



MERTON LOCAL PLAN
A submission by Wandle Valley Forum to London Borough of Merton

January 2018

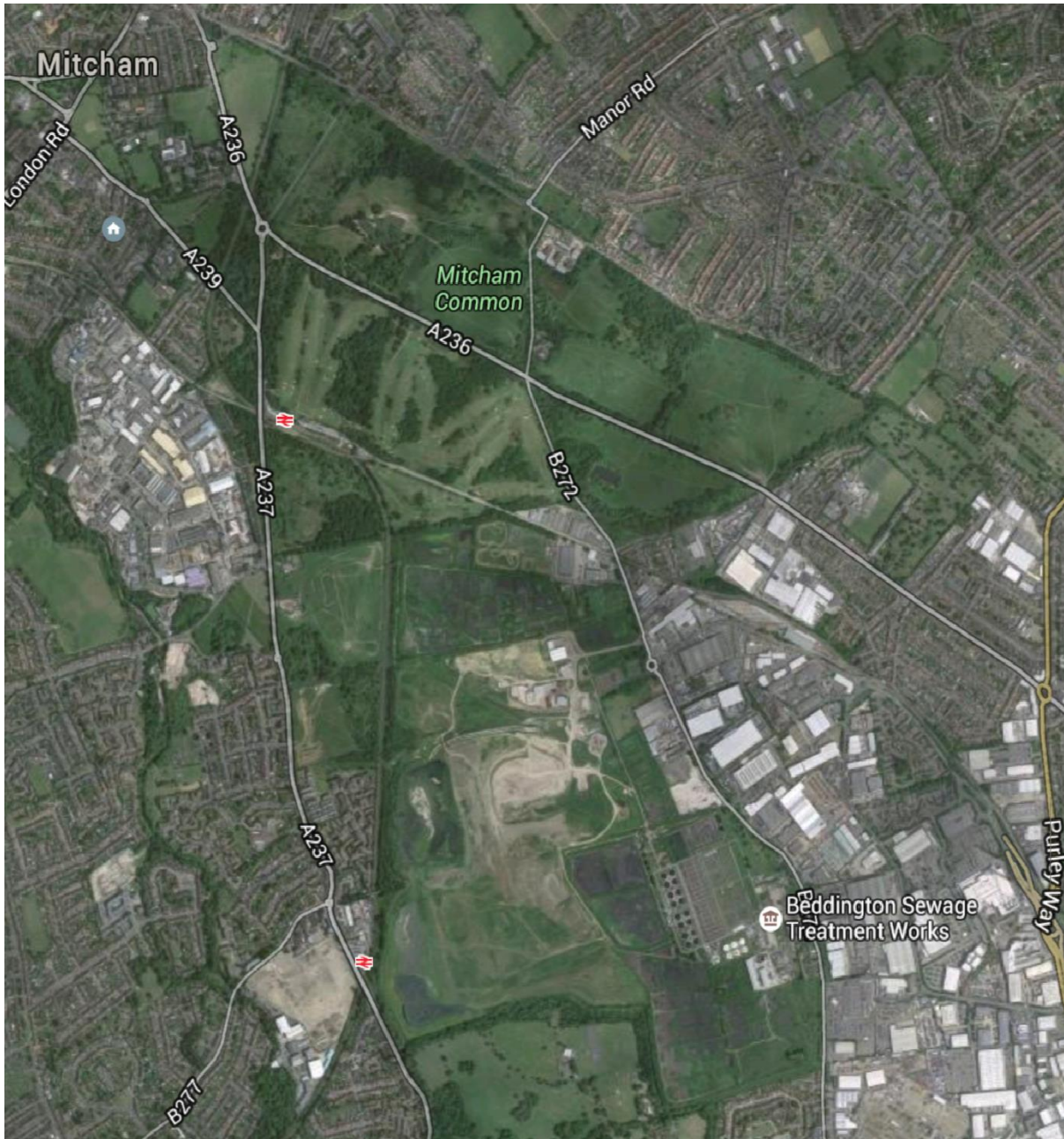
1. Wandle Valley Forum provides support and an independent voice for over 120 community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses and for everyone who shares a passion for the Wandle. Many of our supporters are based in Merton.
2. Merton includes an important part of the Wandle Valley Regional Park and a significant length of the River Wandle and its major tributary, the River Graveney. As well as providing an economic focus through the London Plan and being the site of major industrial estates, the Wandle Valley is also an essential environmental and heritage asset for the Borough. The network of Wandle-related open spaces and the Wandle Trail are especially important for the quality of life in Merton.
3. We have established our priorities for the Wandle Valley in the [Wandle Valley Forum Charter](#). This is grounded in the views of community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses that support us. It sets out a number of issues to be addressed through development plans in the Wandle Valley and we ask that Merton's Local Plan responds positively to these.
4. We believe the Wandle Valley should be a centrepiece of the new Merton Local Plan, with a suite of coherent policies for its protection, renewal and development. These include:

Wandle Valley Regional Park – As one of the main riparian authorities Merton Council is a longstanding supporter of the Wandle Valley Regional Park and the Local Plan should both recognise its role and support its delivery, including by:

- recognising the ambition for the Regional Park in the Local Plan's Vision and key map and as a Strategic Objective
- include an enabling policy for delivery of the Regional Park and completing the Wandle Trail
- identify achievement of the Wandle Valley Regional Park as a priority for strategic use of the community infrastructure levy and s106 obligations, as appropriate

Development along the River Wandle - there is a need to provide clear and consistent policies for development immediately adjacent to the river. This should require it to recognise the river's natural and historic significance, respect its character and promote appropriate access (including the provision of minimum 3m wide access along the river front). The river should feature in both borough wide and site specific policies and address the problems caused by the current inconsistent and ad hoc approach

Wandle Metropolitan Park – the Local Plan should feature a distinct policy framework for the creation of the Wandle Metropolitan Park as the largest area of open space within the Wandle Valley Regional Park. This should embrace the contiguous area of green space stretching from Beddington Park through to Mitcham Common and Three Kings Piece in Mitcham (see image). The long term development of this area will require close collaboration with both Sutton and Croydon Councils. The area presents an extraordinary economic and social as well as environmental opportunity which will boost the area's identity and provide a wide range of quality of life and public health benefits. This area of green space is more than three times the size of Hyde Park but is little known, much lacks public access and it has never been conceived and managed as a coherent whole. It has strategic significance at a London scale.



The Local Plan should:

- recognise the ambition for the Wandle Metropolitan Park as integral to the Wandle Valley Regional Park, including as a Strategic Objective
- include an enabling policy for delivery of the Wandle Metropolitan Park

- identify achievement of the Wandle Metropolitan Park as a priority for strategic use of the community infrastructure levy and s106 obligations, as appropriate
- establish public access to the whole area of the Wandle Metropolitan Park as a Plan objective
- recognise the Wandle Metropolitan Park in the Local Plan's key map, including where it will cross borough boundaries into Croydon and Merton.

Wandle Vistas – Wandle Valley Forum is supporting a significant original research project being undertaken as part of the Living Wandle Landscape Partnership to identify and protect key vistas throughout the Wandle Valley. This will be published in 2018. We ask that Merton's Local Plan identifies and protects the vistas it will identify at Pollards Hill, Mitcham Common, Wimbledon Park and St Marks Road car park, Mitcham.

Business benefits - the Local Plan should recognise the role of the Wandle Valley in supporting economic activity by providing local business with a strong identity that creates jobs and brings prosperity. Already one fifth of London's manufacturing employment is located within the Regional Park and there are extensive industrial estates throughout its length. New creative and technology industries are also finding a home in the Wandle Valley. Today's businesses and entrepreneurs can all benefit from being located in a higher quality environment and better connected to the Wandle Valley and its story. The existing Business Improvement Districts, such as in Willow Lane, have a vital role to play, especially in upgrading industrial estates with the support of enabling development plan policies. The Plan should support a virtuous circle of environmental investment and business benefit by ensuring new development contributes to strengthening the environmental quality, cultural vitality and economic health of the Valley. This in turn will attract more visitors, expand the range of customers and make Wandle Valley businesses attractive places to work. There are particular opportunities where large industrial estates have significant frontages along the river.

Wandle Trail – the Local Plan should recognise the importance of the Wandle Trail and the special qualities of the often narrow green spaces along the river to ensure they are not damaged by investment, such as the recent "Quietways" initiative. All new development along the river should include dedicated public access along the river front which is at least 3m wide.

Connectivity – the Local Plan should support greater connectivity with the Wandle Trail and measures to address significant breaks, such as the Earlsfield Gap. This should anticipate the opportunity, for example, of a Crossrail 2 site located along the river and the local benefits this should bring to the public realm and connections.

Catchment Management Plan – we welcome support for delivery of the Wandle's catchment management plan. A number of the structures along the river are of historic significance and we ask that the Plan ensures full consideration is given to this when considering planning applications for their alteration or removal

Community Infrastructure Levy – the Local Plan should confirm the intention to pool use of the community infrastructure levy across borough boundaries to secure the best outcomes for the Wandle. This would address, for example, the recent shortcomings in dealing with a number of discrete developments spanning the Wandsworth/Merton boundary at Earlsfield. We were informed by Sutton officers at its Local Plan inquiry that it could not collaborate with Merton on Wandle issues because they were not included in Merton's Regulation 123 list.

5. We look forward to being kept involved in the Plan's progress.