



FEATHERS WHARF DEVELOPMENT
A response by Wandle Valley Forum to London Borough of Wandsworth
Application number 2015/4784

September 2015

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 proposals for the extension to existing facilities at Feathers Wharf, including plans to provide a public walkway along both the Wandle and Thames. We have considered the proposals in the context of the existing and emerging development plan policies for the area.
2. We welcome the plans for “*refurbishment of existing riverside walkway on the north side of existing waste transfer station, including encasing elevated section with mesh security fence and roof, and the construction of an extension to this existing walkway along the northern and western edges of Feathers Wharf, with associated hard surfacing, lighting and fencing, in order to link the existing Thames Path on the eastern side of the Waste Transfer Station to The Causeway*”. This is a major opportunity to realise the longstanding vision of public access along the side of both the Wandle and the Thames at the location where the Wandle Trail and Thames Path meet in the Wandle Valley Regional Park. Opening up the walkway around the site, including the high level route, would bring immense public benefit and address the highly significant gap in the Wandle Trail between Smugglers Way and the mouth of the river. We recognise that this development raises other issues, especially for local residents, but focus our comments on the questions of public access and open space.
3. Delivery of a walkway alongside the two rivers is a modest element of this major development, especially given that much of the necessary infrastructure is already in place. Notwithstanding our support for the provision of public access, we believe the current proposals fall short of legitimate expectations of the community and those expressed in the development plan process and by statutory agencies.
4. First, we are disappointed by the plans for a 3m wide walkway along the Wandle. This does not recognise the sensitivity of this important area for wildlife or protect the river bank in the manner required by the Environment Agency. It would also fail to meet appropriate TfL requirements for mixed use paths (cycling and pedestrian) in such an urban environment. We urge that a 6m wide walkway is installed. Any lighting should be sensitive to the wildlife value of the site and avoid light pollution.

General enquiries: wandlevalleyforum@gmail.com
Web site: <http://www.wandlevalleypark.co.uk/The-Trust/The-Trust-Forum>
Twitter: @WandleForum

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

5. Second, we are very disappointed by the absence of any proposals to provide new open space as part of the plans. The development plan is clear in its requirement for a new area of open space at the mouth of the Wandle and states that *“the area at the northern end of the site by the Wandle mouth should be specifically designed to provide a generous open space and should be a place with distinctive character and identity for the public to enjoy.”* (3.3.6 Feathers Wharf, Wandsworth SSAD February 2012 & repeated in 2014 proposed submission). The 2011 Inspector’s report states in relation to Feather’s Wharf that *“A more substantial area of open space is also required to be provided at the point where the routes meet and the site can thus contribute to public enjoyment as well as helping to meet overall development targets”*.

6. This strategic site needs space to breathe and provision of a public path is not sufficient. We urge the development of a pocket park at the meeting of the Thames and Wandle. This would be of strategic value to Wandsworth town centre and provide a high profile vantage point for the community and visitors to enjoy the westerly views of the Thames and over the 'wildlife tranquility zone' on the Wandle's east bank. It also realises the long held Wandsworth Town Centre Partnership ambition to grow the town centre organically towards the Thames and an open space at the confluence of Wandsworth's two rivers is an obvious asset to the town centre's attractiveness to both visitors and the local community. Public open space in this location has been a community aspiration for decades, it was confirmed in the Local Plan and it can now be realised through this development. It would be a huge disappointment if Wandsworth Council were not now to realise this strategic opportunity.

7. We welcome the proposal to dedicate the walkway as a public right of way and ask that this be extended to provide open space dedicated for public use in perpetuity. This could be secured through designation as a “town green” or through legal covenants such as those used by Fields in Trust.

8. In conclusion we support development of this proposal only if it is accompanied by a minimum 6m walkway and pocket park and that it secures public access and use of both in perpetuity.

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.