

# WILLOW LANE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE



## A Brief History

The history of what became the Willow Lane industrial estate in the 20th century can be traced back to the Romano-British period, but it was from the late 16th century that industry was attracted to this part of Mitcham, where the Wandle was a source of pure water and, above all, power. In their time textile bleaching and printing, the production of dyes, leather manufacture, copper and flour milling were to be found here, but all have now gone, to be replaced in the last century by a diversity of businesses. During the Victorian era, before development had commenced, market gardening and watercress growing were also major activities, supplying the London markets.

Prior to any commercial use in the area the landscape was also divided between lavender fields - as well as the watercress beds. Post war individual businesses began to spring up in an ad hoc manner and the early businesses comprised printers and electric cable providers. In the fifties and early sixties as the estate began to evolve one of the main companies was the Mitcham Jig and Press Tool Company Ltd who provided parts to Roots the automobile manufacturer. SGB was another well known company and they occupied a large area of the estate where Connect House is situated.



Presently Willow Lane hosts 150 plus businesses and are wide ranging and diverse. They include building contractors and associated trades, event services, trade waste companies, food manufacturers and providers, timber merchants, motor repair services, records storage and data management, printing services, engineering companies, IT services, suppliers of plastic products and materials double glazing and window suppliers, furniture providers, removals and logistics, chemical distributors, water treatment solutions, training services, cleaning providers and more.

There is a history of businesses working together to further their mutual interests on the estate. The first body was formed in the early nineties and was known as the Mitcham Industries Partnership. This was followed by the Willow Action Group (WAG) and was formed with the help of Society of London manufacturers (SOLOMAN) and the group brought improvements to the estate based on voluntary contributions from the members and funding from SOLOMAN.

This core group of businesses successfully sought to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) and in April 2009 a clear majority of business voted in favour and agreed to pay a BID levy to the BID Company. A five year programme of work to enhance the commercial and trading environment was embarked upon with the mandatory contributions producing annual revenue in excess of £50,000.