

Wandle Valley Regional Park

A Vision for the Future

Our Vision

“Our shared vision is for an innovative, sustainable and high quality Regional Park in the Wandle Valley that is easily accessible, with a rich & thriving biodiversity, offering recreational, landscape, heritage, cultural and resource management benefits in which local people and businesses can take pride and ownership.”

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Thanks go to all members of the Wandle Valley Steering Group, the Wandle Valley Forum members and all of the local people and businesses who have contributed to the consultations about the future of the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

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Foreword

Clive Fox

Chair, WWRP Steering Group

September 2008

The London Plan recognises the Wandle Valley as an opportunity area, a development corridor with potential for intensification of housing, town centres and business growth.

For centuries, the River Wandle, rising in the Surrey Hills and meandering through southwest London to the Thames at Wandsworth, has played a vital role in communications, trade and human settlement.

Long before the Industrial Revolution, the River was a focus for cottage industries, for markets and social life. But when William Morris – a founder of the Arts and Crafts movement (that British version of Art Nouveau, the international style that swept through Europe at the end of the 19th century) - established his workshops at Abbey Mills in 1881 “...because the water is abundant and good”, the River provided clean water and power in a tranquil environment.

Over the following century, industry and people evolved cheek by jowl within the mainly confined space of the River Valley, with a high-density mix of commercial and residential life. Water quality declined, and with it the natural life of the Valley, as people turned their backs on much of the River and forgot its invaluable resource for green space, wildlife, recreation and social renewal.

The Valley became a key centre for manufacturing industry; and even though traditional businesses have given way to new ones, it remains today of major importance to London's overall economic performance, providing 10% of London's jobs, still with a significant manufacturing focus. The London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2004), recognises it as an opportunity area, a development corridor with potential for intensification of housing, town centres and business growth.

The London Plan also makes the crucial strategic and spatial planning commitment to work with Boroughs and other partners to achieve new regional parks in London - of which the Wandle

Valley Regional Park will be the first.

Over the past decade, the Boroughs, Groundwork, the South London Partnership and other players have worked on many individual regeneration projects that have tried to reverse some of that historic neglect of the River as a source of life, opening up river-focused routes and access to green space, and revitalising the social potential of connecting the Valley's spaces and places by engaging citizens and young people. Yet while effective within their limits, the Valley has lacked the unifying potential of a single vision, a shared strategy, or an integrated planning framework.

Previous work on scoping the potential for regional parks, arising from the London Plan and led by the Greater London Authority with a number of key partners, had resulted in the Strategic Parks Report¹.

The EU-funded Sustainable & Accessible Urban Landscapes (SAUL) Project², led by Groundwork London and with the GLA as one of the partners, had contributed to that initiative. In this latest and final stage of the SAUL Project, we have seized the opportunity to take the first step to turn the London Plan's aspiration into a practical reality.

Over the past year, the work of a high-level Steering Group has succeeded in transforming the prospects for the new Wandle Valley Regional Park.

Since the Park is essentially a linear concept, with the River as the unifying element for both open spaces and the wider surrounding retail, housing and commercial interests, it was essential to bring together all the landowners as well as statutory and voluntary stakeholders, to secure commitment to a shared vision for the future.

In the past, different political and economic interests have often



become barriers to collective progress. The sea change that has now taken place has seen the four Borough Councils, the GLA, business interests, the statutory agencies and the third sector - including the Wandle Forum and environmental charities – all giving priority to the challenge and opportunity for a Regional Park.

Putting the objective of a new Wandle Valley Regional Park into the revised London Plan was a vital step achieved during this period.

Sub-regionally, a consensus has emerged for the first time that has seen the four Boroughs forming a new alliance within the Regional Park framework. Both politicians and professional planners have joined forces to ensure the Regional Park will now be written into their respective local authority strategic planning instruments and future funding programmes.



We have all signed up to a single Statement of Support. And we have all committed ourselves to moving forward now through the next, transitional stage of setting up the Regional Park, during which we will determine its future organisation, management and financial structures.

The business sector, whose spatial interests (some might say, spatial dominance) in the Wandle Valley since the 19th century and earlier have significantly influenced the shape and usage of the wider area, has for that reason been the thematic focus of the SAUL Project work in this recent stage. Along with our partner city regions in North West Europe, we have tested the proposition that Europe's new urban landscapes in the post-industrial age are an essential element of economic vitality, since competitive city regions must attract and retain viable businesses and their employees by offering a good quality of life.

The active participation of

representatives of the Valley's business interests in that analysis for SAUL has reinforced this thesis. It has demonstrated that the sector will be a source of knowledge and creative ideas about connecting quality of the working environment with quality of life. But more importantly, that the private sector must have a key role to play, alongside the public and voluntary sectors, in championing the Regional Park objectives and in its future well-being.

So our vision is for a linear Regional Park that gives public access to the length of the River Wandle, linking a series of open spaces, recreational areas and havens for wildlife; and connecting through green routes to the adjacent wider regeneration corridor with its residential areas, business parks and town centres.

The future Park must incorporate a variety of flexible spaces and places that offer a range of opportunities for citizens and stakeholders to enjoy through their diverse activities and social needs – the quiet enjoyment of open spaces and water environments, exercise and physical activities, social and cultural interaction, and alternative traffic-free routes.

The Regional Park will also have a vital part to play in achieving the economic potential of the Wandle Valley regeneration corridor – in offering an attractive quality of life for those investing in southwest London and their future employees; and in helping us to mitigate the impacts of climate change and adapt to its consequences.

And it must be for all: for those who live locally, and those who work in local industries and services; for visitors from all London and beyond; for young people and older citizens; and for those who cannot vote or state their needs, but whose continuing presence is vital to a sustainable future – the wildlife of the Valley.



Introduction

This document aims to present a vision for a Regional Park in the Wandle Valley. It is not a masterplan, but acts as a primer that will assist public, private and voluntary sector organisations as well as individuals with an interest in the Wandle Valley in driving forward their plans for creating a Regional Park. The vision document starts by summarising the process of building sub-regional and regional alliances supporting a Regional Park against the background of national, regional and local policy and planning priorities. It then presents a first vision for the Regional Park, based on a number of themes that offer opportunities for creating a unique resource of multi-functional open space for the Wandle Valley. The following section looks to the future and sets out the priorities and delivery arrangements for a crucial transitional phase, which will result in a partnership-based Implementation Framework for the Wandle Valley Regional Park. The final section provides a list of project opportunities – at varying stages in their development – that illustrate all partners’ commitment to making the Wandle Valley Regional Park a reality.

future Regional Park. This covers the Wandle Development Corridor as described in the London Plan and the adjacent open space network, which will help to connect to town centres, residential areas and business locations. The much larger shaded area shows the wider regeneration zone, which will be directly related to, and benefit from, the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

The river Wandle is a tributary of the Thames to the south west of London. It stretches from Carshalton in Sutton and Waddon in Croydon, joining the Thames at Wandsworth to the north. The river’s catchment area extends from the chalk ridge of the North Downs beyond the Greater London area in the south and spanning over seven kilometres across the river as it flows to the Thames. The Wandle Valley area encompasses four London Boroughs: Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton and Croydon.

This map forms a starting point for further discussion and shows the indicative core area of the

Indicative core area of the future Regional Park



1.0 Policy Context and Process so far

1.1 Regional Parks – definition, functions

Large areas, corridors or networks of open spaces, the majority of which will be publicly accessible and provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits.

The Regional Park concept challenges traditional notions of “parks” as single public green spaces with clearly defined boundaries, landscaped areas and facilities such as playgrounds. For example, the London Plan describes Regional Parks as:

“Large areas, corridors or networks of open spaces, the majority of which will be publicly accessible and provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. [These] offer a combination of facilities and features that are unique within London, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards.”

In the context of the Wandle Valley it may be appropriate to think of a Regional Park as part of a “Green Infrastructure”, a:

“network of interlinked, multi-functional and high quality open spaces and river corridors that connect with town centres, public transport nodes, the countryside in the urban fringe, (...) and major employment and residential areas.”³

At its best, a Regional Park can:

- provide new and enhance existing public open spaces, reducing areas of deficiency;
- provide public access along the major river and green areas;
- provide a range of formal and informal recreational uses and landscapes, promoting healthy living;
- provide new and enhance existing wildlife sites;
- manage water collection, cleansing and flood risk with multi-functional spaces;
- provide beautiful, diverse and managed green infrastructure to the highest standards for people and wildlife.”⁴

A Regional Park, particularly in an urban context, is likely to have permeable boundaries - its role will be to provide both an identity

to a range of different types of green and open space in the region or sub-region and a framework for partners to develop shared priorities and planning tools, and manage combined resources for the wider benefit of communities.

The size of Regional Parks will vary from location to location, but the London Plan’s open space hierarchy states as a benchmark that a regional park should be over 400 hectares in size and should aim to attract visitors within a radius of eight kilometres.

There is increasing recognition that the development of regional parks can have a significant impact at a strategic level. Examples in the UK include the The River Nene Regional Park (RNRP) in Northamptonshire. Formed in 2004, the RNRP partnership now leads on the strategic delivery of a green infrastructure for the whole of Northamptonshire and partners include Regional Government, local authorities, government agencies and the private and voluntary sectors.

In the north east of London, the Lee Valley Regional Park presents an example of a Regional Park that was established by an Act of Parliament. The Park is managed by a dedicated Regional Park Authority and resourced through a levy on the council tax base of its constituent areas of Essex, Hertfordshire and Greater London.

The East London Green Grid brings together partners working towards establishing a green infrastructure for a part of London that has long been identified as an area of deficiency in terms of green and open space and is currently the focus of intensive regeneration.

1.2 Policy context

The creation of a Regional Park as an integrated part of the wider regeneration of the valley has the potential to provide improved access to a linked network of open space, increasing the quality of the environment and contributing to the identity of the valley as a place to live, work and visit.

National priorities

The benefits of high quality multi-functional green and open space in improving people's quality of life are now widely recognised and are reflected in national, regional and local planning policy as well as cross-cutting strategies on issues as diverse as climate change, housing, health, transport or community cohesion.

Planning Policy Statement 12: *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities through Local Spatial Planning* (2008) emphasises the crucial role spatial planning has to play in providing the necessary social, physical and green infrastructure to ensure sustainable communities are delivered.

Planning Policy Guidance 17: *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* (2002) sets out priorities for building the provision of quality open spaces into regional and local planning systems and recognises the need to plan for networks of open spaces which contribute towards creating better urban environments.

London context

The London Plan sets out strategic planning priorities for London for the next 15 – 20 years. These priorities include the provision of high quality open spaces, green networks and corridors. This is to be achieved through planning for a more compact urban environment whilst protecting and improving character and sense of place, open spaces, biodiversity and natural resources and by mitigating climate change and reducing CO2 emissions.

The Plan contains a clear commitment to supporting the

partnership-based development of an Implementation Framework for a Regional Park in the Wandle Valley, which includes Areas for Intensification and Opportunity Areas. It recognises that “the creation of a Regional Park as an integrated part of the wider regeneration of the valley has the potential to provide improved access to a linked network of open space, increasing the quality of the environment and contributing to the identity of the valley as a place to live, work and visit.”⁵

The four Wandle Boroughs' Unitary Development Plans, Supplementary Planning Guidance and emerging Local Development Frameworks' priorities on protecting and enhancing the environment, cultural heritage or economic potential as well as fostering community cohesion all contribute to the objectives for the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

The strategic objectives of key non-statutory landowners such as the National Trust will also play an important role in creating a coherent Regional Park.

Other partners such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Groundwork London have included the Wandle Valley Regional Park as priorities in their regional strategies and business plans.

The development of the Regional Park needs to draw on all these policy and strategic opportunities.



K. CHURCH HOUSE

1.3 The Process so far



For more than a decade, the Wandle Valley has seen a wealth of environmental, economic development and community initiatives.

A first step towards consolidating these initiatives into a more co-ordinated approach was the Wandle Valley Green Ribbon Initiative in 2005, a sub-regional response to the GLA's Blue Ribbon Strategy.

It led to the establishment of the Wandle Forum, which brings together key stakeholders in the Wandle Valley such as the four Wandle Boroughs, statutory agencies, landowners, community groups and businesses.

Groundwork and South London Partnership, part-funded by the London Development Agency, have supported the co-ordination of the Forum since its inception. The Wandle Forum responded to the proposed creation of the Wandle Valley Regional Park by amending their constitution to formally express their support for the Regional Park.

The London Strategic Parks Project Report was commissioned in 2006 by the GLA and partners to take forward opportunities identified in Sub Regional Development Frameworks for developing regional and metropolitan parks in London. As well as developing a methodology for creating new strategic parks, the report tested this methodology using the Wandle Valley, one of the identified Regional Park opportunities, as a case study. One of the key findings highlights the well-established partnerships and multitude of existing initiatives as essential ingredients for taking the development of a Regional Park forward through a more co-ordinated approach.

In 2007/08, an extension to the transnational Interreg IIIB funded

SAUL Project, led by Groundwork, provided resources for progressing the development of the Wandle Valley Regional Park. Building on the work of the Wandle Forum, Groundwork together with the GLA initiated a Steering Group of regional and sub-regional partners with a commitment to creating a Regional Park. The majority of partners have now also formalised this commitment through the adoption of a Statement of Support.

This high-level Steering Group is composed of representatives of the following groups and organisations:

- Groundwork London (current chair)
- LB Croydon
- LB Merton
- LB Sutton
- LB Wandsworth
- South London Partnership
- Greater London Authority
- Elected Members Group (LAW)
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Mitcham Common Conservators
- Wandle Forum
- National Trust
- Pro-Active South London



The work of the Steering Group is supported by the Wandle Forum's working groups on Landscape & Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Sport & Physical Activity and Heritage & Culture. In response to a need for spatial planning expertise identified by the Steering Group, the four Wandle Boroughs have initiated a Planning Officers' working group. Elected Members from each of the four Boroughs have formed the Local Authorities along the Wandle (LAW) Group.

questionnaires and filming sessions, over 80 young people expressed their views on and ideas for local open space and the Regional Park as a whole.

All partners recognise that the creation of a Regional Park does not only require strategic decision-making and political commitment. If the Park is to become a valuable resource for all communities in the Wandle Valley, the process needs to involve these communities in the planning and design right from the outset.

SAUL extension funding enabled Groundwork to carry out three strands of consultation.⁶ Two events for businesses were designed to raise awareness of the benefits of a Regional Park to the local economy and opportunities for getting involved in its development. A custom-built GIS consultation tool invited businesses to include information relevant to them on the evolving maps and to identify opportunities for improving the quality of and access to the public realm related to business locations.

The GIS tool was subsequently also used for wider consultation at public meetings and via the newly created Wandle Valley Regional Park website, which resulted in a number of positive responses such as suggestions for physical improvements and preferences for cycling routes.

The third consultation strand focused on young people. During four workshops in local schools and academies, using creative



2.0 Vision for the Future - Key Themes

The Regional Park will provide a strategic context, inform and add value to future development of the sub-region. The Park will improve the environmental offer of the Wandle Valley, will have clear social and economic benefits and will need to be integrated with regeneration activity in order to maximise these benefits. The added value of the Regional Park process will be to act as a catalyst for change, improving the identity and raising the profile of the Wandle Valley.

In order to make the vision a reality, partners have identified a range of key themes that need to be integrated in the development of the Regional Park.

The following chapters each introduce a specific theme and present some related implementation opportunities. A vision statement captures the main aspiration for each theme.

“Our shared vision is for an innovative, sustainable and high quality Regional Park in the Wandle Valley that is easily accessible, with a rich & thriving biodiversity, offering recreational, landscape, heritage, cultural and resource management benefits in which local people and businesses can take pride and ownership.”



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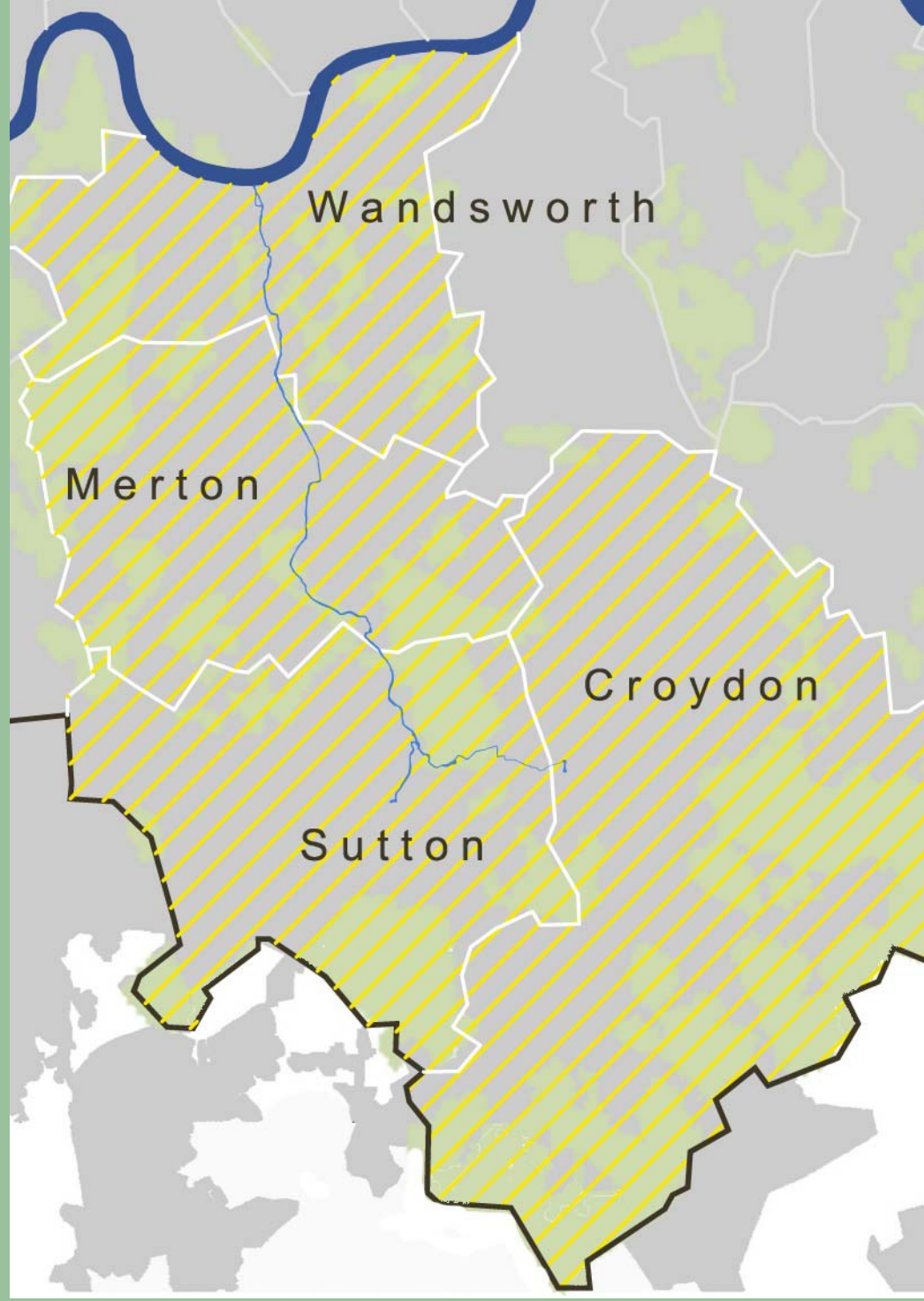
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2.1 Governance



Vision

A Wandle Valley Park that has effective and inclusive governance structures, enabling a strong partnership to develop creative and innovative approaches to the Park's long-term resourcing and management.

While every Regional Park needs to be developed in its own geographical and strategic context, it is important to learn from the success of similar processes in different locations. A key message from the award-winning River Nene Regional Park in Northamptonshire also describes the aspirations for the Wandle Valley:

Without co-ordination, the “cumulative benefits of individual investments are not being fully realised (...). Simply maintaining the status quo, hoping that incremental development and individual action will somehow result in a Regional Park or a great environment, will not achieve the kinds of social, economic and environmental benefits demanded of the project. A big picture is needed – one that links aspirations, secures joined-up action and provides an overarching plan to guide the management of future change.”⁷

The Wandle Valley has a long history of organisations and individuals across the public, private and voluntary sectors working in partnership. The creation of the Regional Park offers a unique opportunity to consolidate these partnerships and to provide an Implementation Framework to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to strategic planning and project delivery. A broadly based partnership will be crucial to ensuring that the Regional Park is integrated into the wider regeneration of the Valley, embedding its principles into plans, strategies and projects.

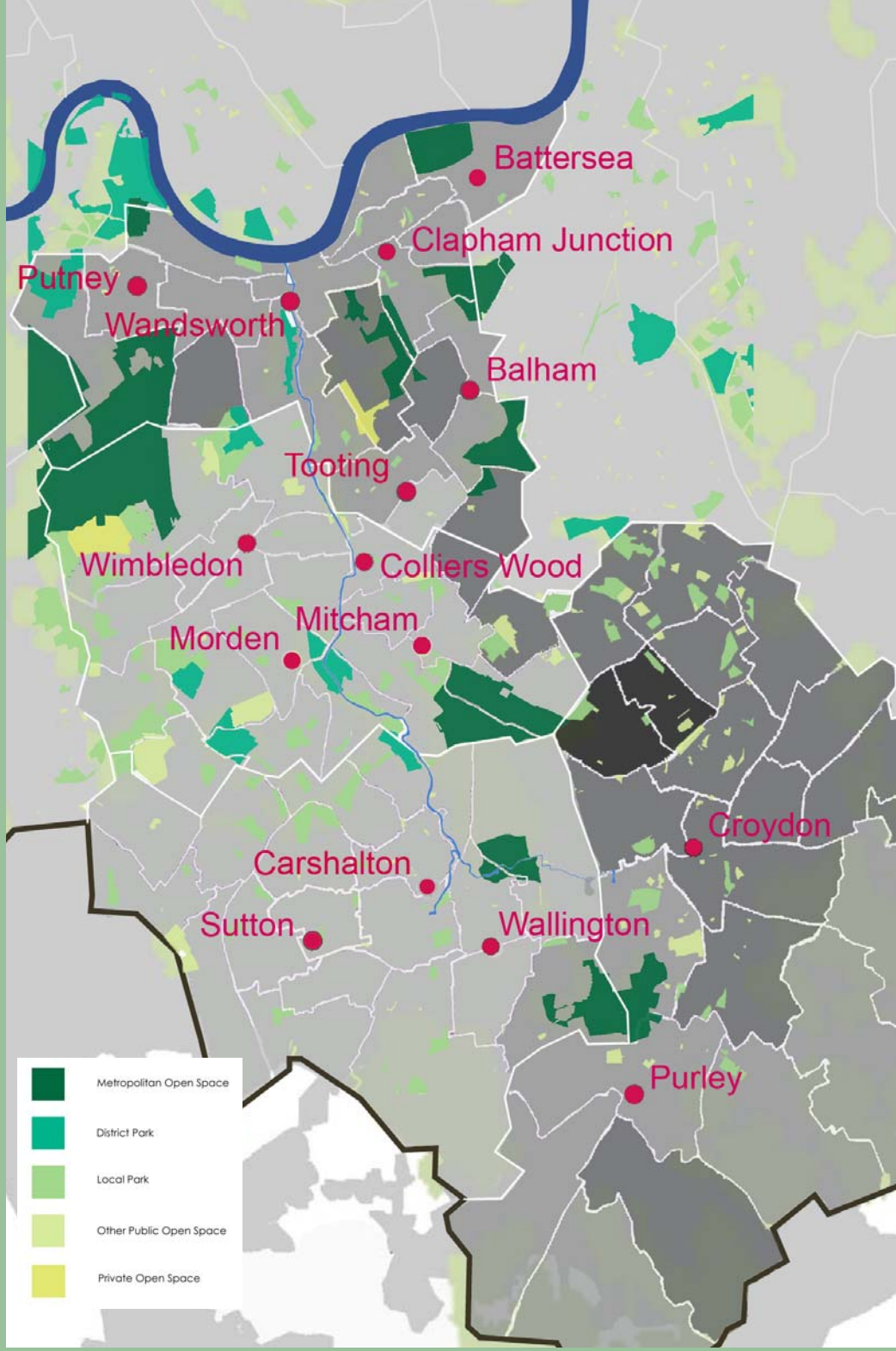
The Wandle Valley Regional Park partners will design governance arrangements that are tailored to the local context and will help them achieve their vision for the park. Robust governance principles will describe all partners' roles and

responsibilities, management structures and procedures, and mechanisms for delivering against the agreed joint vision, priorities and milestones. They will cover operational as well as strategic objectives. In order to ensure flexibility of implementation, the governance arrangements will be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect the evolving priorities of the Regional Park.

Opportunities:

- Agree an Implementation Framework setting out the main priorities and timescales for the Transitional Phase.
- Explore different organisational models for developing and managing the Regional Park, ranging from a dedicated Parks Authority or an independent Regional Park Trust to a less formal network of partners.
- Identify innovative opportunities for resourcing the development and long-term maintenance of the Park such as a Regional Park levy, utilising planning agreements, endowments or private sector funding.
- Organise a programme of learning from other successful Regional Parks.

2.2 Communities & Open Space



Vision

A Wandle Valley Regional Park that celebrates its distinctive character, the diversity of its local communities, engaging them at all stages of its development and providing them with an open space resource that improves their quality of life.

Research quoted in CABE's report on *The Value of Public Space* (2004) found that 85 percent of participants felt that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and on the way they feel.

The Wandle Valley is home to a population of approximately 2.38million. Its many communities are diverse, with some based on geography and others on shared interests and identity.

The Regional Park will need to ensure that all these communities feel welcome to use the spaces and facilities it offers. It will also create links between traditional, existing green spaces and residential and business locations.

Inclusive, well-designed and maintained open spaces provide opportunities for people to meet and interact, play, relax or get involved in activities. When people feel a sense of ownership for public space and have a say in its design and management, anti-social behaviour and vandalism are proven to be reduced. A particular focus will be on engaging children and young people, using the Regional Park as an educational resource and an opportunity for young people to develop aspirations and practical approaches for creating successful open spaces that meet their needs.

High quality green and open space also has a positive impact on communities' mental and physical health by providing safe, accessible and affordable opportunities to exercise and relax, enjoying the outdoors.

The proposed Wandle Valley Regional Park area is rich in high quality open spaces such as Mitcham Common and includes many flagship parks from each of its London boroughs. South west London generally has a legacy of historically linked town and village centres with associated networks of public open space and already contains much of the potential for creating a high quality of life for its residents. The Regional Park will provide a strengthened focus for promoting and enhancing the sub-region's open spaces.

Led by Natural England, a landscape character and green infrastructure assessment for the Wandle Valley will explore the spatial context for the Regional Park.

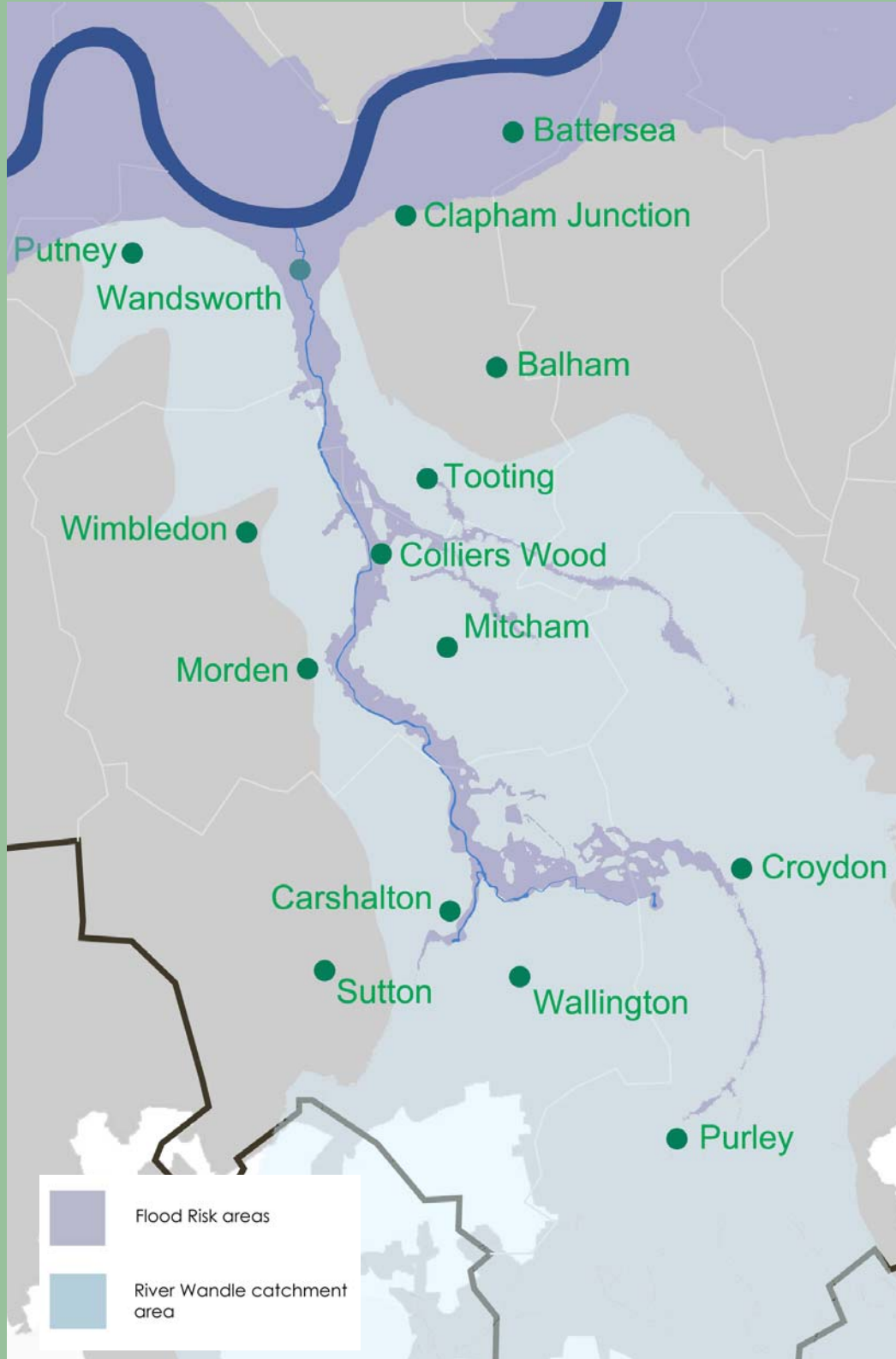
The assessment will highlight the valley's natural features and their role in any future land use planning whilst also helping to develop a stronger sense of place among local communities. It will provide a tool for enabling community driven place making, involving local communities in planning for land use in the Wandle Valley as well as pioneering a methodology for landscape character assessment in urban areas.

Building on the success of community events such as the Wandle Valley Festival, the Regional Park will develop activities that engage different communities including those that are often described as "hard to reach", for example BAME groups or people with disabilities.

Opportunities:

- Through the GIS consultation tool and other methods, establish an ongoing dialogue with local communities, enabling them to contribute to all stages of the Regional Park development and to get involved in activities.
- Supporting the Wandle Valley Festival as an annual focus for community activities and volunteering in the Wandle Valley bringing together people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.
- Involve young people in the planning and development of the open spaces of the Wandle Valley Regional Park and encourage them to volunteer at events so that they are aware of and feel ownership of the facilities available to them.
- Integrate open space planning with strategies for play, sport and healthy living.

2.3 Climate Change



Vision

A Wandle Valley Regional Park that acts as a best practice model for utilising the potential of an open space network in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, and that encourages its users to adopt 'climate change-proof' behaviours.

Climate change is now almost universally acknowledged as the biggest threat to society. Rising temperature levels and increasingly hazardous weather conditions put natural landscapes and wildlife at risk. But at the same time, a well-designed open space network holds the key to adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Green and open space can help reduce the Urban Heat Island effect caused by heat generated by, for example, transport, heating and cooling of buildings and heat stored in exposed surfaces of buildings and roads. There is evidence that even modest increases in vegetation and tree cover can help offset higher temperatures.⁸ Surfaces with a plant cover filter out pollution, increase evaporative cooling and are permeable, thus enabling more controlled surface water run-off and reducing the risk of flooding.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) can be incorporated into open space planning and new developments as well as retrofitted into existing buildings and spaces within the Wandle Valley Regional Park. SUDS capture and control water run-off allowing it to be better managed as it flows through the drainage system. Some of the larger areas of open space and wetlands within the Wandle Valley Regional Park can be adapted to provide space for temporary flood storage.

A well-designed Green Infrastructure in the Wandle Valley also has the potential for showcasing high-quality re-used and recycled materials in landscape design and construction. This will be complemented by designs using climate-resistant planting schemes that reduce the need for watering. Renewable energy generation helps to reduce the dependency on fossil fuels and cut down CO₂ emissions. Alternative energy models can already be found in the Wandle Valley, and will be promoted for all new developments. Local energy production is particularly efficient as it minimises the amount of energy lost in

transmission. Options include solar heating systems, combined heat and power systems, biomass boilers using waste from the food industry, coppiced wood and vegetation waste from crops and arboriculture raisings, wind turbines and ground source heat pumps.

The Regional Park will also improve accessibility and connectivity within the Wandle Valley (see chapter 2.6), thereby reducing CO₂ emissions caused by car use. The planning framework created by the Regional Park will enable increased use of public transport and promote healthy and low-impact alternatives such as walking and cycling.

The Regional Park also provides a unique learning environment for organisations, businesses and individuals to gain first-hand experience of innovative climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions. It will encourage opportunities for behaviour change, in particular through working with children and young people.

The Climate Change theme is clearly cross-cutting with implications for and impacts on all the other themes that the Regional Park will address.

Opportunities

- Support landowners, statutory agencies, businesses and local communities in developing climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions by encouraging innovative land uses, resource efficiency and behaviour change.
- Building on existing sources of renewable energy, aim to develop a consistent alternative energy approach for the whole of the Regional Park.
- Develop a Regional Park standard for using landscaping and building construction materials with a low carbon life cycle, choosing re-used and recycled options where possible.
- Explore carbon storage opportunities.
- Develop tree-planting programmes, applying the Right Place: Right Tree principles that will help increase tree cover in the Regional Park.

2.4 Natural Environment



Vision

A Wandle Valley Regional Park rich in biodiversity with a healthy and thriving river providing a living landscape that is accessible to all.

The River Wandle is one of the best examples of chalk streams in London and a unique resource within an urban setting. Above ground for most of its length and with natural un-engineered banks for much of its upper reaches, it sustains a wide variety of species including some that are rare in London and in the national context.

Urbanisation over many years has led to the loss of floodplains and of natural habitats and features right up to the river-banks. Along with intensive industrial use the demands of urbanisation have led to more water abstraction resulting in a reduced flow in the river. The river's flow is sourced from chalk springs above Beddington Sewage Works. Below this point the flow is approximately 90% sewage outfall and faster flowing. Pollution incidents can occur in periods of heavy rain and from industries along the valley. The river also suffers from colonisation by invasive species.

The uniqueness of the river environment and its potential to provide wider benefits for its surroundings is one of the key drivers for the development of the Wandle Valley Regional Park and the regeneration of the area. The urban context makes the river and its associated habitats a special and precious resource, but can also be a threat to its biodiversity. Local people already have a strong cultural connection with the river and there is a thriving nature-conservation volunteering programme in each Borough working throughout the valley.

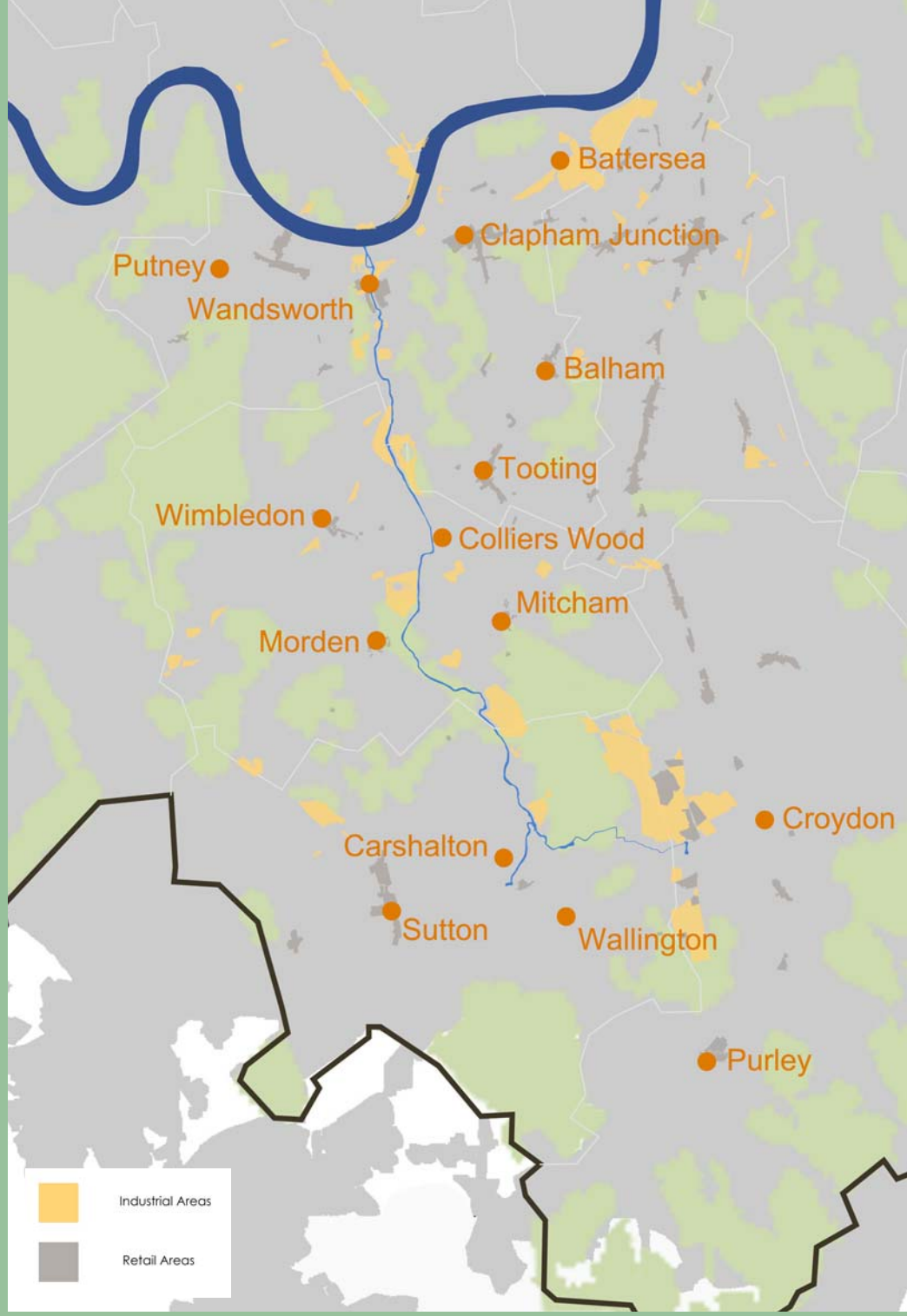
Contact with nature is recognised as an increasing priority for well-being and the quality of life for people especially in urban areas. The *Improving Londoner's Access to Nature report* (GLA, 2008) maps the areas where improving habitats would improve access in areas where no significant opportunity to experience nature

currently exists. Building on this, a more detailed access mapping of the Wandle corridor will inform the integration of green infrastructure planning with the protection and enhancement of its biodiversity.

Opportunities

- Ensure that planning decisions within the Wandle Valley Regional Park take account of biodiversity interests.
- De-culvert the River Wandle in Croydon and, where possible, create natural banks along the river's length.
- Enhance the river environment to facilitate a re-introduction of water voles in a series of linked habitats along the River Wandle.
- Improve the biodiversity value of open spaces including King George's Park and Spencer Road Wetlands.
- Improve water quality and water levels along the river.
- Provide multi-functional flood storage areas.
- Promote the development of habitat corridors within the Wandle Valley Regional Park to allow for migration of species to adapt to climate change impacts.
- Build on the Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy and Boroughs' Biodiversity and Habitat Action Plans to ensure strategic fit of interventions.

2.5 Regeneration & Economy



Vision

A Wandle Valley Regional Park with a distinct identity that is able to attract and retain competitive businesses and a skilled workforce.

The River Wandle was once known as the hardest working river in Europe and remains an important focus of employment with its concentration of business estates and town centres. To this day, ca. 20% of London's manufacturing base is located in the Wandle Valley.

Industry is based predominantly on a ribbon of small and medium sized businesses, which lie either side of the river. These estates have suffered from years of neglect but are increasingly gaining active management groups that have been key to improving signage and security and reducing fly-tipping and crime. Businesses recognise the value of the River Wandle and its environment for their customers and staff and are investing to transform their trading environments into key locations for 21st century business. This reflects recent evidence that a high quality environment can have a positive impact on property prices and rents and helps to attract commercial investment.⁹

The many town centres along the River Wandle offer opportunities for regeneration through housing, retail, office and leisure developments. Croydon, for example, has ambitious development plans that include opening up the culverted River Wandle, drawing on the river's heritage and open space to create a pleasant and prosperous third 'City' for London.

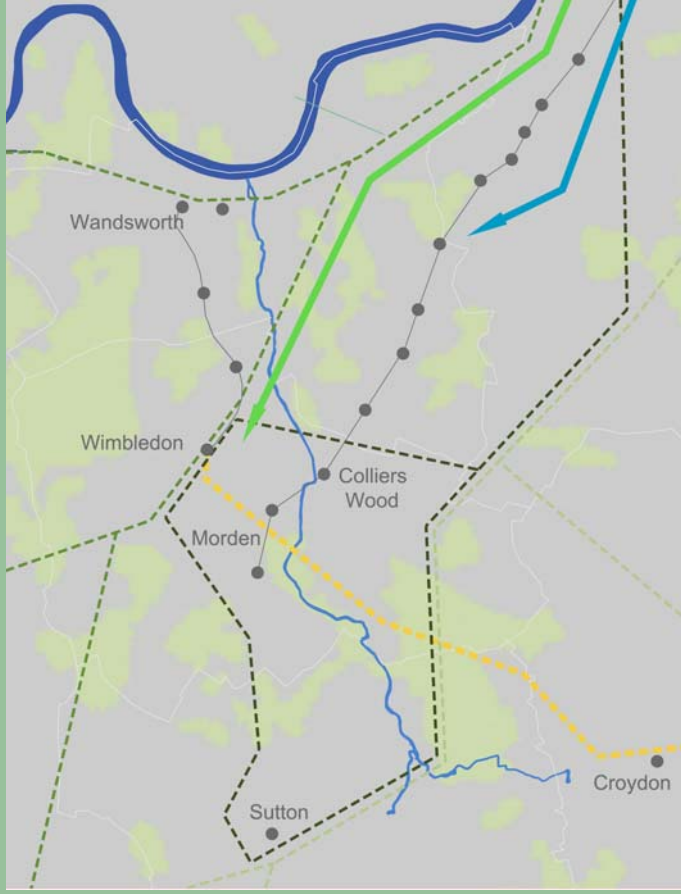
Wandsworth town centre is also well on the way to completing its renaissance with the transformation of the shopping centre and attractive riverside developments.

Opportunities

- Develop the unique identity or 'brand' of the Wandle Valley Regional Park, recognising the Wandle as a key business location that attracts investment.

- Use the Regional Park as a framework for building business alliances and co-ordinating investment.
- Ensure that developments link visually and, where appropriate, physically to the Wandle Valley Regional Park to maximise the benefit to business of the river and open spaces.
- Promote the wide range of businesses, ranging from traditional manufacturing to new creative and high-tech industries that are based along the River Wandle.
- Support innovation in waste management, renewable energy and sound resource efficiency.
- Actively promote good environmental practice in design and business operations with a focus on minimising the carbon footprint of the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

2.6 Travel & Connectivity



Vision

A Wandle Valley Regional Park with integrated public transport links, facilitating a thriving business environment and encouraging people to choose car-free travel alternatives such as walking or cycling.

The Wandle Valley has a fairly well developed road network with two key orbital links, radial routes and key road links to the M25, M3 and M23, so it is unsurprising that cars are the predominant form of transport, particularly in the outer London suburban areas.

The bus and tram network is important in offering alternative modes of transport. The Croydon tramlink has already been proven to reduce the number of local car journeys.

The rail network is mainly radial with some orbital links and the area is relatively well served by stations. The same cannot be said of the underground as only the District and Northern lines cover the area with few stations across the sub region.

A number of programmes are currently underway to improve public transport provision, including the planned extension of Crossrail Phase 1's Western arm to Kingston and Crossrail Phase 2 South focused on Wimbledon. The Thameslink programme, due for completion in 2011, will benefit Croydon, Sutton, Mitcham and Wimbledon town centres. On the underground, the East London line Phase 1 extension to Croydon and Crystal Palace will improve links to the outer margins of the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

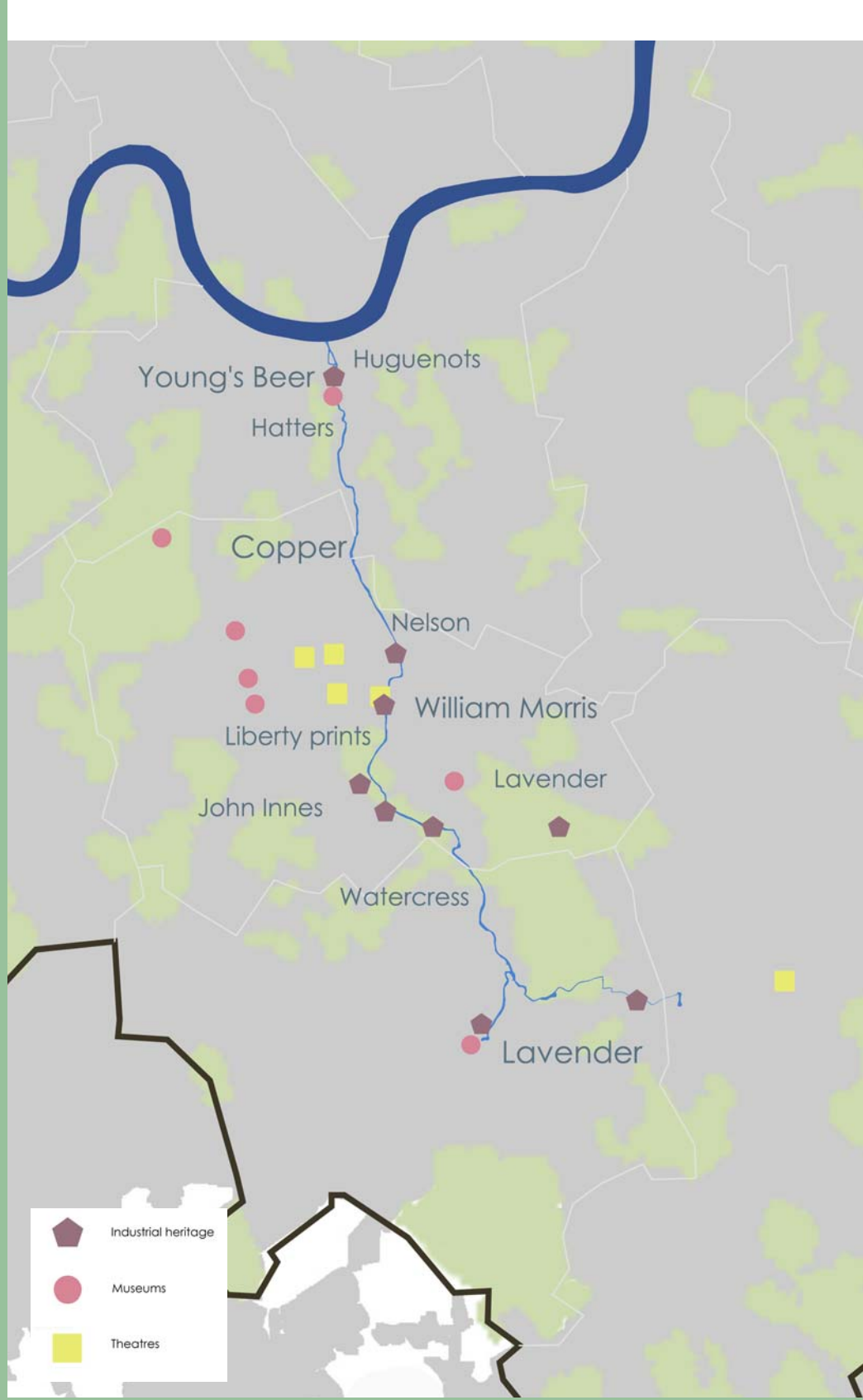
There are existing cycle networks within the proposed Wandle Valley Regional Park, including the Wandle Trail, a shared pedestrian and cycle route. This is already a well-recognised route for leisure and commuting and as Route 22 forms part of the London Cycle Network. It provides an almost unbroken link for walking and cycling along the length of the valley putting people in direct contact with nature, the open spaces, heritage and leisure facilities along the river. However, much work still needs to be done to improve on gaps in the trail

particularly where it leaves the river to follow the road network. Links to the Wandle Trail from town centres and transport hubs are often poor and there is a need for more strategic planning to improve access to the trail and its related open spaces from town centres and transport hubs.

Opportunities

- Set up a Transport and Access Working Group for the Wandle Valley Regional Park that feeds into future plans for the development of public transport opportunities, including potential extensions to the Croydon Tramlink, improvements to bus services and for walkers and cyclists.
- Close gaps in the Wandle Trail, particularly where it leaves the river to follow the road network, and create better links to town centres and transport hubs.
- Design integrated solutions that make the Wandle Valley Regional Park accessible for visitors of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.
- Explore the potential of reviving the River Wandle as a transport corridor.

2.7 Heritage & Culture



Vision

The rich and unique heritage of the Wandle Valley Regional Park contributing to a brand that boosts all aspects of development and tourism, facilitates business growth and encourages a shared community identity.

Historically, the Wandle's fast flowing waters powered 90 mills giving it a well-earned reputation as 'Europe's hardest working river' at the heart of 18th century industrialisation. It was here that the world's first, albeit horse-drawn, railway – the Surrey Iron Railway - was built, running freight from Wandsworth towards Mitcham.

The river's cultural history goes back even further to medieval times when it was the site of Merton Abbey, which predated Canterbury Cathedral as a leading seat of Christianity in England. It was also home to William Morris's famous 'Arts & Crafts' paper and fabric printworks, now part of the popular Merton Abbey craft market. The Wandle has been the source of inspiration for many other artists over the years. Today, new designer/maker businesses are based close to the river continuing these links, emphasising that the river-side environment is particularly important to creative businesses which themselves often act as catalysts for economic growth.

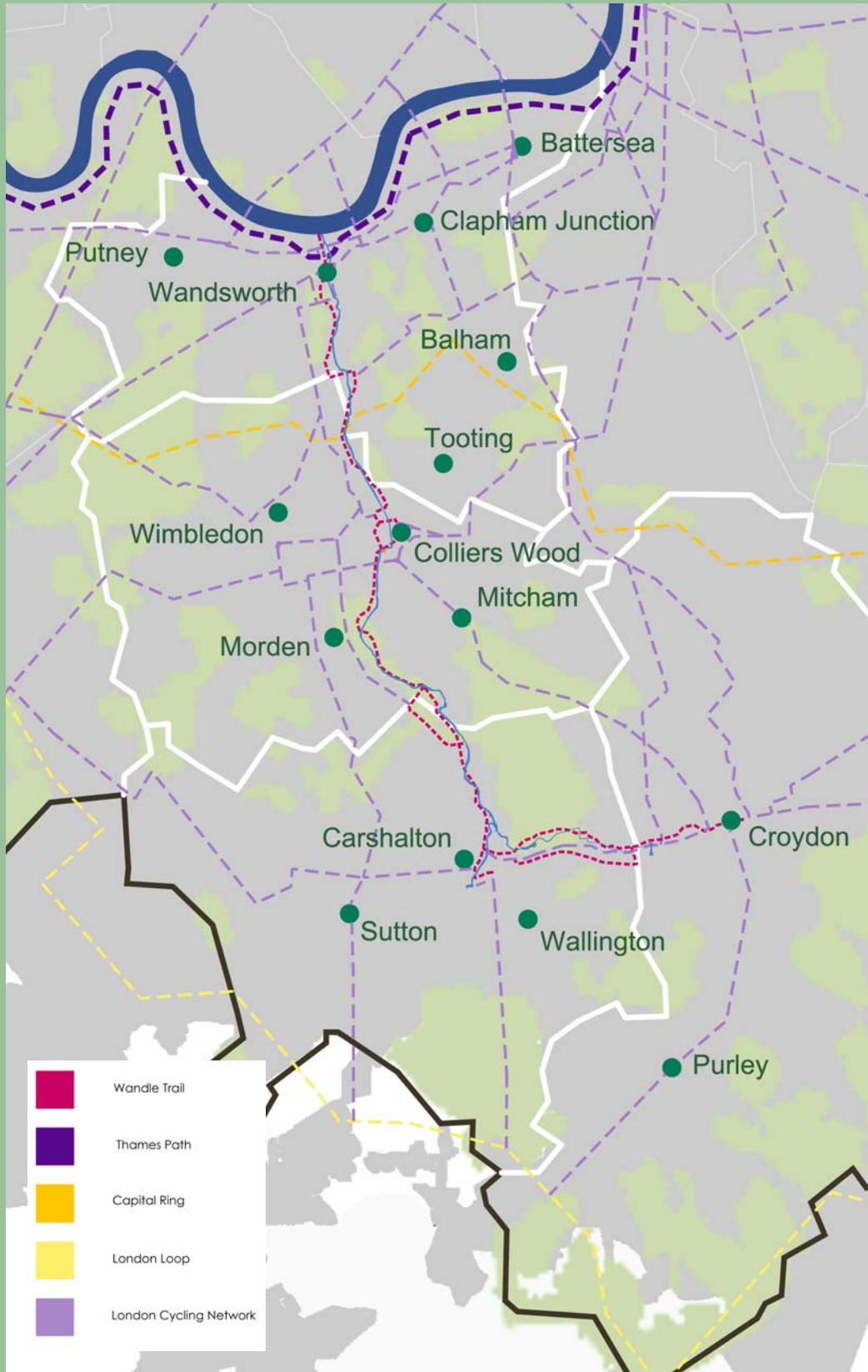
The river Wandle in the Grade II listed Morden Hall Park was known as Nelson's 'Merton Paradise' and he enjoyed a spot of fishing there, as well as visiting Morden Lodge with Lady Hamilton. The genteel character of the well preserved historic parkland and 19th century estate buildings in Morden Hall Park attract half a million visitors a year. Nelson himself is buried in the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Merton Park as is John Innes who developed his famous potting compost in Merton. Following the horticultural theme, by 1900 Carshalton was known as the 'lavender capital of the world' providing lavender oil to companies such as Yardley. Lavender growing has been revived today through collaboration between the Bioregional Development Group, the London Borough of Sutton,

HMP Downview and Yardley.

Opportunities

- Develop a Wandle Heritage & Culture Strategy.
- Instigate educational heritage and arts activities for the whole community, in particular children and young people.
- Continue to support initiatives like the Wandle Valley Festival and Abbey Fest.
- Develop a Wandle Valley Heritage Trail to encourage awareness of the valley's past.
- Develop Creative Partnerships to stimulate regeneration and tourism.
- Encourage creative uses for heritage sites.

2.8 Recreation



Vision

A Wandle Valley Regional Park offering a vibrant mix of leisure activities that attract all members of the community.

Interest in and awareness of leisure activities along the River Wandle is growing, stimulated by organisations such as Pro-Active South London as well as local voluntary groups predominantly from the conservation and sports sectors. These have provided an impetus towards greater consciousness and increased use of recreational resources within the Wandle Valley Regional Park by local communities. Sporting activities available within the area include angling, cycling, tennis, football, golf, swimming and walking as well as 'Green Gym' type activities using conservation projects as opportunities for non-traditional healthy outdoor exercise.

The Wandle Valley is also home to a wide range of performing arts venues from traditional pubs hosting fringe theatre and music events to the Colour House Theatre at Merton Abbey Mill, the Victorian Long Room theatre at 5 Garratt Lane and Croydon's Fairfield Hall. Artists Open House weeks and Arts Festivals have become regular fixtures in a number of boroughs. In particular, the cross-borough annual Wandle Valley Festival, supported by many volunteers, the South London Partnership, local authorities and businesses has become increasingly popular since its inception in 2004.

Opportunities

- Promote walking and cycling by improving access to the Wandle Trail through better signage, widening paths and provision of adapted bikes for people with disabilities.
- Promote angling through improved links between angling clubs, landowners, Thames Water and the Environment Agency.
- Encourage older people to undertake physical activity within the Wandle Valley Regional Park in partnership with Primary Care Trusts.
- Establish "Green Gyms" to

- provide healthy activities and support the Park's maintenance.
- Create sponsoring opportunities for community, physical activity and arts events.
- Increase the profile of the Wandle Valley Festival and widen the range of festival activities, potentially including running training in the Regional Park to complete a half marathon during the Wandle Valley Festival.

3.0 The Future

3.1 The Transitional Phase



The creation of a Regional Park is a long-term process that will only be successful if ongoing commitment from all partners can be secured. While the Park will need a framework setting out its future direction right from the outset, significant change, for example in the environmental quality of all the open spaces it covers, may only become tangible over time.

This vision document summarises the Wandle Valley Regional Park development so far and launches the beginning of the crucial Transitional Phase that will, over a period of up to two years, consolidate the existing partnership, agree boundaries and governance structures for the Regional Park, further develop thematic priorities and deliver practical demonstration projects to illustrate the benefits of a Regional Park in the Wandle Valley.

In order to achieve this, the Steering Group has identified the following key tasks:

1.To develop an Implementation Framework and prioritise a series of actions to implement it, retaining the flexibility to respond to new funding and project opportunities as they arise.

- To produce and adopt the Implementation Framework.
- To prioritise actions and projects to deliver the implementation framework and take forward practical project opportunities.
- To review existing Project Working Groups and, where required, set up, give direction to and receive the reports and recommendations of these Working Groups.
- To co-ordinate and support the WVRP Steering Group, Working Group and Wandle Forum meetings.
- To prepare a funding strategy

and respond to new funding and project opportunities as they arise.

- To influence the direction of resources towards the delivery of the Regional Park.

2.To develop and adopt a Communications Strategy that will build on the successful profile-raising initiatives and keep the vision for the Regional Park clear in the minds of the public.

- To produce a communications strategy.
- To communicate the main messages of the Regional Park to key stakeholders.
- To influence respective regional, sub-regional and local committees and elected members to promote and support the delivery of the Regional Park.

3.To work with the Boroughs to include aspects of the Regional Park objectives within Local Area Agreement planning, and to support an initiative to design a Multi Area Agreement.

- To ensure the project is developed within and adds value to existing policy frameworks and corporate objectives of member, partner and stakeholder organisations.
- To work to embed the Regional Park in planning documents, parks management and local strategic partnerships.

4.To lead necessarily wide-ranging discussions on the preferred governance structures for the Regional Park, and on its future resourcing.

- To consider long-term governance arrangements and agree a timetable for implementation.
- To develop cross-boundary management arrangements.

3.2 The Implementation Framework

Using the vision for the Wandle Valley Regional Park as a starting point, an Implementation Framework will be developed and agreed by the Steering Group partners. It will combine strategic objectives with a spatial plan showing opportunities for interventions and a prioritised action plan for delivering cross-cutting, strategic and local projects.

One of the key challenges for the Framework will be to define the Regional Park and its boundaries in a way that enhances the identity of its catchment area and exploits the Regional Park's potential for providing a context for sustainable development. It will set out common objectives for planning, design and management as well as a timetable for implementing short-, medium- and long-term measures.

The Action Plan will set out in detail what needs to happen in order to achieve the vision for the Regional Park. On the basis of agreed design and feasibility criteria and a procurement framework, partners will develop and prioritise projects and identify funding sources to enable implementation.

The Transitional Phase will be dependent on effective coordination and the efforts of all partners to realise the development of the Implementation Framework for the Wandle Valley Regional Park. The strong partnerships that have developed during the first phase of the process need to be consolidated and strengthened in order to achieve the proposed vision.

It is envisaged that the Transitional Phase will build on the established working arrangements, albeit with a more formalised co-ordination role to

ensure that the process does not lose momentum and puts in place governance structures and procedures for the Regional Park Implementation Phase.

The key components of the transitional structures will be the established Steering Group, Working Groups, the LAW Group, representing Elected Members from the four Wandle Boroughs, and the Wandle Forum.

3.3 The Funding Strategy

A Funding Strategy will be developed to help realise the priorities set out in the Implementation Framework. Currently, there are numerous opportunities to raise funding for individual projects. Moreover, a number of organisations are already involved in conservation, arts, education and other relevant projects in the Wandle Valley, and the Transitional Phase can build on these. However, the Steering Group partners also recognise that a co-ordinated, partnership-based approach to fundraising will be crucial in order to deliver the wider vision for the Regional Park. It will be essential to identify resources that will not only enable the delivery of projects but

also help to establish and maintain sound governance structures and maintenance arrangements for the Regional Park. However, the Regional Park's sustainability will not only depend on external funding, but also on all partners' ongoing contributions, be they financial or in kind.

3.4 The Marketing & Communications Strategy

A Marketing & Communications Strategy will ensure that all key stakeholders are aware of the opportunities that a Regional Park in the Wandle Valley presents. It will identify different target audiences and create tailored communication tools as well as key messages for each audience. The Strategy will define the unique selling points for the Regional Park as a whole as well as for individual locations in the Wandle Valley.

Endnotes

1. GLA - EDAW 2006
2. SAUL Project. This project has received European Regional Development Funding through the INTERREG III B Community Initiative.
3. East London Green Grid SPG (2008)
4. *ibid*
5. London Plan (Consolidated with Alterations since 2004), Para 5.145
6. Full consultation reports can be downloaded from <http://www.wandlevalleypark.org.uk>
7. River Nene Regional Park (2004), Non-technical Feasibility Study
8. Gill, S.E. et al (2007), Adapting Cities for Climate Change: The Role of the Green Infrastructure. *Built Environment*, Vol. 33, No.1, pp.115-133
9. CABI (2004), *The Value of Public Space*

Natural Environment

Project Name & Summary	Main Project Type – other benefits	Status	Lead Partner / Delivery Partner(s)	Land Owner	Budget estimate	Funding Yes / No / Part
River restoration (RR) Renaturalising the river by removing toe-boarding, concrete sides in channels, removal of weirs and deculverting in Wandle Park. Projects are in each Wandle borough.	Biodiversity Climate Change Landscape Community Recreation	Variety Idea Feasibility Fundraising Implementation	Environment Agency National Trust Local Authorities Wandle Forum Groundwork London Wildlife Trust Wandle Trust Developers Thames Water	Site dependant	Site dependant	Part Section 106 EA LWT EU Thames Water Landfill Tax
RR example Deculverting the River Wandle in Wandle Park, Croydon	Biodiversity Climate Change Landscape	Feasibility	LB Croydon Environment Agency Barratt Homes	LB Croydon	£3million	Part £1million Section 106 secured
Landscape characterisation Initial study to inform further work on developing regional park	Landscape Biodiversity Community Climate Change Heritage Transport	Implementation	Natural England Regional Park Steering Group	Various	£25,000	Yes
Water Vole Reintroduction through habitat enhancement	Biodiversity	Feasibility Fundraising Implementation	London Wildlife Trust Landowners Environment Agency Wandle Forum	Current Wandle Valley projects on Sutton and National Trust land	Site dependant	Part LWT and partners fundraising

Travel & Connectivity

Project Name & Summary	Main Project Type – other benefits	Status	Lead Partner / Delivery Partner(s)	Land Owner	Budget estimate	Funding Yes / No / Part
Tramside Walking and Cycling Route between Wandle Park and Mitcham Junction	Transport Recreation	Feasibility Ampere way - Therapia lane Design Wandle Park - Waddon Marsh Implemented Waddon Marsh - Ampere Way Development for Beddington link to Mitcham	LB Croydon, Sutton and Merton TfL Sustrans	Boroughs Private land TfL (new Tramlink owners) Mitcham Common conservators	£300,000	Part Section 106 TfL Sustrans Connect2
Bennetts Hole Bridge with land acquisition for cycle/footpath	Transport Recreation	Development	LB Merton	LB Merton	None as yet	No
Wandle Trail Map for all Update existing map and produce audio guide for visually impaired	Recreation Community Transport	Development	Groundwork London Walk London All landowners	N/A	£30,000	No

Communities & Open Space

Project Name & Summary	Main Project Type – other benefits	Status	Lead Partner / Delivery Partner(s)	Land Owner	Budget estimate	Funding Yes / No / Part
Wandle Valley Festival Many events involving many volunteers at annual festival	Community Recreation Heritage Sport	Implementation Fundraising	Wandle Valley Festival Local authorities Wandle Forum	All in Wandle Valley	£10,000	Part
River Wandle Clean Ups Regular litter and fly-tip rubbish removal	Community Biodiversity	Implementation	Wildlife organisations Wandle Trust Volunteers	LB Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	£5,000pa	Part
Wandle Valley Community Spaces Promoting volunteer action and involvement in planning and delivery	Community Biodiversity Recreation Sport Heritage	Development	Wandle Forum Groundwork London	TBC	£100,000	No

Recreation

Project Name & Summary	Main Project Type – other benefits	Status	Lead Partner / Delivery Partner(s)	Land Owner	Budget estimate	Funding Yes / No / Part
Beddington Park new tennis facilities	Sport	Consultation	LB Sutton Friends of Beddington and Grange Parks	LB Sutton	£120,000	Potential Section 106
Morden Hall Park fishing club Also to assist National Trust with habitat improvements	Sport/ recreation Biodiversity	Implementation	National Trust Environment agency	National Trust	Staff time only	Yes
Provision of cycle hire facilities	Recreation	Development	National Trust Merton Abbey Mills	Various	£10,000 although revenue generating	Part
Wandle Valley Community Food Project combining healthy activity with healthy eating	Recreation Community	Fundraising	Groundwork London Thrive	Various	£200,000	No

Climate Change

Project Name & Summary	Main Project Type – other benefits	Status	Lead Partner / Delivery Partner(s)	Land Owner	Budget estimate	Funding Yes / No / Part
Wandle Valley Climate Change Park Promote mitigation and adaptation measures involving all sectors	Climate change	Development	Steering Group for Regional Park	Various	TBC	Part
Wandle Green Energy Project Developing new sites for renewable energy	Climate change	Development Feasibility study required	Groundwork London Landowners EDF National Grid	Various	TBC	No
Hub of the Park (HOP) in Morden Hall Park Promoting building techniques for energy efficiency and low carbon footprint	Climate change Heritage (conversion of stable yards) Local economy Education	Design Fundraising	National Trust Sustainable Merton	National Trust	£1.2 million	Part EU funds HLF bid

Regeneration & Economy

Project Name & Summary	Main Project Type – other benefits	Status	Lead Partner / Delivery Partner(s)	Land Owner	Budget estimate	Funding Yes / No / Part
Branding the Regional Park Assist in business development and retention	Local economy	Development	Steering Group for Regional Park PR consultants	N/A	£10,000	No
Wandle Business Alliance Develop network to promote trade and share best practice	Local economy	Identified	Possibly SOLOMAN and South London Business	Local Authorities and private	TBC	No
River focused regeneration Linking developments to the Regional Park, businesses must benefit from proximity to river and open spaces	Local economy	Identified	Planning departments in LB Croydon, Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth GLA/LDA	Local Authorities and private	TBC	No

Heritage & Culture

Project Name & Summary	Main Project Type – other benefits	Status	Lead Partner / Delivery Partner(s)	Land Owner	Budget estimate	Funding Yes / No / Part
Wandle Heritage and Culture Strategy To link with Cultural Olympiad	Heritage Community	Development	Wandle Forum All local authorities	Various	Dependant on lead organisation TBC	Potential LDA through Cultural Olympiad and SLP
Parks for People Both Wandle Park and Morden Hall Park major projects for restoration	Heritage Community Biodiversity Sport Recreation	Fundraising	LB Croydon National Trust Community Groups	LB Croydon National Trust	£2 million for each site	Part Section 106 EU
Morden Hall Park - London Family Voices learning project over 3 years with Liberty school	Heritage Community	Implementation	National Trust Liberty School HLF	National Trust	£400,000 over four sites until April 2009	Yes
Wandle Industrial Museum at Ravensbury Mill Restore waterwheel and provide new displays	Heritage Community	Funding Legal issues with building completion	LB Merton Wandle Industrial Museum	LB Merton	TBC	No

