



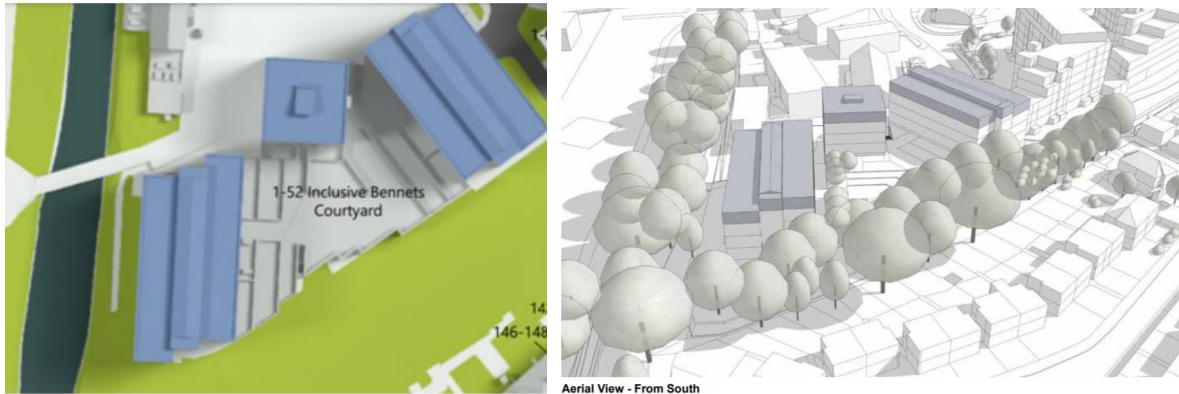
UPWARD EXTENSION OF BENNETS COURTYARD
Planning applications reference 22/P2151 & 22/P1940
A response by Wandle Valley Forum
August 2022

1. Wandle Valley Forum provides support and an independent voice for 140 community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle.
2. We have considered the two options in these planning applications for the upward extension of Bennett's Courtyard in the context of the Wandle Valley Forum Charter (<http://bit.ly/27Yal2m>). This is an important and sensitive site alongside the river and Merton Abbey Mills and lies within Wandle Valley Conservation Area and Wandle Valley Regional Park.
3. The existing building demonstrates the value of the Conservation Area which has required a much higher quality of building than elsewhere in the locality. This is noted in Merton Council's Character Appraisal which identifies that Bennets Courtyard is designed in a "*much more sympathetic and harmonious manner*" than neighbouring buildings outside the Conservation Area. It is important that this quality and distinctiveness is retained.
4. We made representations on similar earlier proposals (20/P3364) for the site and welcomed their eventual rejection following an assessment by Merton Council's Conservation Officer that it would be preferable if the proportions of the existing locally listed building in a Conservation Area were not "*marred*" by an additional floor. It is unfortunate that these views were not properly considered throughout the decision making process. We agree with the views expressed by Merton Council's Planning Applications Committee in refusing this application in March 2022 that "*putting up another unit detracts and affects the view of surrounding buildings in the conservation area and the design did not enhance but detracted*".
5. The revised plans are no more sympathetic to the Conservation Area and the locally listed building than those refused by Merton Council. Both options will cause a similar level of harm and neither will preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. The impact of the upward extension in both options on the elevation facing the Wandle is particularly harmful. It will disrupt the existing balance between the building and adjacent river which has been carefully considered in the original scheme.
6. It is notable that the Design and Access Statements for both options fail to give any consideration to the key impact of the proposals on views from the Wandle or across the Wandle from the Wandle Trail in their townscape assessments. Further information is required before determination as the onus is on the applicant to address the harm to designated heritage assets.

General enquiries: wandlevalleyforum@gmail.com
Web site: www.wandlevalleyforum.org.uk
Twitter: [@WandleForum](https://twitter.com/WandleForum)

Please respond to Chair, Wandle Valley Forum, c/o 43 Bramcote Avenue, Mitcham CR4 4LW

7. No more detailed information is provided on the impact of either option on shadowing of the Wandle. As the applicant recognises only “*minor amendments have been made to the scheme*” and the original proposals included evidence that the upward extension will increase shading of the river. Further information should be required before determination.



8. Any development on this site should also be used to provide public access and a higher quality of public realm between the building and the river.

9. We object to the plans as being in conflict with Merton Local Plan policies CS5, CS14, DM O2, DM D1, DM D2 and DM D3.