



**DEVELOPMENT ON IMPERIAL FIELDS METROPOLITAN OPEN LAND
Planning application 19/P4094**

**A response by Wandle Valley Forum
January 2020**

1. Wandle Valley Forum provides support and an independent voice for 130 community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle.
2. We have considered the proposals for a six storey residential block of flats at Imperial Fields in light of its location within the green space network along the river Wandle, its status as Metropolitan Open Land, development plan policies and the Wandle Valley Forum Charter (<http://bit.ly/27Yal2m>).
3. We are concerned by the precedent which would be set by permitting enabling development of this kind on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). MOL is afforded the strongest possible protection in Merton's Local Plan and the London Plan. Residential development is inappropriate development on MOL and so requires the applicant to demonstrate "*very special circumstances*" to permit it. We welcome the existing community provision at The Hub but do not consider the case made meets the test of "*very special circumstances*".
4. The applicant claims it is a not for profit organisation which will invest profits from the development in enhanced community and sporting facilities at The Hub. In reality the applicant is a private company which is neither not for profit nor charitable. There is no guarantee of the investment being put into local sporting and community facilities and the funds generated will only support a small part of what is needed to deliver the strategic plan for The Hub. The application does not include those elements of the strategic plan for The Hub which it is stated it will fund.
5. We are also concerned by the visual impact of the proposed scheme on Metropolitan Open Land in both Sutton and Merton and support the view expressed by Sutton Council that this will harm its essential openness. This network of green space is integral to the character and value of the Wandle Valley.
6. We note the applicant's consideration of future management of land between The Hub and the river and its intention to collaborate with the National Trust. We welcome the opportunities this provides but there is a lack of detail for what is proposed in an area with sensitive recreational and wildlife considerations. The land also lies outside the ownership of either the applicant or the National Trust.
7. We ask that planning permission is refused for this scheme. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the applicant on the future relationship of The Hub to the Wandle.

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