



**NEW MERTON LOCAL PLAN – Public Examination – Stage 2
MATTER 7 – Neighbourhood policies and healthy places**

**Submission from Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage
September 2022**

1. Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage takes an active interest in the future of the Cricket Green Conservation Area and its environs. We are the civic society for this part of Merton and part of the wider civic movement through membership of the national charity Civic Voice. We have been closely involved in the development of the Merton Local Plan and its evidence base and we made detailed representations in September 2021, January 2021, January 2019 and January 2018 on Merton Council's call for sites at Stage 1 of the Local Plan review; the draft Plan for consultation at Stage 2 and Stage 2a; and the submitted Plan at Stage 3. We contributed to Stage 1 of the Public Examination into Merton's new Local Plan
2. This submission confirms our wish to participate in the Examination's hearing session on Matter 7.
3. Our representations address the policies for the neighbourhood of Mitcham.

Mitcham Village boundary

4. We do not consider the boundary of Mitcham's village [town] centre to be justified. It should recognise and embrace the historic distinction between Upper and Lower Green and their provision of distinct commercial and civic functions. An effective boundary needs to reflect this twin centre and extend from the southern end of Figges Marsh to Mitcham tram stop, with the retail core focused on the village centre around Fair Green. This would be consistent with the broad boundary of the "urban village" agreed in Merton's prescient Unitary Development Plan in 2003 and described as "*A mixed use neighbourhood with a maximum walking distance of 10 minutes to its centre*". This approach should be incorporated in an amendment to the boundary of Mitcham as a District Centre in the Economy section of the Plan and on the Policies Map, reproduced in the Mitcham section. It will retain the character of a 20-minute neighbourhood.

Mitcham Village

5. We do not consider the approach to Mitcham Village to be justified, effective and consistent with national policy.
6. The Plan mischaracterises Mitcham Village and fails to recognise its strengths as a 21st century village. Policy N4.1 omits the priorities for community investment, including local community assets, the need for a much strengthened cultural offer and improvements to public health. The significant number of independent shops and food

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outlets which reflect the cultural diversity of Mitcham and the opportunities presented by the longstanding street market also need to be more clearly recognised, protected and enhanced. This should be informed by a retail study examining the diversity of uses and the influences on Mitcham's vacancy rates and economic fortunes.

7. Merton Council has previously argued that the identification of Mitcham as a village and not a town is not a matter for the Local Plan. We disagree. The Local Plan has explicitly identified it as a town (e.g. "*A stronger Mitcham town centre*" is a Key Objective and Policy N4.1 refers to the "*Town Centre*" on ten occasions) and we believe this is not only inappropriate but also has consequential land use and development implications which threaten local character.

8. The Plan should be altered to refer to Mitcham Village and not identify Mitcham as a town. This will support the Plan's objectives and be consistent with wider policy:

- The London Plan identifies Mitcham as a "district" and not "town" centre
- There is precedent in the London Plan with Cheam Village and Carshalton Village both recognised as district centres
- It was agreed by the Borough Plan Advisory Committee on 26 November 2020 to identify "Mitcham Village" in the Borough Character Study
- The historical origin of the toponym "Mitcham" is "big village"

9. Policy N4.1 should provide a much stronger spatial and place specific expression of the overall Vision, including specifically identifying key community infrastructure, neighbourhood parades and scattered employment sites (as provided in our earlier representations), addressing omissions in the draft Plan.