbury. It is important to explore the possibilities of retaining trees that lie on the border of the Ravensbury estate & Ravensbury Park margins due to the fact that a number of them could be removed if the Circle Housing proposals are given the green light. Initially, the proposals for the garages area could result in trees being removed. We would expect to see a proper tree survey and a report indicating the impact of removal if it is required by any planning proposal.

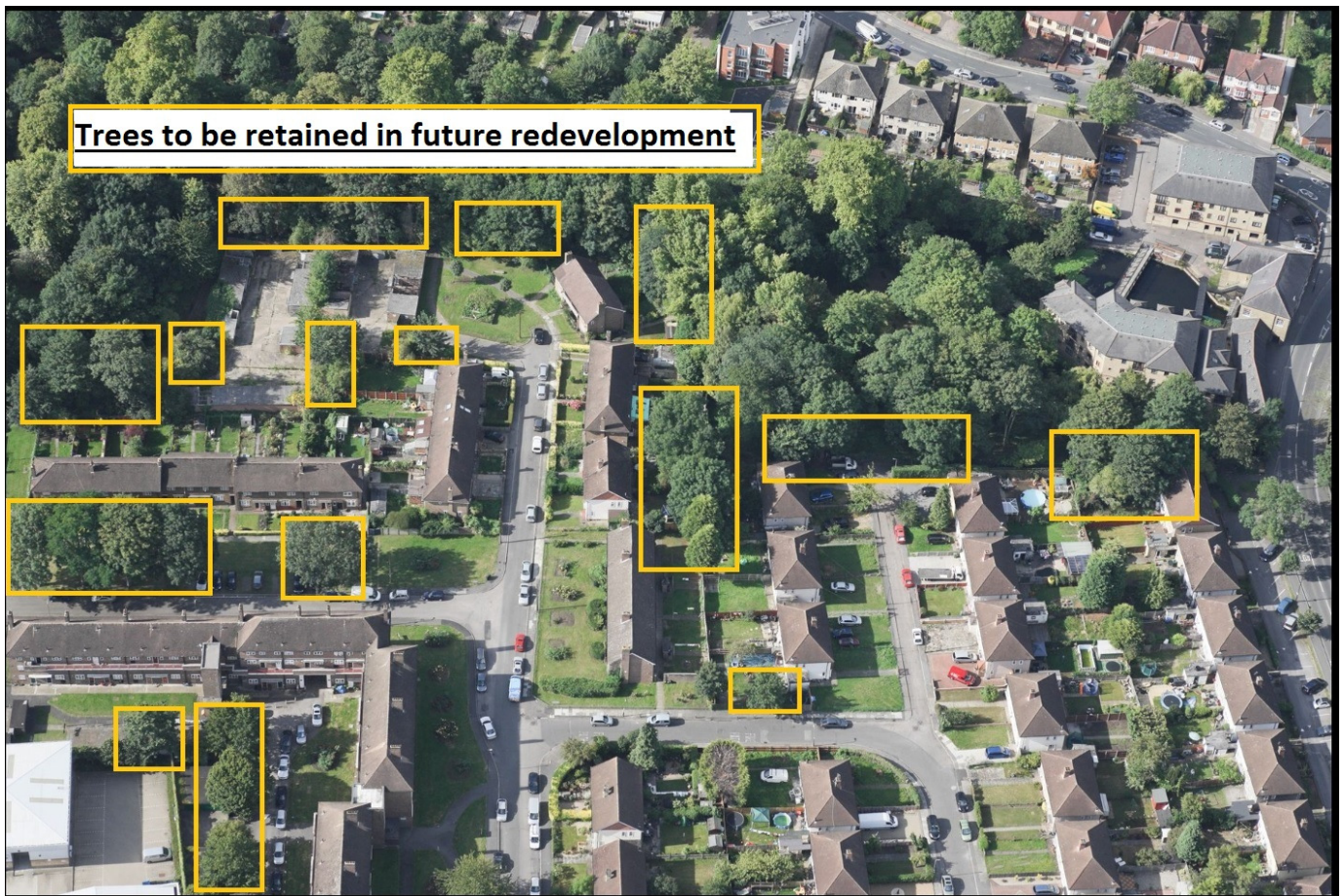


Image above: Trees within the Ravensbury Estate requiring proper survey & retention

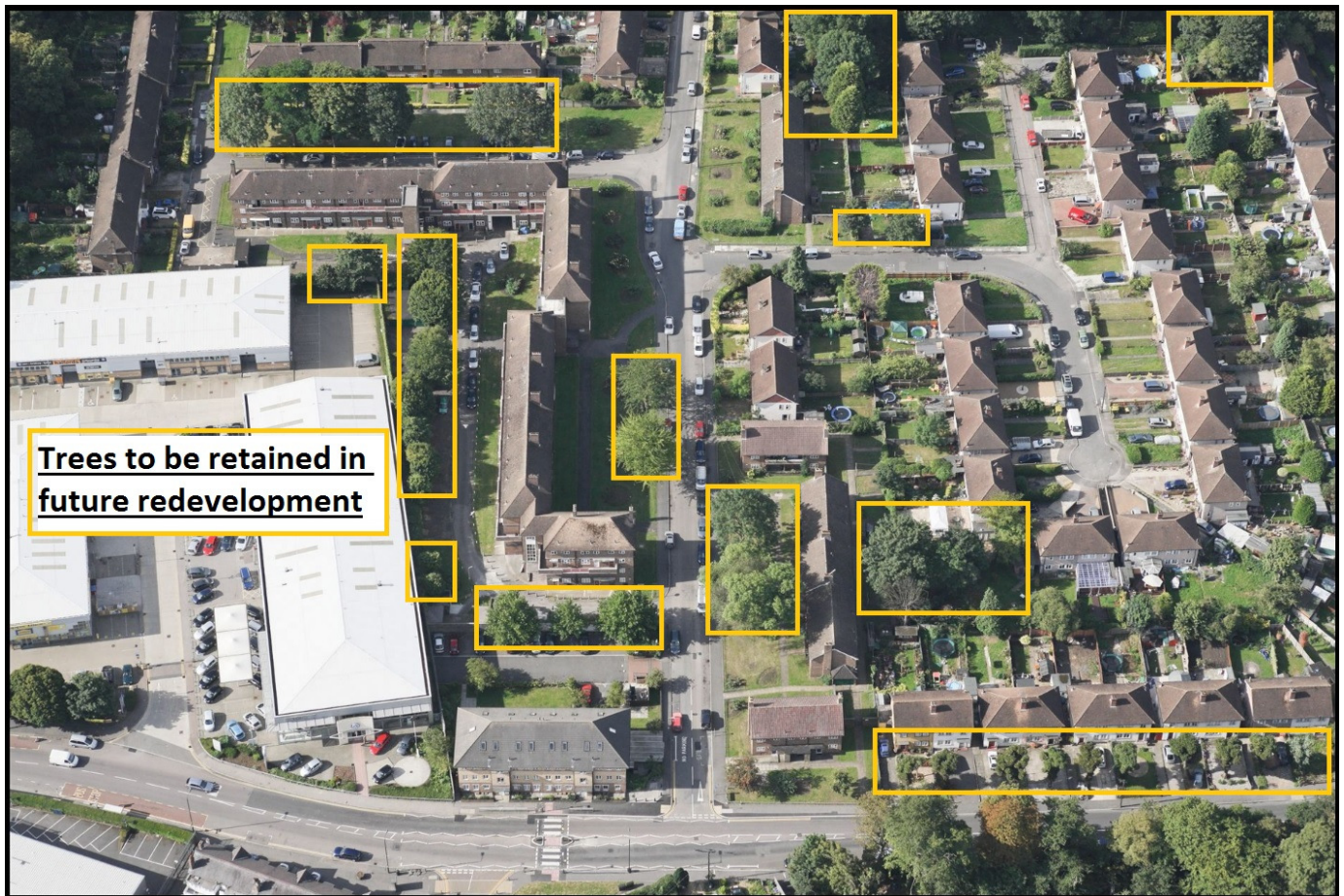


Image above: Trees under threat within the Ravensbury Estate requiring proper survey & retention

3.278 The surrounding open spaces are all important elements of the estate's high quality landscape character and setting. This needs to be carefully maintained and enhanced as part of any new development.

Much of the estate has quality open spaces that are very important elements of Ravensbury. We would encourage retention of these areas and would strongly object to any proposals to remove them.

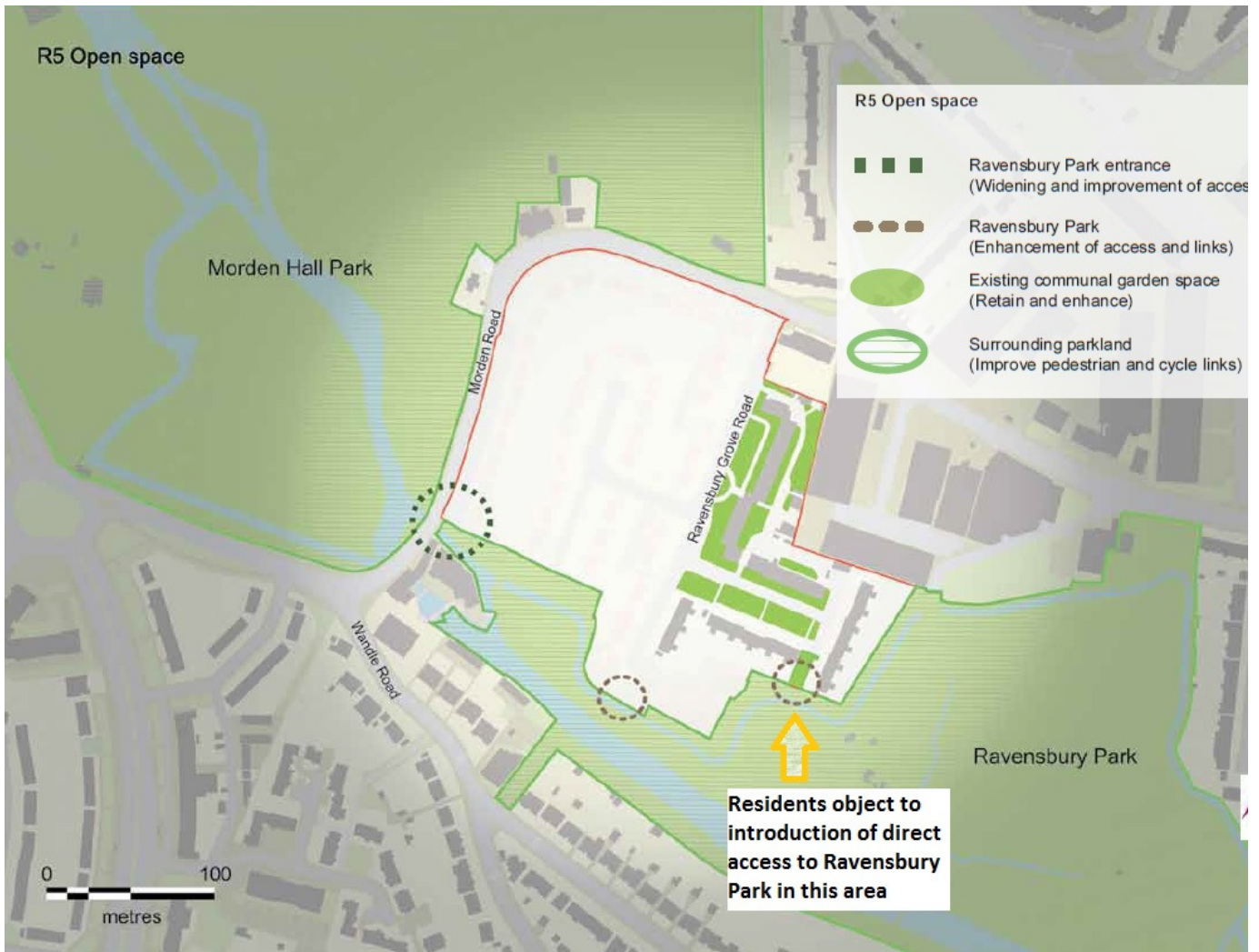
3.279 There are potential opportunities for off-site play space enhancements that might address the need for certain age groups while there will also be a need for some on-site play space. Any proposal should clearly demonstrate how the play space needs of all the age groups will be provided for with reference to the guidance in the Mayor of London's 'Play and Informal Recreation' supplementary planning guidance document (2012).

We would expect residents to have full review of play space implementation as well as the opportunity to reject proposals if need be. We have had insufficient access to the Circle Housing architects during their own consultation and therefore expect this situation to be remedied going forward.

3.280 The provision of gardens that meet space standards increases their functionality, potential for tree planting and the promotion of biodiversity. In keeping with the vision for the new neighbourhood as part of a suburban parkland setting front gardens or defensible space that allows for some planting, is also encouraged.

We would very much hope to see considerable replanting of trees within any rebuilt areas if the redevelopment goes ahead.

R5 Open Space diagram (from page 159) with annotations:



12.0 Policy EP R6

a) As the estate is in close proximity to the River Wandle, development proposals will need to include appropriate flood mitigation measures for the site in accordance with national, regional and local planning policies, to ensure the development is safe and does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

This statement is overstating the effect that swale areas will have on Ravensbury if the River Wandle floods to the extent that the Environment Agency has predicted.

Whilst a flood mitigation measure such as an area of swale may help reduce surface water runoff in times of flood, we think that it is important that proper advice is requested from the council's engineers, & possibly others if needed, in regards to the outcome of a significant flood as projected by the Environment Agency's own advice. Ravensbury is in zone 3a, only one designation below a floodplain. Therefore we would expect that to allow for the future provision of a flood of sufficient scale, the houses will need to be raised by 500mm or even more from ground level. As previously stated, swale areas are primarily designed to reduced the consequences of surface water runoff rather that flood water carried in from a river, whose catchment area extends upstream a considerable distance. We would anticipate a proper assessment of flood risk with defined values to form part of the evidence for redevelopment due to the increased building footprints in a new redevelopment potentially increasing the probability of flood for Ravensbury residents generally and possibly others along the River Wandle itself.

b) Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) must be part of any major development proposal and can include a range of measures such as rain gardens, green roofs, balancing ponds, filter strips, green verges and swales; these should be designed to reduce post development runoff and provide water quality, amenity benefits and enhance biodiversity.

As stated above, swales will, in most probability, not accommodate the potential for the River Wandle flooding Ravensbury: it would simply be impossible to make an area of swale large enough for this. Swale areas are primarily useful in reducing runoff from the development itself. We would prefer that choice of roof construction be primarily concerned with reducing visual impact.

c) The proposed development must aim to reduce post development runoff rates as close to greenfield rates as reasonably possible, as set out in London Plan policy 5.13 and the Mayor of London's sustainable design and construction supplementary planning guidance and the government National Standards for Sustainable Drainage which sets out the requirements for the design, construction operation and maintenance of SuDS. If this is not possible, post development rates must be no more than three times the greenfield rate. The development must be designed to take into consideration flow routes should flooding occur, i.e. designing for exceedence.

We would like the flow routes to be compared specifically with locations of older persons homes as there is potential for these people to be particularly compromised in times of flood.

d) Public realm proposals should be co-ordinated with the wider SuDS strategy for the site and the proposed linear swale network to ensure an appropriate distribution of species throughout the estate.

We are keen to be consulted on the introduction of any species so that we may be able to properly qualify any statements made and consult residents properly.

e) Proposals should seek to create mini corridors which enhance biodiversity of the estate and create a link between the estate and the surrounding parkland and river corridor habitats.

Protected corridors are particularly important within Ravensbury. Flora and fauna are both potentially impacted upon by redevelopment within our area. Areas bordering the Wandle are known to have specific habitats which must not be destroyed by "tidying up" the river bank. There are areas that are currently closed off to the public and these areas should not be opened up due to the existence of these species.

f) Under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991 and Thames Region Land Drainage Byelaws 1981, the Environment Agency requires flood defence consent for any works within 8m from the top of the bank of a main river and they therefore seek an 8m wide undeveloped buffer strip from the top of the river bank on main rivers and Merton seeks a similar 5m wide strip on either side of ordinary watercourses, where possible these distances should be exceeded. Development should not encroach on this buffer zone, which should be managed for the enhancement of biodiversity and to allow maintenance access to the watercourse, where required.

After reviewing the Circle Housing proposals, it seems that the specific location of the top of the river bank maybe in question. We say this because the buildings proposed appear to contravene the 8m wide undeveloped buffer strip. We would like to see further information on the agreed locations.

We would also like to know the definition of "undeveloped" in this instance. Would this include hardlandscaping or just soft landscaping? Would this strip be essentially unmanaged in order to provide habitat for wildlife or would an area of lawn also qualify?

g) New development must ensure the preservation, protection and enhancement of protected species and habits within the adjacent Ravensbury Park and should demonstrate that the proposals would result in net biodiversity gains.

Current bridge & path propositions which cross into the park already infer encroachment on essential habitat, therefore we would like to see these removed from the proposals. We feel that the river corridor, the garages area and the gladed area are all areas that contain locations that have become important for local wildlife. These areas need proper investigation in order to prevent loss of these habitats and associated species.

Further guidance

3.281 The landscape character of the estate is reinforced by the nearby tributary of the River Wandle. There is scope to reinstate a historic river channel which runs alongside Morden Road, which could connect with the watercourses within Morden Hall Park.

We would be somewhat concerned that reinstating the tributary may result in an increased likelihood of flooding within Ravensbury. We would like to see sufficient modelling to support claims that flooding will not be worsened or flood defences compromised.

3.282 Proposals should where possible enhance the outlook of the estate and improve the setting of the park whilst addressing biodiversity habitats.

We consider that building 4 storey blocks on a site adjacent to the park has the potential to ruin the setting of the park, potentially negatively impact on biodiversity due to its relative proximity to the park and nullify the views towards the park that are enjoyed by all residents of Ravensbury.

3.283 There is potential to enhance the backwater tributary channel of the River Wandle that runs along the southern boundary of the site, subject to Environment Agency (EA) flood defence consent as this is a designated main river. Improvements should seek to improve surveillance and interface between the park, buildings and the water.

We are concerned by this proposal due to the fact that this area affords a sheltered zone for wildlife that is well away from the more public areas of Ravensbury Park. There are significant areas that need to be essentially unmanaged for the benefit of biodiversity.

3.284 There is also potential to undertake in-river enhancements to the part of the main channel of the River Wandle to the south of the site, providing this does not increase flood risk and subject to EA flood defence consent.

We would appreciate sight of these reports from the EA particularly in regards to the effect on biodiversity.

Justification

3.285 Being adjacent to the River Wandle, its tributaries and two large historic parks makes issues of flooding and biodiversity particularly relevant to any redevelopment of the estate. These features define the character of the estate and carry various designations and responsibilities that proposals must embrace, address successfully, and take as an opportunity to positively shape and improve the surrounding area.

There is potential that improving an area for a redevelopment is quite the opposite to what is best for wildlife. We would therefore appreciate proper reports and valid consultation before any work is considered or implemented.

3.286 The interface area between any proposed development and Ravensbury Park, which is a designated as a SINC, LNR and Green Corridor, needs careful consideration, with particular reference to the habitats of the protected species within this area e.g. bats. This is a sensitive edge and a balance must be met between providing an active frontage onto the parkland whilst protecting the habitats of the park and surrounding vegetation.

We believe that there are other species such as voles and hedgehogs that exist in these areas. Therefore we would like to see proper protection and prevention of disturbance by construction surveyors and associated trades. We find it impossible to agree with disturbing habitats in the name of having a tidy river bank. This is completely at odds with a proper sense of priorities.

3.287 Of particular importance should be the enhancement of the river corridor and its environment, including dealing with flooding and surface water drainage issues. There are a number of mitigation solutions which should be considered including an open network of swales, permeable paving surfaces, areas of landscaping, front and rear gardens and above and belowground storage (i.e. maximise void spaces above and below ground as a form of attenuation). Swales must be designed to enhance biodiversity and visual amenity, as well as to attenuate run-off and improve water quality.

We believe that the powers that be need to exercise possible restraint in regards to the concept of enhancement of the river corridor. Unless proper local knowledge is invoked, the net diversity will drop like a stone.

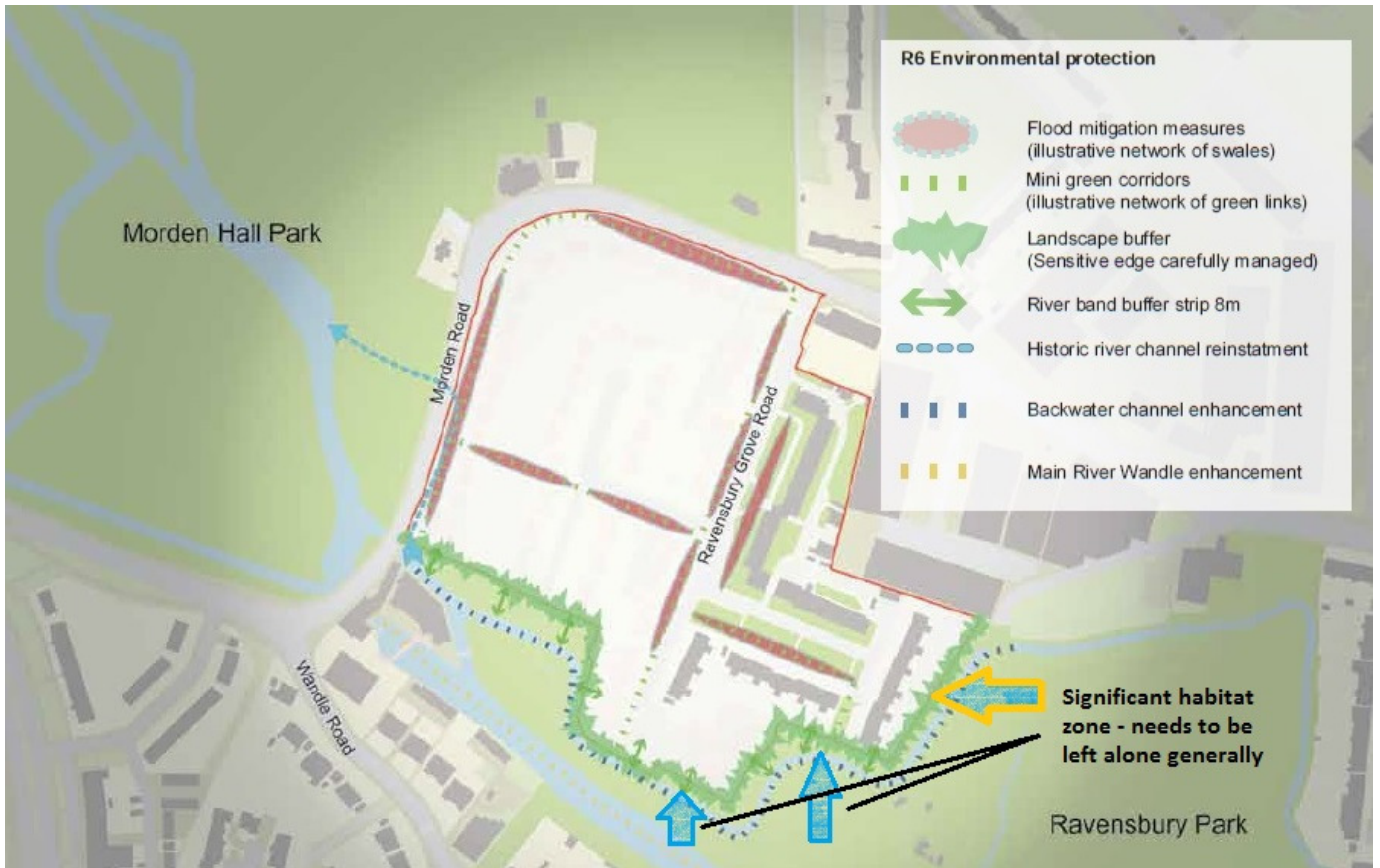


Image above: R6 annotated with observations

3.288 Reinstatement of a historic river channel running alongside Morden Road, would help to enhance the Wandle trail creating a stronger landscape link between Morden Hall Park and Ravensbury Park whilst improving the estates riverside setting, as well as contributing to flood mitigation measures.

We feel that there might be far better potential in renewing the road bridge next to the mill due to limited clearance beneath it. If this bridge were blocked, it could have the potential to cause flooding of the entire Ravensbury area. Hopefully the EA will be able to advise better in this regard.

3.289 Proposals are expected to be developed in consultation with relevant statutory and local interest groups such as the Environment Agency, the National Trust and the Wandle Trust.

3.290 Flood defence consent is required for any structure proposed within 8m of the river bank under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991 and Land Drainage Byelaws 1981.

We would like to know if redevelopment is being considered within the 8m strip from the top of the river bank.

13.0 Policy EP R7

a) Proposed landscaping should be a prominent feature within the public realm and create strong links to the surrounding parkland context. Landscaping treatments should emphasize green links and the river crossing.

Landscaping is an important feature within Ravensbury. Proposals do seem to indicate excessively linear streets, whereas some of the interest within Ravensbury comes from turning corners such that the townscape and also the park landscape is revealed. A strong link with the parkland isn't necessarily a linear street with a dead end that practically lands in the park. At the southern end of the current layout of Ravensbury Grove, the entire length of Ravensbury Park is presented to the passerby.



Images: View towards garages at southern end of Ravensbury Grove (LHS) & Existing buildings & glade (RHS)

b) Street tree planting and landscaping should be incorporated into streets whilst integrating with existing open space functionality, biodiversity enhancements and flood mitigation measures.

Street tree planting will be important if the redevelopment gets the go-ahead due to the need to visually break up the length of Ravensbury Grove and also to reduce the impact of new facades. As many as possible of the existing trees should be retained also.

c) An integral part of any development proposals for the site should be the significant widening and enhancement of the entrance to Ravensbury Park off Morden Road.

No additional comments.

d) Along Morden Road tree planting should be extended to wrap around the perimeter of the estate following the curvature of the road. Tree species should be specified to mitigate against pollution and noise.

This is important, however it would be prudent to discuss the species so that residents can partake in the selections and the reasoning also.

Further guidance

3.291 Incorporate landscaping measures to improve the green corridor link between Ravensbury Park and Morden Hall Park.

No additional comments.

Justification

3.292 The estate is defined and characterised by its landscape setting of the two parks and River Wandle. This is an essential element to its character that should not be lost. Indeed, there are various opportunities to enhance this character whilst still increasing density and building height to appropriate levels.

A substantial loss of mature landscape within Ravensbury would occur if redevelopment went ahead. Therefore it would be prudent to retain mature trees wherever possible. Substantial facades and entire plots would be free of any kind of greenery and therefore a very large amount of habitat related biodiversity would be lost immediately. Remedial measures need to be considered in order to allow wildlife such as hedgehogs, bumblebees, stag beetles, voles, nesting birds and the like to recover. Hedgehog doors should be installed in fence panels. Bird boxes for a variety of species should be installed. Insect hotels should be created and an avoidance of hardlandscaping might need to be implemented. Shrubbery should be chosen for its relative benefit to wildlife. Green walls should be considered, either for some of the homes or for the fencing panels themselves. Hedgerows should be created to maximise the beneficial effect on wildlife.

We feel that density and building heights are one of the key factors in a potential redevelopment that will significantly impact on Ravensbury's character. It is our considered opinion that 3 storeys would be the preferred maximum. The design process undertaken by Circle regen up until now has left a sour taste in the community's mouth - residents feel ignored and far from key stakeholders in the design process. There is a significant degree of no confidence in them as key stakeholders in such a defining process setting the future of Ravensbury such as this.

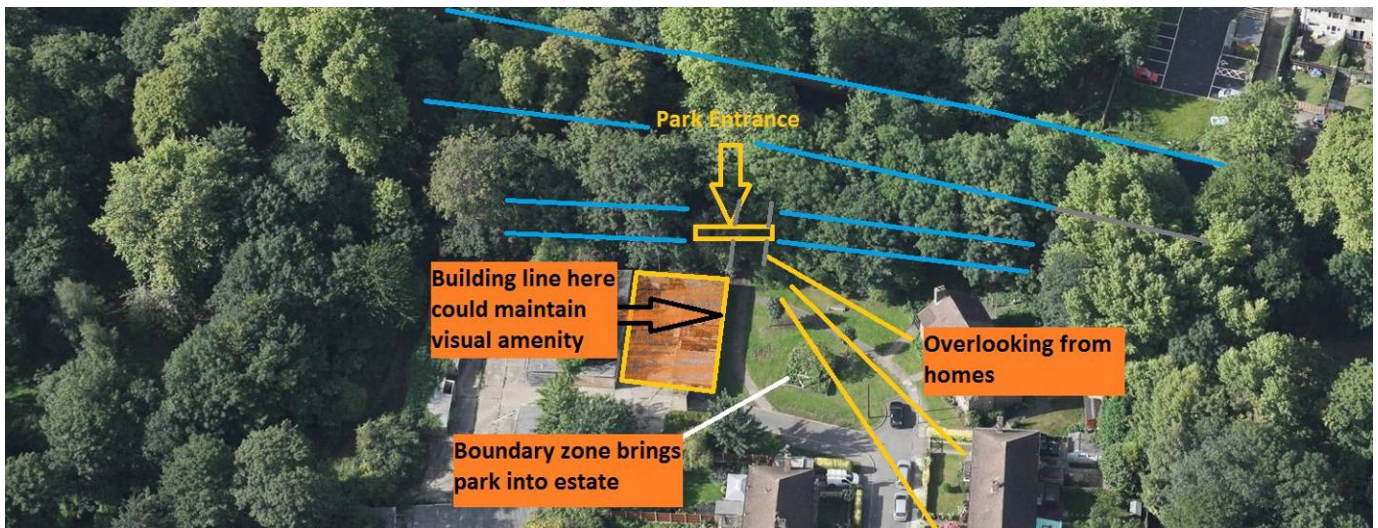
3.293 Large and well vegetated gardens also contribute to the estate's landscape character and redevelopment proposals need to be designed to maintain opportunities for such incidental greenery throughout. The estate's relative isolation is also an element of its character. This needs to be balanced with the need and opportunity to increase accessibility to and along the river and to the tram-stops to the north.

We feel that Merton Council is overstating the case for needing to "increase accessibility" to the river. Increasing accessibility along the river versus the implications on security are issues that residents should decide on the required balance, not Merton Council. There is a footpath to a bridge over the back channel of the River Wandle. Residents fail to see how creating other bridges to do the same thing provides any value to them - most can see the lack of value in security and anti-social behaviour issues. Another large bridge from Ravensbury Grove towards Wandle Road may also affect aspects of security as previously described, and once again it does seem that Merton is somewhat overstating the case for through passage of pedestrians to the tram stops.

The isolation from the hubbub of most of the everyday life is indeed part of the beauty of Ravensbury. Residents feel nested within the park landscape. The park practically forms part of Ravensbury. Bats can be seen flying within Ravensbury Grove, herons fly over, woodpeckers can be heard. Everything needs to be done in order to avoid potential losses to the community if redevelopment goes ahead.

3.294 Currently pedestrian gateways into Ravensbury Park are hidden from view and have limited overlooking which could be resolved by significant widening and enhancement of the entrance to the park off Morden Road.

We feel that the pedestrian gateways have quite considerable overlooking. The entrance on Morden Road is surveyed in its entirety from the flats in the Mill building. The entrance on Ravensbury Grove is reasonably well overlooked from the surrounding buildings. A balance needs to be struck between creating dead straight linear and potentially boring streetscapes versus the inclusion of glades, interesting boundary zones that are neither 100% park nor 100% estate, effectively bringing the park into the estate.



3.295 The skyline around the estate is enveloped by large mature trees and this is a key characteristic of the estate. Additional tree planting will bolster the landscape character of the area and create a landscape buffer between new development and traffic on Morden Road.

3.296 The Wandle Trail is interrupted by Morden Road and the narrowing of Ravensbury Park. There is scope to strengthen the green corridor link between Morden Hall Park and Ravensbury Park through the use of landscape features such as tree planting on Morden Road. This would also help to improve the continuity of the Wandle Trail and improve accessibility into the park. Tree planting could emphasize the entrance into Ravensbury Park.

It should be noted that the rear gardens of some of the homes have retained long-term habitat for a variety of species both bird and animal. We think that many areas should be retained as redevelopment goes ahead. Inclusion into the park might be one way to achieve this along the boundary with a redevelopment.



14.0 Policy EP R8 Building Heights

a) Buildings heights should not compete with established mature trees which envelope the estate and should not harm the visual amenities from within the adjacent parks.

3 storeys including the roof structure should be the higher limit to avoid competition with the tree-line. In our opinion, the employment of mansard roof & dormer window designs could help maintain the character of the area if any redevelopment happens. This is important along Ravensbury Grove as it serves to establish the character of Ravensbury as one enters from Morden Road. It is also important along the border with Ravensbury Park.

The tree-line and park views are a very important feature of Ravensbury. Established mature trees form a vital backdrop to all corners of the Ravensbury "Village". To live in this area is to live practically within a park and a country village. The large mature trees surrounding Ravensbury are vital in the definition of its character, as can be seen from the photographs below.

Little has been said about scope for retaining mature trees within Ravensbury. This is of particular importance to us as there are several areas where trees within the potential redevelopment zone are part & parcel of the character of Ravensbury: this includes trees to the rear of 52-54 Ravensbury Grove, those to the front and back of 2-18 Ravensbury Grove, trees in the vicinity of 241 Morden Road, trees in the vicinity of the Ravensbury Garages area (southern end of Ravensbury Grove), those to the front & rear of Hengelo Gardens, those in the courtyard of Ravensbury Court, those to the front of 171-197 Morden Road, plus others as indicated on the aerial surveys on the following pages.



View across Ravensbury Grove (LHS) & View behind Hengelo Gardens towards garages area (RHS)



View of Rutter Gardens (LHS) & View towards Hatfield Close (RHS)



Views around Ravensbury Court showing established mature trees forming a vital backdrop



Image: Northern End of Ravensbury Grove showing significant trees and two storey construction befitting landscape



Image: Southern end of Ravensbury Grove showing gladed area where park blends with estate.

Tree locations requiring retention in order to preserve character of Ravensbury

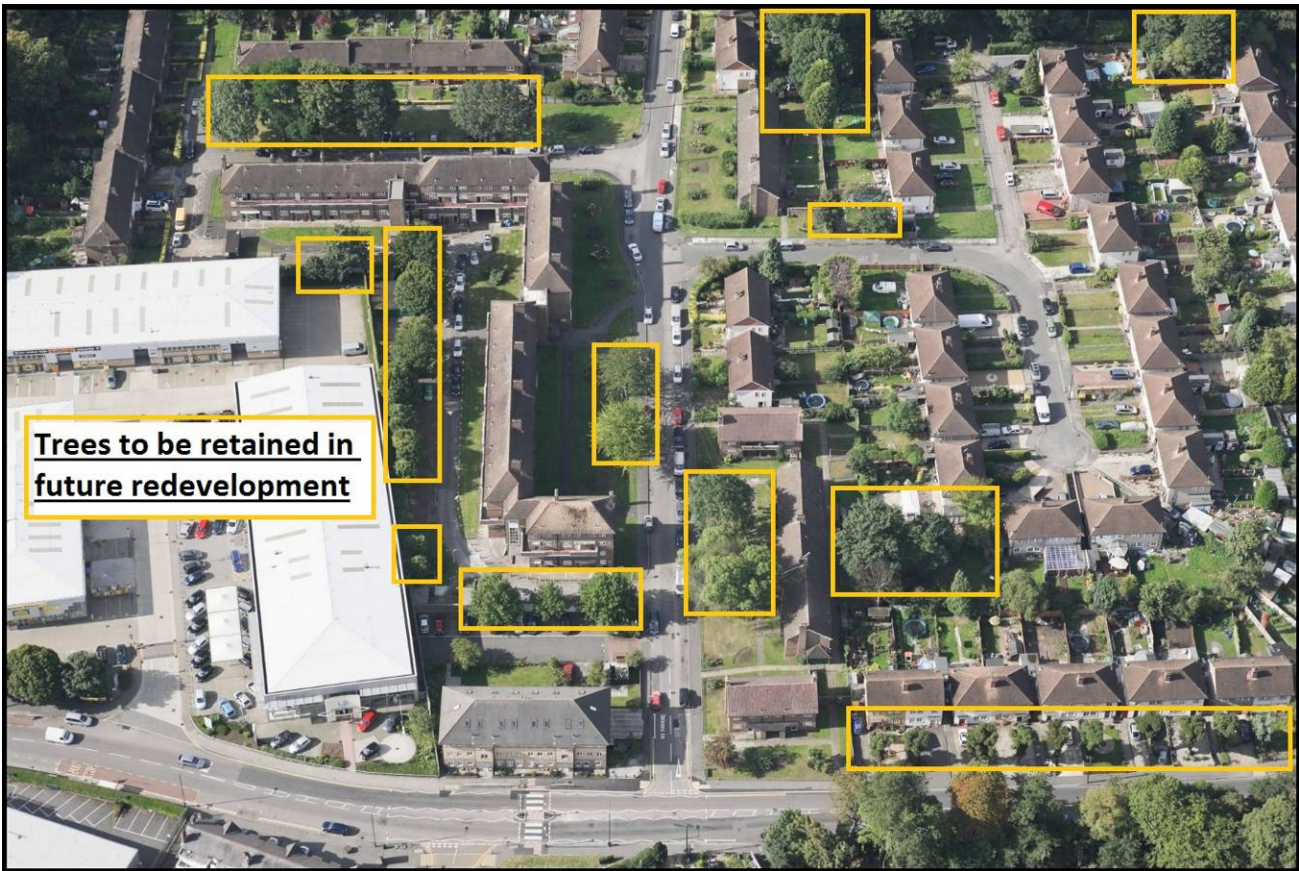


Image above: Trees to be retained in Northern end of Ravensbury

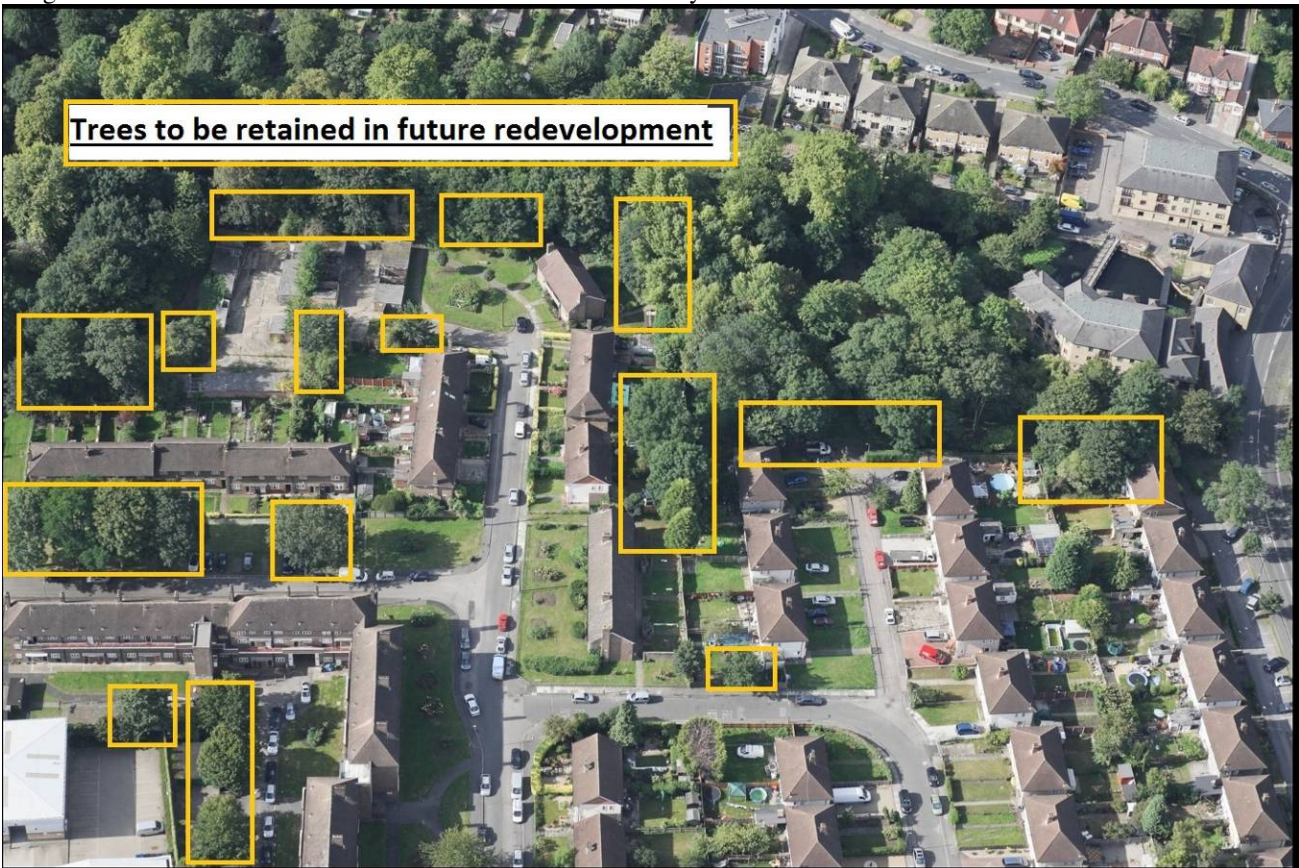


Image above: Trees to be retained in Southern end of Ravensbury

b) Within the development a building height range of 2-4 storeys should not adversely affect views to the surrounding established trees. Relatively open views from within the estate to the surrounding tree canopy are a defining characteristic of the estate and should generally be retained.

We think that 3 storey should be the maximum height along Ravensbury Grove as per our annotated map. To allow 4 storeys within the Ravensbury area is a mistake that would ruin the character of the area. Allowing the possibility of 4 storeys will give the green light to a developer at the expense of the character of Ravensbury. The Ravensbury area has worked as a cohesive design ever since its initial construction. The houses and flats work well together and do not vie for space or light. Ravensbury Court is considered as the Eastern edge of the estate and therefore should be considered as effectively the outer edge of any new development due to the need for cohesion in the design. This concept needs to be appreciated far more by both the council and the potential redevelopers. Buildings opposite Ravensbury Court should be restricted to 2 storeys with a possibility for 3 if the roof space is used for accommodation in the mansard design style. It should be remembered that scope for flooding may require new buildings to be raised by 0.5m to 1.0m above existing ground level according to the latest flood map (Fluvial Flood Risk and AIMS Flood Defences Merton - Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Figure 3.1 Inset 2 Rev 02)

The garages area is the highest part of Ravensbury, being 1m above Hengelo Gardens and even Ravensbury Grove & beyond. Buildings on this land will therefore be automatically taller than their existing neighbours even if they are built to the same height. Buildings directly against the park also will further limit views of the trees for residents of the Ravensbury area and tend to block out extensive existing views for residents of Numbers 1-16 Hengelo Gardens and Numbers 1-11 & 56-62 Ravensbury Grove.

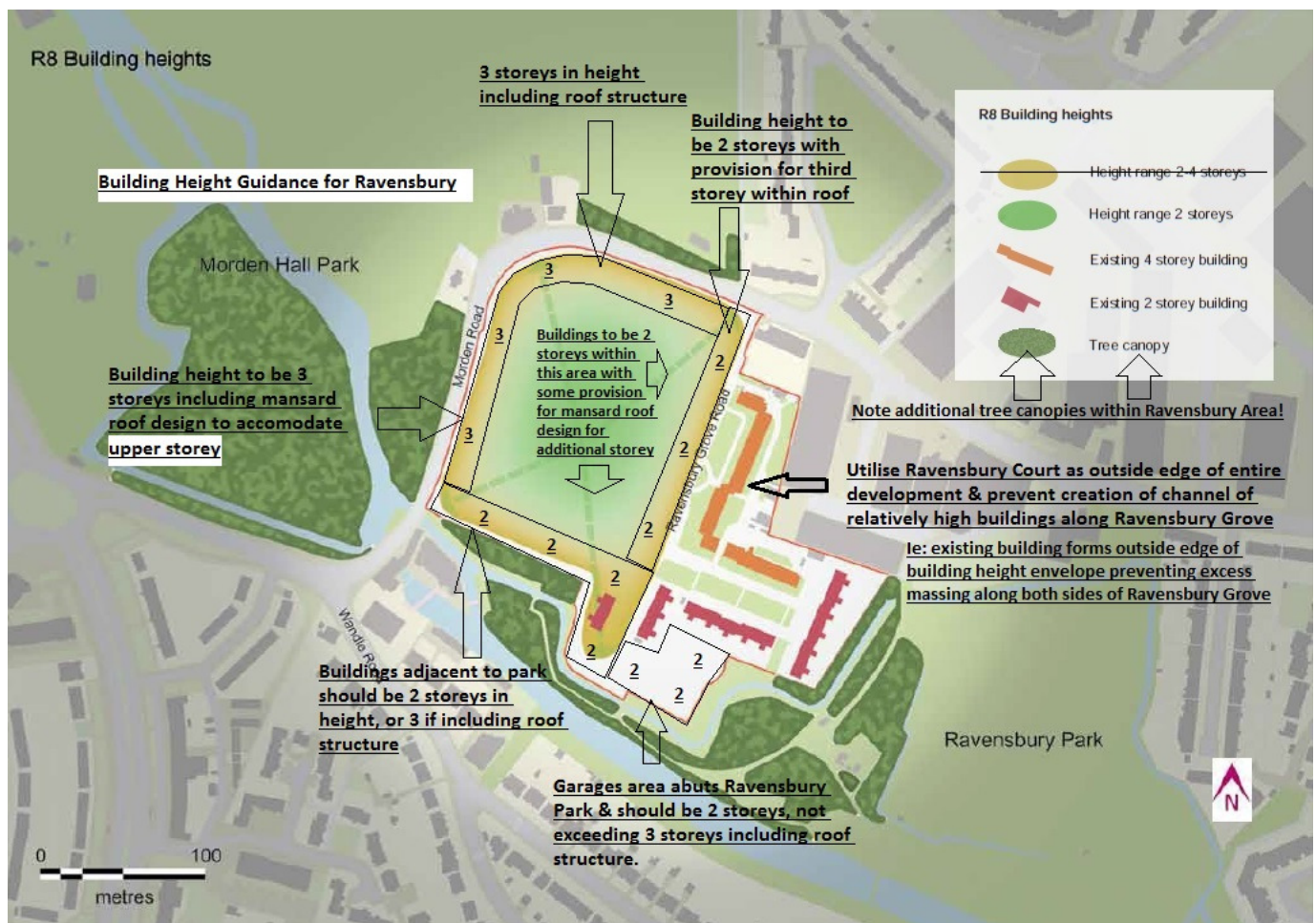




Image above: Effect on views from existing buildings towards garages area



Image above: Effect on views from Ravensbury Court across Ravensbury areas



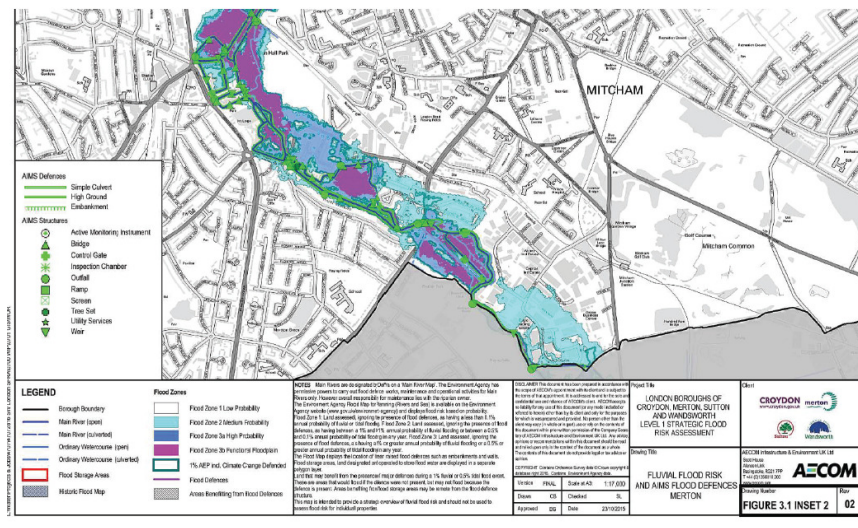
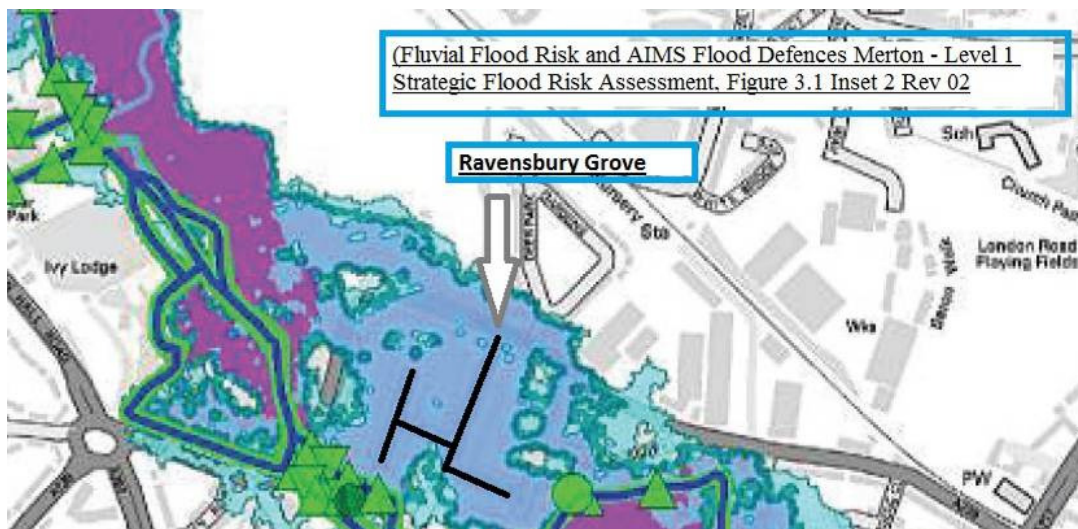
Image above: Views from Ravensbury Court looking West

Further guidance

3.297 New development comprising mainly of houses rather than flats is more likely to preserve the landscape character of the estate.

House designs with tiled roofs tilting towards the street are far more suitable for Ravensbury due to the townscape currently in existence. Retention of this would be beneficial for the overall look of Ravensbury. Employment of mansard roof designs and dormer windows could allow use of roof space as accommodation and therefore reduce need for a three storey height blocking existing views.

Height is a significant factor in maintaining character of Ravensbury due to the tree-line and possible flooding requirements needing between 500mm and 1000mm of additional elevation (Fluvial Flood Risk and AIMS Flood Defences Merton - Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Figure 3.1 Inset 2 Rev 02). If flats are included at all, they should employ the same techniques of including the upper storey in a tiled roof structure, thereby retaining the overall mood of the village-like atmosphere.



3.298 It is likely there is more scope to increase heights adjacent to Morden Road, and where landscaping features allow, for the creation of wider streets with width to height street proportions which enable wider and longer views.

It maybe preferential to have higher buildings along Morden Road than within the Ravensbury area, however wherever the location, excessive height will have a negative effect on the overall character of Ravensbury. We believe that 4 storeys is excessive in height for Ravensbury. This is due to the reduction of views both within Ravensbury, towards Ravensbury Park and beyond the boundaries of the area in question (remember this is referred to as the Ravensbury Village by residents) towards Morden Hall Park, which currently forms a significant backdrop on two sides of the area and along those site lines whose general direction is in the direction of the park. It is our consideration that a building of 3 storeys is the maximum permissible due to the need to retain the overall character of the neighbourhood, and that even in this instance, the upper most storey should be contained within the roof if at all possible. It should be noted that the existing housing in Hatfeild Close has a height that retains the tree-line beyond, but that an additional storey would remove this feature from the townscape with Ravensbury.



Image above: Extents of Ravensbury Estate/Village



Image above: View along Hatfeild Close with tree-line including Morden Hall Park beyond.

Justification

3.299 All existing buildings are two storey with the exception of the one larger four-storey block of flats. This low rise form is what allows views to the tree-line visible around the estate from numerous locations, which is one of the defining characteristics of the estate's setting. The low-rise buildings also define the estate as a suburban place, although it is considered there is more scope to sensitively increase heights to create more homes so long as views to the trees which envelope the site are not obstructed and the landscape character of the overall estate remains strong.

We think that a key element of Ravensbury lies in the unobstructed tree-line, rather than individual views from choice points within it. The fact that Ravensbury is obviously enveloped by the tree-line gives rise to its significantly green and leafy character. It is important to retain this as this quality of place is very unusual in such a mixed resident demographic; normally this sort of area is reserved for the likes of Wimbledon Village as opposed to our Ravensbury Village.



Images above: Southwest & Northwest corners of Ravensbury Village



Images above: Southeast & Northeast corners of Ravensbury Village

3.300 Redevelopment proposals must therefore give very careful consideration as to the site layout, landscaping, building heights and street widths to ensure this character is essentially retained. Any proposals to increase density must demonstrate how this will not result in undermining the dominant landscape character of the area.

We agree with this statement and would prefer that density increases were kept at the lower end of the range projected due to the existing proposals obviously having considerable impact on Ravensbury.

Page 167 - R8 Building Height Map.

We have annotated the map below accordingly:

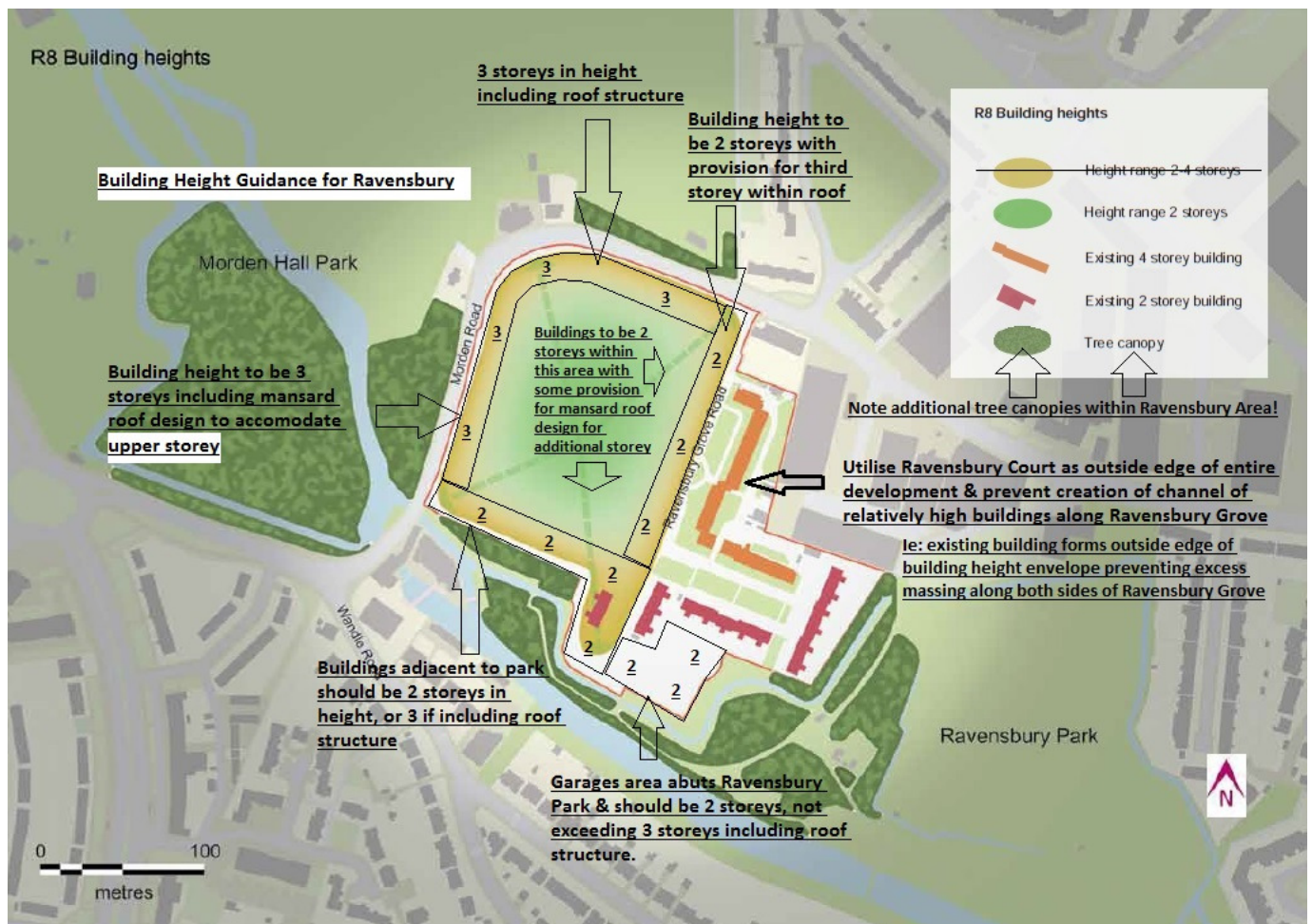


Image above: annotated R8 Building Heights map with guidance on heights proposed

15.0 3D Renders of our understanding of the proposals

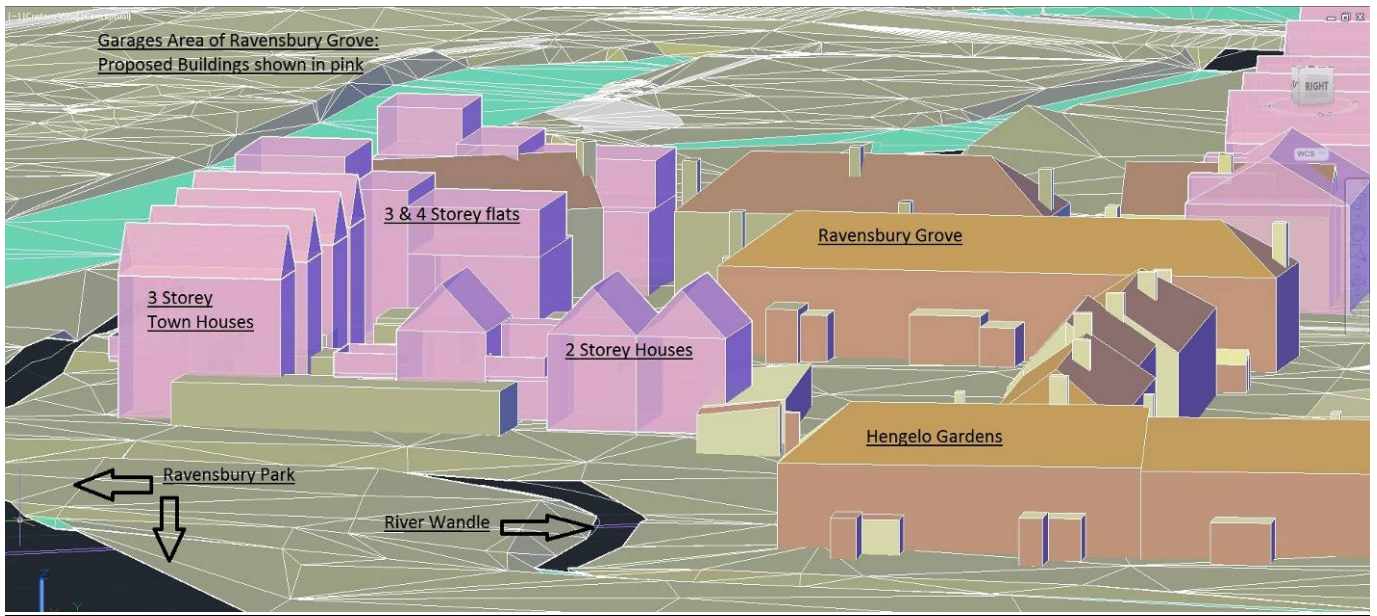




Image above: proposed buildings shown in pink with Orlit homes (etc) shown in white

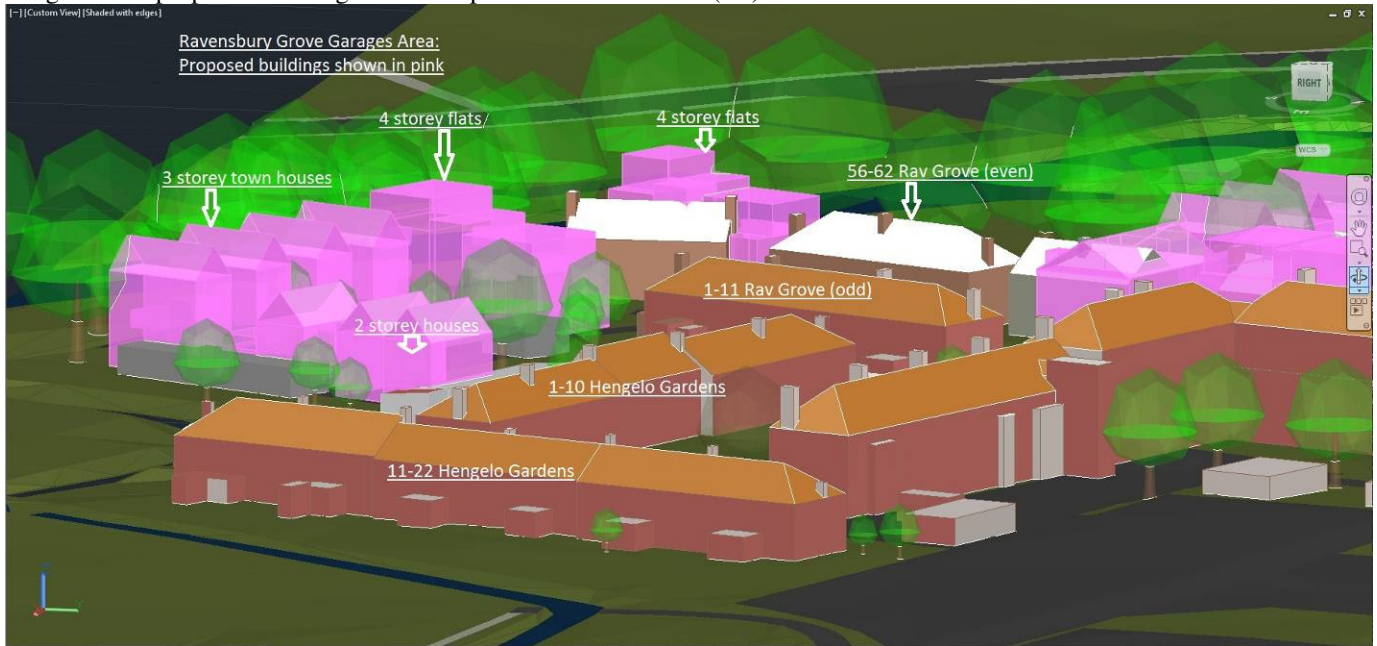


Image above: proposed buildings shown in pink with Ravensbury & Hengelo homes (etc) shown in orange



Image above: Garages area seen from Hengelo Gardens proposed buildings shown in pink

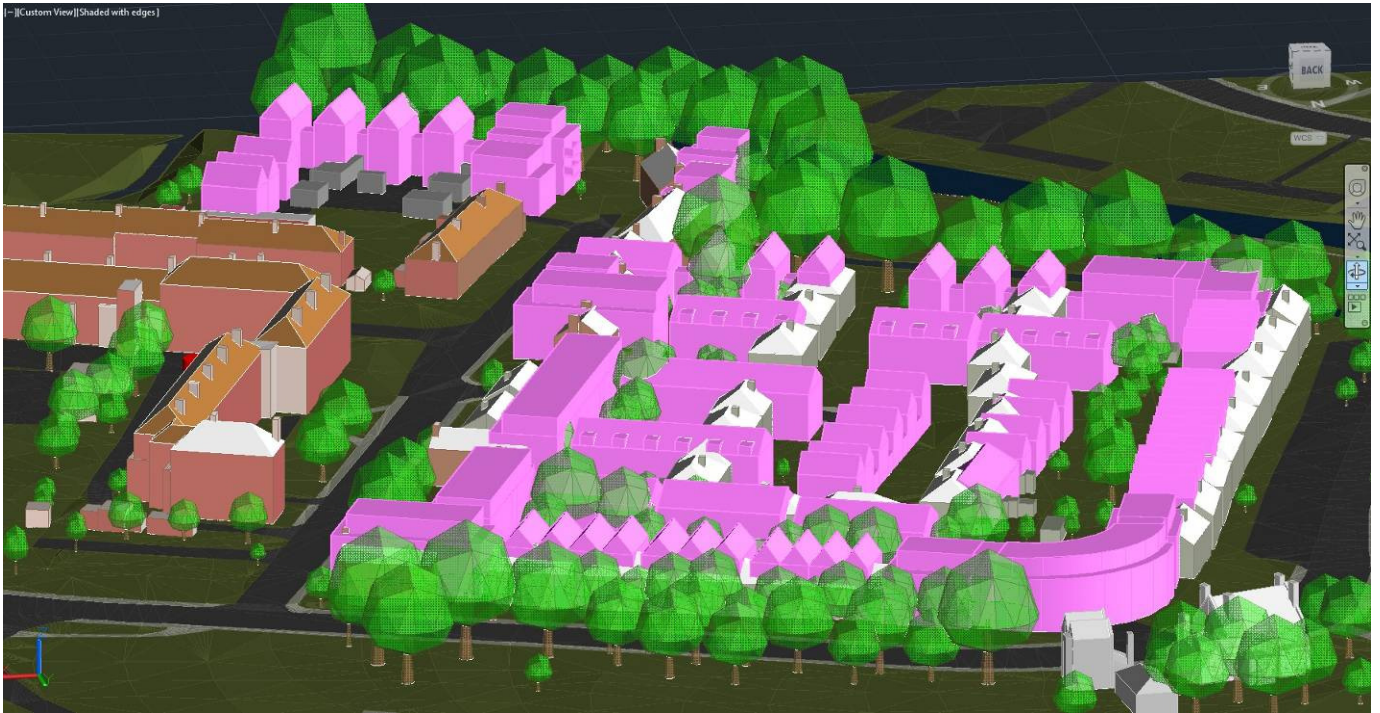
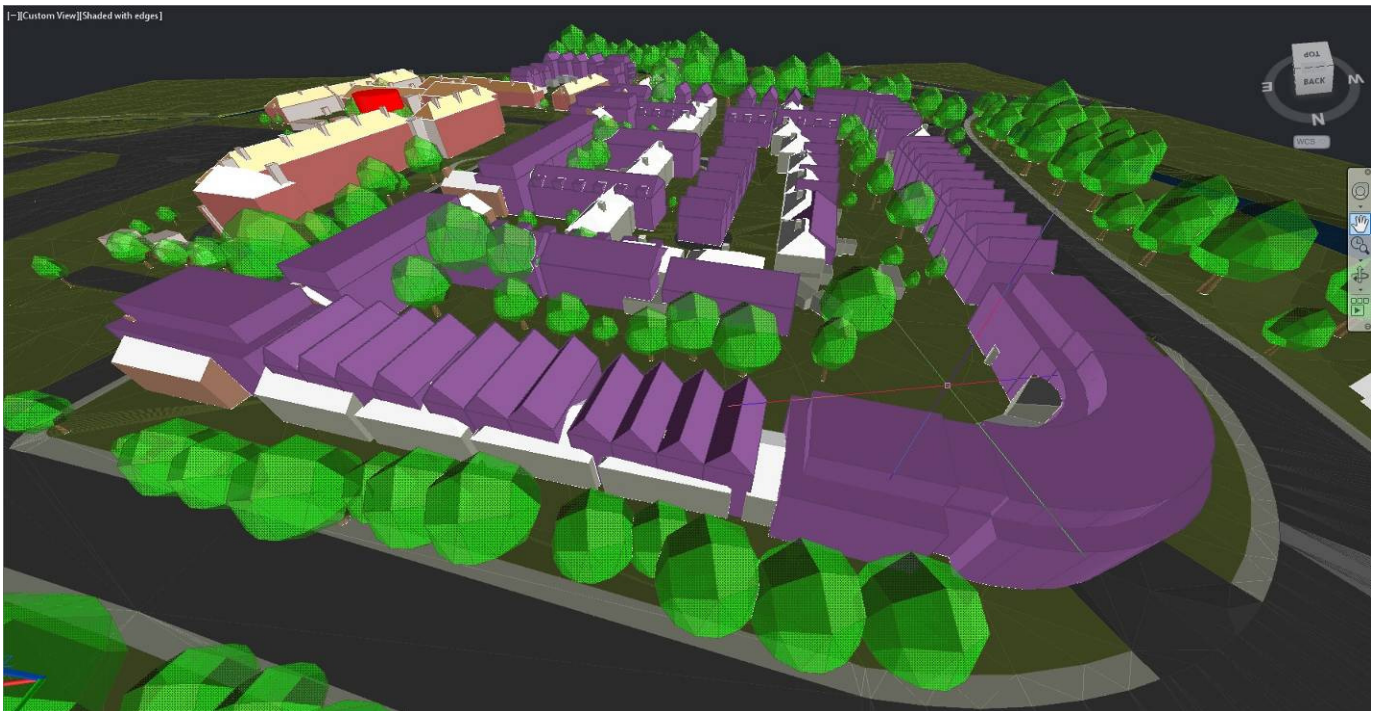
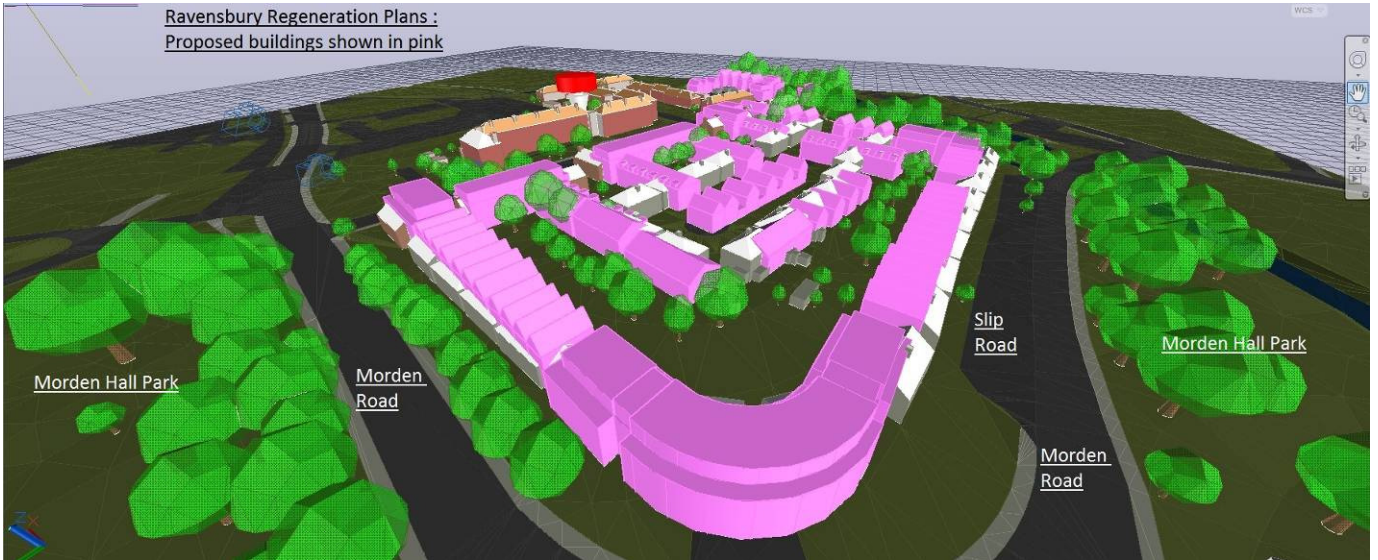


Image above: proposed buildings showing proposed redevelopment density



Image above: Existing buildings showing overall density





16.0 CHMP Reports on Ravensbury Orlit Housing**16.1 Asbestos Surveys**

It is noted that asbestos was only found in the soffit panels of the Orlit houses on Ravensbury. In 34 Ravensbury Grove, one of the recently refurbished properties, these soffit panels were replaced with plastic. However following discussions with CHMP staff, we are unable to ascertain whether the proper asbestos procedures were followed.

The results of the asbestos surveys by Pennington Choices Ltd (dated 15th & 19th September 2014) concur with residents own information regarding Merton Council checking all properties and finding no evidence of asbestos asides from the soffit boards.

16.2 Ravensbury Existing Stock Refurbishment Appraisal by HTA

It is noted that this report makes mention of the Energy Performance Certificates and the potential energy costs to residents. For clarity we think it would be important for Circle to present potential per annum costs of living in the new homes so that residents would have a better idea of total costs and be able to forecast appropriately.

16.3 Structural Assessment of Orlit Homes by Tully De'Ath

Structural Assessment Report of Orlit Houses Revision A 6th November 2014

We note the comments regarding the Chloride Content, namely:

"6.11 GBG tested fifty dust samples for chloride content. These samples were taken from the PRC columns and beams and the in-situ mortar joints. The chloride contents of all seven mortar samples were low at 0.15% or less. Generally the chloride content of the concrete samples were also low at 0.07% or less. There were six exceptions to this however which showed a chloride content ranging from 0.16% to 1.33%. These were on two samples extracted from the secondary beams within 193 Morden Road, three samples extracted from columns within 20 Hatfield Close and a single sample extracted from a primary beam in the roof space of 20 Hatfield Close."

We note the comments regarding the Cement Content, namely:

"6.12 From visual inspections of eight samples, the cement contents vary between 10.3% to 18.7%. GBG consider these are indicative of reasonable to good quality precast concrete. The variability of cement content is considered not uncommon for structures of this age."

We note the comments regarding High Alumina Cement, namely:

"6.13 High-alumina cement (HAC) is an alternative cement mix to Ordinary Portland cement (OPC). It became favourable within the industry as concrete made from it sets rapidly and has a high initial strength. However, under certain conditions it loses strength over time due to a chemical process. As such, it became classified as a deleterious material and was banned from use in 1975. The BRE report on Orlit Houses highlights that many of the precast reinforced concrete elements and in-situ Structural Assessment Report of Orlit Houses Revision A 6th November 2014 11264 Page 14 of 18 mortar stitches of the Orlit houses that they surveyed contain HAC."

6.14 Twenty four samples were tested by GBG across the four properties. None of these were found to contain HAC."

We note the comments regarding Petrographic Examinations:

The results of all the petrographic examinations showed that the concrete appears to be good quality with no obvious evidence of significant distress.

We note the concluding remarks of the Structural Engineers report, namely:

"8.6...There have been no structural engineering concerns identified however and the concrete frames, where investigated, are in a reasonable structural condition. The main concerns highlighted with the BRE research related to concrete beams on flat roofs. The roofs of the Orlit houses at Ravensbury Estate are pitched. It should be recognised however that this conclusion is based on only a limited amount of investigations within a small proportion of all the Orlit houses."

"8.7 If the conclusions reached from the assessment of the 4 Orlit houses were to be reflected in the other 68 properties, then the main issues to consider are linked with the effects of water ingress and the cladding panels.

*8.8 Water ingress can affect the condition of the roof timbers through beetle infestation or decay. As has been seen with the entrance canopies, water ingress can also cause deterioration of concrete elements, especially where reinforcement is allowed to corrode. **To extend the useful life of such buildings it is therefore important to have an effective maintenance regime in place to keep external finishes in good order and to limit potential for water ingress.***

8.9 It is therefore important to keep gutters and downpipes clear for debris so they can work effectively."

"8.10 The cladding panels need to be made good where the joints in the cladding panels have opened up. This will reduce the potential for water ingress. The spalled and cracked corner panels also need replacing and will require additional restraint to tie them back to the structure behind. This will take the form of remedial wall ties and these may also need to be introduced around window and door openings where there are currently a lack of ties. Such an approach will require both a visual and a radar survey of every elevation to be carried out.

8.11 The strategy for repairs to the cladding panels needs to be coordinated with non-structural matters to improve the insulation to the elevations. The cavities which are currently filled with insulation are potential encouraging water to become trapped in the building. Options here include removing the cladding panels so that the insulation can be removed or over-cladding the building with a new rainscreen.

8.12 Similarly the cracking to the window frames should also be made good.

8.13 Although not significant structurally the concrete entrance canopies and support where deteriorated should also be made good and/or removed and replaced with new canopies. The junction of the canopy with the elevations needs to prevent water draining back on to the elevation."

From these results, we conclude that the Orlit homes are essentially structurally sound and require responsive maintenance to keep them in that way.

16.4 Ravensbury Case for Regeneration by Savills

We note the purpose of the document, namely: *"...to set out the findings of the technical work that has been undertaken to date and to demonstrate the economic, social and environmental arguments for and against the "Case for Regeneration" of the Ravensbury Estate, whilst giving equal consideration to reasonable alternative options."*

We also note that:

"... it has been developed to form part of the evidence base for LBM's emerging Estates Plan Development Plan Document (DPD) which will set out the planning policy framework against which regeneration proposals for the Estate will be assessed as part of any future planning application. Therefore, this Case for Regeneration is intended to be an important consideration at the independent examination of the DPD to assist the Inspector in the assessment of whether the submitted DPD is prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements and whether the plan is sound, as per Section 20(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and whether it is, as per the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) (paragraph 182):

- “*positively prepared*”;
- “*justified*”;
- “*effective*”; and
- “*consistent with national policy*”.

We feel that the case for demolition with regards to the structure of the Orlit Homes has been vastly overstated relative to the evidence made available by the structural engineers. Savills appear to have missed the concluding remarks within the Structural Engineers report. We suggest that it is possible that the writer of the Savills report was unable to properly interpret the findings of the Structural Engineer.

We note the following paragraph:

"...CHMP are fully committed to continuing to consult closely with residents and other stakeholders."

We would like to point out that this close consultation, performed by the regen team and their professional advisers, has been very arrogant from the outset. Residents have been furious at how CHMP cherry-picked their comments to suit their objectives. To suggest that there are a number of residents who lack confidence in the integrity and conduct of the regen team at CHMP would be an understatement.

We note the paragraph:

"Continuing to take a reactive approach to repairs to these properties as issues arise would involve significantly higher costs to CHMP than considering a comprehensive regeneration of the Estate over a period of 50 years."

However the costs concerned have not been detailed or referenced. Therefore we are unable to qualify these expressions of intent. In fact there are very few facts available throughout this document and it is impossible to quantify or qualify any of the statements. Therefore we find this document lacking in proper evidence.

We do understand the notion of land however, which seems to feature highly in this report. The available land that the Orlit Houses occupy is considerable and potentially very valuable relative to its salubrious location. We understand that an increase in density would bring a great deal of revenue in. To many of our residents this seems to be the only reason why regeneration is being proposed, due to their own knowledge that their homes are structurally sound.

We note that in 6.39, the writer of this report presumes to second guess the Environment Agency's own advice on flood risk. We find this somewhat misguided. We believe the report also references an out of date flood risk plan as this has been recently revised.

We note that in 8.22, the writer suggests that a high level of support has been received for the scheme. However we believe that this support has been chosen somewhat selectively. It would be most appropriate to be able to scrutinise these results. Interpreting results such as these can be something of an art.

We note that in 8.28, it has been impossible to properly validate these assumptions, which is especially necessary considering the nature of Savills acting on behalf of the developer rather than as an independent advisor.

16.5 Ravensbury Urban Design Review

We note the following:

"This study sets out to evaluate Ravensbury against the established principles of good design and does not attempt to make aesthetic or value judgements on the architectural style of Ravensbury. Instead it concentrates on the physical, spatial and environmental aspects of the design and the quality of the neighbourhood that results."

We note the following:

"Urban structure summary

4. Ravensbury is very 'shallow' in terms of walkability to both the urban facilities on Morden Road and the leisure and play facilities afforded by the riverside and other green spaces. This perhaps explains why residents value this seclusion so highly: they have the benefit of a quiet and secluded neighbourhood combined with direct and convenient connections to local facilities, services and recreation spaces.

5. It is important not to make the estate over- permeable as this will undermine seclusion for residents and disperse movement and activity without any real gains in wider connectivity."

These comments are supported by the residents own comments. Numerous residents have described the seclusion as effectively being highly valuable to them. In addition, the residents have also made mention of effectively limiting proposals in increasing permeability. Therefore we support statements 4 & 5 in the Urban Structure Summary.

We note the following:

"...Building facades have been mapped according to the following classifications:

- Active frontage is defined as facades that having both doors and windows of inhabited rooms (ie not bathrooms, storerooms, lobbies or garages) at regular intervals along the street or route to provide surveillance as well as contact and movement between inside and out.*
- Passive frontage is defined as facades with only windows of inhabited rooms but no doorways, providing surveillance but no contact between public and private space.*
- Dead frontage is where the edge to the public space or route is a blank wall or wall that is effectively blank, for instance rows of garage doors or where windows are obscured."*

It should be noted from the maps provided for Ravensbury Court that there is practically zero dead frontage, but instead some passive frontage (ie providing "good surveillance"). We would state that this has proven to be very feasible over time and that this provides support for our earlier statements dismissing the proposal to re-orientate the ground floor flats.

We note the following:

"In summary, most building facades contribute positively to the surveillance, liveliness and activity of streets and communal spaces"

"Layout summary

1. The figure ground plans show that Ravensbury adopts a similar 'perimeter block' pattern of development to surrounding residential areas.

2. There is a strong and consistent correlation between building alignment and the line of the street. This can be seen at the external perimeter of the estate where the building line follows the curved edge to Morden Road as well as the internal perimeter where buildings follow the simple rectilinear street layout.

3. There are few ambiguous spaces within Ravensbury and buildings are used to make very clear distinctions between the communal spaces of the estate and the private spaces of the home.

4. Most building facades contribute positively to the surveillance, liveliness and activity of streets and communal spaces. Houses all face the streets in a consistent manner, providing continuous active frontage with doors and windows. However, the entrances to maisonettes and flats are all switched to the 'rear', reducing contact and activity between buildings and streets.

5. There is very little dead frontage to the main routes of the estate. The spaces with the least intervisibility and surveillance are the garage courts and the pedestrian paths. This issue could be remedied during the regeneration of the estate."

As residents, we agree that Ravensbury has very little wrong with it. We point out that in relation to item 4, the comment about rear facing flats, many residents enjoy the privacy that this design infers. They find it a positive feature rather than negative.

We note the following:

"Should the regeneration option be taken and the number of dwellings increased significantly then car parking might become a serious problem. This will need careful design and management to prevent the streetscape of the new neighbourhood from being dominated by parked cars and also to prevent this becoming a source of friction between new and existing residents."

This is indeed a problematic area. An increase in density will definitely cause a great deal of problems along these lines. However, a number of cars that park on the estate are actually workers from the VW garage. We even have had Ravensbury Grove used as a temporary showroom car park with one resident counting 15 cars from this company.

We note the following:

"Landscape

Areas of private gardens Ravensbury has a distinctive landscape and an open and green character. The whole estate is set within a significant area of high landscape value, with access to an extensive area of parkland and the green corridor of the River Wandle. Even its 'urban' northern and western boundaries with Morden Road face the woodland within Morden Hall Park. Internally, the estate maintains this green and open character. This is created by a combination of design features: wide building to building set backs; grassed communal spaces; mature trees; hedges on plot boundaries and other planting in large, private front gardens. The height of the largest building on the estate, the 4-storey block of Ravensbury Court, is balanced by building to building set backs of approximately 30 metres, the communal open spaces and the tree-lined streets. The line of trees on Hengelo Gardens is particularly impressive and mirrors the height and enclosure of Ravensbury Court on the other side of the street."

"All elements of the landscape are well maintained, with the exception of the frontage to Morden Road between the junction with Ravensbury Grove and The Surrey Arms. Here the houses are set well back from the main road behind a row of mature pollarded trees that form an attractive feature along this stretch of busy road. However, the frontages to these properties are noticeably less well cared for than the rest of the estate. The Morden Road frontage facing Morden Hall Park is set behind a slip road that insulates houses from the main road. These homes are, by contrast, very well maintained. There is no obvious physical reason for this difference between the two Morden Road frontages and may reflect other social or economic factors. The landscape setting, mature trees and other planting are the most significant features of the estate. Together they create a most attractive residential setting, offering quiet and secluded spaces within the estate as well as easy access to the network of green spaces that surround the estate. As part of the green corridor of the River Wandle the trees have ecological value as well as their visual significance and role in wellbeing. No matter which option is selected for the future of Ravensbury, it will be important to protect mature trees and increase tree planting wherever possible."

We find also important to point out that on page 44 of the Urban Design Review, the writer has identified the areas in front of the flats in Ravensbury Court as private gardens. This is quite the opposite to certain CHMP officers attempting to tell residents that these areas were ambiguous. Residents are only too aware that the courtyard is part of their home, as indeed are passersby.

We note the following positive statements about Ravensbury:

"The various open spaces within the estate are well-located in terms of intervisibility and surveillance, meaning that they are well overlooked from buildings and passers by even at distance. There is little or no evidence of graffiti, litter or antisocial behaviour within the estate and residents report a strong sense of community and communality. Physical evidence of this can be seen in the amount of personalisation of gardens and threshold spaces by doorways to the maisonettes and flats."

We also note the summary on page 47:

Quality of the external environment summary

The Ravensbury Estate has a distinctive identity, mainly by virtue of its secluded setting and landscape but also because of the formal arrangement and massing of building groups to define spaces within the estate. The development options are complex on this site, and will mainly be determined by ownership and building condition rather than urban design or landscape. However, there is clearly potential to increase density and building height through various permutations of retention and regeneration.

- 1. Ravensbury has three very different characters: The busy, urban edge to Morden Road; the green and 'rural' edge to the River Wandle; and the secluded communal and private spaces within the estate.*
- 2. High levels car ownership were apparent at the time of the survey but this is unsurprising in a suburban location with a PTAL rating of 2, 'poor'.*
- 3. Should the regeneration option be taken and the number of dwellings increased significantly then car parking might become a serious problem. This will need careful design and management to prevent the streetscape of the new neighbourhood from being dominated by parked cars and also to prevent this becoming a source of friction between new and existing residents.*
- 4. Generally, pedestrians and drivers use the same street spaces to move around and routes feel safe, legible and direct. There are very few pedestrian -only routes within the estate but all could be improved.*
- 5. Ravensbury Estate is set within a distinctive and significant area of high landscape value. Internally, the estate maintains this green and open character. This is created by a combination of design features: wide building to building set backs; grassed communal spaces; mature trees; hedges on plot boundaries and other planting in large, private front gardens.*
- 6. The landscape setting, mature trees and other planting are the most significant features of the estate. Together they create a most attractive residential setting, offering quiet and secluded spaces within the estate as well as easy access to the network of green spaces that surround the estate.*
- 7. The lack of formal play spaces within the estate would not appear to be a problem for residents. This is partly because of the number and size of private gardens but also because Ravensbury Park offers a very accessible, well-equipped play area. The parks and riverside paths also provide excellent opportunities for leisure and activity for all age groups.*
- 8. There is little or no evidence of graffiti, litter or antisocial behaviour within the estate and residents report a strong sense of community and communality.*

We note the main Urban Design Review summary:

The Ravensbury Estate has a distinctive identity, mainly by virtue of its seclusion and landscape setting but also because of the formal arrangement and massing of building groups that define spaces within the estate. The development options are complex on this site, and are likely to be determined by ownership, viability and building condition rather than urban design or landscape.

1. The Ravensbury Estate is located in a relatively isolated part of the Borough, as reflected in its PTAL classification of 'poor' (2).

2. The extensive parks, riverside open spaces and other barriers surrounding the estate make it an enclave and there is relatively little that can be done to integrate Ravensbury better into its wider area.

3. This relative isolation creates, on the one hand, a quiet and secluded residential neighbourhood but, on the other hand, restricts movement options for residents and is likely to encourage more trips to be taken by car.

4. There is some scope to improve access on foot and cycle through the process of regeneration.

However, it is important not to make the estate over-permeable as this will undermine seclusion for residents and disperse movement and activity without any real gains in wider connectivity.

5. Analysis of building facades reveals that the entire external and internal perimeters of the estate have active or passive frontages providing good levels of surveillance. Conversely, there is very little dead frontage with the exception of the edges to garage courts and the pedestrian paths that are not overlooked.

6. The density of the estate at 43 dwellings per hectare (dph) is similar to surrounding development of the same period. However, this is low by modern standards, even in a suburban location, and there is potential to increase density and building height through the various permutations of retention and regeneration.

7. Ravensbury Estate is set within an area of high landscape value. Internally, this green and open character is maintained by the presence of grassed communal areas, mature trees and other planting. Together they create a most attractive residential setting, offering quiet and secluded spaces within the estate as well as easy access to the network of green spaces that surround the estate.

8. It is important that mature trees and riparian landscape are protected and improved. This is most likely to be possible with masterplan options that combine retention and regeneration rather than complete redevelopment.

9. There is little or no evidence of graffiti, litter or antisocial behaviour within the estate and residents report a strong sense of community and communality.

10. High levels of car ownership were evident at the time of the survey.

11. Currently, a large proportion of the houses have on-plot parking with the rest being provided on street. However, car parking may become a serious problem should regeneration options significantly increase the number of dwellings on the site. This will need careful design and management.

12. The Building for Life 12 assessment for Ravensbury results in 8 'greens' out of the 12 questions.

This Urban Design Review has merely repeated what the residents have been saying from the start of the regeneration consultation: that Ravensbury is about as perfect as you're going to get in terms of environment for a broad demographic within Merton.

Point 4 supports the residents argument regarding limited permeability preserving the benefits of the Ravensbury area. Point 5 supports the good overall design of Ravensbury, that it is not actually in need of fixing in the first instance. Point 7 & 8 further illustrates just how valuable this area really is, in terms of a personal level and in terms of the immediate environment. Point 9 points to the fact that the community at large are significant in their sense of neighbourhood, and that Circle's lack of understanding and arrogance has damaged the community. The residents believe that this is exactly what they want to do - divide and conquer: push through a regen and get their return on investment. Point 12 identifies the very high quality of living that Ravensbury residents have in their current environment.

17.0 Conclusion:

In summary, we feel that in Ravensbury the case for regeneration on the basis of structural faults or environmental deficiencies has been overstated from the outset. A variety of angles have been thrust towards residents over the past few years of consultation and many of these assumptions in favour of regeneration (poor design, unhealthy environments etc) have now actually been negated by CHMP's own reports.

Structurally, the Orlit homes are essentially sound - on the proviso that normal preventative maintenance is carried out appropriately. This is true for any house or structure. We have found that a degree of neglect in regards to proper repairs and maintenance seems to be in effect around Ravensbury. We can only summarize that even if this is the case around Merton as a whole, the only winner in Ravensbury will be the push for demolition - the actual situation is effectively deleterious for residents. Allowing properties to become run down and not responding properly to maintenance only generates apathy and negativity on the part of the resident. Some will feel inclined to move out, others may stay nonetheless with a kind of Blitz spirit, and others will feel resigned to their fate and feel the need to either toe the housing association's line or quietly ally themselves with them. Even long term residents feel they should keep quiet in case expressing an opinion compromises their rent or allocation if the regen still goes ahead.

CHMP continuously refuse to internally refurbish many properties on Ravensbury, so this is proving frustrating for residents. New kitchens and bathrooms are the minimum that they should expect. Proper responsive maintenance should be the order of the day, with internal refurbishment such as replastering of a sitting room practically a matter of course. It seems that delivery of proper maintenance services is uneven, with some residents getting a reasonable service and others getting absolutely nothing at all. This kind of service merely pushes residents to give up and accept demolition, so on Ravensbury we can only believe that it is somehow intentional.

If regen is to go ahead, make residents true stakeholders: give them the opportunity to rebuild their homes and community, sitting in on meetings with architects and controlling the journey whilst being spoken to with respect and courtesy. If you offer them like for like at the start, make sure it's still on the table later on.

If a housing association truly wishes to renew the housing stock, then its officers would behave decently and demonstrated true people skills rather than the anti-community skills that seem more evident.

We believe that there is plenty of truly brownfield land (as opposed to Lord Adonis' description of council housing as brownfield) within and on the margins of Merton. These areas should be a priority for Merton's housing targets. Ravensbury is a prime example of a quality environment that should get a proper maintenance service. Ravensbury should be an icon, a blue print for the design of a residential area, not an area presumed deficient at the start, whose residents are dealt with in an unacceptably arrogant fashion by the housing association's regen team and their associated professionals.

Christopher Holt, Chair RRA.

Ravensbury Residents Association.