



**CYCLE QUIETWAY PROPOSAL ALONG WANDLE TRAIL**  
**A response by Wandle Valley Forum to London Borough of Merton's revised proposals**

**July 2016**

*Wandle Valley Forum was established in 2005 and is the primary consultative forum on Wandle Valley issues for the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust; the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton and Croydon; Greater London Authority and other statutory bodies*

1. Wandle Valley Forum has reviewed the revised proposals for a cycle quietway along a significant stretch of the Wandle Trail as part of a route between Clapham Common and Wimbledon. We have considered the proposals in the context of the Wandle Valley Forum Charter (<http://bit.ly/27Yal2m>) and existing development plan policies.
2. This is one of the most significant stretches of the Wandle Trail bringing a natural and green landscape into the heart of urban London. It includes a precious 700m stretch of the Wandle Trail running south of Trewint Street bridge which offers rare opportunity to escape and relax in a tranquil green corridor devoid of any signs, railings, posts or other urban paraphernalia and clutter. This stretch contains only two small wooden posts in an otherwise undisturbed landscape. The route also crosses Wandle Meadow which provides another distinct and evolving landscape and habitat which is sensitive to intrusion.
3. The Wandle Valley Forum Charter identifies a priority to “*provide public access for all along the river without urbanising the landscape or putting wildlife at risk*”. We support investment which will improve the experience of using the Wandle Trail for all users and both manage and reduce conflict between different users. This requires sensitivity to the different character of the Wandle along its length and a rounded approach which does not bias the enjoyment or use of the Wandle Trail to people using any particular mode of transport.
4. We have welcomed the removal of gates and barriers which are redundant due to other access controls and the plans to make all entrances compatible with the Equality Act. We have also welcomed the proposals to improve the underpass north of Wandle Meadow.
5. We are deeply disappointed, however, by the revised proposals which fail to recognise or address the concerns that have previously been expressed. We believe this stems in part from a failure to engage more widely at the formative stage of determining the principle of whether or not the Wandle Trail is suitable as a quietway and in the development of the proposed interventions. It also reflects the challenge of imposing a single design solution for the quietways network as a whole on a sensitive and distinct landscape such as

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the Wandle. The statement that “*works are planned to begin in January 2017*” suggests that the principle of this investment is still not being consulted on.

6. We note that the feedback on the 2015 proposals was “*mixed and concerns were raised regarding the effect that 6m high lighting columns would have on the local environment and particularly the effect it would have on the local bat population.*” We ask that the feedback on the 2015 proposals and these amended proposals are both made available publicly. We believe the changes proposed fall well short of what is required to address the concerns expressed in order to ensure the continued enjoyment of this stretch of the Wandle Trail by all users in a manner which avoids unnecessary urbanisation of its character or damage to wildlife habitats. No assessment has been provided on the increase in users by different modes and for different purposes which will result from the investment. Our assessment is that the overall effect of the interventions will be to the detriment of the large majority of users who are not cycling the Wandle Trail. This cannot be considered an appropriate outcome for the investment.

7. A key concern relates to the visual impact of the very large number of new columns and bollards during the day and then additionally at night as a result of them being illuminated when people and bikes pass by. This will, for example, introduce light pollution for the first time in the stretch south of Trewint Street bridge and increase light pollution elsewhere. Our understanding is that more than 60 4m lighting columns and more than 50 illuminated bollards will be introduced. This is an extraordinarily large number for such a short length of the route. Around 20 of the columns will be introduced into the precious stretch of the Wandle south of Trewint Street bridge that currently benefits from a complete absence of signs, poles and clutter. Over 20 bollards will be introduced into the very short stretch of the route across Wandle Meadow, completely changing its character.

8. We remain concerned by the lack of evidence that the proposals will not have a negative impact on protected species such as bats. We ask that the ecological surveys which have been undertaken are made public and a baseline established against which the impact of any works can be assessed. We also ask for a commitment to post-project evaluation for at least 5 years if any works are undertaken. Equally, it is important to recognise that this is not the primary concern about the plans, as implied in the assessment of feedback. The statement that “*no potential bat roosts will be lit*” is impossible to guarantee and does not in any case address the key impact on foraging routes. As a result we are not reassured that appropriate consideration has been given to the ecological impact of the scheme.

9. The proposed intervention across Wandle Meadow will require major engineering operations to create a virtual causeway. No information has been provided on the safety assessment of this section of the route which will have a drop on both sides. It will additionally create disposal issues for the excavated material. We have previously identified a need to be able to demonstrate how the proposals are consistent with the management plan for the Lower Wandle Local Nature Reserve.

10. We are also concerned by the impact of the proposals on the average speed of bikes using the Wandle Trail and the growth in commuter over recreational use of the Wandle Trail by cyclists. This will have a significant detrimental impact on other users. If the plans are to proceed then we ask that the proposed surface and the design of the key entrance gates contribute to reducing cycle speeds and continue to bar access by motorbikes. This can be achieved in part by using a surface that makes a noise to alert other users, as provided for in Poulter Park along a different stretch of the Wandle

## About Wandle Valley Forum

Wandle Valley Forum brings together people and organisations that care for the River Wandle and its diverse network of open spaces. We provide support and an independent voice for over 80 community groups & voluntary organisations and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle. Wandle Valley Forum monitors planning applications for developments which impact on the special qualities and character of the Wandle Valley. We make representations on developments which raise Valley-wide issues by reason of their strategic significance or potential to set a precedent.