Understanding Sutton’s Local Distinctiveness

Characterisation Report of Studies

Planning and Transportation Service
Environment and Leisure

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Introduction

“It is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness …”

(PPS1, ODPM 2004)

Introduction

1.1 Sutton has long been regarded as a prosperous and attractive area in which to live. It conveys the image of a leafy well laid out established ‘arcadia’. However the character of the Borough is more complex than this simple stereotype.

1.2 Every place, like every person, has a distinct character, which is often determined by the place’s features, such as the geology, archaeology, heritage quality and the streetscape, including streets, front boundaries and the type, age and scale of buildings. Knowledge of these features is important when designing and making decisions about the type and location of future development. In particular, these are important when seeking to ensure that future development respects and improves the existing local character and helps create places with an identity that builds on Sutton’s local distinctiveness.

1.3 A recognised technique for identifying and recording existing character is by conducting a borough wide ‘characterisation study’. Characterisation is a tool for defining and understanding the characteristics of a place and the Historical Environment Local Management (HELM) states that ‘characterisation is a widely used tool for helping to form an overview of an area as a framework for sustainable decisions on managing change’.

1.4 This document sets out the findings of a Characterisation Study of Sutton’s existing suburban and urban character, conducted during 2007, and will inform the development of Policies in the Local Development Framework and associated documents.

1.5 In addition to informing the preparation of the Council’s Development Plan Documents, this report should be used by anyone seeking planning permission as the starting point in the preparation of a design and access statement. Design and access statements should be started at the earliest stage in the design of schemes and set out, stage by stage, how the preferred design solution takes the opportunities for improving the character of the surrounding area.

Document Background

1.6 Since 1968 and the designation of Carshalton Village and Wrythe Green Conservation Areas the Council has focused on the preservation of the special character and appearance of the Borough. In the last 40 years the
Council has designated a further 12 Conservation Areas and has identified a number of Areas of Special Local Character. However both nationally and regionally there has been an increased focus on an 'urban renaissance' in order to achieve higher density development and regeneration of town centres.

1.7 This study is particularly important given the pressure to meet and exceed housing targets whilst continuing to protect the character of the Borough.

1.8 In order to inform the Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document an Interim Report of Studies was prepared based on the Townscape/Landscape Appraisal (1998). However the Interim Report of Studies indicated that more detailed work would be carried out in 2007. This Report of Studies sets out the latest research and updates and replaces the Interim Report of Studies.

Policy context
1.9 The Council must take account of national and regional planning policy in developing a new policy approach for suburban areas of the Borough. Accordingly, this is summarised below.

1.10 Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) requires Planning Authorities to prepare robust policies on design and access based on an understanding and evaluation of the defining characteristics of the area. The government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment and requires a high level of protection for the most valued townscapes.

1.11 Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) makes clear that Local Planning Authorities should develop design policies aimed at creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character. Furthermore, PPS3 states that the extent to which development creates, or enhances, a distinctive character that relates well to the surroundings and supports a sense of local pride and civic identity, should be considered when assessing proposed development. PPS3 also states that Local Authorities should facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that define the character of a particular local area.

1.12 PPS3 also allows local authorities to set a range of densities across a plan area opposed to one broad density range, although 30dph net should be used as a national indicative minimum until a local density range is adopted. However, PPS3 also allows local planning authorities to plan for densities below this minimum, as long as these are justified bearing in mind local circumstances.

1.13 The Mayor of London, in the London Plan: Consolidated with Alterations since 2004 (the London Plan), states that boroughs should ensure that development proposals
achieve the maximum intensity of use compatible with local context, the design principles in Policy 4B.1, and public transport capacity. The Mayor of London also puts forward a density matrix, which sets a strategic framework for appropriate densities at different locations, which aims to reflect and enhance existing local character by relating the accessibility of an area to appropriate development. Appropriate density ranges are related to setting in terms of location, existing building form and massing, and the index of public transport accessibility.

1.14 Policy 4B.1 of the London Plan states that boroughs should seek to ensure that developments respect local context, history, built heritage, character and communities.

Purpose of this report
1.15 This Report of Studies has been prepared as supporting evidence for the Local Development Framework.

1.16 In particular, the purpose of this report is:
- To set out a thorough understanding of the various elements that make up the borough’s character and which contribute to local distinctiveness;
- To fully understand the relationship between local density and character found in the borough;
- To put forward evidence in support of the Council’s policy approach for a local density matrix based on an assessment of local character;
- To provide the strategic context for Conservation Area Character Appraisals and the preparation of Planning Briefs;
- To update elements of the 1998 Townscape/Landscape Appraisal; and
- To identify any areas or topics where further local evidence is required.
Geological and hydrological context

2.1 The geology of Sutton is made up of three predominant soil types: Upper Chalk in the higher lying southern parts of the borough; London Clay in the north west; and river terrace sands and gravels in the lower lying north east near the Wandle River. The geology of the Borough is shown in Figure 2.1.

2.2 The southern edge of the Borough rests of chalk which was in the past supported a mixture of arable land and open grass downland.

2.3 A result of the changes in height and interface of chalk and gravel & clay is the Thanet Sand found along the north/south divide. Here, water descends through the deep chalk until it meets impermeable clay, rising through the sand to produce abundant springs and ponds, useful for farming, crops and industry.

2.4 In the early 20th century the sands were described as the best barley land in Surrey. This fairly narrow zone of fertile soil must have been under more or less continuous cultivation for thousands of years and its is here that the five historic village centres were located – Beddington, Wallington, Carshalton, Sutton and Cheam.

2.5 The land to north of these divides into two broad areas, east and west. The land in the northeast is largely underlain by gravel which was washed out of the Croydon Valley in the last ice age. The River Wandle flows around the southern and western edge of this its main sources being springs in Croydon and Carshalton. The north west part of the Borough largely rests on London clay which produced intractable and infertile soil.

2.6 The lime for many 17th Century developments, including St. Paul’s Cathedral, is supposed to have come from two large chalk pits found either side of Carshalton Road, where B&Q and the Water Gardens estate is now.
Figure 2.1: Geology of the Borough
Topography and Views

Topography
3.1 The northern part of the London Borough of Sutton is generally flat, lying at between 30/40m above sea level with the exception of Rose Hill which rises up to a height of 50m. However Sutton is located at the foot of the North Downs and therefore the southern part of the Borough rises up towards the south to a height of 140m. The topography of the Borough is shown in Figure 3.1.

Views
3.2 The topography of the Borough affords a number of long-range views into, across and out of the Borough. The Townscape/Landscape Appraisal of the Borough identified the Borough views out from the area, which were deemed to be of strategic significance, and these are shown on Maps in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

3.3 Not surprisingly there are more significant views from the south and given its topography these are largely towards the north. These views extend towards the West London Ridge, towards Crystal Palace and into Central London including of the Telecom Tower and Canary Wharf Tower.
3.4 The views from North are more limited and largely of a more local nature – towards the Ikea chimneys, the Croydon skyline and southwards towards the residential suburbs and tree lined roads.

3.5 Whilst the Landscape Appraisal also considered local views on a site by site basis, these were not comprehensively recorded on a map or critically analysed in a way that could help develop a policy on views. Furthermore skyline issues were not addressed.
3.6 Consultants should be commissioned to undertake a comprehensive study of views and skylines of the area in order to be better able to determine which need to be protected.
Archaeological context

Introduction
4.1 English Heritage advocates the consideration of existing archaeology when undertaking characterisation analysis. Figure 4.1 shows the location of Archaeological Priority Areas and Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Borough.

UDP Context
4.2 Sutton Council’s current UDP, saved Policy BE40, requires Archaeological Field Evaluations for development in the Archaeological Priority Areas identified below:

Upper Paleolithic / Mesolithic Communities
- North Downs Fringe and Springline
- Wandle Alluvium

Late Prehistoric Communities
- Queen Mary’s Hospital
- Wandle Gravels

Late Iron Age, Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon Communities
- Beddington Roman Villa
- Bandon Hill Roman Cemetery
- Beddington Anglo-Saxon Cemetery
- Stane Street
- Mere Bank

Medieval and Later Historic Communities
- Wallington
- Beddington Carshalton
- Sutton
- Cheam
- Woodcote

Post-Medieval Water Powered Industry
- Wandle Mills

Historic Estates, Parks and Gardens – the Suburban Legacy
- Carew Manor and Beddington Park
- Carshalton House (St. Philomena) and Gardens
- Mascal (Carshalton Park House) and Carshalton Park
- Stone Court and the Grove
- The Grange, Wallington
Prehistory

4.3 Very little is known about the earlier pre-history of the area. A number of stray items have been found on the Wandle gravels and the slope of the North Downs but, apart from the fact that they are largely absent from the clay lands, they do not form any clear or obvious pattern. It is therefore difficult to say much about early human activity in the area.

The Late Bronze Age and Iron Age

4.4 Archaeological finds become a lot more common from the Late Bronze Age (starting about 800 BC). There have been many Late Bronze Age finds in and around the upper Wandle valley. The most important site is a circular enclosure – probably a fortified settlement – where Queen Mary’s hospital stood. Other sites are known at Carshalton House, Scawen Close Carshalton, Beddington Roman Villa and elsewhere. The impression created is of a quite densely settled farmed landscape. Late Bronze Age finds are absent from the west side of the Borough probably because the clay soils there were much harder to cultivate.

4.5 The Late Bronze Age was followed by the Iron Age. Settlement of this date is again most common on the east side of the borough. The Carshalton ‘hill fort’ seems to have gone out of use and Iron Age finds are less common than those of the Late Bronze Age. The population may have declined but this is uncertain.
The Roman period

4.6 Pre-Roman Surrey was probably something of a backwater. London did not exist and the Thames may have been a boundary area between tribal territories. The Roman conquest of Britain started in AD 43 and by the winter of AD 47-8 London had been founded. The town went on to become a major settlement and which made Surrey’s position much more central.

4.7 Stane Street - the London Chichester Road crossed the Wandle at Merton Abbey (near the Savacentre) and then ran across the north of the Borough on or near the line of Stonecot Hill and London Road (the A24) to Ewell where there was a Roman settlement.

4.8 The London to Brighton Roman Road passed just east of the Borough and there may have been a roadside settlement at Croydon.

4.9 Two villas are known within the Borough. The Beddington Villa stood on the sewage farm a short distance northeast of Carew Manor. This was first discovered in the 1870s during the construction of the sewage farm. Settlement on the site started in the late Bronze Age (about 800 BC) and continued on to the Roman period. There were early Roman finds on the site but no trace of the associated buildings. About 180 AD a large villa was erected. There was a separate bath house a short distance to the west and a large aisled barn to the north which had been rebuilt several times. The villa was abandoned around the end of the Roman period (about 400 AD).

4.10 In 2002 Sutton Archaeological Services found a flint foundation in West Street to the north of the Race Horse car park. Only one room was exposed but foundations seen in the sides of the trench suggested that the structure extended in the direction of West Street. The site was probably a villa. The finds suggested that it had been occupied in the first and second century. There was also prehistoric material suggesting that the villa may have been developed from an Iron Age farm.

4.11 Two Roman coffins have been found near St Mary’s Church, Beddington and some cremations were found at Bandon Hill. A scatter of Roman finds have come the down slope and the spring line.

Saxon

4.12 This area seems to have been settled by the Saxons at a relatively early date as there are early cemeteries at Beddington, Croydon and Mitcham. We know very little about the settlement and landscape of the local area in the early and mid-Saxon periods. The old village names are recorded in the Domesday book but the pattern of settlement may have been more scattered than it was later. However, the village centres had emerged by the end of the middle ages.

4.13 The local area had four medieval parishes Beddington, Carshalton, Sutton and Cheam. Wallington was part of Beddington parish although it seems to have had its own
chapel which fell into disuse and was demolished about 1800. Much medieval fabric survives in Beddington and Carshalton churches and the chancel of Cheam Church has survived as the Lumley chapel.

4.14 A number of medieval and early modern secular buildings have survived the most important of which is Carew Manor with a grade I listed hammer beam roof of about 1500 over the great hall.

4.15 Even in the 16th century it was possible to travel easily from Sutton to London. The area was therefore a favoured location for out of town houses belonging to courtiers and wealthy London merchants. There are significant archaeological remains of these buildings and their gardens within The Borough including Carew Manor, Carshalton House and Carshalton Park.
Historic development context

General trend of development

5.1 In the late 18th century the Borough was a rural area with five villages, surrounded by farmland. The River Wandle flowed through the villages of Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington. There was only one mill in Beddington, as the river flowed through Beddington Park, but the Carshalton and Wallington areas were heavily industrialised by 18th century standards. The Wandle River was lined with mills producing flour, leather, snuff, paper, dyestuffs and other materials. On the river bank there was a series of textile printing works and bleaching grounds where cloth was whitened by laying it out in the sun. A few of the mill buildings have survived, in addition to several late 18th and early 19th century workers cottages such as Wrights Row, Wallington Green.

5.2 The Borough had an exceptional number of large country houses, which mostly belonged to wealthy Londoners. During the 18th century the roads were improved, allowing those who owned light fast carriages and good horses the opportunity to easily commute to the City. The Downs, to the south of Sutton and Epsom, became famous for horse racing and several large houses were built to take advantage of this, including the Oaks where the Earl of Derby and his friends devised the famous races.

5.3 This mix of agriculture, industry and pleasure survived into the early 19th century, however the area began to change following the introduction of the railway. The West Croydon to Epsom line was the first, opening in 1847, with the Epsom Downs line following in 1865 and the Carshalton / Hackbridge line being built in 1868. These good train connections made the area attractive to middle class commuters and suburban development soon followed.
5.4 During the suburban development period of the Borough, there were two kinds of estates, namely (a) large upper middle class houses often belonging to City workers; and (b) small houses belonging to locally employed people. Sutton expanded the most rapidly because it had the best railway connections, and by 1900 it was considered a small town.

5.5 When the First World War broke out in 1914 much of the area was still rural with a great deal of farmland. However, this changed in the inter war period and by 1939 most of the area was developed as private estates or council housing, and most of the old country houses were demolished. Some of the grounds of these country houses became public parks, although others were lost to development.

5.6 Minimal bomb damage during the Second World War did little to change the character of the Borough. The most significant development was in 1945, when many old houses were demolished to make way for flats and town houses. The impact of this development was fairly severe on the Victorian and Edwardian upper middle class housing estates, with the loss of many fine examples of original buildings. The minimal benefits from the redevelopment of smaller estates has meant that many smaller lower middle class and working class estates have not changed much. However, several additional areas of public housing have been built in recent years, including ‘greenfield’ and ‘brownfield’ development. ‘Brownfield’ development includes the closure of factories and demolition of some areas of poor quality housing.

Figure 5.3: Development of Borough – Mid 1900s
5.7 There is also a great deal of variation within this general trend, which has given each village its particular character and identity. The following section sets out some of the key considerations for each village area.
Beddington

5.8  In the second half of the 14th Century, a courtier called Nicholas Carew built a large estate centred on Beddington and his descendants dominated the parish for centuries. His Victorian heir, Charles Hallowell Carew, was more interested in horse racing than housing development and therefore little or no development occurred in the parish before 1859, when he went bankrupt and sold the greater part of the land. This land sale could have resulted in large-scale development, however control of the parish was passed to a small group of wealthy landowners who wished to retain the rural setting of their country retreats.

The elaborate Carew Manor, Beddington Park

5.9  A large area of open space in the north of Beddington has survived. This was previously the Carew’s deer park covering a large area between Croydon Road and Mitcham Common. In the 1860s Croydon Council bought the northern part of this park for use as a sewage farm. A wealthy Victorian rector from St Mary’s Church, Canon Bridges, protected the southern part from development by preserving it as a park.

5.10  This southern portion of the park contains the historic core of Beddington, including Carew Manor, St Mary’s church, the park and the old village centre. Apart from a small mid-Victorian estate built on Bandon Hill, in 1913 Beddington was largely rural despite large scale development to the east and west, in Croydon and Wallington respectively. However, during the 1920s a large part of the area was developed in a decade and during the 1930’s significant infill development occurred.

5.11  During the First World War two military airfields were created in south Beddington, which became Croydon Airport, London’s key airport of the inter war period. The closure of the airport in 1959 resulted in large amounts
of open space, which a portion was used for the Roundshaw housing estate in the 1960s. The Roundshaw estate had a distinct character with its own identity, before much of it was redeveloped in recent years.

Carshalton

5.12 In the early 19th century Carshalton was the largest and most varied of the villages. It had a reputation as an attractive place, with springs and watercourses. Around the edge of the village where several large houses, with Carshalton House, Stone Court and Strawberry Lodge still surviving, and Carshalton Park House and others which have been demolished. The back yards of the High Street and West Street comprised of a number of squalid housing developments. Furthermore, several mills along the Wandle River contributed to an industrial character of the area.

5.13 In 1847 the owner of Carshalton Park prevented a railway station nearer than Wallington and this left Carshalton Village at an economic disadvantage. Small working class housing estates were built at Mill Lane and north of the Wrythe. However, there was little middle class suburban development until Carshalton Park was subdivided and sold in the 1890s. A delay in developing to the north and south of the village until the 1920s and 1930s meant that the village centre was not totally redeveloped. This resulted in the village retaining its attractive mixture of old buildings from the medieval to modern periods.

Carshalton station finished in 1902 on the line to London via Hackbridge, facilitating suburban growth in the Borough

5.14 In the 1920s and 1930s Carshalton Urban District Council bought up the properties around the ponds to protect the area against development. Carshalton High Street was badly damaged by a bomb in the Second World War, however the attractive nature of the area survived and the Ponds and High Street became Sutton’s first conservation area, Carshalton Village Conservation Area.

5.15 The St Helier Estate, partly in Sutton and partly in Merton, was built by the London County Council from around 1928 to 1936. It was designed as a ‘garden suburb’ with significant green space, varying house
designs and narrow streets because few council tenants owned cars.

**Cheam**

5.16 In the early 17th century Cheam was a large spacious village with many attractive medieval buildings. This included several large houses set in substantial grounds and a private school. Little change occurred in the village for the next century and Cheam was still relatively rural when the First World War broke out in 1914.

5.17 There was, however, significant suburban development at Worcester Park, located on the northern boundary of the parish and separated from the old village. There was also a small amount of Edwardian development on the Downs to the south of Burdon Lane and large Victorian Houses in Peaches Close.

5.18 Following the war, there was large-scale redevelopment in a short period of time. The main roads through the village were widened and most of the old houses along them were demolished and replaced. In less than a decade the village acquired a modern character. However, many attractive ancient buildings survived, including Whitehall, the Old Rectory and St. Dunstan’s Church.

5.19 Development in the 1920s generally comprised of large estates, with groups of detached or semi-detached houses of a few basic designs. However, as an exception to this, Andrew Burdon instigated individually designed, up market houses set in well landscaped areas to the south of the Sutton-Epsom railway. This provided owners with the opportunity to apply Andrew Burton’s design or employ their own architect. This area has a mixed character with several fine examples of 1920s mock Tudor.
Hackbridge

5.20 The area around Hackbridge was previously low lying open fields with the confluence of the fast flowing eastern and western branches of the River Wandle originating as chalk streams and merging at Wilderness Island, before heading north into the Thames. Wilderness Island was the location of several early Mills on the River harnessed as an energy source over several hundred years for a variety of early industrial processes including flour grinding, calico beating and gunpowder grinding, from before the Industrial Revolution.

5.21 The success of the Mills as well as the pleasant pastoral environment less than 12 miles from the City of London (The River Wandle was a famed trout fishing river) attracted wealthy mercantilists who build several large Country houses close to the River funded both by City enterprise and the more dependable rentals arising from Mill ownership. In the early industrial revolution, the River Wandle had the greatest concentration of industrial water mills in the country. The economic significance of the area meant that a branch of the Surrey iron railway - the first public railway in the world - was laid through to the area. With the rapid growth of London and demand for decentralised housing many of the distinctive “County” homes were sold, starting in the later Victorian period and accelerating later. The estates were divided and the land developed for housing estates whilst the Mills remained forming the nucleus for later manufacturing enterprises alongside areas prone to flooding often utilised for Watercress Beds. The predecessor of the Battersea Dogs home was set up here in Hackbridge and became one of the largest dog quarantine sites in the country. The settlements of Hackbridge, Mill Green and Beddington Corner continued with their distinct mixed use industrial / residential character but became more densely suburban and commuting encouraged by the fast rail service to Westminster (Victoria) and the City (London Bridge).

5.22 In the early decades of the 20th Century the area’s proximity to thriving Croydon helped it continue to be a significant manufacturing location by becoming increasingly linked to the global economy and by specialising in the new technologies of electronics (Marconi and Mullards valves), communications (deep sea telegraph and telephone cables) and early aviation.
The need for housing for workers was met by construction nearby. In the interwar periods many of the remaining open spaces and common land were built on for speculative housing and areas employment function continued to grow so that Mullards became part of the multinational Phillips industries and the largest employer in the borough in the 1960’s based on distinctive multi-storey factories reflecting the continental Bauhaus design philosophy. Mullards continued through to the 1990’s before demolition and redevelopment for housing, a school and open space/flood wash land. Other manufacturing locations remained in the area but ceased to be leading edge technologies as the original firms relocated out of London and were replaced in turn by distribution warehouses and the service industry (Hackbridge was the location for the first “Comet” discount retail warehouse in the early 1970’s).

Employment continues to be significant to the area as space for serviced offices/workspaces has been created from former offices (Sutton Business Centre in the former Zetter Pools headquarters) and the Wandle Valley Ward has the second highest employment numbers of any ward in the Borough (after Beddington North).

5.23 New housing has been built for a variety of tenures in the area including the low lying land to the east of the London Road adjacent to the substantial Beddington Farmlands a significant open area associated with market gardening and the tertiary processes of sewage waste treatment originally developed by Croydon Corporation and linked to the Beddington Park and Mitcham Common. Hackbridge therefore has retained its mixed use employment and residential character alongside the River Wandle and its proximity to open land areas although the form and function of the built environment has changed substantially. Most recently the appetite of the area for innovation has returned with the award winning zero carbon development of BedZED based on low energy, low waste, use of local sourced materials and renewables together with its iconic architecture which has attracted international acclaim.

5.24 Wallington

In the early 19th century Wallington was a small hamlet within Beddington Parish. There were several large older houses to the north of the Green, including the Manor House and the Old Manor House. To the south of the Green was an area of late 18th century developments that may have housed people working in the mills and textile works along the Wandle. Wallington acquired a railway station in 1847 and Nathaniel Bridges, owner of the manor and much land, started developing the area for housing. He laid out a number of roads to the north of the station, which were soon lined with large Victorian brick gothic villas. Development to the south of the railway occurred around Stafford Road. Bridges used leases to strictly control the appearance of the houses,
of which the design had to be approved by his architect. As a result of the railway and increased housing development, a new parish was created and Holy Trinity Church erected. In the early 20th century development spread southwards from Stafford Road and Stanley Park Road, with many good examples of Edwardian houses. Development of the Wallington area slowed after the 1930s.

Wallington has several examples of large brick gothic villas from around the 1860’s

5.25 The development of Wallington resulted in it becoming a local retail centre, with the offices of the Beddington and Wallington Council for which the town hall was built in the late 1930s.

5.26 There has been significant redevelopment of the Victorian and Edwardian middle class houses, since the 1930s, which has led to a mixed character of much of the area. However, several examples of Victorian and Edwardian buildings and groups of buildings have survived.

Worcester Park

5.27 Worcester Park is located on the north-east corner of Nonsuch Great Park. It takes its name from the 4th Earl of Worcester, one-time Keeper of the Great Park. The principle house in the park was known as Worcester House, which was built on the highest point in the Park, where The Avenue, Royal Avenue and Delta Road meet.

Typical example of Inter War Suburban Worcester Park

5.28 Suburban Worcester Park was developed around the station in the late 19th Century and was largely completed in the inter war years (1919 – 1939). Suburban Worcester Park is characterised by rows of
terraced houses, with bay windows and clad in varying materials. The streets are fairly narrow with considerable amounts of car parking and front gardens are being paved and used for additional parking which is significantly altering the character of the area.

5.29 More recent development, called the Hamptons, creates a new character in an area with no previous character. This predominantly consists of a ‘New England’ style of architecture comprising various colour weather boarded dwellings in well landscaped surroundings.

**Sutton**

5.30 In the 18th century Sutton was a small village with houses scattered along the High Street from the Green to the Cock Cross Roads. In 1745 the High Street was improved and by 1800 the area became a significant stopping point on the route from London to the seaside resort of Brighton. The area was also used as a calling point on the way to the races at Epsom on the Banstead Downs. During this period, the area was served by several inns, including the Angel; the Greyhound (which stood in the High Street); and the Cock at the Crossroads.

5.31 The introduction of the railway may have reduced the passing trading opportunities on the Brighton route. However, in 1847 Sutton acquired a station and a second line to London was constructed in 1868. Thomas Alcock, who owned the manor and much land in the parish, laid out two housing estates, including Newtown to the east of the High Street and Benhilton to north-east. Further development followed and by 1900 Sutton was a small town with a high street lined with Victorian shops and several exceptional older buildings. Development continued through the Edwardian period, with the development of an attractive estate along the south of Cheam Road. However, even though there was considerable development in the area, a large amount of land was left for development in the 1920s and 1930s.

5.32 Benhilton and many areas south of the railway station consisted of large middle class villas. These have proved attractive for redevelopment, with many original houses being replaced by flats and town houses. The estates with smaller houses, such as Newtown and other late Victorian and Edwardian roads to the west of the High Street, have survived more or less intact.
Example of Victorian terrace in Sutton Town Centre with shops below and flats above. The shopfronts do not respect the quality of the building frontage

The nature of growth and development, including the Victorian influences, made Sutton the main centre in the area and the Borough’s key centre when the Councils merged in 1965. By remaining an important centre, Sutton has experienced large amounts of development in the last 60 years.