



## Local election 2026 – questions for Cricket Green candidates

**Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage – the local civic society for this part of Merton – asked each of the candidates standing for election in Cricket Green ward a series of questions. The unedited responses are below, including responses received since first publication.**

	<b>Merton Conservatives</b> [Peter Ludvigsen, Eleanor Cox, Debbie Wills]	<b>Merton Greens</b> [Ryan Letbe-Holder, Adele Pinkett]	<b>Merton Labour</b> [Usaama Kaweesa, Gill Manly, Michael Butcher]		<b>Merton Liberal Democrats</b> [Vivian Vella, Yu Wing Wong, William Woodward]	<b>Reform UK</b> [Richard Law, Artem Mikheev, Casey Powell]
			<b>Gill Manly</b>	<b>Michael Butcher</b>		
<b>Q1 What is your most important priority for improving the quality of life in Cricket Green?</b>	We believe that Mitcham needs a variety of things to thrive. The town centre needs sensitive regeneration to improve housing and provide new shops and businesses, and we need to continue to focus on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. We have long championed improved transport links with central London and a Conservative administration would make that one of our priorities for Mitcham.	Merton Green Party believes that a neighbourhood should be a place that develops according to the needs of its residents, and that consulting with residents is, therefore, fundamental to ensuring that any development serves those needs. A very extensive toolkit for how to engage effectively with stakeholders already exists. Yet in Merton, consultations are too often run in a way where public input seems to be the last thing that developers and the Council want. Our priority is to address this democratic deficit by drawing from the	There is no one singular priority. I have been conscientiously and consistently working for the past 4 years on various aspects that include: protection of buildings at risk by instigating enforcement action, improvements in the management of the maintenance and care of the cricket pitch and equipment, supporting the residents of Love Lane ion challenging a terrible Planning Application on Church Road which we successfully stopped, reporting fly tipping and anti-social behaviour such as the management and use of the Methodist Church and its users, repairs to PROWs	There is no one single priority, improving the quality of life in Cricket Green requires a number of factors; keeping Council Tax as low as possible whilst maintaining a balanced budget that allows us to pay for the upkeep of our parks, schools & general maintenance, ensuring all residents have access to our brilliant well-maintained green spaces, and making sure the bins are collected, the streets are swept and fly-tipping is cleared in a timely manner so people can take pride in their local area. These are just a few things	We are blessed in Mitcham to have access to some amazing historic and green spaces right in the centre of our town. However the overall Council response to issues like the fire at the Burn Bullock gives a sense of a low priority for our historic buildings and business spaces.  A thriving local economy is essential for improving the quality of life in Cricket Green. Our ward touches the town centre and it is clear we need a stronger focus on returning and retaining key business, community and social infrastructure.	Reform Merton has a vision for Mitcham to improve and lift the centre of Mitcham and Cricket Green / Fair Green to a wonderful new, improved and redeveloped, relandscaped "Mitcham Village". This would be based on the following: - Restoring the gardens and relandscaping Fair Green to what it used to be, before the Labour Merton Council dissected it with an unsightly bus depot; we would divert the buses away from the centre of Fair Green and relandscape the square and green with proper beds and flower gardens

		<p>aforementioned toolkit and striving for best practice at every stage of any consultation. This means providing Cricket Green residents with opportunities to be involved from the very start of any development process – from open access ideation and design workshops, held on multiple occasions and involving multiple demographics, to continuous input mechanisms that give people an ongoing opportunity to make representations.</p>	<p>and lighting, supporting the Canons development area which includes the securing of the café tenancy, reporting noise and nuisance, reporting dumped vehicles, reporting abuse of disabled parking bays, the installation of a new disabled parking bay, reporting the abuse and dumping of Lime bikes, and much more.</p>	<p>and they are all important.</p> <p>One specific thing I would like to do is to continue to support more public events that utilise our green spaces. When speaking to residents on the doorstep one thing that constantly shines through is the pride and love they have for our greenery here in Cricket Green. Over the past four years we have supported various events including Mitcham Heritage Day, promoting events over at Canons House and even setting up our own event for the late Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee. I believe we can continue to build on this success.</p>	<p>Our priority is ensuring Mitcham has a thriving local centre and that requires shops, banks, hospitality and public access to police services in the ward’s police station! Much has been lost in the last few years and the Labour Council has overseen the decline of our local centre. Merton Liberal Democrats have plans to support business with an Enterprise Relief Fund to give life-saving support for local businesses hit by the Labour Government’s business rates and national insurance hikes and further support for empty shop units to open again with new businesses.</p>	<p>providing for a tranquil environment for residents and community to enjoy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allocating CIL and s106 funding, plus grant monies from central and London government, to replace all the shop fronts over a four year term and Labour Merton Council’s unsightly concrete cube fronts that blight Fair Green</li> <li>- Ensure the new shopfronts and all new buildings are rebuilt / improved / constructed in alignment with the heritage architecture of the original Kings Arms and Three Kings pubs</li> <li>- Redesigning the failed market square with a quality glass covering / Halles style market roof to encourage a better standard and consistency of market traders</li> <li>- Planting trees and landscaping to provide a wonderful new walking “Avenue” / walkway for residents and community to link the various ponds and greens of Cricket Green, all the way from Fair Green through to Three Kings Pond and Three Kings Piece, the historic Mitcham Cricket Club and to the Canons – along with a vastly improved Fair Green, this would be the anchor and centre piece for a new Mitcham Village</li> <li>- Improving Majestic Way in particular – this alley has the potential to allow small boutique cafes / restaurants / bars / quality market</li> </ul>
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						shops to flourish in a ground level arcade - Improve St Marks Car Park to establish a new Mitcham Levels (modelled on the incredibly successful offering of Peckham Levels which has brought in quality boutique restaurants and food offerings) - Restate the local plan for Mitcham to ensure all planning development follows the new strategy outlined above and architectural design and seek to establish a meaningful Historic England Conservation Area for the area around Fair Green We trust that this provides a clear answer to your questions: it will improve the quality of life in Cricket Green, align with the Cricket Green Charter, provide a proper Conservation Area, preserve the wonderful historic cricket club; and, with the Avenue, it will foster a new community and standard of living for Cricket Green and for Mitcham, moving forward from the drab shopfronts and disinterested development led by two decades of the Labour Merton Council.
<b>Q2 Do you support the <a href="#">Cricket Green Charter</a> and how will you use it in your work for Cricket Green Ward?</b>	Yes, we do support the Cricket Green charter, it is clear that a lot of work has gone into it, and we thank you for producing it. We value greater levels of community involvement in the development process	Yes. We admire the way that dialogue with local people was integral to its composition and is central to its aims, and how it encourages residents, visitors, businesses and developers to act	The Charter is a very detailed document, some of which I agree with and have actively collaborated on with MCGC&H. The fundamental issue I have is that I do not consider Mitcham a village and do not entitle it thus.	I agree with the overall aims of the Charter and particularly those elements around Green Spaces, Community and the future of the Wilson Hospital.	The Cricket Green Charter offers a strong basis for informed decision making and planning for the future in our local area. We are supportive of the focus of protecting our green	No specific response

	<p>as well as the creation of new safe walking and cycling routes that are kept away from the existing road network. We view the regeneration of Mitcham as a major opportunity to improve the borough and we welcome ideas and suggestions from the local community on how this could be achieved.</p>	<p>responsibly. We will invite all Cricket Green residents and business owners to tell us what of the Charter they would like to see prioritised in the immediate future, and then use this feedback to inform our priorities, working closely with the community to address those priorities.</p>	<p>Mitcham is a town centre and is considered such by the Council. It is a helpful document in relation to my understanding of what the group considers; however, I will not give tacit support to each and every point contained within it. Matters surrounding planning and development have to be judged and considered on an individual basis. Opinions vary greatly on what is "in keeping", and I do not always agree with the objections the group has made in the past.</p>		<p>spaces and historic buildings, growing the business community and ensuring traffic and people can flow easily in and around the area. We are very supportive of new independent shops - indeed you may know our candidate Will who opened, launched and recently passed on Commonside Cafe on Commonside East.</p> <p>We are all supportive of house building here in Cricket Green - there is an immensely long waiting list for social housing in the borough and it is essential Mitcham plays its part in growing our housing stock. Mitcham is a wonderful place to raise a family, it is more affordable than many areas, has great car free green spaces, and has good schools. However, development must be done with care and attention, with the history of the local area in mind, and most importantly with the engagement of local residents. It is clear some developments in the ward (and nearby) have needed a rethink as the MCGC&amp;H knows.</p>	
<p><b>Q3 How will you demonstrate your commitment to protecting Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and its</b></p>	<p>We have always supported our conservation areas in Merton as they are key to preserving the historic character of Merton that our residents value so much. We would work with residents and residents' group to enhance our historic conservation areas</p>	<p>The Council's website states that: 'Conservation areas are places of special architectural or historic interest that we want to preserve and enhance. In these areas there may be extra planning controls to protect the local</p>	<p>I have already spent 4 years proactively committing to protecting the environment by requesting various improvements to rubbish collections on our green spaces, supporting and requesting new trees being planted, and ensuring a tree that was planted to honour</p>	<p>I will continue to tackle the scourge of fly-tipping, reporting issues to the team and ensuring they are followed up on. I will continue supporting planting efforts and will strive for further improvements, such as more benches and park</p>	<p>Our conservation area has a distinct character, feel and look. Local people are the experts on their local spaces - we look forward to engaging with key local stakeholders and champions for the local area and using their</p>	<p>We also believe that the Canons should continue to be improved to a standard that could rival Cannizaro Park, Wimbledon.</p>

<p><b>environs?</b></p>	<p>to ensure they are properly protected and preserved.</p>	<p>character.’ However, we are not convinced that the Council are committed fully to preserving and enhancing the Cricket Green Conservation Area, or ensuring that developments in its environs are in keeping with its local character. We will endeavour to address the gap between theory and practice.</p>	<p>the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee was replanted in a more appropriate space to ensure its protection. I continue to observe the impact of fly tipping on Mitcham Common and actively engage with the Conservators to clear the things that are their responsibility. If re-elected, I plan to tackle the role of the Conservators and what level of engagement they have with the upkeep of the land, provision of benches, and the conservation of the Bidder Memorial.</p>	<p>equipment that allow people to enjoy the area to its full effect.</p>	<p>knowledge. Collaboration is key. We are particularly focused on enhancing and protecting local greenery - this will be to the benefit for residents and visitors.</p>	
<p><b>Q4 What will you do to help secure a long term future for Mitcham Cricket Club and its pavilion and equipment shed?</b></p>	<p>We have always supported the idea of a ‘Borough of Sport’, and we would work with the community and listen to their suggestions. It seems likely that this could be taken into community ownership, however, this is a vital part of Mitcham and Merton’s history, and we need to ensure that a workable long-term solution is found.</p>	<p>We will push for the transfer of its operational land and buildings to community ownership and management. The Community Land Trust (CLT) model might be apt. We believe that CLTs constitute an important challenge to a dominant system of landownership which perpetuates selfish and wasteful practices, as they distribute wealth, power, and agency more widely, with the aim of improving social, economic, and environmental wellbeing.</p>	<p>I have been working with the Council on this for 4 years and continue to do so. The club management has been the cause of a number of negative impact issues to the pitch, and the Council has had to step in to support them and improve their overall management. Of course, I fully support its remaining in situ, and hope that their future is secure.</p>	<p>It is my desire that the future of the Cricket Club be secured with a proper lease with clear terms, and I will continue to support efforts that secure this.</p>	<p>The association between cricket and Mitcham is a key part of our borough’s history. It seems strange the Council has not given it higher priority bearing in mind the current administration’s ‘Borough of Sport’ ambitions. A potential route to protect the future of these assets would be to ensure control of the pavilion is transferred to the community as a part of any future development around the Burn Bullock. However this requires engagement from a range of local stakeholders. The state of the building suggests action is required and potentially soon.</p>	<p>No specific response</p>
<p><b>Q5 Do you support compulsory purchase of the Burn Bullock site by Merton Council working with a development</b></p>	<p>That is certainly one option that we would be prepared to consider. Regeneration has been poorly handled by Labour over the last 16 years across the borough. We would make Mitcham regeneration a priority,</p>	<p>Yes. We are appalled that the degradation of such an historic and prominent site, both before and after the fire, has been allowed. We do not understand why its restoration has not been prioritised – especially in light of the</p>	<p>This has been my aim and request to the Council for 4 years and I continue to campaign for this.</p>	<p>Yes, in order to protect the building and to secure the long-term future of the Cricket Club.</p>	<p>We think this may be one of the routes to ensure the survival of this historic building but this must be the right decision based on evidence. We will need to assess all options for the future of this site -</p>	<p>The Council failed to take robust action on the Burn Bullock and it has compromised the neighbourhood – the squatters were allowed to act with impunity for years – Reform will end that and we will support</p>

<p><b>partner to restore the Grade II listed building?</b></p>	<p>however, we understand the special need for this site and its importance within the wider historic context which means the building must be restored. If it could not come forward as part of a future town centre regeneration scheme, then we would support a compulsory purchase.</p>	<p>extensive refurbishment of Vestry Hall and Canons House and Grounds. The potential of the site to become a hub and source of pride for the community is huge</p>			<p>unfortunately it seems very little has been done on this issue and the site remains stuck. We will look at the Burn Bullock afresh if elected with the area's heritage in mind. However, we want to be clear - any public money spent and any cost incurred must make financial sense.</p>	<p>a CPO to restore the Grade II listed building, as opposed to Labour's and the Liberal Democrats preference for creating temporary accommodation and HMOs.</p>
<p><b>Q6 What will you do to improve the character and vitality of Mitcham Village?</b></p>	<p>We will make Mitcham a priority from day one, we would work with residents and local groups such as yourself to protect and enhance Mitcham.</p>	<p>We applaud the Council's employment of a Town Centre Manager who has shown commitment to revitalising the area. We think that retaining this position and growing a town centre management team is desirable.</p>	<p>I do not acknowledge or accept the title "Village". With reference to the Town Centre, I support any new business that brings something new and different, e.g., Forty Café. I have been highly supportive of the bandstand, the market, and any new planting. I believe in Mitcham and its continued growth. However, the influx of the same old shops, such as barbers, vape shops is not within the Council's gift to prevent; we do not own the premises or assets. I supported the residents of Commonsides East joining together to begin a street garden, supported the elimination of regular dumping of old food and bread by the pond, secured a new pond fountain, and planted two cherry trees to honour the passing of lifetime resident Tot Kelly on Commonsides East. I will continue in the same manner if re-elected.</p>	<p>While I love the parts of Mitcham that have kept their village feel, I also accept that we are a London Borough and that easy access into Central London is an integral aspect of the lives of many of our residents. Much the same as my first answer, I think one of the keys is to utilise our public spaces for a wide range of events attractive to all residents. Working alongside our Town Centre manager, I would also like to attract proper investment and business into the area that builds character and custom.</p>	<p>We have focussed elsewhere in these questions on protecting our green spaces and supporting new business. Another area which we think is key is a proactive approach to tackling street drinking which can blight areas across our town. Further enforcement is needed on this issue rather than the seemingly containment policy currently in place. Stronger community policing is essential in our ward and across the borough and is a key priority for the Liberal Democrats in Merton. We want to make clear that this year Labour have ended public access to Mitcham Police Station in the centre of Cricket Green.</p> <p>Secondly, the Wilson Hospital site provides an excellent location to provide needed significant health services in Mitcham. This development has seen multiple delays and changes to plans. This site needs real backing - the potential benefit for local residents from a</p>	<p>See response to Q1</p>

					health access and equality perspective is significant.	
<p><b>Q7 What will you do to ensure swift enforcement against breaches of planning laws and fly tipping?</b></p>	<p>For far too long this area has been ignored by Labour. We will ensure that any necessary retrospective action is taken to ensure that any breaches are corrected and we would make eradicating fly tipping and other anti-social behaviours a priority.</p>	<p>We will be vigilant and encourage vigilance amongst residents, and we will respond promptly to reports, as sitting on information could result in irreparable damage. Furthermore, we anticipate that many residents are unaware of what to look out for and how to report issues. Hence, awareness raising in the community will be crucial.</p>	<p>I have demonstrated for the past 4 years my swift action in terms of planning and enforcement. I have reported cases within 48 hours to the Planning Team. I used the FixMyStreet app every week when I do my Ward inspection to report fly tips. The Council is extremely responsive, and we have had excellent results.</p>	<p>I have a good relationship with Jon Berry and his team at the Council, and would ensure any breaches are immediately passed onto them and investigated.</p>	<p>The local authority does need to better quickly respond to planning breaches across the borough and this should be a priority for new councillors, particularly in the Conservation Area. We would welcome the opportunity to work with organisations like MCGC&amp;H who are close to the ground on these issues. In practical terms, we would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defend planning policies that protect open spaces and biodiversity.</li> <li>- Strengthen planning enforcement to ensure developers comply with conditions and environmental obligations.</li> <li>- Work more closely with community groups and friends organisations that help steward these spaces.</li> <li>- Invest in better management, biodiversity restoration and facilities within parks.</li> </ul> <p>Fly tipping remains a significant issue in the ward - unfortunately green spaces do become a target. Cricket Green regularly records high numbers of fly tips compared to other wards in Merton. Borough wide, a common sense approach to enforcement is needed with new warnings and sliding scale of fines. Lib Dems will introduce a fixed-</p>	<p>We will also take the most robust action allowed by law against flytippers and any breaches of planning law, both matters completely disregarded by the Labour Merton Council; we will also require the Met to adopt strict zero tolerance approaches to the ASB and street drinking around Fair Green.</p>

					schedule street sweeping and a reliability guarantee, expand the pop-up tips initiative, bringing them closer to people's homes. We will keep our parks and green spaces clean as part of our 'Parks Promise' commitment.	
<b>Q8 What will you do to ensure the Pagoda Tree in The Canons nursery continues to thrive despite Merton Council's building plans for the site?</b>	This site does not seem to be sensible considering the historic importance of the tree, residents are right to call for its protection, and we would make this a priority.	Any development that takes place should make this particularly special tree a focal point. We will push for its retention accordingly, including opposing any diminishment of its canopy, as reduction would create an existential threat.	Currently, it is debatable if the Council is still planning to build on that site. I would also insist on a full report by an expert on the current condition of the tree and what impact any future development might have. I would make my judgment based on that information. In principle, I would seek the best possible outcome for the protection of any trees, depending on their condition and health.	I do not believe there is any current threat to the tree from development. I would like to see a report done on the current health of the tree, and in general support all tree planting efforts.	Merton has numerous sites in its Local Plan that could be developed. We personally don't believe this is a sensible site for a significant housing development, between two listed buildings in the centre of the town's green and open space, and it would have been better to incorporate it into the wider Canons site. This could have provided even better services at this location and saved one of the winners of Merton's 'Tree of the Year'. Merton Council got this one wrong - maintenance of this tree should be at the centre of any work at this location, not become a victim of it.	No specific response
<b>Q9 What will you do to protect our green spaces from any new tarmac paths and/or lighting?</b>	Protection of our green spaces is of vital importance we would ensure they are protected from future development and enhanced as part of the wider regeneration process.	We see no need for any tarmac paths or lighting. Moreover, their introduction would have an adverse impact upon biodiversity and irrevocably change the feel of the spaces.	My biggest concern is the safety of pedestrians. Where pathways require repair, then they must be done. Where there is a lack of sufficient lighting to safeguard users, then I support lighting provision. In this day and age, the safety of women, children and the elderly comes first.	When it comes to new lighting this is something many residents, particularly women, have requested of us. I think it's integral to make sure residents feel safe, and there's many areas that need improvement with lighting. I will of course do what I can to push for the least intrusive lighting and tarmac that keeps in character with what we already have in the local area.	We are keen to avoid any addition of further tarmaced areas over our green spaces. Our aim is not only to protect open space from development, but also to improve the quality and accessibility of these spaces for residents . All developments should be considered in light of community concerns. We have had areas raised with us where we believe appropriate lighting would enhance the	No specific response

					safety and usability of local spaces, including on Three Kings Piece, and would take these ideas to the authority and local organisations like MCGC&H.	
<b>Q10 Do you support the de-designation of Church Road as a recognised lorry route?</b>	Yes. There are similar roads across the borough where residents experience the same level of noise and vibrations, we would listen to local residents and act of their concerns, this means stopping the lorries on Church Road.	Yes. The thundering past, especially where the road is narrower, is horrible.	If there is a practical and safe alternative, then potentially yes.	Ideally, I would like to see this. I believe the quality of the road is degrading due to the volume of heavy vehicles, and would like to see an alternative.	Significant volumes of large vehicles using this route , particularly down the narrow stretch from Lower Green, will be a significant nuisance to residents. This is an issue we will take away and look at further.	Church Road has wonderful potential – it should not be redesignated as a lorry route.
<b>Q11 Do you support ending parking along King George VI Avenue as recommended in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan?</b>	Yes, there are longstanding issues regarding abandoned vehicles and other negative behaviour at this location.	If alternative provision for those who tend to park there can be made, we will support the recommendation.	Having consulted with Tony Burton last week on a site meeting that seems a good option that I support.	Yes	This seems sensible. We have concerns about anti-social behaviour and the abandonment of vehicles on this road. There is ample parking in the Canons for short stays.	No specific response
<b>Q12 What is your favourite place in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area?</b>	Canons House is a very special part of the MCGCA with its beautiful trees and grounds.	<b>Ryan Letbe-Holder:</b> My favourite place in Cricket Green is the cemetery grounds of St Peter and St Paul's church. I have such fond memories of taking my daughter there when she was learning to walk. She loved toddling up and down the little paths, between grasses and wildflowers that were sometimes taller than she was. It is often a very quiet place, but I can also sometimes hear the bells ringing in the church from my home, and the sound reminds me of community – the coming together of the faithful to sing and remember the importance of doing good in the world.	Mary Tate's Cottages and the view across the Greens.	I like to write in the flower garden in the Canons, next to the Pawelek Café. For walking or running, I love Three Kings Piece and Seven Islands Pond on the Common.	<b>Will's answer</b> - with a four year old I am a regular user of the green spaces around Canons House. We are very lucky to have such a facility in the centre of the ward and my daughter is very fond of the play area, the walled garden and the nature trail.  <b>Viv's answer</b> - I like the village feel and the range of older houses that line the green. It feels in many ways that you could be out of London in an English village particularly with cricket at the weekends!  <b>Yuwing's answer</b> - As	No specific response

		<p><b>Adele Pinkett:</b>  My favourite place in Cricket Green is the grounds of Canons House. The variety of trees, the grass, and the benches make it somewhere from which one can escape from the air and noise pollution created by motor traffic in the surrounding roads. As a mother of two young children, I think that access to this kind of space is especially important.</p>			<p>the founder of an organic farming community in the borough I am very keen on sustainable living and empowering people to grow their own food, either at home or in community spaces. I therefore love the community garden / planters in the Canons next to the play area. This type of community engagement is a great way to spend time together, meet people and learn new things.</p>	
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