

## **19/P4072 360 - 364 London Road Mitcham**

### **Mitcham Society comments**

ERECTION OF A PART 4 STOREY, PART 5 STOREY MIXED USE BUILDING COMPRISING 1 x COMMERCIAL/RETAIL UNIT ON GROUND FLOOR (CLASS A1, A2, A3 OR B1) PLUS 24 x SELF-CONTAINED FLATS (CLASS C3) WITH CYCLE PARKING AND AMENITY SPACE

Mitcham Society has considered the proposals for the above development and has the following comments.

- 1) The site is in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation area. Policies require that development in a Conservation Area should make a positive contribution to it. This is not the case here. This building gives every appearance of being an attempt by the developer to cram as much as possible onto the site, while showing absolutely no respect for the Conservation Area. Nor does it bear any relationship to the wider townscape. The proposed development:
  - a. Damages the settings of the Grade II Burn Bullock, Grade II White Hart pub, Grade II cottages at 346 and 348 London Road, Grade II war memorial, locally listed Vestry Hall and locally listed old fire station all of which are inside Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area
  - b. Damages views both to and from the open space of Cricket Green – which is inside Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area
  - c. Presents an overbearing, dense, poorly designed, heavy-set façade on a key gateway into Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area.
  - d. Competes with existing buildings on both sides of London Road rather than complementing them, creating a jarring, out of place addition to the townscape.
  - e. Is a considerable overdevelopment of the site being too tall and too dense for the site and location.

- 2) The design is uninspiring and disjointed. Even elements within the building do not appear to show any flow or response to each other. It adds nothing to Mitcham Cricket Green, but takes much away.



- a. There is no precedent for the angular balconies facing into Broadway Gardens either elsewhere in this proposed building or in surrounding buildings.
- b. The balconies facing towards the Cricket Green are perhaps designed to elevate the price of the flats that have them, but they detract from views towards the building from the Cricket Green itself. This is another negative point about this building's relationship to the Conservation Area.
- c. The tall grey 'stack' within Broadway Gardens is a bizarrely incongruous design feature adding nothing, looking like an out of place monolith, and taking much away from the appearance of the building.
- d. The view from within Broadway Gardens approaching London Road is difficult to describe with any other word than 'dreadful'. With car parking, huge protruding balconies, bizarrely angled windows, a randomly angular, disjointed and visually unappealing fascia and the grey 'stack', the appearance is messy and jarring. The grey hard landscaping and bare minimum of greenery adds insult to injury.



- 3) Policy CS8 in the council's core planning strategy sets a borough-wide affordable housing target of 40% for developments of 10 or more units. The prevailing view is that affordable homes should be integrated rather than separated out onto different sites. Merton Council should contest the developer's assertion that affordable housing is not viable for this site, conduct its own assessment, and require affordable housing to be provided on site.
  
- 4) The commercial / retail allocation on the ground floor is welcome. More retail would help to revitalise this part of Mitcham. We are concerned that developers can allocate commercial / retail space which helps them get planning permission, and then never let the space, instead using it for residential. In this case the Co-Op has been mentioned as a retail partner. We are very mindful that this is the same retail partner which was proposed for the office-to-residential conversion of Justin Plaza, just a couple of hundred meters away from this site. The retail space was never occupied, and is now flats. We urge Merton Council to place a condition on the planning consent if it is granted that the ground floor is in commercial use before any residential units are occupied.
  
- 5) Car Parking in Broadway Gardens is already near impossible. Pedestrians must often walk in the road as cars occupy the pavement. It is inconceivable that no occupants of these homes apart from those who need a disabled parking space will have cars. Pressure for car parking is at breaking point in the surrounding streets. It is not good enough for Merton Council officers to simply close their eyes to these pressures. This issue must be considered and addressed in any response to this application. A reduction in the mass, height and number of flats would inevitably reduce also the local demand for car parking spaces.

- 6) The location of the two disabled parking spaces on the street frontage is unacceptable. Car parking on street fronts should not be legitimised in this way. Car access to disabled homes should be near the front door of those homes – the configuration of the development should be reworked to locate the car parking away from the street frontage.
  
- 7) Overlooking. We note a balcony on the highest level at the corner facing into Broadway Gardens, and also that there are windows on this side of the building. This raises concerns of overlooking into the private amenity space of residents of Broadway Gardens, negatively affecting people’s personal wellbeing and right to privacy.



- 8) This proposal uses the proposed development of the current car wash site (19/P2785 370 - 374 London Road Mitcham) as justification for its height and massing even though that development does not itself have permission. This is disingenuous. An undecided planning application is in no way a justification for another application, and it should not be a consideration in deciding permission for this application.
  
- 9) Should both this application and 19/P2785 (370 - 374 London Road Mitcham) be given permission, the effect would be to:

- a. Create a canyon into Broadway Gardens – a cul-de-sac street of two storey, modest houses. The contrast between the two blocks and Broadway Gardens is unacceptable.
- b. Create a long, tall, ugly and incongruous façade onto London Road.

Taken together these two applications would destroy the townscape of London Road, ruin the approach to Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and create an inhospitable and characterless opening into Broadway Gardens. This would be a low point for new development in Mitcham.

10) This application contravenes a number of Merton Council's policies, as well as NPPF guidance.

- a. NPPF paragraph 130 "permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions"
- b. The proposed development is within the Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and will cause significant harm to it.
- c. The application contravenes Merton Council development plan policies CS2, CS8, CS14, DM D1, DM D2, DM D4, DM T2 and DM T3.

**This development should not be granted planning permission.**