



MITCHAM SOCIETY

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25/P2282 1 - 12 Majestic Way Mitcham CR4 2JS

DEMOLITION OF ALL EXISTING BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES AND ACCESS RAMP AND THE ERECTION OF 6-11 STOREY BUILDINGS COMPRISING COMMUNITY FLOORSPACE (USE CLASS F1/F2), FLEXIBLE COMMERCIAL USES (USE CLASS E) AND RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION (USE CLASS C3 TO PROVIDE 249 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS) WITH ASSOCIATED AMENITY SPACE, LANDSCAPING, PARKING, SERVICING ACCESS, RELOCATION OF BUS STAND TO LONDON ROAD AND ASSOCIATED HIGHWAY WORKS.

Mitcham Society comments

July 2026

1. Mitcham Society understands and supports the need for social housing, including the need for new provision. We believe social housing, like other tenures, should be of the highest quality, well designed and fit for its surroundings, and make a positive contribution to the streetscape.
2. We have examined the recently submitted changes to this proposal, and find that they do not meet the fundamental objections we made to the scheme as originally submitted: they are not of the highest quality, not fit for their surroundings, and do not make a positive contribution to the streetscape. They do not meet key requirements in both Merton's Local Plan and the London Plan. We regard the changes made as tweaks to a fundamentally flawed scheme, when what is required is a return to the drawing board.
3. In that light, and to be clear, comments we make here should be reviewed alongside our earlier submission. These comments are additional to, and not intended to replace those earlier comments.
4. Earlier this year we took the highly unusual step of writing a joint letter with Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage directly to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Ross Garrod to express our concerns. In his reply to us, dated 20 February 2026, he said:

"I believe that any proposals for Majestic Way should respond to the ambitions set out in the Local Plan, setting a high design standard that respects its sensitive surroundings ensuring it contributes positively to Mitcham's long-term vitality."

5. The first iteration of these plans was due to go before Merton Council's Development and Planning Applications Committee on 26 February this year, but were withdrawn before the committee meeting took place. We do not believe that the application as it currently stands is fit for purpose. Nor does it meet the three aims Cllr Ross Garrod expressed in his letter to us. It does not respond to the ambitions out in the local plan, the design standard is a very long way from high, and if realised as it is proposed, the contribution to Mitcham would be detraction not enhancement. The additional issues of multiple breaches of Merton's Local Plan make it simply untenable.

Merton's Design Review Panel

6. Clarion will no doubt laud itself for having moved from a Red rating at the its first design review panel in February this year to an Amber (towards Green) rating this time. And yet, within the lengthy write up of the Design Review Panel meeting, there are many causes for concern, which must be scrutinised in detail. Clarion will have had no time to consider these and amend its designs, as the Panel met on 3 June 2026 and documents were uploaded to the Planning Portal on 21 June 2026.
7. We draw out some of the points made in the 3 June 2026 Design Review Panel meeting, and some are reiterated later in this response as we raise them independently in our own submission:
 - *"Views from St Mark's Road were identified as a key concern."* We contend that this will always be the case with the currently proposed height and massing. The only way to mitigate this is to reduce the height and massing. It is impossible to make an 11 storey building that faces onto a small Victorian school and streets of individual two storey houses have any other appearance than looming, overlooking and entirely alien. No amount of design jiggery pokery can fix this.
 - The panel suggested that St Mark's Road would benefit from *"further refinement"* of the scheme at a *"human scale"*. We concur. The only way to achieve this is, as we note above, is to reduce the height and massing to a more human scale.
 - Comments on design include specific mention of some balconies. *"For instance (and not confined to), there are projecting balconies in front of the White Lion Pub, these balconies are not in keeping with the character and appearance of the historical façade and should be reconsidered (re-positioned and re-designed) in the corner between the pub and the proposed new building."* We entirely agree, and we have further comments on balconies later in this document.
 - Comments on design also include *"Overall, it was felt that there was still a disconnect between the character analysis and the actual design"*. The problem here, as we note elsewhere, is that it is demeaning, patronising and belittling to take features such as Dutch Gables and datum bands, where they are in the context of buildings of their time with distinctive local character and used at an entirely appropriate scale, and plonk them onto a building where they are out of context and unnatural, even to the point of having come after the initial design rather than being a central part of it.
 - *"The Panel expressed concern that the scheme is underperforming against best practice sustainability benchmarks and that the building is not being developed as an integrated system"* Among the concerns noted are the *"Over-reliance on active cooling systems..... with a number of dwellings overheating when windows are closed, **this results in high energy use and unacceptable living conditions**"* (our bold text), and

“The number of single aspect dwellings at 30% being a concern especially in relation to the west facing dwellings that could have poorer noise and air quality conditions. All dwelling types and tenure should have limited exposure to poorer quality conditions at this location.” We fully agree, and these points are fundamental. At the risk of repeating ourselves, the failure here seems due to cramming more dwellings in than the site can cope with, and among the losers of this approach would be people whose living conditions are blighted.

- *“The Panel emphasised that addressing sustainability and climate change effectively should be a fundamental driver of the design evolution. The architects are advised to take ownership of this design aspect.”* We fully concur – and would add that taking control almost certainly means reducing the density, height and massing to achieve conditions which are actually liveable.

Height, massing, design

8. For context, the applicant states, on page 34 of the revised Design and Access Statement:

“Buildings should demonstrate high architectural quality through robust materiality, careful detailing and a clear hierarchy of façade elements. Contemporary architecture should respond positively to Mitcham’s historic character whilst creating a distinctive and enduring identity for Majestic Way.”

9. The applicant makes a great deal of its redesigned curved frontage facing onto the Market Square and Fair Green, to its Dutch Gable inspired roofline, to the introduction of “datum bands” that mimic some of the design of the White Lion of Mortimer, and to the introduction of green balconies. To deal with these in turn:
- The curved frontage which is, we are told, reminiscent of the Majestic Way cinema is an improvement on the angular design that came before it. This is notwithstanding our desire for a reduction in height at the point where the proposed development meets the heart of Mitcham Village, as part of an overall reduction.
 - The Dutch Gables concept is borrowed from local buildings, including the White Lion of Mortimer pub. On these buildings they are clearly integral, well proportioned and designed in the context of the overall height and bulk. They belong to the overall design, and feel harmonious with it. Here they are just an afterthought, added in a desperate attempt to mimic a local feature. They are disproportionate to the building in scale and even on the least tall part of the proposed development they look ridiculous - quite clearly added as an attempt to save a shockingly poor design. They fail abjectly.
 - The Datum Bands are also purloined from White Lion of Mortimer. They remove some distinctiveness from the pub itself, and appear almost mocking, not least because the proposed development will dwarf and obscure the pub – a much loved local landmark.
 - The green balconies are a concept that is beyond banal. There is no doubting that Mitcham Library is a distinctive local building. However it is too far away for any visual reference to be apparent to local people. The idea seems to be more one to please architects, designers and planners than one which will create a real relationship in the local street scene. In any case, all the colouring does is draws the eye to the balconies which jar alarmingly. See for example views on p110 and p111 of the revised Design and Access Statement reproduced below.



10. The applicant has done so little in terms of working to reduce the heinous height and massing that it has not seen fit to produce a new Heritage Townscape & Visual Impact Assessment. However we know from that produced for the exiting application that the views from all angles are overbearing, domineering and entirely crushing of absolutely everything with Mitcham Village. Our Market Square and Fair Green becomes postage stamps, mere adjuncts to the monster that looms over them. Our Grade II Listed clock tower is entirely lost against a backdrop of the facade, which rises ever higher from Fair Green to St Marks Road. It is inescapably, undeniably and very palpably a beast with no reference point and no place in Mitcham Village. We apologise that the view below does not show the current revisions to the exterior design, but the fault is the applicants, for not providing an updated view.



11. Clarion does provide one new view, in the revised Design and Access Statement on page 109, which shows the horrific effect the development would have on Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area. This new view confirms the that devastating effect this proposed development would have extends far beyond Mitcham Village itself.



12. For further comments on visual impact please refer to our earlier submission – we must assume there is no change to visual impact in the new submission, and therefore these remain pertinent.
13. An objection submitted by the head teachers of St Mark’s Academy, St Mark’s Primary School and St Thomas Canterbury Primary school with a combined roll of 1680 students, to the earlier version of this application was, like us, supportive of the desire to provide more social homes in Merton. However, also like us, the three school leaders raised some fundamental issues with this proposal, and none of which are mitigated by the new submission. These include serious concerns regarding overlooking the playground of St Mark’s Primary School and, very worryingly, potential safeguarding concerns resulting from this. The school leaders were also concerned about the loss of village feel, wind tunnel effects and paint a very worrying picture when they say “the children, we are sure, will be unnerved by such a modern and vast building dominating over our late Victorian school building.”
14. The new Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing report notes that half (10 out of 20 rooms) assessed in St Mark’s Primary School meeting BRE standards for daylight. It gets worse: In some cases there is up to 75% daylight loss and 48% sunlight loss.
15. In the light of such strong feeling from the three school leaders, and the revised Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing report, how can permission be given for this development? It is difficult to understand how Merton Council could sanction the blight and potential harm that could be caused to so many of our young people by allowing this application.

Tall Buildings and Merton’s Local Plan

16. As we noted in our earlier objection, Merton’s Local Plan identifies this site as Mi8, with a site capacity of 60 – 160 new homes. This proposal is for 249 new homes – a total uplift of 89 on the maximum site capacity in the Local Plan, and 189 on the minimum site capacity. Put another way, the number of homes proposed is 4.1 times more than the minimum site allocation and 1.56 times more than the maximum site allocation.
17. As we stated in our earlier objection, this proposal goes against key policies in Merton Council’s Local Plan. There is a dedicated policy on tall buildings – D12.6. As we previously stated, Point 3 of this policy is crystal clear, (our bold text):

*3. Tall buildings are **only** acceptable in the following locations:*

- a. As indicated in the Strategic Heights Diagrams for Morden Regeneration Zone and Wimbledon Town Centre.*
- b. Wimbledon Town Centre, as set out within the chapter on Wimbledon.*
- c. Morden Regeneration Zone, as set out within the chapter on Morden.*
- d. As set out within Merton’s adopted Estates Local Plan 2018 for Eastfields and High Path estates.*
- e. Where they are identified in the following site allocations, CW2, Mi1, Mi16, Mo1, RP3, Wi2,*

Wi5, Wi6, Wi9, Wi10, Wi11, Wi12, Wi13, Wi15 and Wi16.

f. On sites immediately adjacent to the above locations, where they would provide design-led opportunities for appropriate transitional elements between differing building scales.

18. Moreover, the London Plan Policy D9 makes it abundantly clear that it is the Local Plan that calls the shots on tall buildings, stating that they “should only” be developed in locations identified as suitable in development plans. To reiterate, Merton Council does not include Site Mi8 within the list of sites appropriate for tall buildings.
19. It is absolutely clear that if Merton Council allows this planning application it is opening the doors for developers in Mitcham and across the borough to bring forward plans for tall buildings, citing this application as evidence that theirs should be allowed. Such an outcome would make a laughing stock of the Local Plan, of the years spent in its development, and the considerable technical expertise of council staff brought to bear to work on developing the Local Plan within Merton Council.

Living conditions and climate change

20. Climate change is real and it is here now. We have seen in May, June and July the effects that record temperatures can have, and many of us have become only too starkly aware how our own homes are not fit to deal with extremes of heat. It should therefore be front of mind for Merton Council that any planning applications adhere strictly to its own Local Plan policies on climate change, and adopt best practice at all times. Merton Council policy D12.3 *Ensuring high quality design for all developments* is clear on climate change. Point y says:

“In residential developments, maximise the provision of dual aspect homes. Single aspect homes are strongly discouraged and will only be accepted where they demonstrate they have adequate passive ventilation, daylight and privacy and avoid overheating and are necessary to optimise site capacity through a design-led approach, in line with the London Plan.”

21. And yet these revised plans offer just 70% dual aspect homes (Revised Design and Access Statement p88). In other words, 30% of homes – *almost one in every three homes*, - is single aspect. Moreover, the applicant has played fast and loose with the topic of overheating in this revised submission. The overheating report provided with the original submission said that all flats assessed fail without either opening windows or constant mechanical ventilation. As the applicant has not provided an updated overheating report, we must assume that the original report still stands. It would surely be unconscionable to grant a scheme permission when it fails on these fundamentals.

Commercial offer and community space

22. There has been some increase in the amount of community space on offer, but we remain unconvinced that this is either enough or fit for purpose. Some of the uplift in the amount of space is a long, narrow corridor whose practical utility for community functions is, put in the very kindest terms, extremely limited. In any case, the total amount of space allocated for community use in the revised plans is still not enough. Surely it could not accommodate

enough community services even for the new residents, let alone for any other people living, working or learning in Mitcham Village or its immediate surroundings.

23. We continue to support the idea of retail space that is geared towards smaller, more local traders rather than larger chains. Our hopes for this to work positively in practice are somewhat sullied by the applicants very swift decanting of the retail space of its existing traders, leaving us with a parade of units that can't even benefit from meanwhile uses. It does not inspire us with confidence for the future of the retail offer.

Conclusion

24. The desire to create new social housing is laudable, and we continue to be supportive of this site being used for that purpose.
25. We also remain supportive of the expressed wish to use the commercial spaces for small and primarily local businesses, and we can see that there is great potential to support local entrepreneurs.
26. We are also content with a desire to provide community space, but the current offer is not enough, and its potential users are not outlined. These factors leave it looking like Clarion is doing the minimum to tick a box.
27. The bulk of this submission focuses on the housing development, and we find this to be entirely inadequate. Its overbearing, oversized nature has not changed since the earlier submission, and the minor design tweaks are at best neutral and at worst patronising, meaningless and harmful.
28. This proposal remains a prime example of overdevelopment, and it is that factor which is a key driver of its many flaws including overheating, the inclusion of single aspect dwellings, serious harm to daylight and sunlight for St Mark's Primary School, harm to local landmark buildings in the heart of Mitcham Village as well as to our Grade II Listed clock tower and to the wider environment including Cricket Green Conservation Area.
29. The proposals continue to contravene policies in Merton's Local Plan including significantly overstepping the site capacity, proposing a tall building in an area where these are not permitted. Even its Amber/Green Design Review Panel rating is a facade behind which lies plenty of opportunity for improvement, as we have explored above.
30. The proposed development would be detrimental to Mitcham Village, St Mark's Primary School, our loved buildings many of which are locally listed, our Grade II Listed clock tower, and the residents who would end up living in overheating accommodation.
31. In the light of all these factors, and the failure to comply with the Merton Local Plan, this application should be refused.