



MITCHAM SOCIETY

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19/P4048 Car Park Raleigh Gardens Mitcham

Mitcham Society comments June 2020

REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING CAR PARK TO ALLOW FOR THE ERECTION OF A PART FIVE, PART SIZE [sic] STOREY DEVELOPMENT COMPRISING 36 SELF-CONTAINED UNITS (29X 1B AND 7X 2B); WITH ASSOCIATED CYCLE PARKING, REFUSE STORE, 3X DISABLED PARKING BAYS AND LANDSCAPING.

AMENDMENTS TO THE PROPOSED DRAWINGS, ADDENDUM TO THE DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT AND AN AMENDED TREE SURVEY

Mitcham Society has considered the amendments to this planning application and has the following comments.

It should be noted that our original comments still pertain where there have been no amendments, and these are appended for the avoidance of doubt.

- 1) In the original Design and Access Statement Merantun states “we explored pitched roof forms in response to the common typology of residential buildings in Mitcham”, (P25), and that the choice of pitch “created a suitable façade”, (p25), and later “The pitched roof form further breaks down the mass of each building element, and creates an interesting roofline that picks up on a number of buildings in the local context.” (p32). This is repeated later “The pitched roof form further breaks down the mass of the two blocks” (p34).

These are strong arguments for a pitched roof, positioning it as central to the design proposition. It is strange, then, with such a strong preference for a pitched roof, that key alteration in the new proposal is to remove the pitched roof and instead use a flat roof. This seems entirely counter to the design principles on which the original proposal was based.

Flattening the roof has the visual effects of: emphasising the massing – now the development is clearly two huge monolithic blocks; removing the reference to Glebe Court and the cottages adjacent which have pitched roofs – which was emphasised as significant in the original proposals; and instead plonking a completely unreferenced, building block style design into a location where it is incongruous and entirely out of place.

- 2) The addition of glazing to the stair core, advised by the case officer as an alternative to a mass of brickwork, simply replaces this massing with a different material. It is a case of replacing one mass of façade with another. The only way to truly mitigate the massing issue is to reduce the size and bulk of the development in its entirety.
- 3) The altered window grouping which has been designed to reduce the appearance of height is a crude visual trick. The building heights will not change, they will still overshadow the nearby cottages, significant numbers of Glebe Court homes will still suffer great loss of daylight and sunlight, and the development will still be out of character with the immediate surroundings and the rest of Mitcham. The only solution to mitigating the bulk, form and massing of this development is to go back to the drawing board and scale down the mass and height of the building significantly.

ORIGINAL SUBMISSION



AMENDED DESIGN



- 4) We have argued against Merantun’s statement that in designing the building it was “keen to respond to the historical industrial context of the area” (design and access statement 01 p26), pointing out a number of inconsistencies – see our original submission below. The present alterations (removal of pitched roof, addition of glazing and altered window groupings), are a move away from that earlier approach. Even though it was fundamentally flawed, the justification for these changes seems merely workaday, lazy attempts to gain planning permission, rather than a studied, thoughtful response to location and context. We repeat, the only way to thoughtfully respond to location and context is to reduce the size and bulk of the development in its entirety.
- 5) The proposal remains for five and six storey blocks. This is simply too much for the site to accommodate, and no amount of design artifice will remove that fact. It is a damaging overdevelopment of a small site.
- 6) There have been some significant revisions to the Tree Survey. In particular, there has been a reassessment of trees on and bordering the development site, and a reclassification of the

majority of trees with many formerly designated for removal now designated to be retained. However, the RPAs of many trees are in danger from the development process, and it is vital that these are all protected if the trees are not to be irreparably damaged or lost.

- 7) There is some inconsistency regarding the trees marked for removal. 7 are marked as 'unsuitable for retention' on page 9 of the revised Tree Survey, and 8 on page 10. Tree T5 is the anomaly, which in the schedule on page 7 is given the harsh descriptor of 'incompatible with development'. (It is not the only one to get this descriptor). A further discrepancy comes on page 10 of the revised Tree Survey which states "It is proposed to remove all 15 trees within the development area". This suggests a lack of attention being given to these critical considerations.
- 8) The revised Tree Survey comments that "Three trees scheduled for removal are on Glebe Court land, and will require landowner approval" (p12). These are T7 an ash, T9 a silver birch and T11 a holly. The schedule on P7 suggests the removal of T11 "If permission is forthcoming", while T7 and T9 are marked for removal with no mention of permission. The original version of the Tree Survey, still on the planning Portal indicates that T11 will be replaced (though not T7 or T9). The replacement of T11 has been removed from the revised Tree Survey. These details (along with those raised in points 6 and 7) leave us concerned about the detail of tree management for this site and about an overall reduction of tree canopy.
- 9) Overall there should be no net loss of tree canopy – and arguably there should be a net increase. This is consistent with Merton Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency on 10 July 2019, its work on its Climate Action Plan, and the recognition of the importance of trees for air quality, biodiversity and wellbeing. Any tree removed must be replaced with a tree of at least equal canopy either on site or in the immediate vicinity, and every opportunity should be taken for additional tree planting.
- 10) Glebe Court was added to Cricket Green Conservation Area in 2013. Trees within a conservation area are automatically protected, a fact that is made explicit on Merton Council's web site which states clearly "All trees in conservation areas are protected."
<https://www.merton.gov.uk/planning-and-buildings/planning/list-of-tree-preservation-orders>). A number of the trees marked in the revised Tree Survey as needing care so as not to damage their RPA are within Glebe Court. In fact, those trees are protected. The utmost effort, therefore, must be made to ensure those trees are not damaged.
- 11) Further work and revised documentation is needed to a) clarify what precisely is the proposal for each individual tree removing all inconsistencies, b) maintain consistency in approach for all trees on Glebe Court and respect that they are all afforded Conservation Area grade protection c) provide the strongest assurances for RPA protection and the protection of all trees to be retained and d) provide clear commitments around a net increase of tree canopy.
- 12) The revised Design and Access Statement makes no mention of removing uplighters, so we assume the original plans in this respect are retained. We noted in our original submission "The Landscaping Statement proposes three types of lighting – wall lighting, in-ground lighting and

tree uplighting” with the latter to “uplight new trees as focal points” – i.e. for aesthetic reasons. We contended that lighting trees for aesthetic reasons was unacceptable, and still hold to that.

Uplighting trees is unacceptable, both for wildlife reasons and because it would be detrimental to the outlook for residents of Glebe Court (and the new dwellings). Our full comments on this are in our original submission (appended below).



- 13) None of the proposed amendments cause us to make any changes to our overall view. Comments made previously and not revised above still apply. This application still fails to comply with a number of Merton Council’s policies and we describe these in our original comments which are appended below. Very importantly, this proposal continues to be, as Merton Council’s Design Review Panel noted, an overdevelopment of a small site.
- 14) Merantun continues to pay scant regard to the townscape and show little regard for local context or for the enhancement of Mitcham’s village character, and to show a dismissive attitude towards the right to light of residents of Glebe Court. Merantun is a local authority development company that has brought forward plans in conflict with the same local authority’s development plan policies.

This development should not be granted planning permission.



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

- 1) The proposal is an overdevelopment of the site. We commented on the height and massing after the first plans were made available to the public in August. The building remains six storeys high at its maximum, with an overbearing pitched roof which raises the height further.

The use of an unbuilt additional two storeys on Standor House, which is some way away, is used to justify the height. This is disingenuous. That two storey addition is not built, and is a long way from the proposed development. It is not relevant to the very negative effect this proposal will have both on the street scene and on Glebe Court.

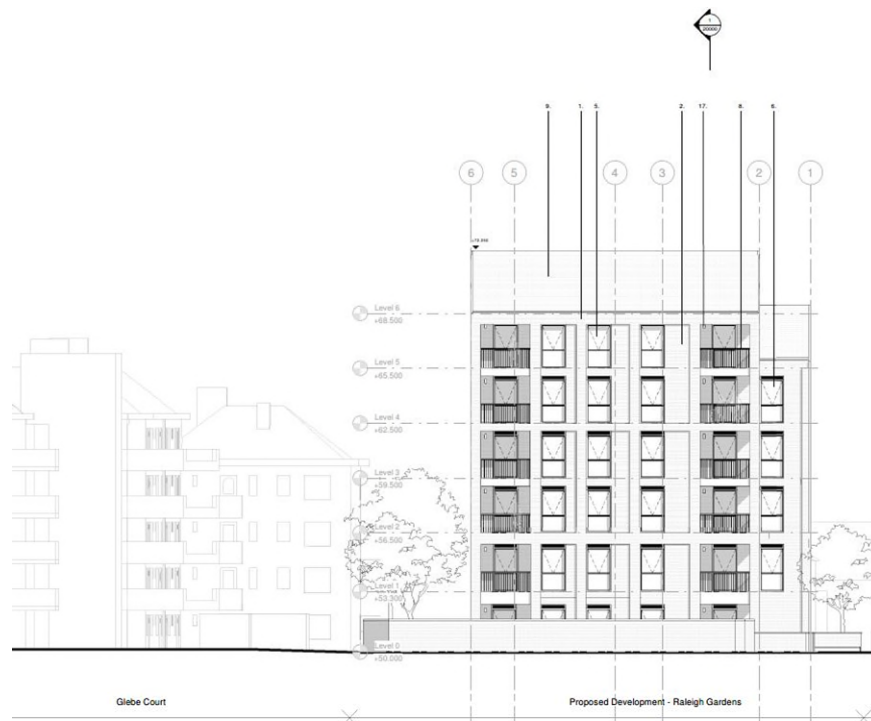
The image used on the first page of the Design and Access Statement presents a view of the proposed development taken from such an angle as to make Standor House with its (unbuilt) two storeys added appear significantly taller than the proposed development. This use of perspective is deceptive, and a disappointing ruse to make the proposed development seem less intrusive than in fact it is.



An image from later in the same document places Standor House in a more realistic position. Sadly this also too uses a deceptive perspective, hiding the taller, six storey proposed block behind the five storey one in the foreground. In reality the height and massing is greater than this image suggests.



When considered in relation to the block of Glebe Court closest to the proposal, the imbalance of height is abundantly clear in the architect's elevation drawing. Glebe Court is to the left in the image below.



The pitched roof, which adds considerably to the overall height, makes no contribution to dwelling space.

- 2) Merton Council's design review panel discussed this development in public at a meeting in October 2019. Mitcham Society heard several members of the Design Review Panel comment that the proposal was an overdevelopment of the site. They specifically said 'overdevelopment'. The comments can be found on the DRP recording at [Merton TV](#). We concur with this view. Four storeys is the maximum height that this site can bear, especially because the pitched roof adds further to the height while adding no dwelling space.
- 3) Merantun claims that in designing the building it was 'keen to respond to the historical industrial context of the area' (design and access statement 01 p26).
 - a. There is no 'industrial' building within the locality of this proposed development.
 - b. The historical context of the immediate area has a mix of design and history.
 - c. Probably the most significant reference point in terms of housing is Glebe Court, which is characterised by light coloured brick that help the blocks disappear into their well-landscaped surroundings. Even the tallest blocks within Glebe Court, which are well away from the proposed development, are set in open, landscaped grounds which help reduce the impact of their height. By contrast this development is squeezed onto a site which allows no amount of mitigation for its height and mass by landscaping.

d. The choice of brick colour is stated as a reference to the two storey cottages close by. This dark brick makes the proposed development appear looming, and does nothing to mitigate the sheer, overpowering size of it. It is, as we said in our formal response to the August 2019 consultation, ‘an incredibly insensitive material for such a large building in this area.’

4) Daylight and sunlight for residents of 1-264 Glebe Court. Merantun presents its daylight and sunlight assessment in a report which shows a shockingly severe impact on 1-264 Glebe Court, and makes some questionable inferences and value-judgements about how Glebe Court residents use the spaces within their homes, and their rights to access to daylight/sunlight.

The report assessed 58 windows, and concluded that 17 will be affected by the development – close to a third of those assessed.

The report states that these rooms are bedrooms and kitchens. It defines the use of bedrooms, stating ‘a bedroom is generally used for sleeping and storage, and therefore dependency on daylight is less critical.’ How people configure and use the rooms in their home is a matter for them. Bedrooms can be used for study or private space during the daytime and evening, for example. The situation is similar for kitchens, which have uses for groups and individuals that may or may not be food related. The value judgements presented in this report are unreasonable and unacceptable. Where there is a loss of daylight/sunlight - which there will be to 17 windows - that loss can be injurious to wellbeing.

5) Lighting. The Landscaping Statement proposes three types of lighting – wall lighting, in-ground lighting and tree uplighting. Uplighting is proposed for all seventeen trees in the development. The purpose is stated as to ‘uplight new trees as focal points’ – i.e. for aesthetic reasons. There has been no consideration of any potential consequences or their mitigation.

a. 1-264 Glebe Court. Regardless of the spread of the tree uplighting, residents of Glebe Court will be able to see many of the lights through windows when they are at home. It is unclear whether any analysis of this effect has been undertaken. An analysis should be required as a **planning condition**, and if any negative effect is found, the lighting causing this effect should not be permitted. This work should also be carried out for residents of the proposed development, some of whose windows will look directly onto uplit trees.

b. An investigation of the effect of the proposed tree uplighting on wildlife, including, but not limited to, bird species (both nesting prospects and everyday habit), bat species, bugs and moths should be required as a **planning condition**, and if any negative effect is found, the lighting causing this effect should not be permitted.



- 6) Pitched roof and PV. We have already noted that the pitched roof adds unnecessary height to this design, adding to the overbearing massing. There is no PV provision on the roof, despite Merton Council having declared a Climate Emergency, and despite the growing normalisation of its inclusion on new builds. We feel that PV is a 'must have' for all new build across Merton.
- 7) This application contravenes a number of Merton Council policies. Specific clauses are highlighted below where appropriate:
 - a. CS 2 Mitcham Sub-Area policy – this application fails particularly on:
 - I. CS 2 i “Ensuring that development conserves and enhances the historic environment
 - II. CS 2 j “Enhancing the public realm through high quality urban design and architecture”
 - b. CS 14 Design, which states “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”. This application fails particularly on:
 - I. CS 14 b iii “improves Merton’s overall design standard”
 - II. CS 14 b iv “responds to heritage assets and the wider historic environment to enhance local character and distinctiveness”
 - c. DM D1 which is clear that “Development proposals must impact positively on the character and quality of the public realm”
 - d. DM D2 which focuses on high quality design. This application fails particularly on:

- I. DM D2 a) 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”
- II. DM D2 a) ii “Use appropriate architectural forms, language, detailing and materials which complement and enhance the character of the wider setting”
- III. DM D2 a) vi “Protect new and existing development from visual intrusion..... so that the living conditions of existing and future occupiers are not unduly diminished”

8) This application fails to comply with a number of Merton Council’s policies. It is large, overbearing, designed in a bland fashion, has a pitched roof which adds to the height and massing while making no contribution to dwelling space, and is faced in dark brick which does nothing to detract from its overbearing experience.

Merton Council’s own Design Review Panel commented that it is an overdevelopment of the site.

Merantun’s greedy approach to this site adds nothing to the character of Mitcham Village – quite the opposite. If it were built, it would be a significant step in turning Mitcham, an area under considerable development pressure, into a place characterised by crammed, cramped, overdevelopment. As Merton Council’s development company Merantun should set the standard, not contribute to the destruction of an area’s character.

This development should not be granted planning permission.