

Dear Future Merton

Further to my earlier email, I attempted to analyse in the same way

http://www.merton.gov.uk/high_path_chmp_urban_design_review.pdf

However there are many annoying spelling mistakes, basises in theoreys , and inaccuracies , particularly Building Heights, Ages of completions of existiting structures and landscaping, negative criticism of such areas proudly boasted of by Merton Priory Homes 'improvements' to the play areas and green realm, and by Merton Council and its predecessors as Housing Authority of its initial design and build over the previous structures as the way forward. Perhaps the most annoying comment was that 'Parking Courts appeared to be underused' and parking on roadways was preferred by residents. Well, most weekday on-street parking is of employees of businesses in the vicinity - in the health care , shops and offices of Merton High Street, and of the bus garage. Under the present CHMP parking controls parking in front of garages is forbidden - although I have already made mention of the usage of some garages, others, for example in our road are used on a regular basis by tenants on the estate and from off it as these are made available. I enquired today for additional garage for a friend in the area, but had CHMP reply that the person responsible was on holiday until March 30th , 2016.

Another confusion is the use of one photograph of Cottages in Rodney Place, which is not in the High Path Estate constrained area.

In respect of transport it is a little stretching things to state that bus services are well connected to borough of Sutton (effectively The Woodstock and North Cheam - hardly Sutton Town Centre - which is a bus route desination that would be useful). Indeed at one time bus and local coach services connected the area to places such as Dunstable, Dorking and Reigate, Central London-Victoria and Marble Arch, Elephant and Castle /Blackfriars/Westminster , Esher , Tolworth and Summerstown (for Wimbledon Football Ground) , more recently Richmond. Over the years these connections have been eliminated, in some cases improved ,but more expensive underground rail services have provided some replacements,but others are not wholly possible for leisure or work.

Missing in the design, and masterplanning of the area is the very significant problem of the Transport function of Abbey Road, and its negative impact on residents of the Mill Road area. Also the building of new private blocks in Abbey Road, and Nelson Grove Road (including L&Q HA Flats, and the presence of Rodney Place and The Nelson Pub complex provide further constraints to the ability to place on a Nelson Grove Road / Pincott Road spine system elegant streeeted properties as appear to be desired as the distances do not clearly divide by the minium sizes needed for dwelling units for regular patterning.

One comment made in the review is that effectively of Road->Footpath->Grassed Area->GreenBorder->Builidng wall (with or without windows. Now this is somewhat needed when the building hight goes over three storeys (two storery plus hipped roof), as the building line along the non-major roadway becomes feeling 'enclosed' and lack of good daylight.

I could de-construct further the document, but I have a life elsewhere too, but I could be available to read it through with you to point of the other errors, which is tedious, but typical of Circle's lack of attention and lack of respect to its residents.

(It might be worth noting the little bit of Circle took over Merton Council housing stock after a 'successful' ballot of tenants. (Dont forget this ballot promised internal renewals and common parts improvements not demolition of existing homes). While true if one considers the transfer

as a success, the wording correctly identifies that leaseholders and service charge paying freeholders had no counted say in the transfer of their landlord.

Dear Future Merton Re High Path.

There are a multiplicity of documents that have been created in a mish-mash between CHMP and Merton Council, and although the present Stage 2 Consultation (Merton Council) Document is in part worthy of comment on, there are a number of documentents previously issued, in part in 'support' of the present considerations to demolish our homes and change our ways of living in a way that is not resident led, and with some half complete research on the exisiting and a slightly incoherant housing needs extrapolation from the 2011 census returns.

There is a mix of 'negative criticism' about the external asthetics of existing buildings (which may be justified- beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and functionality for decent living (*I will return to this theme in a later missive as its something that both Circle and Merton have missed) of accessble internal areas and dwelling unit arrangements, which have not been filled out - and given the CHMP thought of total housing units in a range of 900-1400, and Merton's upper thought of 1800 then something has to give.

Affordabilty(of the build rather than market sale prices), to achieve a greater saving on the likes of energy consumption (triple glazing, passive and active heat recovery systems, underfloor heating and similar) then a greater initial build cost will be required, Circle seem to show no appetite for seeking additional incremental funding from specialist grant sources, maintaining that the build will be met solely from their internal reserved funds. (** note this comment applies to all three estate areas under consideration).

So one looks at some of the backing documentation from

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/environment/planning/planningpolicy/localplan/estatesplan.htm>

avilible as at today

My (xxxxx xxxxx SW19 xxxx) comments are generally in (parentheses), where there is no comment , please assume I am either ignorant of an alternate view, or actually agree with what is mentioned .

Social Background.

http://www.merton.gov.uk/high_path_chmp_socio_economic_analysis.pdf

Rather re-inforces the obvious, if 60% of High Path housing is social rented, access to which is generally restricted for new entrants to certain types of household make-up, then some elements of the report will follow by logic.

High Path has a significantly higher percentage of pensioners living in poverty. According to the Office for National Statistics, an estimated 45 % of pensioners on High Path are in receipt of Pension Credit. This is above the national average of around 22%. This further indicates low levels of income and spending power in the local area

(not necessarily, maybe we are better at claiming benefits, or are in receipt of attendance allowance which has a different pension credit threshold trigger -the number of persons in receipt of this have not been specified - and further note the service charges / rents tip housing costs for pensioners into Pension Credit territory, which older persons in own house accommodation , maybe with a modest employer/widow pension - which is taxable, cannot claim and the cost of their repairs in so far as not grant funded - actually takes their Net Income lower than pensioners on High Path). (Pension credit is not a good indicator of pensioner poverty!).

Housing Quality 3.2.24 Repeats the assertions about how the blocks external faces are 'inconsistent' as if this is a bad thing, and also mentions the state of the walkways and similar (something we have been asking for due repair, change and maintenance of since before stock transfer - admittedly Merton Council got Conways to re-surface parts of Abbey Road and Nelson Grove Road pavements, but left part of Hillborough Close with old surfacing and the likewise the walkway behind the parking spaces in Pincott Road not repaired even though they resurfaced similar in Nelson Grove Road.)

3.2.28 Access and Transport - Parking

Can you understand that ? (Apparently there is no parking problem on High Path. Can we get access to the detail of the roads surveyed in 2014 by WYG Group as I suspect they are incorrectly defined between public highway and estate parking areas (I presume the 182 Garages includes those in blocks and those attached to or in rear gardens of house) - do they assume that the garages are all occupied by Motor Vehicles ? for example two are used by Merton Council street cleansing barrows, at least three by CHMP for bulk waste storage and one by a local furniture re-use charity for furniture storage, many others are used as overspill storage from flats for the likes of Winter sledges to Summer Tents and fishing tackle as examples - and they appear to have forgotten that some store sheds have powered two-wheelers housed in them.)

3and a bit - Schools - Saville's report reckon sufficient school places (this was raised by others at the Saturday event, but the Planning Chap could not fully quote this bit, nor did I have the chance to interrupt that Merton Council are planning an additional 4000 borough wide primary school places , but he appeared to indicate that there was present stress on existing High School provision borough-wide - which appears to contradict Saville's Conclusions)

4 The Case for Regeneration

4.1.1

Regeneration of High Path will help address the socio-economic inequalities of the area compared to other parts of LBM – a key objective of the Core Strategy and overall vision of the Borough. It also improves South Wimbledon's links to strategic growth area, such as Colliers Wood, which has been designated as a District Centre in the London Plan.

(oh well I suppose if one says something enough times someone might believe it , maybe they are just referring to sorting out the present day 'overcrowding' issue, cos I cannot see how simply building more stuff helps, and in terms of improving links to Colliers Wood District area do they mean they are going to install bungee connectors to the bottom of the Brown and Root Tower from Nelson's Columette? - given that the pavement walkway via Merton High Street has already been repaved by Merton /TfL contractors)

4.1.2

The proposed regeneration as part of the vision for the area will enable High Path to capture

some of the growth in the wider area through improved economic prospects; increased accessibility to employment and training opportunities; and enhanced social infrastructure and community facilities.

(That's an assertion - there is no way this in anyway has been demonstrated within any plan document,- (where is the 'growth' and 'the wider area' specified and defined) - over and above that which could be achieved by other means - eg give me the former cop station on Pincott Road and I reckon we could get 10 unemployed persons into employment working with others year 1 and 20 per annum there after from the estate pool of NEETs). PS (community facilities.- seems undefined)

4.1.3 (The conclusion does not match the statement made, the provision of tree lined streets is not dependent on demolition of existing, The visit to Stockwell Park showed the problem of private gardens not getting maintained owing to residents holidays/infirmative / time out a work. Indeed at Norfolk House where Front Gardens were adopted by former residents new incomers have either laid to gravel or neglected (as they returned to family in indian sub-continent for 6 months) the former rose garden maintained by Merton Council. Other properties existing seem to do quite wellish with there private gardens - note Estate Plan block border colouring on this existing is incorrect certainly wrt Merton Place_.

4.1.4 Higher quality (debateable) housing will help address issues such as overcrowding(ok , probably) ease concerns over deprivation (err, anyone feel deprived ??) and reduce poverty levels (really, how ??- lower rents ? reduced service charges?)

4.1.5 The inclusion of over ten different types of homes including one, two and three bedroom flats, maisonettes and houses. (Hmm, that's odd, didn't the other survey show some 4 beds were needed, has the housing mix been currently kicked into a ToBeAdvised area ?)

4.1.6 (We want to flog off dwelling units to commuters) New housing units will be adding to the character. This will improve perceptions of the area (hmm, so we don't have character). (Perceptions I can provide evidence from Mum's more recent visitors and new moved in neighbours of 'I like it round here', 'I wouldn't mind living here' 'Cor your place is bigger than I would have thought' - all unprompted.)

www.merton.gov.uk/environment/planning/planningpolicy/localplan/estatesplan.htm

(Note the link Does NOT have the Baily Garner Condition survey from existing so far as I can see)

The Savills Case for Regeneration is linked to http://www.merton.gov.uk/high_path_-_chmp_case_for_regen.pdf

Bringing existing units to at least Decent Homes Merton Standards. Considered on its own, this would not require the demolition or redevelopment of any existing homes, but it would necessitate a significant and expensive programme of works, including new kitchens, bathrooms, doors, windows and other materials and fittings such as insulation and plumbing.

<as there are 608 dwelling units only 60% are CHMP direct responsibility = 365. Now of those not all require work as they are serviceable, and if we take 10 year life for internals 10 years into a build plan 140 per annum will need internal repair or renewal anyway. It was probably poor

of Merton Council to make a promise (? inducement ? to tenants re these works). So far as I know (and Savills appear ignorant of) Insulation works to cavity walls, and roof spaces were completed under other govt funded programmes, All flats have UPVC Double Glazed Windows. There is a theoretical issue with some external doors as to the fire resistance. Plumbing ?- what any Supply pipes in lead ? >

2.7 (FALP) - (agreed someone changed the goalposts/pitch since the demolition was first mooted by CHMP. Savilles is doing a sell to Merton Council , but ignoring disruption to a significant number of existing residents, its also ignoring private build surrounding High Path in numbers count.)

(It could be reasonable to assume that housing targets within the Borough and London will rise again within the next 5 years (hmm maybe not when all the illegal immigrants sent home, and we are out of Europe led by our glorious Boris, and there is a big need to address the Northern Poorhouse to fill its vacant houses [we could use the empty boxes in Ireland - and Spain - to encourage excess European persons looking for a home as a suitable place to go to - depends if one likes verdant rain or baked earth sunshine].

2.12 (I think the only design change has been Pitched Rooves instead of flat ones and separation of Food storage and preparation areas from Living Spaces).

2.13 (no evidence so far)

2.16 (I'm right, stock condition still not complete by Mid Jan)

2.26 (If I read that right, basically keepy-uppy with basic maintenance, its not going to disappear with new build + 25 year mid life refurb). The comment about pitched rooves rather ignores the differences on Clay Tiles (mansion blocks), Concrete Tiled - Low Rise Blocks , and Traditional Slate - 1980s Houses/Brown Brick. The external to tower blocks does look worrying in terms of cost to leaseholders. One wonders if grants can be obtained to these rather unique buildings which seem to be loved and hated in equal measure.) (The flat roof repair to Tower Blocks could be paid for by adding one or two penthouse apartments set back similar to new build in Abbey Road and Nelson Grove Road or with curtain wall glazing, sold for say £590,000 each gives just under a net £2m for 6 units)

Internal common areas

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Regular redecoration is required on a circa 5 to 7 year cycle (wah-hay - except its not been done for 9 - 14 years and arguably not at all properly since build.)

Interesting that generally Kitchens and Bathrooms were servicable (methinks under stock transfer those with problems of age are the former LCC RoseHill estate ones). There is a problem which is not noted of many have things like check valves to water regulations present day missing, and dimensions are generally imperial when new items are at metric standards. (this is not specified in the report).

2.28 Space Sizes (I ain't convinced by those useable space measures the -1mSq for 1 Beds I think they are ignoring the ground floor external sheds to a number of properties which gives good additional storage of personal items better than an additional 3ftx3ft cube pushed in the floor of an existing size)

2.33 65 May Court Mould Problem- Its under the failing roof covering, so hardly typical. Data supplied seems weak and no robust enough to shew how condensation and penetrating damp can be prevented in existing construction means, no evidence of a person qualified by the Property Care Association carried out the surveys or has given indicative remediation solutions and costings for much of this)

2.35 Car Parking Location (Agreed - see South Wimbledon plan of 1964 for justification of separating car parking from residential front doors) Agree with other comments re disabled access , again as a charity are not grants available to re-model entrances to tower blocks for propelled wheelchairs? (note my son lives in a new build (Bellway) ground floor flat, but that has no step-free paved access to suitable for wheel chair or other mobility challenged persons, and has heavy front fire door to common parts with no remote automatic opening- which should be designed into all entrances for residents and visitors).

2.37 (asbestos survey - one was done for Merton Council back in the Mid 90s but it seemed to have got lost. From my own experience there should be no Asbestos remaining in common parts apart from thermoplastic floor tiles and roof space water tanks. Main flat internal areas are floor tiles, some WC cisterns, some bath panels , possible fire backs ,some fuse boxes. I dont think the 1980s houses had any asbestos materials used.

3.2 Insulation Cladding Improvements - as Mu values for existing stock have not been provided how can any assement that external cladding form is actually required to any block or House ? (in theroy except for tower blocks all walls built since 1950s should be brick/ cavity (generally retro-filled), /block or brick /3mm wall plaster. Which gives a reasonable standard of insulation. - Better standards today would be a wider cavity with wool or similar part insulation, possibly wider blocks and an external clad or render. But the incremental Mu value is not a lot more.

4.(NPPF muddles new build yardsticks with the 'regeneration' type rebuild ,note the contention earlier regarding layout and disturbance does not make any kind of logical analysis). Sustainable development is ill defined in the practial outcome sense. (***) I will do a separate missive on this later particulary with respect to the sourcing of materials).

4.11 (not demonstrated in Merton Council estate plan clearly. The rather weird conclusion in other doxs that the estate at present is not 'affordable'(for purchase) seems to ignore the CHMP contention that new build will be more expensive to purchase outright and ignores the 40% of residents that live in affordable properties - that they own lock stock and in varing legal amounts - outright).

"sensitive renewal of existing residential areas" (ohh, I look forward to the regeneration of the clearly old John Innes developments around Merton Park Tramstop that with some 5 storey flats could clearly bring about additional dwelling units)

4.22 appears contradictory - (respect the local character by destroying it and building 'mee too' boxes.)

5.1 (Lettings Turnover 24 is about 4% of the CHMP stock, which is about right)

5.16 Net Weekly Household Income (I suspect this is slewed downwards by nos of pensioners - av income about £150 a week), 'grey economy' Interesting though that apparently the

proportion of pensioners on estate is lower than elsewhere in merton, probably varies between blocks)

"quality of living environment" (ranking seems strange - we dont have a large number of persons desparate to leave (ok I am but that is another matter), and do have persons whom wish to move here).

5.18 (repeat again cos weve said it before.... yawn)

5.22 (yes, no, maybe - have you seen the prices in eggs benedict?)

5.25 (we are all off to Sainsburys)

5.26 (why are the commercial unit/s at junction of Merton High Street / Mill Road so difficult for Wandle HA to let ?)

6.3 (It is interesting to consider why Merton Road has economic activity and Morden Road designed with so little - though note South Wimbledon Station had a florists , ladies outfitters, book and news-stall , cafe, and general shop in it when first built and over the years, the last general shop there closed down after Tesco Metro opened at The Grove PH, so one has to consider what the economic viability actually is, certainly we have an active car hire business, and the small take-away appears to have its own niche. The owner of The Kilkenny Tavern is doing some minor repairs and improvements, which I suppose are welcome.)

6.13 Cool score for walking (agreed, many of the obvious sight-lines are blocked by fences put up by CHMP or Merton Council, There is confusion due to lack of good road naming as to where blocks are, the change in Pedestrian Crossing points and removal recently of local bus stop have left walkways to merton high street as paths to nowhere(useful or safe), there is heave to pavements from tree root ingress,there are high literal cobbles and raised kerbs deterring the flat walking routes, this should be attended to irrespective of any regeneration.)

6.15 (It is not quite clear what is meant by sight lines, one problem is the narrow footway to the south of High Path and the location of Eleanor House surrounded only by green space and not easily linked to High Path, or anywhere really.)

6.16 The Review highlights the potential for creating stronger connections from the Estate, across High Path to the school, church and other nearby facilities. (oh my, how did I ever walk to school 50 years ago, or get to church in this unpenetrable maze?)

6.18 the existing layout of the Estate lacks consistency and does not exhibit a similar form to surrounding development (let us celebrate our diversity and uniqueness, but we have consistently requested better and clear signage - of course our traditional street pattern (with the exception of Will Miles Court, Rowland Way, Doel Close, part Hayward Close and Dowman Close) has been with us since 1854 approx and these 1980s additional were not properly integrated into the other streets.)

6.19 (agreed, but no one wanted to take forward quick wins ideas in the 2014 consultations, I still think Yurts in Nelson Grove Road by the garage backs would be a space enhancement)

6.20 (Setting back buildings behind open space - well thats the way it was planned at Lovell House and Norfolk House and works quite well really in those places.)

6.21 (I cannot think of a non alleyway footpath that is not viewable from a building window - with exceptions of the footpaths linking to merton high street - which are viewable from the buildings opposite.)

6.24 garages.. appear to be poorly used (CHMP restricted these to a max of two per residential household, when I requested an additional garage they were unable to provide a clear list of what garages were vacant and available to let as they didn't know. I was able to get one only because a former neighbour whom I had moved away I saw leaving that Saturday and was able to see CHMP at the Grange on Monday when keys had been handed in. Other garages have been boarded up out of use for some time by CHMP, others are used weekdays by Merton Council Highways department, otherwise I suggest one visit at Weekends when the classic car and bike guys get prepped to go out to shows with their vehicles, or evening when the builders return to change over paint, etc stocks.

6.26 (has the person writing the report noticed the planters and small gardens, ps where has the duck pond gone to ?)

6.27 {could}

6.35 (agreed, but the proposals don't clearly show what renewables, etc are actually going to be included in the new designs)

6.36 (I refer to my earlier comments re Mu values)

6.37 (assertation not backed up by study or demonstratable fact)

6.39 (would need incremental savings to be shown as CHP / solar etc not yet shown in actual plans so meaningless calculation - against what build is the baseline coming from ?)

6.41 (cost ?Kwh? savings cannot be said to be significant, £300 pa saving ain't a lot on an untested CHP system, which won't be across the build of all properties anyway!)

6.52 South Wimbledon as a place and destination (- unlikely it never has been, and with little non residential parking it's not really going to be for the masses)

8.4 Did the respondents mean that their existing were too small for family needs - they were short of a bedroom - or they needed a couple of extra MSq to move around generally ?

8.10 (I must have been on holiday, (or dealing with the aftermath of my mother-in-law's death) or CHMP is over-interpreting support levels, I happen to love most of the external of existing buildings, I doubt if many persons from the east end of High Path estate attended this event) (p.s. what happened to a proper independent analysis of the MES test of opinion, should that take precedence over earlier design meetings?)

8.27 (well, what's not to like, given that it was a take it or leave it without a range of proposed designs being put forward - the question of do you prefer what is being shown here in compared to that of your existing dwelling was not asked)

http://www.merton.gov.uk/high_path_chmp_housing_needs.pdf

The following is all my comments - this is best described as educated(?informed?) guesswork, but generally is of a format I would expect to find, but it does not refer so far as I can see, to an age profile of [Now to 15years+] of residents, nor to the explicit need for the 'multi generational homes' that were promised- and also it's not clear about the housing need for persons with physical or mental health issues.

I would agree that there is a mis-match of household size (in the rented sectors) and dwelling unit accommodation size, this is common among areas more than just High Path (London Road, Morden and Pitt Crescent Wimbledon I guess would have similar results).

It is unclear to me where they are talking about net additional dwelling units required per annum at affordable tenure (where tenure includes rent or purchase), and at market prices, or if these are gross figures - ie Summation of Total Existing Need (met and unmet as of Today) + Expected Change over next 12 years ?

Assuming that they are Gross Figures it implies a housing mix total dwelling units of about 848 affordable + 240 market = 1088 dwelling units , which I think is achievable based on minimum of current gross internal areas of existing units replaced + whatever size they feel like for new units. It is lower than the indicative 1200 odd units that CHMP first proposed, and below the 1800 Merton Council think can fit here.

Of course I may have mis-read this, it would have been useful to have this document with proper explanation in place at the Merton Council Officer Meetings.

(note in respect of Estate Plan I will have further comments . these will come later)