



## **DATE VALLEY SCHOOL – extension of operating hours and use**

**Application number 14/P2812  
September 2014**

1. Mitcham Cricket Green Community and 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 new Character Study, the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and numerous development proposals in the area as well as the recent bids for Heritage Lottery Fund support. The Cricket Green Charter (<http://bit.ly/1l4jbDi>) establishes our approach to development and change in the area and was developed in partnership with the London Borough of Merton, the local community and our local councillors.
2. Date Valley School is located along a narrow road with single access in the heart of the Conservation Area. It is a mixed residential area with a charm and quality which is rare in Merton and needs to be respected.
3. The School has had a significant impact since it was set up in Mitcham Court. These impacts are already much greater than anticipated and they are not being adequately managed by the conditions placed on the existing planning consent. This application to extend use to include a Saturday School, Saturday opening till 5.30pm and adult education until 10pm Monday to Friday has, therefore, given rise to major concerns from our members and local residents.
4. The problems with the current use include:
  - significant access problems along Cricket Green – a narrow road of significant character which operates as an informal shared space with equal priority for cars and pedestrians
  - major parking problems, including fly parking, obstruction of residential spaces, and illegal parking on private land alongside a failure to enforce the parking restrictions introduced when the School opened
  - intensive use of the registered town green immediately outside the school to the exclusion of other uses and incursions onto the historic cricket ground managed by Mitcham Cricket Club where the game has been played continuously since 1685, longer than anywhere else in the world

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5. These problems are caused by the current intensity of use of the school and they are not being adequately addressed by the travel plan or management of the way the School uses nearby open space. There are numerous examples of the problems which have been reported by local residents and we are both surprised and disappointed by the School's intention to operate the same parking and traffic management plan if planning consent is granted. We must also challenge the effectiveness of the School in enforcing its own travel plan when it claims that *"during spot checks our report was very good and no real problems were noted"*. This complacency is belied by the evidence provided by local residents in response to this application.

6. The proposed extension of hours will take these pressures to a new level - into the weekend and outside daylight hours - and cross the boundary of acceptability. The development is in conflict with adopted planning policies (including CS2i, CS13a, CS13c, CS18b, CS18d, CS20d) as it will seriously erode the tranquillity and character of this part of the Conservation Area and impact badly on the amenity of local residents. It should be refused.

7. Instead, we urge the Council to take action to ensure effective implementation of the conditions placed on the current use of the School by requiring preparation of a more effective travel plan and monitoring its enforcement. The School's Parking and Traffic Management Policy states that *"Planning permission has been granted on the condition that the school manages to reduce congestion and traffic disturbance to others in the area"* and notes that *"Planning permission can be revoked if it is felt that the school is not complying with these conditions."* Manifestly traffic disturbance is growing in Cricket Green, Chatsworth Place and Kingsleigh Place and it should be a priority to ensure effective compliance with existing conditions and to reject proposals which will exacerbate the situation.

8. The School's Travel Plan warrants only bronze accreditation under the STAR Sustainable Travel and Accreditation Scheme. Given the sensitivity of this location and the evident problems with existing levels of use we believe that a much higher accreditation level should be required. This approach should be developed in collaboration with the local community and we should be happy to play our role in supporting this.

9. We also urge much more sensitive management of the School's use of the registered town green and that the School makes an appropriate financial contribution to its management. Its use of the green should be sensitive to other users and the adjacent cricket ground should never be used for school activities unless organised by or with the express consent of Mitcham Cricket Club. We would encourage much more regular use of the former News of the World Sports Ground for sport and recreation.