



REDEVELOPMENT OF FORMER KWIK FIT SITE, 360-364 LONDON ROAD

July 2015

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 Borough Character Studies, 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 which establishes our approach to development and change in the area and has been acknowledged in finalising the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Cricket Green (<http://mitchamcricketgreen.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/cricket-green-charter.pdf>)

2. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of proposals for redevelopment of this site and for the opportunity to meet with Caerus Developments to view and discuss the plans. We are also aware the plans are at an advanced stage and have already been subject to significant pre-application discussion and examination by the Design Review Panel. We are disappointed the letter of invitation to neighbouring properties to visit the public exhibition did not include properties along the east side of Cricket Green. The proposals directly impact on the views from these properties across the historic cricket ground. We would also have welcomed the opportunity to feed in views at an earlier stage when the plans were still being developed. We were pleased that Caerus Developments committed to responding to the representations received prior to submitting a planning application for the site.

3. We have considered the proposals for 22 flats and 280 sq m of ground floor commercial space in the context of the site's:

- prominent location in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area for which it acts as a gateway
- proximity to important listed and locally listed buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area
- sensitive location in key views across the critical open space at the heart of the Conservation Area which is home to the oldest cricket ground in the world
- relevant development plan policies
- Cricket Green Charter

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4. We are also aware of the expired planning consent for development of the site. We share the view in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan that the site currently makes a negative contribution to the area and would welcome development of the site which enhances the area.

5. The size and prominence of this site in a critical part of the Conservation Area demands the most sensitive treatment and the highest quality of development. Our review of the current proposals indicates that the development is not yet suitable to go forward as a planning application and we ask that the following matters be considered:

- The overall scale and bulk of the development is too large for this site – it will overwhelm neighbouring buildings and compete rather than complement the surrounding townscape which is identified as making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The development will be a significant imposition on the key view from Mitcham cricket ground and damage its setting
- The proposals sit uneasily alongside the modest residential dwellings in Broadway Gardens and the important group of adjacent buildings along London Road – this is clearly illustrated by the awkward relationship with the chimney stack for 356 London Road and the way the proposals will overshadow housing in Broadway Gardens
- The reference point for the height of the proposed development should have been the adjacent buildings of 356 and 352 London Road rather than 354 London Road if it is to be of an appropriate massing and to avoid detracting from the positive contribution this assemblage makes to the Conservation Area
- We welcome the efforts to address the large bulk and massing of the proposals through a design treatment which gives a vertical emphasis through differentially shaded bricks that also reflects the way in which the building is used for residential accommodation
- We are concerned that the commercial space provided as part of the development will remain empty and not provide an active frontage at street level
- We welcome the commitment to provide dual aspect flats to Lifetime Homes standards and of a size which we are informed (just) exceeds the standards established in London's housing supplementary planning guidance
- Experience with car ownership levels in recently constructed flats elsewhere on London Road suggests the parking provision is inadequate and will place extra parking pressure on surrounding roads
- The quality of bricks, finishings and windows will need to be of the highest quality and there is clear evidence in nearby developments along London Road of the consequences of failing to provide this
- We are concerned that management controls over the use of domestic balconies will be inadequate to prevent clutter which will seriously damage the visual integrity of the scheme and the character of the Conservation Area in this location – this view was shared by the Inspector in a recent appeal relating to the redevelopment of the nearby Cricketers
- Any development of the site should contribute through s106 agreements to improving the junction of Cricket Green and London Road at the White Hart and the management and maintenance of the nearby open spaces

6. As the development proposals currently stand we believe they are in conflict with Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy that:

"All development needs to be designed in order to respect, reinforce and enhance the local character of the area in which it is located and to contribute to Merton's sense of place and identity. We will achieve this by....protecting, conserving and enhancing Merton's heritage assets and wider historic environment"

and Policy DM D2 which states:

"Proposals for all development will be expected to meet all the following criteria:

i. Relate positively and appropriately to the siting, rhythm, scale, density, proportions, height, materials and massing of surrounding buildings and existing street patterns, historic context, urban layout and landscape features of the surrounding area"

7. We ask that the proposals are re-considered before they proceed to a planning application and should be happy to contribute to that consideration.