

# THE MERTON VISION

## RECLAIMING THE PRIORY

Prepared for LB Merton

### FINAL DRAFT 2

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October 2009



# **MERTON PRIORY**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Merton Priory is an extraordinary place. It was the **site of the first English Parliament**. That Parliament formed the basis for the American and most of the Commonwealth countries' systems of government.

There too, in the Priory, **the first English Statute Law was passed**. From this law the legal systems of America and most of the Commonwealth countries are directly derived.

This site is of international importance and should be designated as a **World Heritage Site**.

Furthermore, as the site of **William Morris's** factory and **Liberty's** factory it has unparalleled artistic importance.

The site is presently a disgrace. It is the vision of LB Merton to change this. It has to be accepted that certain grotesque intrusions, such as Merantun Way, cannot yet be removed, others, however, can be addressed.

To this end it is proposed that most of the car parks north and south of Merantun Way are dug up and grassed over. The line of Priory walls will be restored.

The petrol station on the north and the restaurants on the south will be demolished. The pylon on the south should be removed.

New workshops, retail outlets, a new university facility and a Visitor Centre should be built on the western side of the Wandle opposite Merton Abbey Mills. This redevelopment will lead to a reinvigorated local economy, training and employment for local people and a surge in tourism.

In brief - with drive and energy **the Priory can be reclaimed**.

This document is not a master plan but sets out an overview of how this historic jewel may be saved from years of intensive commercial redevelopment. It identifies key themes and opportunities from which more detailed plans may be developed.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Mills Whipp Projects has been commissioned by LB Merton to prepare a report outlining a Vision for the revitalisation of the Merton Priory site and nearby Wandle Valley. It is not an exhaustive master plan. It has identified a number of key themes which make the site of national and international importance and on which the Vision is founded.

Over the last 10 years a number of documents have been produced which have identified opportunities to preserve the Priory remains and assessed commercial feasibility. This report builds on their results and aims to produce a clear and achievable Vision to reclaim Merton Priory.

Achieving the Vision will require demolition and clearance followed by the restoration of the Priory and the natural beauty of the River Wandle valley.

This outline of the Vision does not provide detailed information, but indicates minimum and maximum works which specialists may use as a basis for developing more detailed plans and projected resource needs.

Finally, to make an obvious point – the scope of the regeneration scheme will depend entirely on the political will to improve the area and the funds to carry through the improvements.

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## 2. WHY IS MERTON PRIORY IMPORTANT?

### Internationally

Merton Priory is of international significance because it was here on 23rd January 1236 that Henry III met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, other bishops and the greater part of the earls, barons and others to discuss “the common good of the realm” in what was for the first time called a ‘**Parliament**’.

Unlike Magna Carta in 1215, when a resentful king had unwillingly acceded to demands forced upon him, the **Statute of Merton**, which resulted by agreement from this meeting, is the first English Statute Law.

This extraordinary document provided the basis for the principle that laws must not just be issued by the King but must be approved by the senior Churchmen and nobility together with members of the gentry. This meeting was indeed the first Parliament.

The **principle of representation** took root in this damp meeting in a Priory in rural Surrey and grew to become the basis of democratic government worldwide. The governance of the United States of America and most Commonwealth countries derive from that first Parliament. Now, about **2 billion people worldwide live under a system of law that derives from the Statute of Merton.**

The significance of the first Parliament and the approval of the first Statute Law therefore has worldwide implications. We would argue that it fulfils two of the criteria for **World Heritage Status**:

***III “to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared”***

***VI “to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.”***

## Nationally

In addition, Merton Priory has other claims to fame. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the extraordinary designer and thinker, William Morris, established his factory within the Priory precinct. Here his artisans produced wallpaper, carpets, stained glass and other objet d'art. Furthermore, the site later became the factory for the retailers Liberty's. In terms of the Art and Craft movement, Merton Priory is one of the most important sites in Britain.

Merton Priory also had a notable school. In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century Walter de Merton was educated at Merton Priory, subsequently becoming a legal clerk assisting the prior in conveyancing. In return the prior helped Walter de Merton to establish a school at Malden Surrey. However, the school then moved to Oxford. In 1264 Walter obtained a charter of incorporation, establishing Merton College, Oxford with a constitution based on the Augustinian rules he had observed at Merton Priory. The community should live together under a common rule and head, supported by secure endowments.

Merton College, Oxford, was the first college to be so established and its statutes formed the basis for all the other Oxford colleges and soon after by Cambridge colleges.

### 3. THE VISION

Reclaiming Merton Priory is at the heart of the Vision to create a stimulating and sustainable cultural asset of international significance. And to be a catalyst for economic and social growth to kindle shared community focus.

This simple aim will be extraordinarily difficult to achieve but possible, given political will and community consensus. This document makes no pretence that the site is currently anything but grotesquely deformed by culturally illiterate modern buildings, pointless roads and intrusive electricity pylons. However, no modern intrusions are permanent, no modern defacings which are there now cannot be undone in due course.

Behind *Reclaim the Priory* lies a powerful vision to unearth the cradle of English, commonwealth and American law and highlight the importance of the Statute of Merton.

The Vision will seek World Heritage Site status to support the presentation of the Priory remains, re-establish the Priory lands and restore the beautiful Wandle Valley.

Three core elements are central to this aim:

- conservation, presentation of the Priory remains and Statute of Merton
- creation of the Merton Priory Park
- construction of the Visitor Centre complex

It is proposed that the Park will occupy a large, open but inclusive area on the eastern side of the River Wandle, with the Priory and a copy of the Statute of Merton at its centre, and with the visitor complex on the western side of the river. Access to the Park will be through the Visitor Centre before crossing over the Wandle via pedestrian bridges. It is proposed to locate the main entrance on the western side of the Visitor Centre with a connection to Merantun Way. An alternative or supplementary access point could be from Merton High Street along the side of the River Pickle. It is envisaged that the majority of visitors will enter and leave the scheme via the Visitor Centre's commercial area.

Visitor car parking availability will be a key issue. One possible solution may be to provide ground level parking beneath a raised Visitor Centre.

Improved signage from all public access routes via road, over-ground rail and the underground system will be necessary. The feasibility of renaming Collier's Wood underground station "Merton Priory" should be considered at an early date.

### Conservation and presentation of the Priory Remains (Zones 1 – 3)

The scheme aspires to emphasise the Statute of Merton by expressing its scale of influence and the magnitude of the events that took place at the Priory, through a multi-media platform. A reproduction of the Statute of Merton will be exhibited within the Chapter House and an interactive Wi-Fi information system will enable visitors of all ages to understand the 'spirit of place'.

It is unlikely that English Heritage will allow the remainder of the surviving Priory foundations to be consolidated and exposed. It is therefore proposed to conserve them *in situ*. The footprint of the Priory defined by these foundations would then be recreated at ground level over the ancient foundation plan to a height of a few courses, using similar materials to the original, to create an impression of the Priory size and layout and to present a unified, coherent ground plan of the Priory. Alternatively Marcus Beale Associates suggest adopting high-tech glazing technology to provide a viewing cover over of the actual remains. The feasibility of this and the potential of the remains for public display should be assessed.

Specialist advice should be sought to consider ways of further enhancing the presentation of the Priory using lighting, screening and possibly projections. During this process the policies set out within the Conservation and Management plan 2006 should be taken into account.

### Creation of the Priory Park (Zones 1 – 4)

Creating the Park within the Priory precinct will provide a setting which will both enhance the ancient Priory remains and establish a direct physical link with the Wandle valley. Fashioning a cohesive rural open space to confer a feeling of incorporation and bond its disparate parts may be achieved through establishing sight lines and screening, especially beneath Merantun Way, and standardising common elements e.g. pathways, signage and park furniture.

It aims to provide opportunities for local communities and visitors to enjoy an open, rural area with a strong sense of place and history, enhanced by greater biodiversity and the re-establishment of the ancient environment. Spread throughout the Park, an interactive zonal information system based on Wi-Fi stations will provide heritage and natural history information at each location for both children and adults.

Merton Priory Park has the potential to form one of the Wandle Regional Park's most significant and outstanding features. It should become a major focal point at the heart of the Wandle Valley development corridor with a strategic planning commitment within the London Plan. To achieve this Merton Priory initiative should explore opportunities to collaborate with the Wandle Valley Park's regeneration team during their scheme's Transitional Phase.



The policies set out within the Management and Conservation Plan 2006 should be adhered to and a restoration master plan devised.

### Creation of the Visitor Centre Complex (Zone 5)

The proposed Visitor Centre complex is located adjacent to the western side of the Wandle corridor (Zone 5, Fig. 3). Along with a major, multi-storey landmark building(s), it is proposed to incorporate a plaza/market space and possibly an outdoor music/theatre venue. The Liberty's building should also be incorporated into this scheme. This initiative should complement Merton Abbey Mills and dovetail with the proposed Merton Abbey Mills Conceptual Master Plan (Matthew Springett Assoc. and Marcus Beale Assoc. May 2007).

In parallel with these proposals a marketing plan should be developed for the commercial, educational and arts aspects of the scheme. A broad based open membership scheme of "friends" should be created building on existing marketing initiatives supporting performing arts and heritage events already taking place at Abbey Mills. Supporting this, a major website facility will provide up to date information.

It is anticipated that the Visitor Centre will house a number of different facilities and amenities, including:

- Multi-faith Ecumenical centre
- Education centre
- Museum
- Arts centre
- Theatre
- Retail
- Auction house
- Workshops
- Restaurant

One of the key problems for the proposed scheme to overcome is the provision of adequate parking facilities. Not only will the scheme attract a greater number of cars to the area, but the existing parking areas on the southern side of the Savacentre and to the south of Merantun Way will have been replaced by the Merton Priory Park.

This problem could be partially solved by lifting the Visitor Centre complex (Zone 5) to provide ground level parking beneath, in a similar fashion to that beneath the Sainsbury's building.

### Looking beyond the core scheme: University Facilities

LB Merton has the potential to support a major university facility. Given the historical significance of the area, both law and arts faculties could place themselves culturally and geographically at the epicentre of their discipline's past great achievements.

## **4. WHAT WILL THE VISION ACHIEVE?**

### **Economic Regeneration**

#### Retail

It is proposed to promote investment in a wide range of small businesses and industries to reflect the unique cultural heritage of the Park. Themes include; horticulture, tourism, hospitality, education, recreation, brewing and creative industries to be housed in the Visitor Centre and within parts of the green open space of the Park.

The opportunity to develop a trading environment to complement Merton Abbey Mills on the western side of the River Wandle as part of the main Visitor Centre area should be explored.

#### Employment /apprenticeships /workshops

It is proposed that new workshops will be built on the western bank of the Wandle. It is suggested that these could be the basis for re-establishing the centre of artistic vigour manifested by William Morris and the Liberty's works.

It is intended that this will lead to a powerful strategy for funding and creating sustainable businesses to employ and train local people. The workshops will provide a creative focus, attracting companies to provide apprenticeships for printing, design, crafts and so on.

#### Tourism

It is proposed that the regeneration of the Priory and establishment of the Park will in turn promote tourism to the area. This will benefit the existing Merton Abbey Mills, encourage new business in the workshops and retail outlets on the western Zone 5.

#### Arts

New facilities for the performing arts and art exhibitions will be provided within the proposed Visitor Centre. A key aim will be to establish a thriving centre for the Arts and Crafts movement at Merton which could include an auction house at the Visitor Centre complex.

## **4.2 Local Communities and Social Benefits**

### Community focus

It is the aim of the vision to make sure that the Park and Visitor Centre are welcoming and attractive to all local communities, especially those hard to reach. A key aim is to provide a harmonious environment in which people may meet and conduct their activities. It is envisaged that such an environment will encourage the involvement of the local community and foster a sense of ownership.

A sense of place may be cultivated by staging community events based on the new cultural, recreational and educational facilities. This sense will be further enhanced through the natural geographical inclusiveness of the site's location within the natural boundaries of the River Wandle valley.

Furthermore, the fame of the Priory and William Morris will to attract people over a wider geographical area and promote LB Merton.

### Recreation

Merton Priory Park will provide opportunities for outdoor activities associated with both the river and the open space. Together, the Park and Visitor Centre can become a venue for expanding the already thriving calendar of performing arts, festivals, fairs, theatre and music. A museum, theatre and restaurant will be established within the Visitor Centre while the potential for an outdoor music venue within the Park will be explored.

It is intended that Merton Priory Park will be integrated with Wandle Trail and form a major hub within the River Wandle Park.

### Education

The scheme possesses a unique resource for education being not only the site of the Priory remains and the extraordinary historical events associated with them, but also the location for the foundation of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Extensive educational facilities will be provided within the Visitor Centre, museum and art gallery which will cater for both adult education and school visits. Within the Park a broadband based, zonal information system will provide specifically located internet access points each providing a range of educational material for differing age groups.

The Visitor Centre may have a full time education officer and possibly be the base for an archaeologist providing outreach to local schools.

## 5. HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THE VISION?

It will be necessary to invest the scheme with a high degree of design and programming flexibility in order to accommodate both short and long term objectives which can reflect changing circumstances. Decision making processes on this scale will be informed by the policies set out within the Conservation and Management Plan 2006 and achieved through the creation of an efficient system of management and project governance structure.

In parallel with this, the process of achieving World Heritage Site status will be initiated to raise the profile of Merton Priory Park and attract patrons.

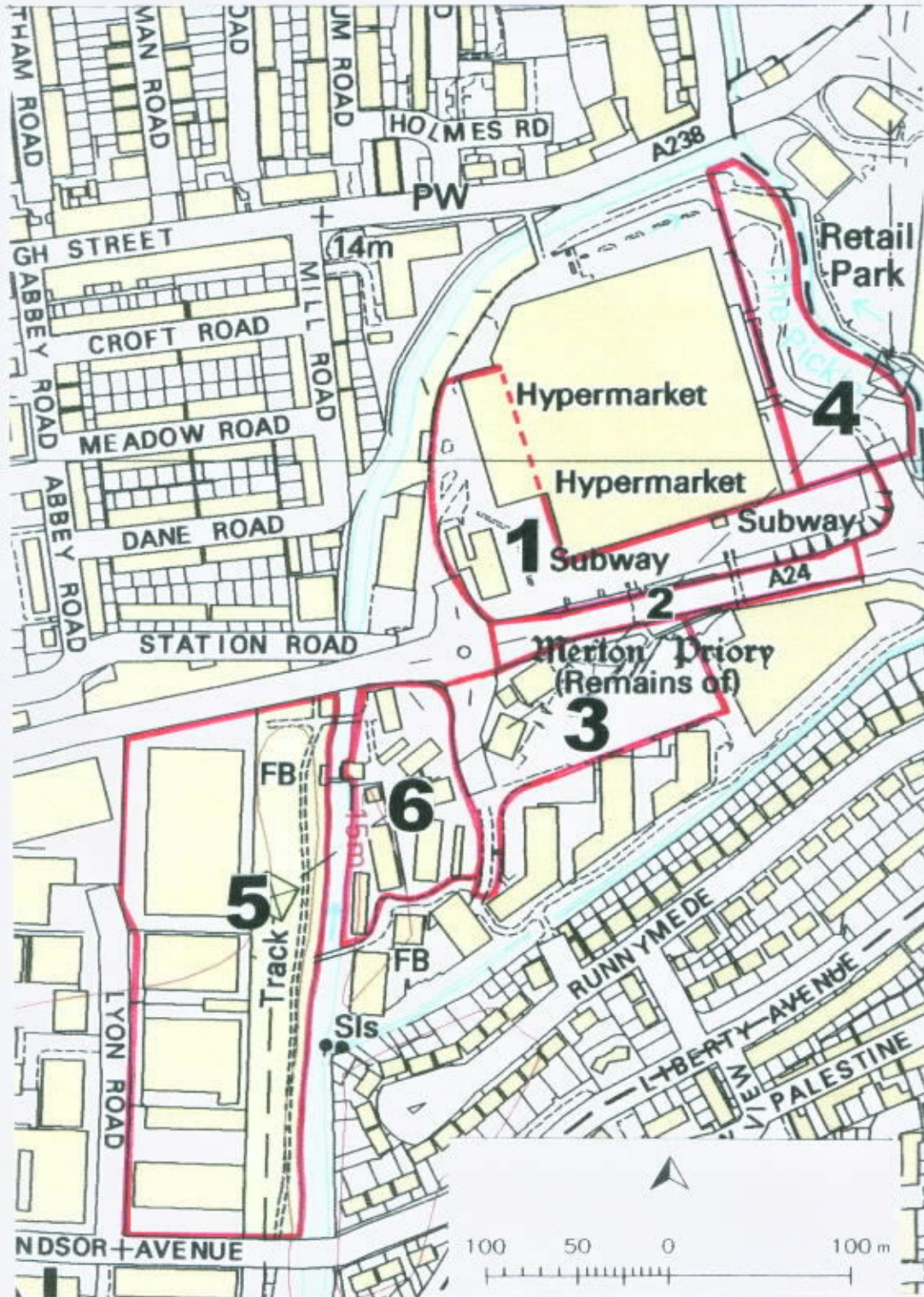
To achieve the Vision the revitalisation site has been broken up into 6 modular building blocks referred to as Zones 1 to 6. Each Zone has its own challenges and opportunities. Moving each one forward will entail discussions with the landowner, retail tenants, English Heritage Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service.

The limited scope of this outline Vision should be taken into account. More detail will be added through the Master Plans when outline design consensus is reached amongst major stakeholders. Further, although it is beyond the scope of this document to provide solutions to fundamental design issues, some of the most critical influences on design are noted:

- sustainability (both of Vision concept and its material make-up),
- land availability
- building on the River Wandle flood plain
- car parking facilities
- access

Steps to progress the scheme are set out below in two sections. Firstly, the make-up of each Zone is described and illustrated on Figure 3. This is followed by a 9 Step Plan.

Figure 3 Strategic Zones



## **Project Zones 1 - 6**

### Zone 1 Merton Priory Park North

This area is currently used as a car park for the shopping precinct and has a petrol station on the western edge.

#### *Minimum*

The car park will be reclaimed and the petrol station demolished or relocated.

The modern overburden will be removed and soft landscaping laid out. The line of the Priory walls will be defined by upstanding new stonework / brickwork about 3ft / 1m high. A playground will be established. The shopping precinct will be screened by trees and vegetation.

#### *Maximum*

An urban farm will be established. The area north of the Church will become a permanent / temporary sculpture park.

The western part of the existing shopping precinct will be converted into an Art Gallery showing objects on loan from the V&A, the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery illustrating the character of the site e.g. Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, William de Morgan and their influences.

### Zone 2 Merantun Way

Cutting across the site is Merantun Way. Under the road the Chapter House of the Priory is partially uncovered. The road arches are filled in with brick walls.

#### *Minimum*

The infill brickwork under the road will be removed to provide sight lines beneath the road and increase the cohesiveness of the Park. The Chapter House walls will be conserved as necessary and the remains will be visually connected to the Priory remains either side of the road.

Merantun Way will be enhanced visually to provide a strong contrast to the Priory remains.

#### *Maximum*

Merantun Way will be removed and the footprint of the road integrated within Priory Park. The Priory walls will be defined above ground.

The feasibility of using state of the art glazing technology to preserve and exhibit the remains should be assessed and discussed with English Heritage.

### Zone 3 Merton Priory Park South

At present the area is occupied by a private car park and two fast food restaurants.

#### *Minimum*

The two fast food outlets will be demolished.

The modern overburden will be removed and soft landscaping laid out. The line of the Priory walls will be defined by upstanding new stonework / brickwork about 3ft / 1m high.

Being the site of the Priory Infirmary a recreated mediaeval medicine garden will be established.

#### *Maximum*

The electricity cables will be rerouted and the pylon removed. The access road will be removed.

### Zone 4 the River Pickle

At present the Zone is occupied by car parking, refuse and recycling skips.

#### *Minimum*

The present layout will be re-arranged to allow access to the remains of the Priory precinct wall and the visual approach to the Pickle will be enhanced. A pedestrian route will be created.

#### *Maximum*

The car park and modern intrusions will be removed. The area will be landscaped and the surviving Priory precinct wall will be displayed and enhanced. This area may provide a supplementary access point.



### Zone 5 West of the Wandle

The Zone is currently occupied by modern industrial sheds and warehouses of no architectural merit. The redevelopment of this area should incorporate the major Visitor Centre building(s), car park, plaza/market area and possibly open air theatre/music venue. It should dovetail with the mixed use development concept proposed by Matthew Springett Assoc. and Marcus Beale Assoc.

#### *Minimum*

The existing warehouses will be demolished.

It is proposed that a new Visitor Centre will be erected. This will include a museum / art gallery reflecting the rich history of the site. Educational facilities will also be included.

A non denominational prayer centre may be included to represent the religious character of the site and to form a bridge (literally) to the broader community.

Visitor car parking will be located beneath the raised Visitor Centre and the Park accessed via pedestrian bridges across the River Wandle.

New university facilities may be located here to re-establish Merton's legal and artistic inheritance.

Part of the site was occupied by the apartments of King Henry III. The remains of the building will be exposed as part of the Priory Park.

#### *Maximum*

New workshops and retail outlets and restaurants will be built using traditional material reflecting the range and quality of materials in the present Merton Priory Mills complex. A new theatre and outdoor music venue will be created.

### Zone 6 Merton Abbey Mills

The new landscaping will be intended to compliment the architecture and functions of the Merton Abbey Mills.

## **9 Step Plan**

### ***1. LB Merton to adopt the outline vision, agree and confirm with major stakeholders***

A review of outline Vision will be undertaken by LB Merton prior to its adoption. A further review should be undertaken by major stakeholders with the aim of reaching broad based consensus prior to the adoption of the final outline Vision.

### ***2. World Heritage Site application***

The project team should agree a strategy and project design for applying for World Heritage Site status. This process should involve liaison with the Senior Advisor, World Heritage and International Policy Team for English Heritage. This process has already been initiated by Mills Whipp Projects as part of the initial Vision development.

Once agreed the application programme should commence immediately. This would involve the preparation of a nomination document and management plan for submission to the Dept. of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).

This process should continue in parallel with other elements of the strategy.

### ***3. Agree project leadership, management and governance***

A project team should be created possessing a well defined project hierarchy with clear roles and responsibilities. Strong project leadership is necessary to co-ordinate, implement and manage programmes working in parallel involving complex interplay of land acquisition, demolition, legal approvals.

As Merton Priory has a complex history of interested parties within the public, private and voluntary sectors, a project governance structure should be adopted in order to define their roles and responsibilities.

### ***4. Feasibility study***

A study of the feasibility of the maximum and minimum components of each Zone should be undertaken adopting short, medium and long term aspirations.

Short term feasibility should include achievable aims for the initial stage of the scheme's development. This is likely to be represented mainly, but not exclusively, by the minimum aims for each of the 6 Zones. These will inform the development of the Master Plans.

A Business Plan feasibility study of the commercial aspects of the scheme should be carried out to build on that undertaken in 2003. It should also assess external funding potential.

### ***5. Master Plans***

Following the adoption of the outline Vision and the assessment of its feasibility, Master Plans will be prepared describing the overall scheme in narrative, graphic and audio visual format. This will be used to co-ordinate the preparation of detailed project designs for the Visitor Centre, Park and Priory remains on a zonal basis.

As the scheme incorporates numerous component parts with a wide spatial distribution, the Master Plans should also include a scheme wide land acquisition strategy, outline development sequence and town planning application strategy.

At this stage a major commercial development company or project management company should be employed to manage the delivery of the scheme.

### ***6. Funding strategy***

The proposed outline scheme needs to be costed by specialists. A range of costs will encompass the maximum to minimum works.

Once the range of costs has been established, a funding strategy will be prepared identifying potential revenue sources. Fund raising should then begin immediately.

### ***7. Project Designs & Planning Applications – programmes, budgets, resources***

Detailed project designs should be prepared for each Zone, although those Zones representing the Park (Zones 1-4) could form one package while the Visitor Centre (Zone 5) forms another. Final project designs should include detailed architectural/engineering designs, construction methodologies, budgets, programmes, resource requirements and planning application documentation.

Design and build contractors will apply for scheme contracts through LB Merton's supply chain. It may be necessary, however, to include an architectural design competition for the Visitor Centre Complex in Zone 5 and other aspects of the scheme.

Planning consultants will prepare and submit planning application documentation as detailed plan information becomes available.

**8. Marketing Strategy**

In parallel with steps 6 & 7 a marketing plan should be developed to embrace the commercial, community, religious, educational and arts aspects of the scheme. It should aim to raise the profile of the scheme at the design stage as well as marketing after scheme completion.

**9. Start work on the ground**

When planning permission is granted the project design programmes for on-site work may commence.

## **APPENDIX 1 - Statement of Achievability**

Scheme achievability rests entirely upon the degree political will to support it. To achieve consensus and create momentum it will be necessary for the scheme to be backed by an influential group of supporters.

Such support will have a profound influence on every aspect of the project but most crucially on the success of the funding strategy. It goes without saying that the extent and range of the scheme is directly proportional to its resources. To this end a range of options are presented as minimum and maximum targets for each Zone. Minimum targets are considered to be achievable in the short term while the achievability of maximum targets increases when considered in the longer term.

### Zone 1 Merton Priory Park North

Minimum - achievability rests entirely with the ability to reclaim Sainsbury's car park and petrol station.

Maximum – the inclusion of an urban farm and sculpture park rely on the availability of land. The conversion of the western part of the shopping precinct will depend upon the goodwill of the freeholder and on its commercial feasibility.

### Zone 2 Merantun Way

Minimum – Is there an engineering capability to install new non-intrusive road supports at a reasonable cost or use existing supports? The ability to exhibit the existing Priory remains in Zones 1-3 is dependent upon the attitude of English Heritage.

Maximum – the removal of Merantun Way is currently cost prohibitive. It may, however, be possible in the longer term. Using state of the art glazing technology to preserve and exhibit the remains in Zones 1-3 may be cost prohibitive but should be assessed.

### Zone 3 Merton Priory Park South

Minimum – the removal of the existing fast food outlets and land ownership problems will require political will to overcome.

Maximum – the removal of the electricity pylons and re-routing of the supply is dependent upon the degree of political pressure placed upon the national grid

administration and the availability of funds. A similar situation arises with regard to the access road.

#### Zone 4 the River Pickle

Maximum – land availability to provide an alternative scheme access point.

#### Zone 5 West of the Wandle

Minimum – the development of the Visitor Centre is dependent upon land acquisition. The scale of the Visitor Centre is entirely dependent upon funding.

Maximum – the ability to include an outdoor theatre/music venue is dependent upon the availability of land.

#### Zone 6 Merton Abbey Mills

Merton Abbey Park and the Visitor Complex are intended to complement and enhance Merton Abbey Mills.

## **APPENDIX 2 - Planning and Legislative Background for archaeology**

### **Legislation**

Part of the proposed Merton Priory Park is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Any works affecting the SAM must be approved by the Dept Culture Media and Sport, who advised by English Heritage will issue a Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC).

The site also lies within an Archaeological Priority Zone as defined by LB Merton. Any works which would need planning permission would also require the archaeological implications to be considered. English Heritage is adviser to LB Merton on archaeological matters. Details of the policies are given in the Appendix.

Part of the site is a Conservation Area so any design matters will have to take that into consideration.

### **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979**

The Act is divided into three parts, covering Ancient Monuments, Archaeological Areas and Miscellaneous and Supplemental. Only the first part is relevant here.

The purpose of the Act is to provide legal protection for ancient monuments by listing the monument in a schedule, hence Scheduled Ancient Monuments. It is an offence to damage, alter or bury a Scheduled Ancient Monument. However, Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) can be granted by DCMS advised by EH which permits works to the SAM. This includes consolidation and repairs.

### **National Planning Policy**

#### **Planning Policy Guidance (PPG16, 1990)**

The Department of the Environment published Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) in November 1990. This set out the policy on archaeological remains on land, and provided recommendations many of which have been integrated into local development plans. The principal points stated by PPG 16 are given below.

Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, and in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by a proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.

The key to informed and reasonable planning decisions is for consideration to be given early, before formal planning applications are made, to the question of whether archaeological remains are known to exist on a site where development is planned and the implications for the development proposal.

When important remains are known to exist, or when archaeologists have good reason to believe that important remains exist, developers will be able to help by preparing sympathetic designs using, for example, foundations which avoid disturbing the remains altogether or minimise damage by raising ground levels under a proposed new structure, or by careful siting of landscaped or open areas. There are techniques available for sealing archaeological remains underneath buildings or landscaping, thus securing their preservation for the future even though they remain inaccessible for the time being. If physical preservation in situ is not feasible, an archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record' may be an acceptable alternative. From an archaeological point of view, according to PPG16, this should be regarded as a second best option.

Agreements should also provide for the subsequent publication of the results of any excavation programme.

Development plans should reconcile the need for development with the interests of conservation including archaeology. Detailed development plans should include policies for the protection, enhancement and preservation of sites of archaeological interest, and their settings.

Decisions by planning authorities on whether to preserve archaeological remains in situ, in the face of proposed development, have to be taken on merit, taking account of development plan policies and all other material considerations including the importance of the remains and weighing these against the need for development.

Planning authorities, when they propose to allow development which is damaging to archaeological remains, must ensure that the developer has satisfactorily provided for excavation and recording, either through voluntary agreement with the archaeologists or, in the absence of agreement, by imposing an appropriate condition on the planning permission.

PPG16 forms part of an EU context which considers the importance of the archaeological and historic heritage of development proposals. This has been formulated in the Code of Good Practice On Archaeological Heritage in Urban Development Policies established by the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe (2000).



## **Regional Policy: The London Plan**

The strategies and policies for the whole of the Greater London area which are contained within the GLA's London Plan (Feb. 2008) also refer to archaeology.

*Policy 4B.13 Archaeology The Mayor, in partnership with English Heritage, the Museum of London and boroughs, will support the identification, protection, interpretation and presentation of London's archaeological resources. Boroughs in consultation with English Heritage and other relevant statutory organisations should include appropriate policies in their DPDs for protecting scheduled ancient monuments and archaeological assets within their area.*

## **Local Policy: Archaeology and planning in the LB Merton**

LB Merton's UDP contains a number of policies relating to archaeology. These include

Policy BE.3 Development adjacent to a Conservation Area - A development proposal adjacent to a Conservation Area will be expected to preserve or enhance its setting and not detract from views into or out of the area in which archaeological significance is a criterion.

Policy BE.8 Setting of Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks and Gardens and the wider Historic Landscape – In considering the design and siting of extensions or development special regard will be had to the desirability of protecting the settings of Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments and the wider Historic Landscape, including views to and from Historic Parks and Gardens (see also Policies I.5 and L.6)

Policy BE.13 Archaeological Protection and Preservation – The Council will encourage early consultation on development proposals affecting sites of archaeological importance and their settings.

- i) There will be a general presumption in favour of the permanent physical preservation of all Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other nationally important archaeological sites and their settings. Planning permission will not be granted for development that would adversely affect such monuments and sites, involve significant alteration to them or would have a harmful impact on their settings
- ii) Locally important archaeological remains should preferably also be preserved in situ. Exceptionally, where remains cannot be preserved in situ, they will be preserved by record through an appropriate programme of archaeological work by a recognised archaeological organisation before development, in accordance with a project design approved by the council. Such provision shall also include the subsequent publication of the results.

Policy BE.14 Archaeological Evaluation – Before development commences on site, reference should be made to the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note on Archaeology.

Where development is proposed within a Priority Zone, as shown on the proposals Map, The Council may require a preliminary archaeological assessment before proposals are

considered. This requirement may also be applied to sites outside the Archaeological Priority Zones especially where they are over 0.6ha or where there is proven or known archaeological potential.

The subject lies within the APZ 1 Wandle Valley Alluvium and contains Merton Priory, a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

## **APPENDIX 3 - World Heritage Site Status**

### **Applying for World Heritage Site status**

The fact that Merton Priory was the setting for the first English Parliament and the creation of the first English Statute Law means the site is of international importance. The political and legal development of the American and Commonwealth countries can be traced directly back to Merton Priory.

The significance of the first Parliament and the approval of the first Statute Law therefore has worldwide implications. We would argue that it fulfils two of the criteria for **World Heritage Status**:

***III “to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared”***

***VI “to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.”***

It is proposed that the site should, therefore, be submitted for designation as a World Heritage Site.

### **World Heritage Site – Designation Process**

Preliminary discussions have been undertaken with Sue Cole, Senior Advisor World Heritage and International Policy Team for English Heritage. She has outlined the bid process.

The first stage is the preparation of a nomination document and management plan. This is normally prepared by a group of stakeholders e.g. local council with businesses and other large organisation. This is prepared in close liaison with English Heritage.

The bid is then submitted to the Dept of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), which may place it on the World Heritage Tentative List. Next DCMS can select a property from the Tentative List to place in a Nomination File.

At this point the file is evaluated by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and decision made whether to include the site on the World Heritage List.

#### **APPENDIX 4 - Consultees**

Rod Lyons – LB Merton  
Cllr Richard Chellew – LB Merton  
Caroline Keary – LB Merton

Simon Thurley – English Heritage  
Jane Sidell – English Heritage  
Sue Cole – English Heritage

David Saxby – Museum of London

John Hawks – Merton Abbey Mills Ltd  
Terry Buckland – Merton Abbey Mills  
Marcus Beale – Marcus Beal Architects