



MITCHAM SOCIETY

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19/P4047 Elm Nursery Car Park London Road Mitcham

Mitcham Society comments

ERECTION OF A FIVE STOREY BUILDING TO CREATE 21 NEW RESIDENTIAL UNITS. COMPRISING OF ONE AND TWO BEDROOM APARTMENTS, ASSOCIATE CYCLE PARKING, DISABLED PARKING BAYS AND PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS.

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

- 1) Design. The blocky, monolithic design takes little if any inspiration from its surroundings. Inset balconies on one corner jar against protruding balconies on another. The overly tall 'folded' upper storey appears entirely detached in design terms from the rest of the block and has no reference points in the townscape. The flat roof has no relationship to any of the immediately surrounding housing. The design is poor in relation to the surrounding townscape.



- 2) Height. At five floors the block is one storey too tall for the surrounding townscape. The flats immediately next to the development site are three stores in height rising taller later, behind London Road and on Armfield Crescent, away from the main London Road street scene. Further towards Figges Marsh the next block on this side of London Road is also four storeys high. The flats opposite the development site – Sir Arthur Bliss Court - are four storeys high. Those in the Sir Arthur Bliss Court opposite the three storey block that is next to Elm Nursery Car Park respect

that older block's three storey height. This pattern sets the scene for blocks facing onto London Road. Four storeys is the maximum height that the new development should reach.

- 3) Frontage and landscaping. The four storey block immediately next to Elm Nursery Car Park and the flats opposite are set back from the pavement with landscaping and grass acting as a buffer between the ground floor homes and the pavement. The proposed development is about 50 percent paved / hard landscaping fronting on to London Road. Two raised planters fronting London Road beg the question of maintenance – who will maintain these and how? The proposed rain garden and buffer planting raise the same question. If this application is approved we would expect to see a clear planning condition to ensure that all of the landscaping is adequately maintained. The Landscape Statement shares this expectation – “The planting palettes presented are illustrative and we would expect the planting approach to be confirmed in condition.” (p10)
- 4) Lighting. The Landscape statement indicates plans to uplight the nine trees on site. We are concerned about the possible effects on residents and on wildlife. Will any residents' windows look out onto uplit trees, and what effect would this have on their enjoyment of their private space? We would also expect to see an analysis of the effect of tree uplighting on wildlife, including, but not limited to, bird species (both nesting prospects and everyday habit), bat species, bugs and moths. No assessments of either factors have been provided and thus this application is incomplete.
- 5) Apartment design – single aspect dwellings. The ground and first floors both include a single aspect dwelling. We believe that all affordable homes should benefit from a minimum of dual aspect living. Merantun should be required to reconfigure the internal layouts to deliver this.
- 6) Solar / PV. This proposed development has a flat roof. There is no provision for PVs 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. In this particular case, where the entire block will be 'affordable', there is a very strong case for using solar to offset energy bills. It should be a requirement of this build.
- 7) Affordable Housing. We note that this is one of four proposed developments by Merton Council's development company Merantun, and that this particular proposal comprises the entire affordable housing requirement for the other three developments. While we applaud Merton Council's aspiration to build new affordable housing, we deplore its execution.
 - a. Merton's policy CS 8 is specific in setting a target of 40% affordable housing on all sites comprising ten units or more. The combined number of units on the other plots is 72. (36 at Raleigh Gardens, 18 at Site North of Numbers 11 to 17 Madeira Road Mitcham (The Canons site) (11 flats, 7 townhouses), 18 at Farm Road Church Morden (15 flats, 3 houses). If all three of those applications are successful, then meeting policy CS 8 would require 29 homes to be built, so there is a shortfall of 7 homes overall. The numbers are more favourable if one or more of the other applications is refused.

- b. Policy CS8 is emphatic that the affordable housing portion be built on site, stating that “Only in exceptional circumstances will the council consider the provision of affordable housing off-site or financial contributions in lieu of provision on site.” No exceptional circumstances are presented for the three other proposed Merantun developments, and so there is no justification for displacing their affordable housing to this site.
- 8) Merton Council should refuse this application. It is of questionable design, too tall by one storey, and sits uneasily in the streetscape. There are some single aspect dwellings, and the internal design should be reconfigured to ensure that all dwellings are at least dual aspect. We have concerns regarding the proposal to uplight trees which requires further study.

The plan to bring all the affordable homes from four Merantun developments into a single location is highly questionable and contravenes policy CS8. This policy is also contravened by the failure to reach the 40% affordable homes target (assuming the three other applications are all successful).

This development should not be granted planning permission.