



DEVELOPMENT OF 118-120 GARRATT LANE
A response by Wandle Valley Forum to planning application 2024/4486
March 2025

1. Wandle Valley Forum provides support and an independent voice for 150 community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle.

2. We recognise the site as being part of a Locally Significant Industrial Area and support this continuing use. This continues the rich industrial heritage of the Wandle Valley as recognised in Wandsworth Local Plan's Area Strategy. We agree with the Area Strategy that:

"An important future challenge for the Wandle Valley is to create a better relationship between industrial areas and the green space network which it borders; working with landowners to allow greater safe access between or through industrial sites, improving permeability for pedestrians, cyclists and adjacent communities. To achieve this, there is a need to improve the connectivity along the River Wandle"

Wandsworth Local Plan (paragraph 12.6)

3. This is further supported in Local Plan Policy PM10 which states:

"4. New development along the Wandle Valley should respect the small scale of the river corridor, offer public access and provide positive frontage to the riverside. Proposals must ensure a high degree of permeability for pedestrians and cyclists, which promotes heritage and natural trails and encourages linkages along the watercourse.

5. Proposals to redevelop the industrial units should aim to provide a stronger sense of place for the park and reduce the dominance of their massing through careful attention to façades and roof lines, incorporation of trees, creation of active frontages and appropriate proportions along streets."

4. Consequently, our ambition for this site is that it both increases public access along the river and improves the hard urban edge to the river.

5. We believe the proposals should form part of an initiative across the wider Old Sergeant Industrial Area to increase public access along the river Wandle. This would provide a pedestrian/cycle link along the river from King George's Park to the south to connect with the footpath between King George's Park and Garratt Lane to the north.

6. As proposed these plans would frustrate this ambition. We do not agree with the summary assessment provided by the applicant that it is *"unsafe, impractical, and financially*

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unviable to deliver the River Walk". We have also been informed by the applicant that it "would be impractical to include such a walk due to health, safety, and security concerns, as well as there not currently [being an] existing a Right of Way because the land is privately owned". No substantive evidence is provided to demonstrate any of this. There is significant public access alongside the river in other locations without any unreasonable health, safety or security concerns and access can be provided through legal obligation as a permissive route if a designated right of way is not considered appropriate. We are confident in the affordability of the proposal and the applicant has provided no cost estimates or details of the wider viability of the plans.

7. On the basis of the limited information provided we are also concerned that other opportunities to "*create a better relationship*" with the Wandle has not been taken. As presented there will be a hard urban edge along the bulk of the riverbank which is also designated in Wandsworth's Local Plan as a Site of Importance to Nature Conservation. We would support a much softer edge as part of the wider ambitions in the Wandle Catchment Plan for naturalising the river. There is currently vegetation, including trees along the west bank of the Wandle. This is not all shown in the future plans. We ask that further information is provided on the impact on existing planting. A soft, well planted edge to the river should be one outcome from the plans.

8. We welcome the small area of species rich grass proposed in the northern part of the site but this will have a minimal impact and occupies only a small part of the site area. It is notable that the proposal does not meet biodiversity net gain requirements despite the opportunities to do more on site.

9. It is also unclear what measures will be taken to protect the river from polluted run off, including from the significant area of vehicle hardstanding immediately adjacent to the river bank. The area of hardstanding should also be permeable and reduce run off.