

Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage

FENCING PROPOSALS ALONG WILLOW LANE Planning application reference 13/P0846

April 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.
2. We have taken a close interest in the work to re-open Willow Lane from Carshalton Road since they began unexpectedly several weeks ago. This includes liaising with local councillors and responding to local residents. We submitted views on the Orders re-opening this access road and imposing weight and speed restrictions. As a result of these Cabinet Member Councillor Andrew Judge asked that the works should be "*as unobtrusive as possible*" in his April decision notice. Given the sensitivity of this semi-rural lane and how this was recognised in the decision on the Orders we are shocked by the fencing proposals which the Council is now putting forward. The Council should be setting a much better example through its own development.

Context

3. Willow Lane is a semi-rural lane running along the edge of one of Merton's premier environmental assets, Mitcham Common, which is designated Metropolitan Open Land. It also forms the boundary of Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area where all development is required to "preserve or enhance" the character that gave rise to its designation.

Proposals

4. We are grateful for confirmation from officers of the stretch of Willow Lane which is being proposed for fencing. This remains unclear from the submitted plans which suggest three different areas and do not make it clear whether the fencing is proposed for one or both sides of Willow Lane.
5. We find the proposed 2.5m galvanised steel fencing to be wholly inappropriate in such an environment. It is designed more to provide security around an industrial park than as a border for a semi-rural lane in a Conservation Area running along the edge of Mitcham Common. This application is in clear conflict with the adopted development plan (notably Policy CS13 and Policy CS14).
6. The current boundary is a soft, vegetated and unobtrusive wire fence which allows clear views out into the woodland on either side. It will be replaced by harsh, urbanising, and intrusive steel which is completely inappropriate. The impact is illustrated by a short section of similar fencing which is installed nearby:



Current boundary



Impact of new boundary

7. We urge a major rethink of these proposals. The application proposed is for “security” fencing yet there is public access to both sides of the proposed fence. Its sole function is as a safety feature to the drop on either side of this short section of Willow Lane. We can see no case for a significant boundary. Where a boundary is necessary then it should be made of natural materials and/or be easily vegetated by the natural growth alongside both sides of Willow Lane. It should not obstruct views out from Willow Lane. Given that the role is not to prevent access but simply to provide for safety then there is no need for it to be 2.5m high, let alone have a spiked top. Even the parapets on the nearby bridge above a working heavy rail line are much lower than this. We urge a soft boundary no more than 1m in height.

8. We are also aware of discussions about the treatment of the boundary behind both Hatton Gardens and Mitcham Garden Village and urge that the decision on this application does not set an unfortunate precedent for any future plans.

9. We ask that this application be refused on grounds of its impact on the local area which is in conflict with the adopted development plan.

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