

Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage

CRICKET GREEN SCHOOL – CHANGE OF USE, ACCESS GATES AND NEW FENCING

Application number 12/P3318
January 2013

1. Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage is the civic society for this part of Merton and part of the wider civic movement through membership of the national charity Civic Voice. We take an active interest in the future of the Cricket Green Conservation Area and its environs and have been closely involved in the development of the Borough Character Studies, the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and numerous development proposals in the area.
2. We have considered the proposals in the context of the new National Planning Policy Framework, development plan (Core Strategy, UDP and London Plan), draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the emerging Borough Character Studies. The application relates to a site within Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area where all development must conserve or enhance the Conservation Area.
3. We raised a number of significant issues in relation to the previous application for this site (12/P2379) and welcome its withdrawal and replacement by the current proposals. This recognises that the site is specifically identified in the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Cricket Green as one which would benefit from environmental improvement to contribute more positively to the character of the area. Specifically it states in Policy ENV1 that:

ENV 1: Chapel Orchard, Hall Place, Worsfold House
The Council will support proposals that can deliver the creative redevelopment of these sites. Schemes for redevelopment that build on the surrounding quality of the conservation area and create new, high quality contemporary developments will be encouraged.

This is supported by the commentary that:

“The architectural quality of these buildings as well as the public realm that surrounds them, has a detrimental impact on the character of the conservation area. Their redevelopment would be supported to achieve a high quality of built form that would make a positive contribution towards the character of the conservation area.

“In addition, the public realm around these buildings is in need of improvement. There is a need to rationalise the parking within these areas and to improve the boundary treatments adjacent to London Road. Uncontrolled parking is intrusive in the street scene, especially at the two entrances onto Church Road where parked cars narrow the access. Parking occurs on the grassed areas, damaging the landscape as well as the kerbs. Boundary fencing in this area is of poor quality and the area would be greatly improved by replacing it with railings.”

4. We agree that there is potential for significant environmental improvement as part of these proposals and there is a real opportunity for Merton to show leadership by example by ensuring its education investment also supports achievement of other policy goals. We welcome the benefits the proposals will bring in removing clutter, providing a clear boundary to the site, offering more co-ordinated boundary treatments, reducing the number of gates and providing a one way system. We also welcome the proposals to put the former local authority offices in Chapel Orchard into productive use as an educational facility.

5. We are particularly pleased by the new proposals included in the revised application:

- replacing the earlier proposals for a wooden fence and concrete posts with black railings will provide a much more appropriate and sensitive treatment for the boundary fence that will enhance the area
- removal of all fencing within this boundary will enhance the open aspect of the site
- withdrawal of proposals for resurfacing and extending the car parks
- relocation of the proposed eastern entrance gate to a position further away from Church Road
- protective measures to ensure no trees are lost as a result of the proposals.

6. We also welcome the new arboricultural and heritage reports in response to the acknowledged importance of the site's trees and historic environment. We are particularly pleased to see the inclusion of the Grade II listed remains of the C14th Hall Place Chapel in the accompanying documentation.

7. Our main issue with the revised planning application is that the new fencing is limited to the western boundary and the area immediately around the new gates. This misses the opportunity significantly to enhance the aspect from Church Road which is also the direction from which most people will view the site and is recognised as an important gateway to the Conservation Area in the draft appraisal. We would encourage the black railing fence to be extended to include the whole site boundary.

8. We believe there would be merit in undertaking some further works as part of these changes:

- protecting the Grade II listed remains of C14th Hall Place Chapel which are currently at risk from flyparking on the grass by delineating its boundaries more clearly and enhancing its setting. Some simple interpretation should also be provided. This could be achieved as part of the proposals at no significant additional cost and we should also be happy to work with the applicants in sourcing grants for providing interpretation where none currently exists.
- removing the kerbing around the existing car parks as part of measures to reduce the overall visual impact

- improving management of the site, including action against illegal car parking by those not using the facilities and ensuring all bins are located within designated enclosures – a recent site visit found bins in a number of different locations across the site in full public view.

9. In conclusion we support this planning application subject to the extension of the black railing fencing (see paragraph 7) and ask that the issues raised in paragraph 8 are also addressed.

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