



COLLIERS WOOD TOWER STUDY

Stage 2 Local Plan Evidence for Site Allocation CW2

**MERTON COUNCIL
FUTURE MERTON**

September 2022

1.0 Introduction

This study has been produced by Merton Council following the submission [planning application 21/P0082](#) that proposes two tall buildings of 26 and 16 storeys on site allocation CW2. The planning application can be found on Merton's planning webpage including the GLA Stage 1 report.

It is in the council's view that Britannia Point should remain the pinnacle building at 19 storeys Wood and any future developments should be lower in height and help transition between the surrounding suburban 2/3 storey buildings and Britannia Point.

Tall building development on this site is supported and it is understood that it will have many benefits for Colliers Wood town centre by providing more homes, jobs and improved public realm.

The study aims to examine the potential visual impact of tall buildings on the site and demonstrate what height of tall building the council will likely support based on views analysis.

Main Modification MM3.1 was introduced, alongside other amendments, to the Merton's Local Plan to conform with the London Plan Policy D9 'Tall Buildings' by clearly demonstrated locations and appropriate building heights the council will likely support. This resulted in a Statement of Common Ground with the Greater London Authority, document 0D13a.

Within this modification, site CW2 was given a maximum building height of 15 storeys. During the Stage 1 Public Enquiry, the applicant team of the submitted application 21/P0082 (Quod on behalf of Criterion Capital Ltd) submitted a hearing statement opposing this modification.

This study is to be used as evidence to demonstrate that the policies within site allocation CW2 are justified and underpinned by robust evidence.



1.1 The Future of Colliers Wood

It has excellent public transport and road links. Colliers Wood underground station and the frequent bus services give residents, visitors and workers a variety of travel options with excellent Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL). Colliers Wood is situated on the A24 road and is the start of the Mayor of London's Cycle Superhighway 7, an 8.5-mile cycle trail starting from Colliers Wood to the City of London.

The site is within an Opportunity Area (designated in the London Plan). Opportunity Area Indicative capacity for new homes and jobs is 5000 new homes and 6000 new jobs. This site is expected to contribute to the OA (Opportunity Area) and future growth in Merton that is socially and economically inclusive and environmentally green and sustainable.

Consultees to Stage 1 Local Plan identified neighbouring sites Sainsbury's and Priory Retail Park (site allocation CW5) as unattractive, inward-looking, lacking in recent investment, car-dominated; they also identified the pavements and public realm along Merantun Way as in need of similar investment to encourage walking and cycling and improve the links between the sites. Although these sites have ample opportunity to be optimised and provide a mix of uses, they currently support a significant number of jobs and businesses and provide town centre shops and services. Furthermore, these sites are constrained by pylons and overhead electricity wires that will impact on the sites layout, uses and building heights.

It is in the council view that any development in the Town Centre must approach their design holistically and consider neighbouring future sites that have potential to be developed in the future.



1.0 Massing approach

The Local Plan 'Strategic Tall Buildings Diagram, Colliers Wood' outlines what height the council is likely to support on this site. As demonstrated in Merton's Tall Buildings Background Paper 2010, the council's ambition for Colliers Wood is to retain Britannia Point (previously Brown and Root Tower) as the pinnacle building with neighbouring future development transitioning from the surrounding suburban 2/3 storey context to form a coherent group of buildings that relate well to each other in terms of scale, massing, form and architecture.

The design intention behind this is to create a better setting for the existing Britannia Point. Currently, Britannia Point is an isolated tall building that is out of scale and character with its surroundings. Forming a coherent family of buildings that step up to it can improve its setting and has the potential to be beneficial from many viewpoints.



Figure 59: Indicative Colliers Wood skyline

Diagram from Tall Buildings Background Paper 2010, fig. 59

The current application (21/P0082) proposes a massing composition that steps both up and down from Britannia Point's 19 storeys to the proposed 26 storeys and 16 storeys. Whilst this can be seen to create a coherent group of buildings, it introduces a building taller than Britannia Point in Colliers Wood. As highlighted in the applicants Design and Access Statement, the long term vision for this site for neighbouring future development to complete its transition from the sites suburban context.

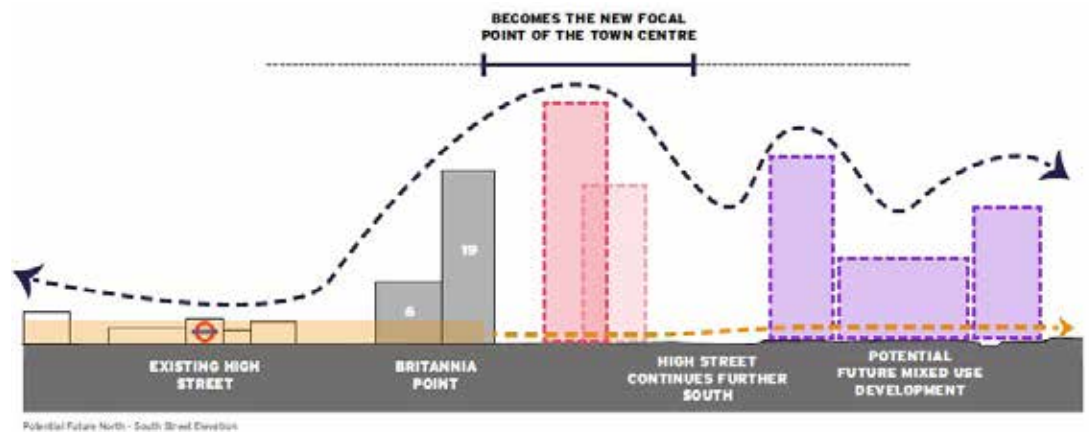


Diagram from application (21/P0082) Design and Access Statement



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- | | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------------------|
| | Colliers Wood town centre
heights range: up to 21m*
[approx. up to 7-storeys] | | Metropolitan Open Land [MOL] |
| | Indicative location of tall
building cluster
heights range: up to 49m*
[approx. up to 15-storeys] | | Open space |
| | Brittania Point
height: 58m* [19-storeys] | | Conservation area |
| | Gateway buildings | | Scheduled ancient monuments |
| | Townscape views into
town centre | | Registered parks and gardens |
| | Electricity pylons | | Listed buildings |
| | Site allocations | | Locally listed buildings |
| | South Wimbledon town centre | * Heights from ground level.
More information on building heights
can be found in the supporting text. | |
| | Estate regeneration: High Path | | |



2.0 Assessment Methodology

Using the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Third Edition (2013), this assessment has taken into account the existing physical fabric of the area, the character and settings of conservation areas and listed buildings within the local and surrounding area in assessing the sensitivity to change of an existing townscape view. See table 1.

The magnitude of possible significant effects have been assessed along two dimensions: the magnitude of potential future changes and the quality of the impact of potential future changes to the town centre. See tables 2 and 3.

Mitigation measures are identified where appropriate to avoid, reduce or offset any potential adverse impacts that could come forward through future development in the town centre, together with the nature and significance of any residual impacts.

The criteria for assessing townscape sensitivity have been based on a number of factors and attributes that are generally agreed to influence the existing character of the townscape as described in the GLVIA 2013.

Table of Existing Townscape Sensitivity		
Value	Criteria	Sensitivity to change
Exceptional	Strong townscape or landscape structure, distinctive features and buildings worthy of conservation, exhibiting unity, richness and harmony, no detracting features, and a strong sense of place. Likely to be internationally or nationally recognised, e.g. a World Heritage Site, a group of Grade I listed buildings or a Grade I registered historic park or garden.	Very high
High	Strong townscape structure, distinctive features and buildings worthy of conservation, strong sense of place, only occasional detracting features. The townscape is likely to be of importance at the county, borough or district level and contain features of national importance, e.g. a Grade II* or Grade II Registered historic park or garden, a conservation area containing a high proportion of listed buildings.	High
Good	Recognisable townscape structure, some features and buildings worthy of conservation, some detracting features, recognisable sense of place. May be a locally valued townscape, conservation area or contain groups of Grade II listed or locally listed buildings.	Medium
Ordinary	Distinguishable townscape structure, some features and buildings worthy of conservation, prominent detracting features.	Low
Poor	Weak or disjointed townscape structure, frequent discordant and detracting features.	Very low

Table 1
Source: Developed by the Tavemor Consultancy based on GLVIA

An indicative 3d model has been produced by Merton Council using the submitted drawings of planning application 21/P0082. This has been tested in 3D using VuCity, with a number of viewpoints selected to show what the height, massing and bulk could look like from both the local and surrounding areas.

Alternative massing options produced by Merton Council have been based on the same building plan as the application.

Magnitude of impact	
None	No impact
Negligible	Imperceptible impact
Low	Slight impact
Medium	Clear impact
High	Major impact

Table 2
Source: Developed by the Tavernor Consultancy based on GLVIA

Quality of impact	
Adverse	The quality of the environment is diminished or harmed
Neutral	The quality of the environment is preserved or sustained or there is an equal balance of benefit and harm
Beneficial	The quality of the environment is enhanced.

Table 3
Source: Developed by the Tavernor Consultancy based on GLVIA

3.0 Alternative Massing Options

The council have tested two indicative alternative options based on the proposal of planning application 21/P0082. The alternative options test a massing approach that uses the existing Britannia Point as the pinnacle of a cluster of tall buildings. Please note that the alternative options are indicative only and are used solely to test the impact of buildings heights. They have been used to evaluate the impact of height. There is potential for alternative options to yield more homes subject to further design development.

The three versions being evaluated are:

Alternative 1.

Approx number of homes: 119 [277 homes per ha.]

This option provides a 'comfortable' response to the development site that consists of two buildings of 7 and 12 storeys. This option is likely unviable but has been tested as a control. The massing transitions from the existing context whilst keeping Britannia Point the pinnacle.

Alternative 2.

Approx number of homes: 154 [358 homes per ha.]

This option is an optimised version of the above that consists of two buildings of 12 and 15 storeys. This arrangement has been tests what is an appropriate height to retain Britannia Point as the pinnacle of the cluster of tall buildings.

Application 21/P0082.

Number of homes: 266 [619 homes per ha.]

The above alternatives are being evaluated against the massing of planning application 21/P0082 that proposes two buildings of 26 and 16 storeys. *Both buildings include a roof terrace with built structures that add an additional storey. The massing composition of the proposed scheme creates a new pinnacle whilst using the existing Britannia Point as a transitional step.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



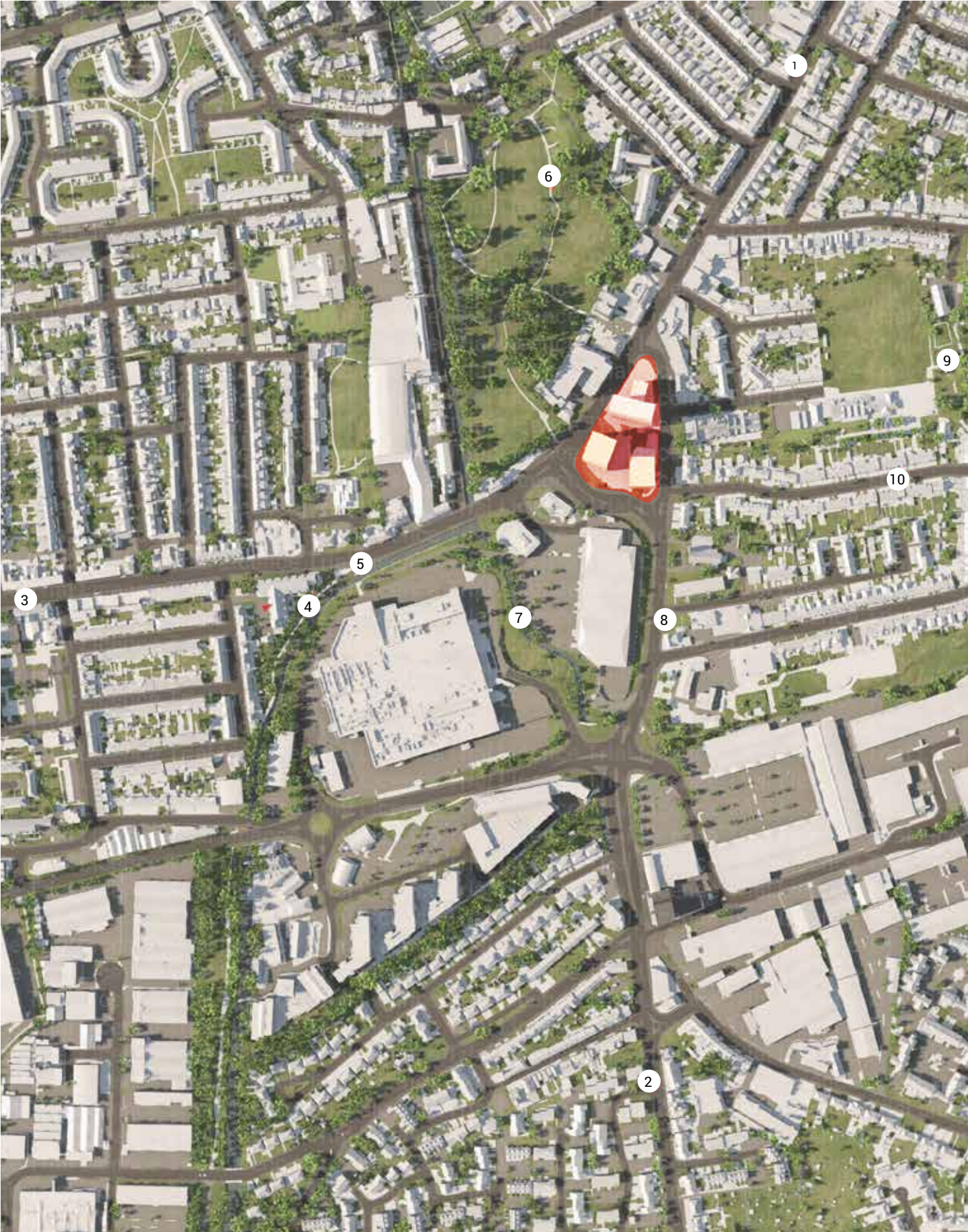
Application: 21/P0082

4.0 View Points

10 views have been tested in VuCity to assess the impact of the massing options.

The views tested are a combination of viewpoints identified in the draft Local Plan's Strategic Tall Buildings Diagram for Colliers Wood Town Centre and additional short/mid views that have been identified as locations where the development site provides a backdrop for public routes and likely to have significant impact to the view.

Townscape View Points	
1	High Street Colliers Wood / University Road
2	Church Road / Hogarth Crescent
3	Merton High Street / Abbey Road
4	Wandle Trail
5	Merton High Street / River Wandle
6	Wandle Park
7	Priory Retail Park car park / River Wandle
8	Christchurch Road / Christchurch Close
9	Colliers Wood Recreation Ground
10	Colwood Gardens



View 1: High Street Colliers Wood / University Road

Existing

The view is taken from High Street Colliers Wood which connects Tooting to Colliers Wood. This linear route provides a sequence of views to Colliers Wood Tower. The route is a primary vehicle route which is lined with local shopping parades. The existing Britannia Point terminates the view and creates a marker for the town centre.

The townscape character of High Street Colliers Wood varies between low and good.

Impact

Both alternative options have negligible/low impact on the view, retaining Britannia Point as a focal building that marks the town centre, therefore having a neutral effect on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces new height. The increased collective bulk of Britannia Point creating an over-dominant massing can be judged as having an adverse effect.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 2: Church Road / Hogarth Crescent

Existing

The view is taken from Church Road which connects Mitcham to Colliers Wood. This linear route provides a sequence of views to Colliers Wood Tower. The route is a primary vehicle route which is primarily residential in character. The existing Britannia Point terminates the view and creates a marker for the town centre.

The townscape character of Church Road varies between poor and ordinary.

Impact

Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing surrounding 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having beneficial effects on the view.

Alternative 2, although doesn't introduce additional height, it increases the collective bulk of the cluster whilst stepping down from Britannia Point having a neutral impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation. This can be judged to having a neutral/adverse impact.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 3: Merton High Street / Abbey Road

Existing

The view is taken from Merton High Street which connects South Wimbledon to Colliers Wood. The route is a primary vehicle route which is primarily non-residential in character with many local shopping parades. Due to the enclosed nature of the street, Britannia Point sits behind the existing buildings and reveals itself as you leave the South Wimbledon Town Centre Boundary.

The townscape character of Merton High Street is ordinary.

Impact

Both alternative options help transition between the existing surrounding context of 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having neutral effects on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation. This can be judged to having a neutral/adverse impact.





View 4: Wandle Trail

Existing

The view is taken from the Wandle Trail which provides a pedestrian/cycle route through Colliers Wood. The Wandle Trail is part of the Wandle Valley conservation area and is also has MOL status. The existing Britannia Point has historically provided a marker for the station.

The townscape character of the Wandle Trail view is High.

Impact

Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing surrounding 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having beneficial effects on the view.

Alternative 2, although doesn't introduce additional height, it increases the collective bulk of the cluster whilst stepping down from Britannia Point having a neutral impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation. This can be judged to having a neutral/adverse impact.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 5: Merton High Street / River Wandle

Existing

The view is taken from the entry point to the Wandle Trail from Merton High Street. The Wandle Trail is part of the Wandle Valley conservation area and is also has MOL status. The existing Britannia Point has historically provided a marker for the station.

The townscape character of the Wandle Trail view is High.

Impact

Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing surrounding 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having beneficial effects on the view.

Alternative 2 significantly increases the collective bulk of the cluster having a neutral/adverse impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation, however the lower tower appears over-dominant with little transition from the surrounding area. This can be judged to having an adverse impact.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 6: Wandle Park

Existing

The view is taken from Wandle Park. Wandle Park is part of the Wandle Valley conservation area and is also has MOL status. The existing Britannia Point has historically provided a marker for the station.

The townscape character of the Wandle Trail view is High.

Impact

Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing surrounding 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having beneficial effects on the view.

Alternative 2 significantly increases the collective bulk of the cluster having a neutral/adverse impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation, however the lower tower appears over-dominant with little transition from the surrounding area. This can be judged to having an adverse impact.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 7: Priory Retail Park car park / River Wandle

Existing

The view is taken from Priory Retail Park car park on the bank of the River Wandle. It is adjacent the Wandle Valley conservation area and is also has MOL status.

The existing townscape character is poor/ordinary due to it's existing car parking use.

Impact

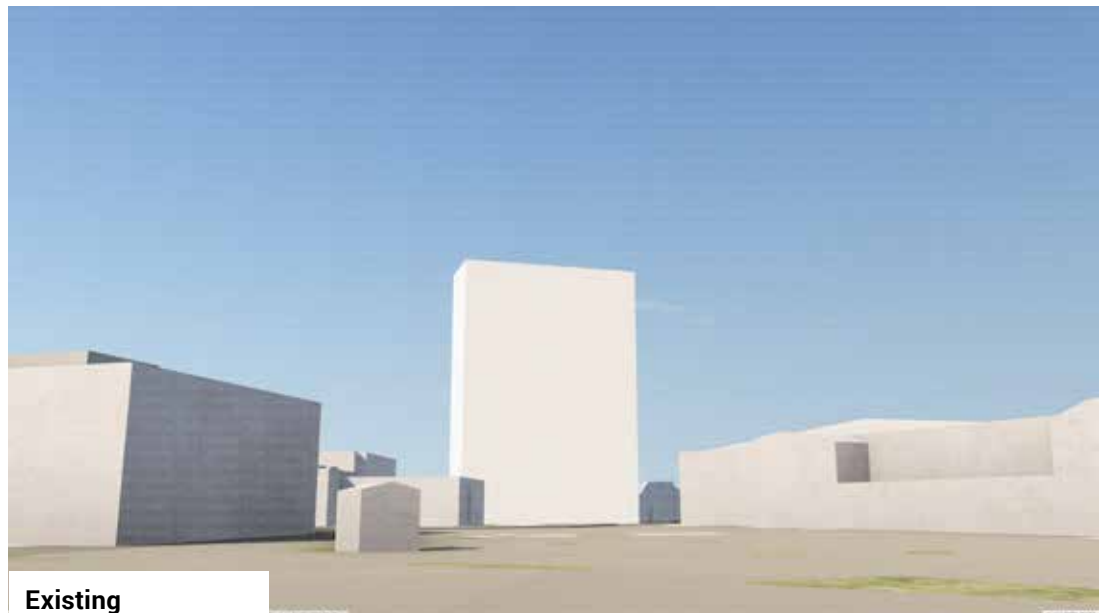
Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing surrounding 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having beneficial effects on the view.

Alternative 2 significantly increases the collective bulk of the cluster having a neutral impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation, however the lower tower appears over-dominant with little transition from the surrounding area. This can be judged to having an adverse impact.



approximate location



Existing



Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 8: Christchurch Road / Christchurch Close

Existing

The view is taken from Christchurch Road which is a primary vehicular route.

The existing townscape character is poor/ordinary. The western side of the street forms the rear of Priory Retail park and has no active street frontage.

Impact

Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing surrounding 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having beneficial effects on the view.

Alternative 2 significantly increases the collective bulk of the cluster having a neutral/adverse impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation, however the lower tower appears over-dominant with little transition from the surrounding area. This can be judged to having an adverse impact.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 9: Colliers Wood Recreation Ground

Existing

The view is taken from the open space at Colliers Wood Recreation Ground. It provides a direct view of Britannia Point which forms a unique backdrop for the open space.

The existing townscape character is ordinary.

Impact

Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing surrounding 2/3 storey buildings to Britannia Point having beneficial effects on the view.

Alternative 2 significantly increases the collective bulk of the cluster having a neutral/adverse impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the clusters visual separation, however the lower tower appears over-dominant with little transition from the surrounding area. This can be judged to having an adverse impact.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

View 10: Colwood Gardens

Existing

The view is taken from Colwood Gardens which is a residential street adjacent to Britannia Point.

The townscape character of Colwood Gardens is ordinary.

Impact

Alternative 1 helps transition between the existing to Britannia Point having neutral effects on the view.

Alternative 2, although doesn't introduce additional height, it increases the collective bulk of the cluster whilst stepping down from Britannia Point having a neutral/adverse impact on the view.

The application massing has a high impact on the view as it introduces significant height. The creation of a clear new pinnacle building assists with the cluster's visual separation, however the lower tower appears over-dominant with little transition from the surrounding area. This can be judged to have an adverse impact.





Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Pre-application

5.0 Conclusion

The 10 views analysed demonstrate the visual impact the application massing of 26 storeys will have on the surrounding areas. In many of the views the application massing will have an adverse impact on the quality of the view. This is primarily caused by the introduction of significant new height on the development site that creates an out of scale and dominant massing. Although the building volumes are slender, there is little transition between the existing 2/3 storey context and the application scheme. It is worth noting that if this application is successful, this would become Merton's tallest building. It is in the council's view that, although there are ambitions for Colliers Wood to become a District Town Centre, this site is not appropriate for a building of this height.

It is also worth noting that within the GLA report (appended), their tall buildings conclusion (point 66) stated:

Overall, whilst this location is identified in the local plan as suitable for tall buildings, there is a strong local policy presumption against buildings taller than Britannia Point. To address this the applicant must reduce the height of the buildings or demonstrate an exemplary standard of design and an improved package of public benefits that would justify the proposed height. At present, the tall buildings demonstrate symptoms of overdevelopment, with a significant massing, a poor relationship with the public realm, little consideration of their functional management and adverse environmental impacts. These matters must be addressed for the tall buildings to be considered acceptable.

It is in the councils view that the applicant has yet to justify this height.

The proposed application massing approach is predicated on neighbouring future development sites to ease the transition from the sites surroundings to the 26 storey tower in the future. In principle this is an acceptable approach providing that there is certainty that the neighbouring sites in question are likely to be developed, however it is highly unlikely that these sites will be delivered using tall buildings that can deliver the massing concept outlined in the application due to the existing constraints on the site and the cost implications attached, such as the electricity pylons. Therefore, if any development was to move forward on these neighbouring sites, their building heights would be constrained, therefore they would not be able to transition the building heights as justified in the applicants planning submission.

This study demonstrates that tall buildings are appropriate for this site and their impact can be neutral and in some cases beneficial, helping transition between the 2/3 storey context and the existing Britannia Point. However, buildings that are taller than Britannia Point are not appropriate on this site given its adverse impacts on views.

Therefore, it is recommended that buildings within the site allocation CW2 should form a family of buildings with Britannia Point being the pinnacle. This composition of tall buildings will assist with improving the setting of Britannia Point where currently it stands isolated and out of place.

6.0 Document hyperlinks

[Planning application 21/P0082](#)

[GLA Stage 1 report 2021/01461/01](#)