

Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage

DEVELOPMENT AT CRANMER SCHOOL

**Application number 13/P1207
May 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 new Character Study, the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and numerous development proposals in the area. We have worked with the London Borough of Merton and our local councillors to produce the Cricket Green Charter (attached) which establishes our approach to development and change in the area.

Summary

2. We support the proposed development to expand the capacity of Cranmer School subject to further consideration being given to:

- minimising the impact of the “school run” which already has a significant and detrimental impact on Cranmer Road and the residential area of Bramcote Avenue, The Close and Mitcham Park – this should include provision for access via the Wilson Hospital site and a commitment to developing a school travel plan with the local community that will reduce the overall impact even after expansion, backed by guarantees for effective monitoring and enforcement
- reversibility of any new development – given school numbers go down as well as up
- impact of the north east elevation of the proposed building which presents an overly intrusive and highly coloured aspect
- further community use of the new facilities for local residents on a regular basis
- archaeological investigation of the site of The Cranmers mansion house and tithe barn.

3. The poor quality of some of the work undertaken by Atkins for Merton Council in support of this application also suggests a retendering process for such work should be undertaken.

Context

4. Cranmer School is sensitively located on the edge of Cricket Green Conservation Area. It has an important relationship with the Wilson Hospital (which includes locally listed buildings) and includes a significant area of open land that

makes a major contribution to the local environment and landscape. This is recognised as an important Green Corridor and open space in the adopted Core Strategy.

Approach to planning application

5. We welcome the consideration which has been given to this important new development on a sensitive site. It is especially welcome to see consideration of options and alternatives.

6. The application indicates a significant amount of public consultation about the emerging proposals. We are disappointed, therefore, that we have not been involved in these and that residents living in nearby properties report that they have not been informed. The focus of the consultation appears to have been on parents/guardians and school users rather than the wider community. We hope these relationships can be extended and improved in future and as the local civic society we would welcome being kept informed directly by Cranmer School of its activities.

7. We are also disappointed by some glaring weaknesses and errors in the work undertaken by Atkins to support Merton Council in making this application. These include:

- A heritage assessment which makes no mention of The Cranmers which is the source of the name of the school and was one of the three mansion houses in the area along with The Canons and Park Place. It included a predominantly 18th century house and a large tithe barn and was demolished in the 1920s to be replaced by the school and hospital. The site warrants further archaeological study for this alone. This assessment also fails to mention Cricket Green Conservation Area despite the important spatial relationship
- Historical analysis which is based on materials provided by Sutton Local Studies Library and includes references to unrelated areas such as Beddington and Wallington rather than using the excellent and more relevant Merton Local Studies Centre which includes significant information on the importance of the Cricket Green area and this site. Remarkably there is no reference to the Merton Historical Society's Mitcham Histories 11 *The Cranmers, The Canons and Park Place* by eminent local historian Eric Montague.
- Basic errors in the various reports, including:
 - wrongly naming the Wilson Hospital as Winfield Hospital
 - use of out-of-date maps which do not include the new residential development off Denham Crescent which borders the school
 - misspelling Canons as Cannons
 - variously describing the site as being in the Conservation Area or outside it
 - making no reference to Cranmer Green Local Nature Reserve which abuts the site
 - referring erroneously to a "proposed pipeline" rather than a proposed building (suggesting cut-and-paste re-use of consultancy reports prepared for other purposes)

- A transport report which makes no mention of Mitcham tram stop other than on the map
8. We would encourage Merton Council to review the quality assurance which guides its use of consultants and re-tender for such work.

Proposed development

9. We have considered the planning application against the planning policy framework for the area and the Cricket Green Charter:

New building – we find this an effective and low key design which will sit well with its surroundings while adding to the range of building types in the area with a modern and distinctive style. We are concerned by the impact of the highly coloured north east elevation and ask that this be toned down

Open space and trees – the proposed development will result in the loss of important open space in a green corridor and we are concerned by the overall impact. We welcome the mitigation measures proposed, including the green sedum roof to the new building, and also the results of the tree report which indicate no material loss as a result of the scheme

Traffic – the impact of the school run on the surrounding area is already a concern and will be significantly worsened by a 50% increase in the number of pupils. There are weaknesses in the study accompanying the planning application which barely makes any reference to the illegal parking and obstruction that is a daily experience in Bramcote Avenue and The Close as well as along Cranmer Green Road. We do not consider the proposed actions adequate to address even the existing problems and urge that this opportunity is taken to secure a long term solution for the school. This issue has been raised by local residents since the first plans were mooted and is a key feature of the feedback summarised in the May 2012 “Published notice and prescribed information” addressing the expansion proposals.

We urge that a school travel plan is developed in consultation with the local community with the objective of reducing impacts to below current levels even after the expansion. This can be achieved through effective implementation and enforcement. We will seek guarantees on monitoring and enforcement of the plan given the evident problems being experienced with new and expanded schools elsewhere in the borough which are being neither monitored nor enforced effectively. One obvious, easily implemented and financially attractive option would be to provide drop off and pick up points on the Wilson Hospital site and open up a new pedestrian access to the school from here

Community use – there is only limited community use of the existing facilities and this is only for organised events and activities. We urge much greater community use of the open space, MUGAs and meeting rooms as an integral part of the future of the school and that this is secured as part of the planning permission

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