



Wandle Valley

# The Future of the Wandle Valley:

A CREATIVE START for  
a transformative project

Roundtable 1 of 5

21 May 2018

Minutes



GREATER  
LONDON  
AUTHORITY



Living Wandle  
Landscape Partnership

wandle



# WVRPT Resilient Heritage

## Roundtable 1 of 5 – 21 May 2018

### Attendees

Ken Worpole (Chair)

Darren Barker, Barker Langham

Joost Beunderman, 00

John Cheetham, Mitcham Common Conservator/Trust Board

Ben Croot, LDA Design

Paul Harper, GLA

Jurgen van der Heijden, AT Osborne

Marishana Mabusela, Barker Langham

Peter Massini, GLA

Nicola Mathers, Future for London

Sue Morgan, WVRPT

Frazer Osment, LDA Design

Sarah Perry, Living Wandle Partnership

Paul Rosier, Subsea Seven

John Waxman, Barker Langham

Dave Webb, Environment Agency

Beth Wratishlaw, Barker Langham

### High Level Summary

#### The River Wandle

- The River Wandle is an incredibly dynamic landscape feature that is key to the Valley, and must not be forgotten in the development of this strategy
- If the boundary is expanded too much, to encompass all 4 boroughs, it would be easy to lose the essential notion of how the river is special and how it integrates with surrounding landscapes
- Focusing on the river is key for this strategy, due to fragmented landownership in the Valley
- The identity and narrative of the Wandle Valley will still be built around the river and water, but needs to relate to the wider landscape – layering the landscapes, the river at the heart
- The river will be integral to the overall vision, it is integral to linking green and urban infrastructure
- Sustainability and ecology of the river needs to be integrated into future planning – the river is a key asset, sometimes water levels are low and it needs to continue running
- Water management is a large-scale task but undertaken through small interventions – needs a coherent approach across political boundaries – value won't be generated if the management is split up

## Green Infrastructure

- Green infrastructure development usually driven by people interested in and working in green infrastructure, but examples in Germany and the Netherlands have been driven by economic decline and water security
- GI can be an important part of economic regeneration
- There are 8 BID areas adjacent to the river, but plans for green infrastructure in these areas is inadequate
- Environment and climate concerns can lead to green infrastructure – i.e. Rotterdam created green roofs for new developments for water retention, now have a green roof landscape - adapting urban landscapes for environmental benefit
- Important to align with mayoral objectives – need to use open space to attract a wider demographic in these new development areas along the river, to foster tolerance
- Green space benefits near the river have great and easy potential, though this needs a tighter and more specific vision; urban environments will take longer to change

## Development and Growth

- 10% of manufacturing space, 20% of employment in London – a powerful statistic, what is the nature of this industry?
- Lots of developments in Wandle Valley now but will happen quickly – need to balance short-term actions with long-term planning and strategy
- Short-term pilot projects are needed to pick up investments in the near future
- New developments in the Wandle Valley can be designed to prepare for increased densification and urbanisation – with building modifications for flood risk assessments
- There is a need for retrofitting the existing urban environment to make it fit for the future – there are mechanisms for this – what kind of organisation would be required to drive these mechanisms?
- Retrofitting urban environments requires incentivising businesses – i.e. in Mexico, hotel owners depend on quality of the reefs for tourism and for protection of their assets from the sea – so they are offered lower flood risk insurance tariffs in exchange for better care of the reefs

## Investment and Funding

- Levies are a good source of funding if the benefits are made clear, tangible – i.e. Cannock Chase Conservation Area has a levy on all new homes in its sphere of influence, agreed as benefits of their work for all the people in the catchment
- May not need new legislation to function depending on how investments are utilised – would work within the boundaries of existing law
- Would be good to approach Local Authorities with potential best business case, identifying variety of potential investment opportunities and current multiple value opportunities
- Pilot projects, potentially with social landlords in Wandle Valley, would give unrestricted core funding as opposed to project-based, annualised grant funding
- Organisations can organise services through user agreements – civic funding, public subscriptions as starter funding – generating income without owning assets
- Brokering the value of investment – understanding the future value of investment now – i.e. changing school playgrounds into green spaces is a short-term win for green infrastructure but in the long term saves money for water management in those neighbourhoods
- Difficulties in monetising and measuring social impact, and damage reduced through infrastructure
- Governing body could be co-funded, receiving match-funding from RFCC

## Assets and Projects

- WVRPT do not currently own any assets, and thus can be more nimble, can facilitate developments and projects – a bit like building preservation trusts
- While owning assets would make it easier to achieve things (fragmented landownership, politics, land registry), an asset could easily become a burden
- Not owning assets is an asset – can organise Roundtables to bring together investors and funders that can finance combined investments
- If the organisation becomes a broker or asset manager, requires Local Authorities to cede management
- Small-scale citizen activity drives the majority of the projects in the Wandle Valley – this comes from a catalyst, but for most problems there are multiple drivers and they are complex issues – a lack of interconnectedness
- Governing body as facilitator for collective intelligence building
- Possibility to build a business case to bring in people across the community (i.e. people in education, people in daycare) involved in some way in the management / activity of these projects – opening up the organisation to funding from multiple sources

## Nature of the Governing Body

- Would be a bespoke body with support from the local authorities; ways to utilise existing primary legislation and institutions, or create wider non-statutory partnerships – i.e. Cross River Partnerships
- If independent of assets, the body would have the power to convene around community issues
- Brokering role of the body will be key to demonstrating its value to community organisations
- To engage Local Authorities, would need a dialogue around planning; Local Authorities would be part of the partnership – not for funding
- The Trust / body potentially in a good place to kickstart integrated working across the 4 boroughs – using a boundary of the water directive, catchment partnership

## Summary of Discussion

The 'Wandle Boundary' (i.e. the WVRPT's effective sphere of influence) should not be extended to the point where the notion of the river serving as the unifying/linking element is completely lost. But equally, the identity and narrative of the Wandle needs to encompass the wider landscape. Successful management of the Wandle Valley requires a coherent approach that transcends political boundaries.

Green infrastructure can play a key role in economic regeneration but too often green infrastructure development is championed by GI enthusiasts with limited success. Drivers such as economic decline, climate change, the need for water security and the potential to meet broader Mayoral objectives are likely to gain more traction in many instances.

There is a lot of potential for 'quick win' green space benefits near the River Wandle but urban environments will take longer to change for the better. New developments in the Wandle Valley can be designed to prepare for increased densification and urbanisation, but the need to retrofit existing development has to be recognised and this will require effective incentives.

Levies would provide a good potential source of unrestricted core funding for WVRPT if the benefits are made clear to those paying them. And new legislation may not necessarily be required (depending on how the money is used). To access money from this source, it would be helpful to provide Local Authorities with a list of current and potential investment opportunities that deliver multiple benefits. And also, it will be vital to effectively articulate the future value to be gained from investment now, even though it may be difficult to monetise and measure some aspects such as the social impact. Pilot levy projects (e.g. with social landlords) would allow the

basic concept to be tested. Funding through public subscription, or from bodies that have closely-aligned objectives (e.g Regional Flood and Coastal Committee) could also help to generate income without the need for the WVRPT to own assets.

Whilst owning assets might make some aspects of delivery easier, assets can quickly become a burden. Not owning assets would allow WVRPT to be more nimble and to focus on facilitation (e.g. bringing together social entrepreneurs, investors, funders etc). WVRPT would be free to act as a catalyst for action, collecting intelligence, and providing the inter-connectiveness that is currently missing amongst prospective delivery partners in the Wandle Valley. But whether the WVRPT is a broker or an asset manager (or indeed both), Local Authorities must be willing to cede some management control for the arrangement to work.

The WVRPT needs to be a bespoke body - supported by the local authorities working in partnership with each other - with the power to utilise existing legislation and institutions and/or create wider non-statutory partnerships. Having sufficient influence over planning policy and planning decisions in the Wandle Valley is key to WVRPT's future success, as is the ability to independently allocate funding without the risk of local authority veto. With no assets, WVRPT would be free to focus on community issues in a brokering role.

## Key Questions

- How will we define the catchment / boundary for the new body?
- How can the Trust / body function to coordinate projects and encourage interconnectedness across the Wandle Valley?
- What is the appetite among the Local Authorities for a bespoke body to manage the river and surrounding infrastructure?
- Should the Trust / body be asset-based, or should it be a brokerage / facilitator service?
- What would be required for the Trust / body to function as a facilitator for collective intelligence building?
- How can Local Authorities be convinced to cede authority to this new governing body?

