



**FIXING THE MISSING LINK**  
**Local Election responses**  
**April 2026**

1. Wandle Valley Forum asked all candidates standing in adjacent wards whether they support action by Merton and Wandsworth Councils to fix the "Missing Link" in the Wandle Trail under the railway bridge at Earlsfield. The wards involved are Wimbledon Park in Merton and Wandsworth Common, Southfields and Wandle in Wandsworth.

2. The responses are below:

Merton Labour

We understand how important this issue is to the Wandle Valley Forum and to everyone who enjoys using the beautiful Wandle Trail.

That is why we are pleased to share that the Labour administration at Merton Council has ensured that in their new Walking, Wheeling, and Cycling Strategy, the council has committed to progressing the Wandle Trail missing link project.

Within the strategy, the council has set out its ambition to work with key stakeholders to enable the route along the River Wandle to bypass Earlsfield Town Centre, and finally fix the missing link. These stakeholders include Transport for London, Wandsworth Council, and the National Trust.

Building on the feasibility study and support from Network Rail and the Environment Agency you mention in your email, the council has appointed a project manager within their transport team who will be focused on progressing our ambitions to fix the missing link.

As we work towards delivering the fix needed to the missing link in the Wandle Trail, we commit to continue engaging with you and the Wandle Valley Forum as key stakeholders in this vital local project.

Wandsworth Green Party

As a party, we support fixing the missing link in the Wandle Trail and, if elected, would push for this from within the Council.

The plan is costed and supported by both councils, and as you mention a priority for communities on both sides of the bridge. The Green Party promotes active travel and we have also signed London Cycling Network's Streets for Cycling campaign to make safer, connected cycle networks, which this is a part of. Walkers and cyclists should not be put at risk by being forced out into busy traffic.

Thank you for bringing the petition to our attention too, we will encourage our members to sign it.

#### Wandsworth Liberal Democrats

I am happy to confirm that I support your call to Fix the Missing Link of the Wandle trail...your campaign is something that we highlighted in one of our newsletters to Southfields residents and hopefully it generated more sign ups to your petition.

If elected, I will work with Wandsworth Council to provide a safe, accessible off-road route under the railway bridge at Earlsfield. We will also work with Lib Dems Councillors in neighbouring Merton on this issue.

#### Wandle Independent Group

This is a brilliant and very overdue initiative, which I fully support. I am disappointed this was not delivered when the Collective was granted planning consent/built, but hopefully this will get more impetus with the next administration.

#### Reform UK Merton

Reform Merton wholeheartedly supports the Earlsfield Extension of the Wandle Trail to finally close the missing link, which is long overdue.

Reform Merton is delighted to have had a committee member involved in the earlier period of the project several years ago when Ed Gretton (former councillor of Wimbledon Park) first brought in the former director of environment and regeneration at Merton Council (Chris Lee) to gain his department's full support and also advise and submit that bridging the missing link should be included as a priority in the **Merton Local Plan**, also then bringing in Wandsworth Council to work together with Merton as the two relevant local authorities and landowners. Out of the various possible routes in consideration at the time, Ed highlighted the need to come to a decision on the best route and adopt the path under the Network Rail bridge as the most direct, most obvious and the simplest solution. We are delighted to see the plans now progressing and that the key stakeholders Network Rail and the Environment Agency have finally also given a green light.

Reform Merton advises that the working group quickly set out a realistic but ambitious **project timetable** with the requisite funding, planning and build milestones, to ensure the best chances of project acceleration, completion and success. Clearly funding should be made available from three of the four key stakeholders mentioned above (the Councils and Network Rail), together with any available s106 and CIL funding already committed or becoming available on any Wandle developments in Merton and Wandsworth. The budget should be extremely manageable and the project ought to be easily deliverable, we suggest aiming to secure the funding, definitive designs and planning approvals during 2026-2027, with the build then to complete fully before year end 2028. Since the project spans two boroughs, GLA funding should also be requested / available/ applied for by Merton promptly this year; adhoc Government grants may also be available given the obvious benefits.

Reform Merton advises a clear working timetable to ensure the project does not 'stagnate'.

Reform also points out the financial commitments from the developers of residential blocks on Ravensbury Terrace in 2017-2018 to fund a **footbridge** across the Wandle at the same location, linking Wimbledon Park to the Banham building at Groton Road. Nothing was carried out on this by Merton Council despite the funding being available from the developers in a s106 Agreement, although it may be that any new footpath across the Wandle can be and is now being incorporated within the ongoing project design.

Please do contact us (Ed Gretton / John Pearson) to walk the trail at this point next time you / the Wandle Valley Forum are on site as we would be very interested in continuing our

support for bridging the missing link and understanding how the footbridge would be included in the plan. Obviously, a footbridge that links Merton (Wimbledon Park / Haslemere Ave/ Ravensbury Terrace) to Earlsfield station (Wandsworth / Groton Rd) would be a massive win for the two boroughs and communities and eliminate the current need for navigating the busy and narrow Penwith Rd when Merton residents access Earlsfield station.

**More information** on our position, including on some of the funding, is set out below:

Many Reform supporters, living in Merton and Wandsworth, are enthusiastic users of the Wandle trail. Others are discovering the trail's delights. Like when some joined a recent walk organised by the Wimbledon Society. Everyone appreciates the simple, varied, healthy pleasures and the usefulness of the trail alongside the river Wandle.

Of course, Earlsfield isn't the only gap in the Wandle trail. There are others in Wandsworth Town, Beddington Farmlands and Croydon. When the Earlsfield extension is built, 90% of the trail between Morden and Wandsworth will be traffic free, leaving only the Wandsworth Town "final mile" to be built.

There is progress. As mentioned above, Merton Council's local plan adopted the "full link", favoured by residents, that would run beside the river from Trewint Street to St George's Park. Developers have a legal obligation to facilitate the link. Technical design talks between Merton Council, Network Rail and Wandsworth Council are going well. Critically, Network Rail supports routing the trail directly under the railway bridge.

The key issue is financial. The "full link" route will cost about £2.4 million, not £1.1 million which was the cost of the feasibility and design stage and which was paid for by the developer of Garratt Mill.

To prevent the project from stalling in 2026, £50,000 needs to be allocated to pay for the Easement Agreement with Network Rail. No funding was set aside in Merton's 2026/27 budget for this critical task. Reform's elected councillors will push hard for £50,000 to be set aside as a priority from Merton's £1.8 million Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Strategy capital budget to pay for the Easement Agreement.

To make the project viable for contractors to tender, Merton Council will also have to allocate about £300,000 to "seed" the cost of the site's clearance, carry out site surveys and bring in materials.

Overall, a project budget for about £350,000 will need to be set aside in 2026/27 for the Earlsfield Wandle Trail Extension. Reform believes this should be a high priority which should be funded by the Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Strategy capital budget.

There are at least four sources of funds that could finance the remaining capital cost which is likely to be about £2 million. (TfL Healthy Streets & Cycleways, Community Infrastructure Levy, Merton Legacy Fund, GLA Green Finance Fund.) Reform will help the Wandle Valley Forum secure this capital funding.

A final, important point. The average life span financially of the Wandle Trail Extension is likely to be about 60 years. The total charge to Merton Council's annual accounts will probably not exceed £50,000 a year. Therefore the £350,000 Easement & Seed budget will be a very small expense that will be easy for Merton Council to manage over the long term.

Reform supports wholeheartedly the Wandle Trail's Earlsfield Extension. Reform knows what needs to be done. Reform's elected councillors will work with the Wandle Valley Forum to complete the project. Vote Reform on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

*John Pearson – Reform Merton; Ed Gretton – Reform Merton – Campaign Manager*

### Merton Liberal Democrats

We do support this but feel that the bridge over the Wandle from Ravensbury Terrace (next to 10) to Groton Road would be of more benefit to WP residents. We pressed for the feasibility report to be carried out and this covered both projects together.

The Environment Agency raised some concerns regarding the issue of shadow over the water leading to a reduction in friendly environment to wildlife, but we believe that these concerns have been resolved.

One of the issues with the Wandle Trail extension is how it links to Ravensbury Terrace (access through the so-called 'pocket park' where there is no pavement and therefore had health and safety issues for pedestrians.

It's not insurmountable but would require more work. Making these projects become a reality would be a local priority and we would take action to accelerate progress (recognising that both projects are multi-agency and require commitment from all parties.)"

There have been meetings between Merton & Wandsworth officers last year. They have not shared all the information with us, but I believe they considered both projects. We will press for more progress to be made as a matter of urgency.

### Merton Green Party

I am happy to confirm that if elected Merton Green Party councillors would support action to fix the "missing link" on the Wandle Trail at Earlsfield.

### Wandsworth Labour

Wandsworth Labour is fully committed to fixing the missing link as in our 2026 manifesto. This is part of our top 5 pledges under love our parks, we have committed to fixing the missing link; creating a safer, greener route for our community. For too long, residents walking and cycling have been forced onto busy roads where the trail breaks under the railway bridge. We support the practical solution now being developed and will work with partners to ensure local voices are heard. Wandsworth Labour are committed to promoting active travel and sustainable infrastructure, so we will push to deliver this project—improving connectivity, boosting health, and opening up access to nature for everyone in our area.

Please also see a short video I made about our commitment a few weeks ago -

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DW9C-1UjXwB/?igsh=MXZmcHg1Z3ZoMmt1Mw==>