

Mitcham Society submission to Merton Council Local Plan 2020

Mitcham: A 21st Century Village

Mitcham retains many of the features and characteristic of a village, and these give it a unique and special status within Merton. But it is under increasing development pressure. At the heart of Mitcham Society's submission to the Local Plan 2020 is a desire that it enshrines a response to all development pressures which will:

- Recognise, value and seek to retain the village character of Mitcham
- Wherever possible seek to enhance and develop the village character of Mitcham
- Actively promote and support Mitcham as a 21st Century Village
- Actively discourage developments, built and otherwise, which
 - o Disrupt or damage the existing elements which characterise Mitcham Village
 - o Detract from the continuation of a village feel in Mitcham
 - o Over urbanise
 - o Remove green spaces
 - o Prioritise the 'generic' over the special and unique

Following these principles can help Mitcham retain and develop its position as a 21st Century Village of which local people – and the whole borough of Merton – can be proud.

Mitcham Village: Key Characteristics

A number of characteristics contribute to give Mitcham a unique status within Merton as a 21st Century Village.

These characteristics include:

- A network of greens including Fair Green, Three Kings Piece, Figges Marsh, Lower Green and Cricket Green, and, the vast open space of Mitcham Common
- Street names which clearly reference the open spaces including Upper Green West, and Upper Green East (surrounding Fair Green itself), Commonside East and Commonside West (flanking Three Kings Piece and leading into Mitcham Common, and Lower Green West, Lower Green East and Cricket Green flanking Lower Green and Cricket Green
- Historic buildings, including two of Merton's three Grade I listed buildings, a number of Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings as well as locally listed buildings and other structures
- Three Kings Pond with its locally listed cart dip

- A generally low-rise character to buildings, with very few buildings more than four storeys high, a small number of weatherboarded buildings, and many which quite clearly visibly date from the 1800s, 1900s and pre mid-2000s
- A shopping environment which is notable for local rather than chain shops
- The close proximity of residential and retail areas making Mitcham walkable
- A public realm that has an open, accessible aspect, with a clear heart at Fair Green

This village character is in danger of being lost through insensitive development, just at the time when the village characteristics of walkability, mixed use and human-scale townscape are being recognised as an ideal approach for the future.

Retaining the Village Character

In order to maintain the character of Mitcham Village any development should be considered in the context of at least retaining and at best enhancing the characteristics mentioned above.

In addition, Merton Council should ensure that:

- New development should respect the character and scale of the existing townscape and be no taller than four stories high
- Additional stories on existing buildings should not increase the height of those buildings to more than six storeys
- New development is of the highest design quality, with detailing and use of high quality materials.
- New development should be required to enhance the public realm, including (but not exclusively) the provision and maintenance of green space, planting and trees - and provision for their maintenance - taking priority over hard landscaping
- All existing green space and planting – including that created through the Rediscover Mitcham investment – is protected from any future removal by designation as registered town green
- Retail developments should continue to have small floorplates and priority should be given to encouraging small, local businesses
- Mitcham Market should be developed so it can fulfil its role as an attractor to Mitcham
- Merton Council should be mindful of the balance of shops that will enhance Mitcham Village and use the powers it has to help develop and sustain that balance, for example ensuring there is no further growth in hot food takeaway shops

Ensuring a Positive Future

As well as ensuring that new development does not detract from the character of Mitcham Village, Merton Council should make every effort to enhance Mitcham Village through highway investment and use of the community infrastructure levy. This should include – but not be limited to, efforts to:

- Reduce road traffic
- Combat air pollution
- Encourage walking and cycling

Measures to enhance Mitcham Village should include:

- Introduction of 20mph zones throughout the Mitcham Village area, along with other measures such as the creation of home zones and pedestrian priority areas to reduce traffic and the air pollution it causes

- Removal of all parking bays in and around Mitcham Fair Green as these inhibit pedestrian and cycle flows, unnecessarily occupy a large area of public realm, and cause visual intrusion across what should be an open and pleasant area
- Encouragement of the woefully underused multistorey car park for vehicle parking
- Provision of wide, usable cycle lanes along London Road connecting Fair Green to Cricket Green, Mitcham tram stop and beyond, alongside removal of all permitted cycling on pavements, to promote true permeability for both cyclists and pedestrians
- Ensuring that traffic light phasing in Mitcham Village works in favour of pedestrian at all times, to encourage walking
- Securing from TFL the introduction of Ultra Low Emission buses for all buses on all routes that use the new 'bus street' that cuts through Mitcham Fair Green