



**REDEVELOPMENT OF WILSON HOSPITAL FOR MITCHAM LOCAL CARE
CENTRE**
**Community Planning & Design Brief for Merton Clinical Commissioning
Group and London Borough of Merton**

March 2016

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 Merton Council's draft Borough Character Study and the Cricket Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan. The Cricket Green Charter (<http://mitchamcricketgreen.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/cricket-green-charter.pdf>) establishes our approach to development and change in the area and was developed in partnership with London Borough of Merton, the local community and local councillors.
2. We have prepared this Community Planning & Design Brief to inform redevelopment of the Wilson Hospital for Mitcham's new Local Care Centre by Merton Clinical Commissioning Group. It is based on our understanding of the site, its history and its relationship to the surrounding area as well as local planning policy frameworks. These include Merton Council's site allocation and local plan policies and the fact that the site is in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area. This requires any new development to "preserve or enhance" the area.
3. We have not been able to assess the interior of the buildings despite a number of requests to the Clinical Commissioning Group. We are aware of important features in the main entrance hall, including timber panelled walls and a characteristic staircase. We hope to supplement this brief at a later date once an interior assessment has been completed.

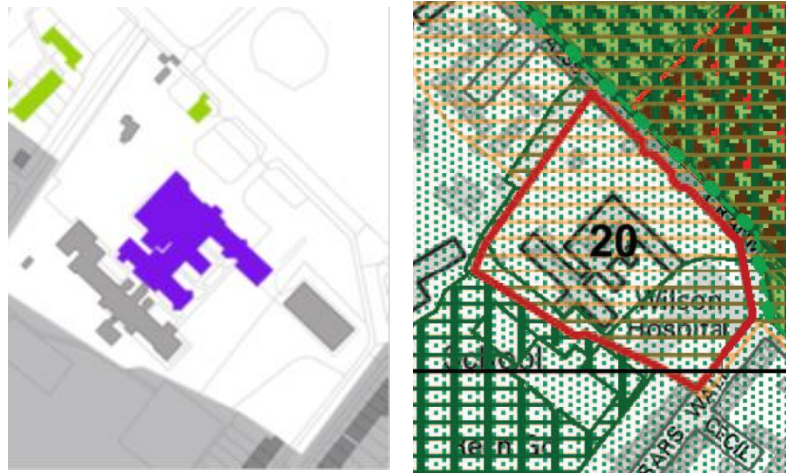
Context

4. The Wilson Hospital is a much loved feature of Mitcham Cricket Green. It is founded on endowments worth £70,000 in the 1920 & 30s from Sir Isaac Wilson that are worth over £4m today. This is just one of Wilson's many endowments in the area, including The Birches, Cumberland Hospital and Mitcham Garden Village, and the hospital was designed by the same architects as the Vestry Hall, and former fire station. These civic and social welfare associations are of immense local importance to both the community and character of Mitcham Cricket Green.

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5. We acknowledge and support the planning policy context for the site. The site is located in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and the central buildings were



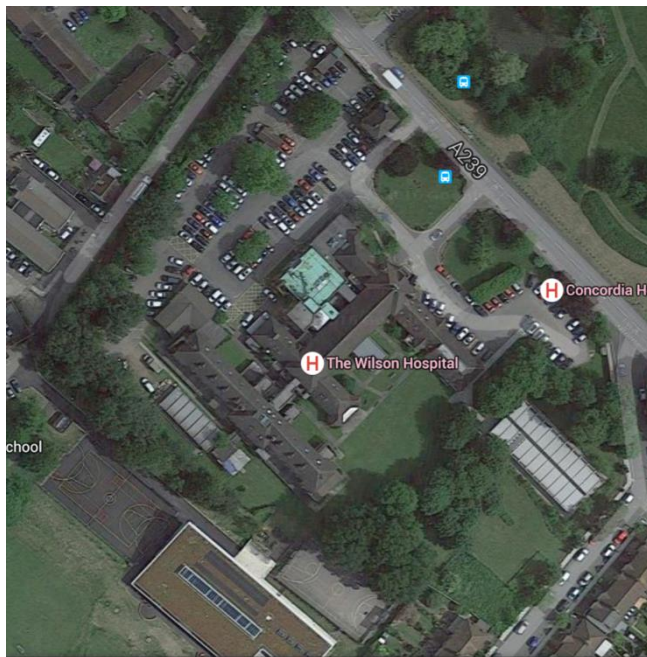
locally listed in 1991 (in purple above left). We agree with the recognition of the main hospital building as a “local landmark” in the draft Cricket Green Character Study by Merton Council. The site is in the Wandle Valley Regional Park buffer zone, includes a designated green corridor running across the site to the north west and south east (see extract from Mitcham Sites & Policies DPD above right) and is in an archaeological priority zone as evidenced by the flint tools and medieval pottery found during previous building works. It is the site of one of the three great mansion houses of Mitcham – The Cranmers – demolished in 1928 and faces one of the area’s important registered town greens, Cranmer Green which is also Metropolitan Open Land and a Local Nature Reserve.

6. We share the need expressed in Merton Council’s Sites and Policies Development Plan Document for development of the Local Care Centre to:

- Retain the positive features of the locally listed building
- Respect the character of this part of the conservation area
- Protect the residential amenity of the adjacent properties
- Protect the habitat of the protected species that have been identified on/near the site in past ten years i.e. Common Toads, Smooth Newts and Common Frogs
- Investigate the potential impact of any proposed development on archaeological heritage
- Incorporate suitable mitigation measures to address the issues associated with the critical drainage area
- Investigate the possibility of upgrading access to Cranmer School.

7. We also believe this is a location of particular relevance to Merton Council’s development plan policies CS13, CS14 and DM D2 (see Annex). These address not only design and open space issues but also the importance of considering nature conservation, public health and the role of the site in the Wandle Valley Regional Park.

8. We also support Merton Council’s recognition of the importance of the trees and open space on with Wilson Hospital site in contributing to the character of the Conservation Area:



"Trees within the grounds of the.....Wilson Hospital contribute significantly to the area's suburban character, they also provide an important backdrop to significant buildings and mitigate against the environmental impact of traffic by absorbing noise and pollution. There is a significant group of trees to the east of the hospital, which are an important green feature within the area. Trees along the grass verges on the south side of Cranmer Road also contribute significantly to the area's character."

Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

This is clearly visible in the aerial image of the site to the left.

Significances

9. We have undertaken a site visit to assess the significances of the site and these are summarised in the photographic tour of the site below. This identifies those elements which contribute positively to the area and those which have a negative impact. Any future redevelopment of the site needs to recognise and address these significances if it is to "preserve or enhance" the Conservation Area:

Positive

10. We have identified the following positive elements of the site:

Historic details



Sense of arrival



Important tree cover



Formal open space



Extensive green space



Classical design



Vernacular elements



Open aspect from Caesar's Walk



Characteristic boundary walls, railings and tree lines



Overlooking town green & local nature reserve



Negative

11. We have identified the following negative elements of the site:

Poor quality outbuildings



Excessive tarmac & impermeable surfaces



Temporary buildings



Functional servicing and air conditioning units



Underused green space



Intrusive lighting and road signs within the site



Insensitive fire escapes



Poorly located car parking dominating formal landscaped setting



Inconsistent window details



Lack of access to Cranmer School



Community planning & design principles

12. We believe the following principles should guide redevelopment of the Wilson hospital site:

1. Enhance the classical frontage, symmetry, setting and sense of arrival from Cranmer Road
2. Retain and enhance the original elements of the locally listed building visible from Cranmer Road and re-establish its setting
3. Deliver no increase in the footprint of buildings over the whole site or development in the green corridor running through the north west and south east of the site
4. Ensure new development relates positively and appropriately to the siting, rhythm, scale, density, proportions, height, materials and massing of the classically designed locally listed building and the surrounding area
5. Avoid loss of green space or tree cover and retain the significant group of trees to the east of the hospital and commemorative trees
6. Locate car parking where it does not disrupt the frontage and minimise the overall area of tarmac
7. Provide off-road access and a drop off point to Cranmer School for the school run
8. Significantly enhance the public realm and boundary features
9. Provide subdued, LED lighting avoiding light pollution beyond the site boundaries
10. Respect existing vernacular features
11. Retain open land and views into the site along Cranmer Road and Caesar's Walk
12. Retain, restore and repurpose the historic entrance Lodge
13. Provide full public access to the grounds and make positive use of the open space for public health, wellbeing, informal play and wildlife
14. Remove all temporary outbuildings and structures
15. Provide appropriate public interpretation of the site
16. Enhance access to the site, including from future investment in tram and bus services and in the development of the Wandle Valley Regional Park

Merton Council's Development Plan policies

Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy that:

We will:

- a. Protect and enhance the borough's public and private open space network including Metropolitan Open Land, parks, and other open spaces;
- b. Improve access to open space and nature conservation by public transport, cycle, mobility vehicles and on foot;
- c. Expect development to incorporate and maintain appropriate elements of open space, play areas and landscape features such as trees which makes a positive contribution to the wider network of open spaces. Where this is not feasible, planning contributions will be sought to do so;
- d. Work with partners to develop and implement proposals for the Wandle Valley Regional Park.....

g. Nature Conservation

To improve opportunities for our residents and visitors to experience nature we will:

1. Protect and enhance biodiversity through supporting the objectives of the London Biodiversity Action Plans;
2. Encourage new green links, green corridors and islands to seek to reduce areas of deficiency in nature conservation and to create safe species movement and havens for nature;
3. Refuse development that has a significant adverse effect on the population or conservation status of protected or priority species and priority habitats;
4. Require any development proposals likely to affect a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Metropolitan, Borough or Local Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Local Nature Reserve, as shown on the Proposals Map, to demonstrate that such development will not adversely affect the nature conservation values of the site;
5. Protect street trees and use Tree Preservation Orders to safeguard significant trees;
6. Improve public access to and enhance our waterways, including the River Wandle and its banks, for leisure and recreational use while protecting its biodiversity value;
7. Expect new development within the area of the Wandle Valley Regional Park, where appropriate, to incorporate physical, visual and landscape connections that will encourage pedestrian and cycle accessibility and enhance the attractiveness of the park;
8. Require, where appropriate, development to integrate new or enhanced habitat or design and landscaping which encourages biodiversity and where possible avoid causing ecological damage. Developers must propose full mitigation and compensation measures for any ecological damage that is caused.

h. Leisure and culture

Based on assessment of need and capacity, opportunities in culture, sport, recreation and play will be promoted by:

1. Safeguarding the existing viable cultural, leisure, recreational and sporting facilities and supporting proposals for new and improved facilities;
2. Refurbishing and replacing culture, sport, recreation and play facilities in our parks and open spaces;
3. Promoting healthy lifestyles to encourage physical education and well-being through the use of our leisure centres, schools, open spaces, playing pitches, recreation space and engagement in the arts through the use of our schools and colleges, open spaces, theatres and libraries. We will also encourage exercise in daily routines such as when travelling to work or school;
4. Working with partners to facilitate and enable them to deliver culture, sport, recreation, play facilities and events for community benefit. To encourage shared use of

sites and space through joint funding initiatives and commissioning, external funding including public and private sources;

5. Safeguarding existing and seeking to provide enhanced play facilities along with formal and informal play spaces where these are needed;

6. Working with key partners including the South London Partnership in the preparation and delivery of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and in particular the Olympic tennis event at the All England Lawn Tennis Club.

As part of this the site is subject to the requirement set out in para 21.13 of Merton Council's Core Strategy that:

"development within 400 m of the Wandle Valley Regional Park boundary will be required to consider its relationship to the park in terms of visual, physical and landscape links, to ensure that new development enhances the accessibility and attractiveness of the park. Our aspiration is to ensure the arrangement of buildings within new developments complement the existing green corridors and prevent disjointed pedestrian and cycle accessibility, removing physical barriers such as railings and built form that disrupt continuity and access into and around the park."

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"

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"*