

Morden Town Centre - SWOT Analysis

Developed by Merton Councillors

Strengths

- Transport links
- Green spaces (Morden Hall Park, Wandle Trail etc.)
- Independent shops
- Affordable property prices
- Good schools
- Residents want change in the area
- Car parks
It feels safe in Morden
- The Mosque.

Weaknesses

Look and feel

- Perceived as negative/depressing walking along the high street.
- Shop offer is poor/wrong – retail and eating offer in particular, no variety, no anchor stores to bring interest, wrong size units
- Not a destination town centre
- Not a place to dwell - “Not a place to go to a place to go through”
- Designed for cars not people
- Badly polluted
- Badly laid out
- Poor lighting – not bright enough
- Feels unsafe
- Often compared to Wimbledon and Wimbledon wins.
- Not green in the town centre – sandwiched between two parks but ugly in the town centre.
- Since 2004 discussion around regeneration, there is a constant worry of blight for the businesses

Transport and layout

- Station side crowded especially at rush hour (7-9am and 4-6pm)
- Social distancing is impossible at times of day as bus stops and station access all in same location.
 - Closes off movement of people.
- Pavement and lobby too small to manage commuters
- Brutal architecture, lobby dark.
- Crossing the road is difficult
- Road is noisy and overwhelming as a commuter route

Opportunities

- Improving public toilet facilities would help the high street e.g. a community toilet scheme. No statutory duty to provide public facilities.
 - Could lobby government, but who pays? Need to engage with Transport for London on this.
 - Look at schemes like '20p for a pee' and exemplars like Victoria, Kensington and Chelsea and Euston. There is a certain level people are willing to pay.
 - Could consider a reduction in business rates for shops/businesses taking part in a community toilet scheme.
- Opportunity to repurpose the station area and make more welcoming to people who might want to stay rather than the large number of commuters just moving through. No reason for people to want to stay. We want to encourage people to idle/meet and go in to nice shops. Possible focal/meeting point in Morden.
- Currently a feeling of untidiness, so we should look at opportunities to make the high street cleaner and better.
- Need to look at improving the local offer around leisure and food and drink.
- The demographic has changed in Morden and there is more money, but the offer cannot be too expensive.
- Flexible licencing – wholesale review of licencing to allow more outside use, allowing for accessibility. Could consider grants for blinds to provide outside covered areas.
- There are a range of ethnic food offerings in Morden – could market this more effectively.
- Other opportunities include pop-ups, floor markings for social distancing and more seating.
- Successful high streets are based on a Norman Church so you are always close to the centre. Morden high street is focused on the tube station, which intersects the high street.
- Could consider having the station covered over for 30 meters to open up more space. Potentially move bus garage for additional dwelling space in front of the station.
 - Huge area: could consider making into a park.
 - Currently, people look north rather than coming south. Tube stops people from coming from the north so could look at opening up new walkways. Could create a walk through to Abbotsbury Road.
 - Could we look at an easier walking route to Morden Hall Park via Sainsbury's, and allowing pedestrian access to Kendall Gardens, also from Sainsbury's?
- Opportunities for vacant shops or struggling larger shops to consider a new office hybrid model: hub community people can use as a working space. Wimbletech CIC have been delivering this model in the Wimbledon area, including spaces like Wimbledon library.
- Opportunities to create a space to dwell. Could we pedestrianise Abbotsbury Road?

- Need a solution to opening up and pedestrianising the centre that overcomes the challenge of the big main road in the middle. The easiest thing to do would be to look at options for Aberconway Road. Also a walk through with pedestrian priority from the tube station. Could consider 10m/p/h speed limits, chicanes, ban combustion engines, etc.
 - What would replace A24?
- Accessible carparks are necessary to open up access in the South of Morden – too far away mentally so need better physical and mental access.
- Change focus to consumption rather than take away. Not enough consumption outlets.
- In the short term could look at getting businesses up and running, and closing down Abbotsbury Road to traffic.
- Street scene pop up on Abbotsbury Road. Tables in parks: Opening areas in Mostyn Gardens. Look at ideas from Wandsworth/Westminster.
- Could get some businesses operating in the piazza in front of the Civic.
- Morden Hall Park currently feels too far away. Could consider options with National Trust to make it more symbiotic with the local area. Better signposting from the Wandle trail. The park currently has around 1.2 million visitors per year so is easiest thing in Morden to attract people.
- Greening: getting more greenery onto the high street. Refreshing of flowerbeds outside the Civic: more colourful and vibrant. Possible additional uses of foyer of civic. More planters/trees.
- Tackling traffic and air pollution. Low emissions buses. Anti-idling opportunity?
- Longer-term solution: Making the dual carriageway buses only.
- Want something unique to associate with Morden: not just chain stores.
- Opportunity to work with landlords to fill voids. Rents must be low to attract businesses.
- Could make it more of a destination for young people – fun.
- Also, opportunity to attract older people and families to family oriented activities in local green spaces. Morden Hall Park is the big draw. Need to create more of a link between the high street and the park. Morden Road is the challenge.
- Tall blocks in Morden are unappealing. Could look at greening the whole area e.g. green boulevard between the station and the park. More trees and longer term greening.
- Create a green destination: London version of Eden Project!
- Want to encourage people to visit Morden High Street for lunch/evening/work. Attract pop-ups/bars/micro businesses/start-up enterprises to the area.
- Creating space for people to dwell safely, make it comfortable - seating or meeting areas of interest.
- Quick win would be to green the station and TC spaces, potted Yuccas and plant trees.

Threats

- That Morden High Street is unable to develop a new identity, or ‘reinvent itself’
- Indecision and conflict will prevent progress

- The end of commuting – fewer people pass through Morden
- Changing habits – people no longer shop on high street
- That they will just build tower blocks
- Houses nearby, so nightlife economy an issue (hidden strength – could emulate Herne Hill and have a day time market area rather than night focus)
- Lack of finance
- Volume of traffic flowing, and where it goes instead
- Countering negative images
- That London Borough of Merton, Transport for London and National Trust will not work together, have a joined up vision, and do things separately.
- Perception – challenge to change the narrative, and counter negative image
- That Kingston, Wimbledon, Sutton strengthen, and Morden is left further behind.
- Lack of variety of shops
- Threat – marketing not there, not being publicised enough or right
- Changing demographic – threat that we underappreciate pace of change, Morden lags in its offering of what people in the areas might actually want or support.
- Biggest threat – lack of progress. Council's lack of skills right on the project.
- Cross rail – will further increase the benefit from Wimbledon, so that will push Morden aside.
- Competing against other high streets. Being on the northern line makes it even compete with central London areas.
- Bigger centres getting bigger – e.g. people in Morden going to Westfield shopping centre.
- Domination by clone retailers.
- Community there that are willing to shop
- Transport - going to limit what can do long term
- Parking and cycling issues
- People being against plans (e.g. pedestrianisation)

Mitcham Town Centre SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Central location
- Good bus network and trains/trams
- Sports – cricket, bowling, leisure centre.
- Heritage
- Affordable housing and rental properties
- Greenspaces (Mitcham common)
- Sense of community

Weaknesses

Transport and layout

- Traffic movement makes it feel stranded.
- Morrison's car park creates a barrier.
- Green spaces are not connected.
- Reorganisation of the traffic has helped but still difficult for pedestrians to move around.
- Difficult to drop off and pick up, especially for older residents.
- No defined High Street
- Polluted from busy road.

Look and Feel

- Not a shopping destination, loses out to Croydon and Wimbledon Town Centre
- No draw - No anchor or branded stores
- No “love,” lacks energy.
- No entrepreneur driving the Town Centre, no trigger for external investment.
- No ambition.
- Proliferation of hairdressers, betting shops and charity so feels run down.
- No interaction with the industrial estates
- No night-time offers.
- Lack of restaurants.
- Not meeting the Mitcham demographic
- Market is weak, with a poor offer.
 - Suggested that the market income goes to Kingston Markets?
- Too many car parks in a small Town Centre.
- Quality of produce poor – plastic dominated.
- Antisocial behaviour - Street drinkers intimidating (highest rate of crime across the borough).
- Dirty and smelly, fly tipping and littering.
- Architecture a major weakness - Ugly buildings in the last few decades.

- Fear of crime & anti-social behaviour
- Fly tipping problems
- Lack of places to dwell and socialise
- Too many takeaways and not enough restaurants

Opportunities

Sites

- Mitcham Eastfields station to enable regeneration.
- Sadlers Place redevelopment to attract an entrepreneur.
- Work with Asda to open Town Centre catchment.
- Gasometer site could be a special garden space with areas for rest, food stalls, and open space for recreation – again opportunity to work with the owners/developers.
- Eagle House GII listed – opportunity to use the car park for boot fayres, markets.
- Canons House – Art Hub could be driving young people to Mitcham.
- Vestry Hall underutilised, opportunity to market the space more.
- Marble seating on the grass area is a readymade theatre space.
- Promotion of the green spaces and heritage – the cricket pitch.
- Use Mitcham Common for events
- Morrisons Car Park redesigned – “Peckham Levels” model with street food, good vibe in the evening.
- Market – reconsider covering.

Wider opportunities:

- To carry out some analysis to understand the demand and needs of the catchment area around the Town Centre.
- New residents with disposable income
- A local centre, especially for older residents so make it more accessible (e.g., re-invent the drop off points for pedestrians).
- A cultural strategy for the Town Centre.
- Pop up art events
- Marketing and public relations for the Town Centre
- Manage the fly tipping to improve look and feel.
- To extend the Conservation Area
- Be ambitious about the market, create themed market activity – Afro-Caribbean food, farmers, Polish – be more like Tooting market. Encourage at least 30 stalls on site.
- Create more events – Film Merton created a stir and very well received.
- Surrounded by stunning green spaces – create connections/links to Beddington, Watermead, and nearby bird sanctuary.
- Improve connectivity of the green spaces through walking and cycling routes – Morden to Mitcham, Morden Hall Road, Phipps Bridge Road, and Eastfields to Town Centre were all mentioned.

Threats

- Westfields sucked life out of south west London
- Online retailing – can Mitcham survive on businesses that provide instant services?
- Transport for London is a threat as bus goes through Fair Green
- Building on parks and open spaces: the housing shortage
- Green space doesn't have good access so don't use it
- Untidy, not sure why, not beautiful so people do not dwell. Need space, safety, happiness and don't have that quality in Mitcham
- Crime levels, anti-social behaviour around the pond
- Too many betting shops, encouraging anti-social behaviour
- Fear of crime, anti-social behaviour
- Threat
 - a. people don't see the opportunity,
 - b. Transport into central London;
 - c. places to relax
- Littering
- Crime rate
- All leads to people not coming and not staying – could lead to town centre disappearing, becoming residential, will lose emotional tie and identify as have no central place to go.
- Quirky! (a positive)
- Very diverse *(also a positive)
- Difficult to make the town centre a social environment – cannot come in with their friends and socialise, nowhere to meet.
- Threat - National planning rules relaxing – can put anything anywhere and leave gaping
- Anti-social behaviour
- Perception – drunken behaviour of individuals, but could be widespread and occurs in other town centres. Police presence required
- Threat of other areas doing better – us as a council not getting the chorography right, other areas improve quicker and people are drawn away from Mitcham
- Threat – lacking buzz and dynamics in town centre

Summary of both groups THREATS

- Difficult to make the town centre a social environment – cannot come in with their friends and socialise, nowhere to meet.
- Threat – people do not linger (untidy, anti social behaviour). Need space, safety, happiness and don't have that quality in Mitcham
- Perceptions and reality – crime and fear of crime, littering, general sense of untidiness all leads to people not coming and not staying – could lead to town centre disappearing, becoming residential, will lose emotional tie and identify as have no central place to go.
- Outside threats –
 - online retailing,

- Westfields,
- national planning changes allowing anything to happen anywhere, leaving gaping hole
- Threat of other areas doing better – us as a council not getting the chorography right, other areas improve quicker and people are drawn away from Mitcham

Wimbledon SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Transport
- Town centre amenities and shopping choices
- Cinema and theatres
- Vibrant
- Safe
- Tennis

Weaknesses

- Chain heavy – no independent shops
- Nothing unique
- Resident tension over developments
- Nowhere to dwell
- High traffic

Opportunities

- Create something that appeals to the young people who already come there, a cultural leisure option
 - Alternative sports, climbing walls
- Improving the cultural offer
 - Concert Hall
 - New sound system will hopefully improve theatre popularity. (Matthew Bourne now willing to bring ballet here).
 - Polka Theatre also to be opening again soon – will appeal to families and young people.
 - Music offering – small scale music type venue to attract people of all ages. Jazz and comedy nights – can be done in pubs. Can be small scale cultural venues.
- Pursuing a stronger leisure and dining offer over retail
- New owners of Centre Court – want to make it more unique with less retail.
 - Developing more of a café area on Queens Road, creating pedestrian space.
 - Work spaces, makers spaces and workshops
 - Giving over roof to allotments and bee hives.
- Communities has connected more over the last year – opportunity to harness this
 - Community garden on plot of land council owns?
 - Small scale business units
- Pop ups – would need to publicise that we are open for them.
- Library hub – while people are working from home. Harnessing groups of people working from home during day.

- Mixed mode use – bit of office, bit of retail, leisure. Need that flexibility. More successful parts of Wimbledon are places which have been able to adapt and change. Mix at ground floor, and then something above.
- Attractor – to get people in. Diary of events, every month major thing on for people to come in and see.
- Opportunity to do something with development sites P3 and P4 by the theatre – arrangements outside the theatre – small community space created there. Should harness this.
- Concert Hall – opportunity (P3)
- Having an arcade of small independent shops, would add more character.
- Wimbledon Tennis – village does it well, but constant opportunity – 2 weeks of tennis – great opportunity of updating Centre Court – during that period on world stage, gives business owners that opportunity to do the best they can in that 2 week period.
- Over the last year Wimbledon Community Interest Company have done well in the library, developed network – looking to roll out more towards the high street. Looking to create a bubble/hub – so taking out a small section of a retail store as a hub. With more people working from home locally, this would be a good opportunity for them.
- People have changed the way they work. Rather than residents going into London, shopping etc. will be based at home more – spending locally rather than in central.
- Opportunities to improve the station to improve layout and make use of land behind the station

Threats

- Individual shopkeepers and/or businesses don't have a collected mind/approach (other than Love Wimbledon).
- Need to make sure doesn't become too twee or faded.
- Great transport hub – need it to be bringing people in not letting people leave.
- Wimbledon has to reinvent itself. Look and feel of the place. Character of shopping offer. Encouraging independents – offering something that people will come for, then stay.
- So close into London. Competing with central London locations. Wimbledon has to constantly create independent shops to keep residents engaged.
- Need to have theatre that can compete with central London ones – it's a big space to fill. Will it ever be able to compete? Extend analogy to shopping and food offer.
- Wimbledon High Street is not centre of town, but doesn't have space of Kingston. Neither one thing nor the other – hard to see how it will become really attractive town centre. Buildings are so big and bulky – limited in terms of creating space, would need particularly high obstacles.

- Cost of running a business in Wimbledon is quite high – rents and rates. Has to be attractive. Easy to put people off.
- Too many things happen at once
- Depend on return to office. Was successful as affluent residential area, but not densely enough populated to support the high street – was propped up by commuters and office workers.
 - What if not as many office workers come back?
 - How do you replace that footfall – tourism strategy?
- Food and drink places rely on office workers. If not there – how viable is it as a restaurant/food/drink place.
- Traffic management – although not as bad Morden.
- The rise of the office only approach – want something that works well for everyone, not just high-rise offices.
- Not green enough (opportunity – create more green spaces)

Raynes Park - SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Waitrose
- Mix of chains and independents
- Strong community feel
- Transport links are good
- Lantern arts centre
- Low crime rate

Weaknesses

- Too many vacant shops
- Lack of parking
- Lack of step free access to station.
- High house prices - average price £1.5m
- Lack of open space / green space.
- Vacant premises - too many (Lloyds / Wetherspoons) depressing look to the high street. But rents going up?
- Lack of parking in the town centre, outside Sainsbury's. Controlled Parking Zone
- Lack of Commuter Parking.
- Management of the Railway Lands, fly tipping and mess
- Train line splits the town centre in two. Passive, not so much active frontages on one side. Solicitor's accountants – rentals and 3 tunnels none are attractive to go through
- Ease into conversion of flats - Permitted Development rights
- Commercial rent increases.
- Tunnel maintenance and lighting.
- Skew arch south side environment
- Confusion over refuse collection for flats above shops.
- Not any green spaces in the High Street – no street trees because of the embankment.
- Pub offer not so great. Cavern good but a bit more niche. Beer garden refused twice at Weatherspoons – beer garden was a must for London Village Inns to take over the lease from the freeholder) Gone from £75k to £105k rents.
- Not too much of a night time offering – some niche offerings e.g. Japanese could be an opportunity?
- Designed for cars not people. Not a thoroughfare
- Psychological perspective of Town Centre is negative - Station is a barrier and dominates peoples psyche.
- Low lying land and water settles quickly, maybe something more substantial about the drains.
- Things that were there in the past. Significant challenge as a small high Street and suck the life out of Needs better lighting, wider pavements and pedestrian sites – possibly improve outside Starbucks

Opportunities

- Opportunities to capitalise on the many positives including good hinterland; highly compact and easy to walk about; above average in terms of salary and consumption; seen as 'up and coming'; active residents' association; involved populous; Waitrose; good bus and train links. It is a high street for everybody with a daytime and evening officer for everyone and it is extremely safe. Area would benefit from a good, strong marketing campaign.
- Should look at any opportunities to improve footfall and dwell time and make the high street more attractive.
- Could look at opportunities to widen pavements, put in trees and improve lighting.
- One of the current challenges is the lack of accessible green space. There are opportunities to make better use of land and green spaces in particular on the edge of Raynes Park. Areas such as the Skew Arch and the land towards railway path. Potential to make concreted area outside Waitrose into a garden.
 - Also, create more opportunities for sitting outside.
- Area is currently too much of a thoroughfare so could look to pedestrianize certain areas such as the area between Raynes Park Tavern and the health centre.
 - Bus lane unnecessary: could look to convert back to two-way traffic. Opportunity to change in to pedestrianised area.
 - Could look at other opportunities to divert traffic; creating roundabouts rather than traffic space.
- Could convert fencing outside the railway to iron railings. The area between the platforms is an area of special scientific interest so it would be good to be able to view this. Fence owned by Network Rail.
- Current cycle lane doesn't work. Could make the pavement opposite broader to create more space for dining. May need to lose 2 to 3 parking spaces to do this.
- One short-term solution would be better use of the outside space close to Lantern Arts Centre/church and to provide more outdoor seating for the café.
 - Opportunity to capitalise more on the arts centre as a local a hub and community focus.
 - Currently pretty treeless outside so could plant more trees.
- Could also plant more trees along high street to give it a different atmosphere.
- Demographics in the area are quite stable but shoppers tend to go elsewhere.
- Area would benefit from free 20 minute parking bays and removing some of the existing parking restrictions.
- The South Korean community is potentially a niche market we could aim for in the area. The Raynes Park Korean Church is well established in the area (8-10 years), plus there are two local Korean shops on Coombe Lane and another local Korean church in the area.
- Quite a few vacant shops on high street. Opportunity to find out who the landlords are and potentially look at community meanwhile uses if there is interest from community groups.

- Opportunity to create more public spaces in the central area. There is an area of artificial space in front of the Raynes Park Tavern: possible to make this more of a public space.
- In the short term there is an opportunity to continue to approve space for outdoor eating.
- Opportunity to smarten up the high street. This could include ensuring litter is cleared around the railway embankments. Removing of graffiti around the Raynes Park motor garage and on private lands. Charity shops are a good thing but there is a problem of donations being left outside the shops.
 - Could consider public art and improved lighting in the Skew Arch tunnel. Clearer guidance for flats above shops on disposing of waste. Tackling overspill in bins outside Waitrose carpark.
- Further improvement opportunities to consider around Raynes Park Industrial Estate.

Threats

- Recession/shrinking economy: shops closing down (i.e. Post Office)
- Proximity to Wimbledon (or other better served high streets) impacts on the high street in two ways:
 - Higher commercial rents, so businesses move out
 - Residents shop (or dine) on the other high streets
 - Lack of commuting into the area possibly for years
- Challenges to create new and cost-effective parking spaces. Parking is too expensive and poorly distributed or advertised. This also disincentives families with children (prevalent demographic) who need cars for their shopping to shop in the area.
- Mismatch between residents' needs and existing business. Too many estate agents. There is a risk that this is not addressed in a timely manner.
- It is not a very attractive area. There is a risk that it will get forgotten – lack of investment/funding.
- It has a linear shape, so it requires more creative thinking than a traditional high street.
- Proposals with National Railway Network take forever to be approved

South Wimbledon SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Great transport – tubes and buses
- Good schools
- Close to Abbey Mills and Deen City Farm attractions
- Late night cafes and takeaways
- Local to Wimbledon

Weaknesses

- Flytipping magnet
- Vacant shops
- Heavy traffic and constant roadworks
- Lack of parking
- Lack of places to dwell/relax/sit outside and eat

Opportunities

- Good Transportation Systems, trams, buses, tubes
- Good number of independent shops
- Affordable rents
- Build upon small business presence by providing them support
- There are 100 shops within a five minute walk.
- The High Street has the cross required for a dense town centre
- Nearby attractions include; Merton Abbey Mills, Wandle Trust, Wandle River Walk is a good family day out
- Transport for London is a major local organisation they could fund the Green agenda
- Opportunities for space – the back entrance of the tube station could be used to create a walkway
- South Wimbledon is the centre of the borough
- Opportunities for regeneration with commercial spaces at the bottom
- Increase in working from home opportunities to create local shopping experience
- Growth in Wimbledon could spill over into South Wimbledon
- Opportunity to make good use of end spaces of high street
- There is a commuter market and nighttime economy
- The width of Kingston Road can facilitate outdoor space for coffee shop expansion
- Close to the entertainment district
- Opportunities to green the area and plant more trees
- Opportunities to extend tramline
- There need to be a review of disabled parking availability

Threats

- The Landscape is now dense and not as picturesque as it used to be
- Pollution
- Traffic congestion
- Safety of pedestrians around cross junction
- The business community is not cohesive or united
- Need to gain buy-in from Transport for London to invest in traffic and pollution issues
- There is a lack of outside seating space, nowhere to socialize
- Street cleaning needs to be improved
- Too many lock ups owned by people who do not live in the area causing problems with refuse collection
- The area does not attract funding (unlike Colliers Wood)
- New buildings causing overcrowding, more cars and no parking
- Congestion on major roads causing traffic delays
- Need more trees to tackle pollution
- High Path Regeneration is causing noise pollution
- Roadworks are on-going throughout the year lack of information on schedule
- House prices are very high - excluding young people.