



MITCHAM SOCIETY

Web: [www.mitchamsociety.org.uk](http://www.mitchamsociety.org.uk)  
Email: [TheMitchamSociety@gmail.com](mailto:TheMitchamSociety@gmail.com)  
Twitter: @MitchamSociety

## Comments to Merantun Ltd on proposed development on Raleigh Gardens Car Park

August 2019

Mitcham Society has considered the proposals of Merantun Ltd, a development company owned by the London Borough of Merton for flats on Raleigh Gardens car park, and has the following comments.

- 1) The building is too tall, and the number of homes too dense for the site. In our [response to Merton Council's Local Plan 2020](#), we say clearly, as one of our key principles for any development in Mitcham, that "No new development above four storeys in height is appropriate." We did not set four storeys as a target, but as an absolute ceiling for the few locations that can accommodate that height. The proposed development of one five and one six storey block, each topped with a pitched roof, is simply too tall and the density too great for the site.

The architects own drawings show the gable end of the nearest Glebe Court block at about half way up the height of the taller of the two new blocks, while street trees are dwarfed by the mass of the proposed building.



Source: Merantun Ltd public consultation boards, August 2019

The architects have also produced a ‘proposal in context’ photo montage. This comprises a single image, once as it is now, and again with the proposed development edited in. Both images show a single cottage at the end of the Raleigh Gardens terrace. The edited photo includes Standor House with the two storey addition extension that has been granted planning permission but which is not yet built. The unedited photo shows Standor House as it is today.

What is not shown is the surrounding 360 degree view, in which there is no nearby building of any height comparable to the proposed development. Indeed there is nothing in the immediate vicinity which is at present taller than the closest Glebe Court block. The images below show this clearly.



Image 1: Far right through trees, Glebe Court nearest block to proposed development; behind road sign, Raleigh Gardens car park – the development site. Source: Google Maps



Image 2: Right former Conservative Club; left Lidl supermarket. Source: Google Maps



Image 3: Raleigh Gardens cottages. Source: Google Maps

- 2) Glebe Court is in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area. It is incumbent on Merton Council to ensure that development on the edges (environs) of a conservation area does nothing to detract from the conservation area. We believe this development fails to meet that test. As a starting point the adjacent Glebe Court block – which is in the Conservation Area - should remain the most prominent building in the area and any development of Raleigh Gardens Car Park should respect – and be subservient to - its height and massing.
- 3) Glebe Court is a well-designed estate. It is constructed in light coloured brick and comprises several blocks, spaced well apart and set in landscaped gardens, so that the whole feeling is of light and openness. The proposed development seems to ignore these good design cues right on its doorstep.
- 4) The use of dark brick, which we are told has been selected taking a cue from surrounding housing (but clearly not from Glebe Court), makes the proposed development seem even larger, more looming and more oppressive than it is. It is an incredibly insensitive material for such a large building in this area.
- 5) In our response to Merton Council’s Local Plan 2020 (link above) we say “Development needs to be sensitively managed, and within a context that will ensure Mitcham Village does not become a bland ‘anytown’”. The architects have described their local inspiration, yet we find it difficult to see beyond a ‘pattern book’ appearance. We heard at one meeting an architect say they were partly inspired by ‘sort of workhouse buildings’. We wonder whether they meant the Holborn Workhouse. Most of these buildings are long gone, the one remaining building bears no relationship to the design chosen. The general design is workaday and uninspiring. There are too many similarities with many other bland blocks, and the design even shares some key characteristics with some of the architects other designs. This proposal does not feel bespoke for its setting.

- 6) Merantun says its assessments for access to light show no loss to residents of the Glebe Court block closest to the proposed development. Our concern is about the design and its visual impact, not compliance with Daylight Regulations, which have to be met by law. We believe the height and density of the proposal will create a significant visual impact that will make Glebe Court residents in the block closest to the proposed development feel hemmed in by the proximity of the new building. Many of their room windows would look on to the block, which will block out broader views and be unacceptably close. The changes created by the new block could be detrimental to the wellbeing of residents of this Glebe Court block.
- 7) The architects, and/or the Merantun Director of Design, must be aware that new building heights are often set by the heights of buildings around them. One building taller than the rest will mean the next developer will want to use that building as its reference point hoping to at least match its height. Merantun will point to a number of buildings on London Road which have received permission to add additional storeys, making them taller. Mitcham Society is against this policy as a general principle, but is aware that Merantun has used the reference point of Standor House on London Road help justify the height of the Raleigh Gardens development. This is not acceptable. Merantun should be setting the standard, not following the herd.
- 8) In the [Draft Local Plan, Policy N3.2 Mitcham](#) states the following as a policy goal for the surrounding area of Mitcham Town Centre “Enhancing the public realm through high quality urban design and architecture, and permitting development that makes a positive visual impact to the overall surroundings and connectivity to the town centre”. This proposal does not meet that policy goal for all the reasons stated above.
- 9) In the light of the comments above we propose a reset. The current proposals should be withdrawn. The architects should engage properly with local people in co-design workshops to produce residential development that is more appropriate for the specific site and for Mitcham in terms of design and density.

General comments on the work of Merantun Ltd.

- 10) This company, as one which is owned by the London Borough of Merton, should set the highest standards of design, of consultation, and of public participation. It should set the standards that other developers need to follow. Mitcham Society feels Merantun has failed to achieve these goals.
- 11) The notice period for the public consultation events was too short. An email received on 1 August informing us of consultation events on Saturday 3 August and Wednesday 7 August gave us little time to let our members and people across Mitcham know of the events. In any case, holding these events in August is unhelpful as many people are away.
- 12) Merantun has no web site – so the drawings of plans are not available to a wider audience. We were not made aware that materials were available by email on request, and learned this almost by accident. In any event, making materials available ‘on request’ is meeting the lowest possible definition of ‘public availability’. It requires minimal cost and effort to set up a simple web site to

host four sets of drawings for the four current development sites. Merantun's failure to do so is inexplicable.

13) Merantun should be an exemplar of good practice and good design. For the reasons we give above, the design and density standards of the Raleigh Gardens proposal are poor. They open the door to further poor quality, overly dense development in Mitcham, of a kind which flies in the face of the aspirations of the Draft Local Plan.

14) To be clear - **Merantun should be setting the standard, not following the herd.**