



MITCHAM SOCIETY

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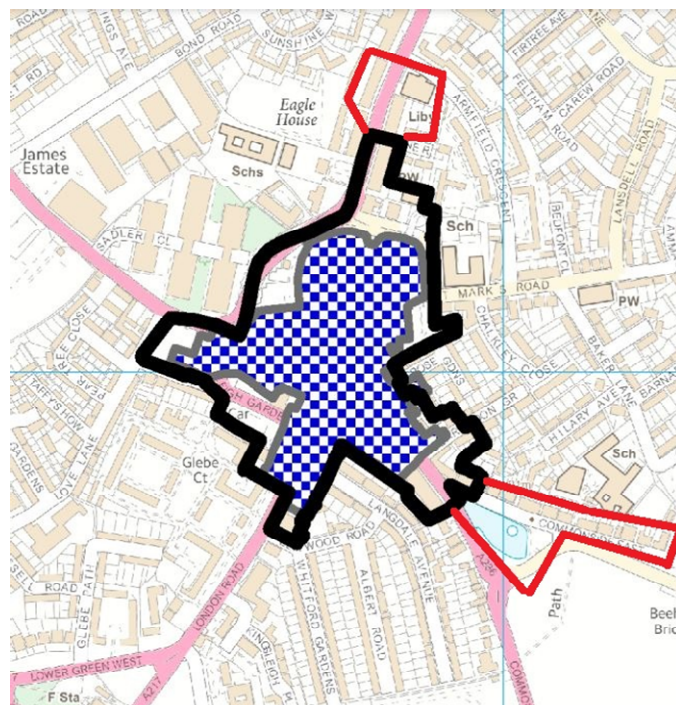
Manifesto for Mitcham Village

July 2021

Mitcham Village

Mitcham Village has a clear physical identity that reflects its heritage and speaks to its role as a 21st century village. Its central focus is what remains of Fair Green, extending to Figges Marsh, Three Kings Pond and Piece, and onwards to The Canons, Cricket Green and its various greens, and Mitcham Common.

Mitcham Village today provides a range of retail and other facilities including banking, grocery and supermarket shopping, Post Office, vet, eat-in and takeaway food, optician, key-cutting, undertaker, two pubs, newsagents, estate agents, dentistry, and a street market. A high proportion of the retail offer is made up of independent stores. These are key assets for Mitcham Village, and sit alongside the pond, nearby open spaces and central village green as defining characteristics.



We define Mitcham Village as the area outlined in red and black on the map above. The area in black is the definition of “Mitcham town centre” used by Merton Council in its Local Plan. We believe

Mitcham Village includes Mitcham Library to the north, and extends to include the cottages at Three Kings Pond in the east.

Action Plan for Mitcham Village

Mitcham Village is teetering on the edge of losing its village character for ever. A lack of recognition of the village character by Merton Council, accompanied by the absence of positive action to preserve and enhance the village, leaves it prey to constant and increasing threat.

Our action plan provides a way to begin to reverse the threat, build on what makes Mitcham Village a great place, and look to a brighter future for Mitcham Village and those who live, work and visit here.

Finish what has been started

The Rediscover Mitcham project ran from 2012 to 2018. Numerous changes were made to the village centre. One notable commitment was left incomplete, and another was not started. Both need urgent action:

- **Revitalise the market.** Money was specifically earmarked to revitalise the market. The market square was made larger, and electricity was provided to pitches. There were a small number of market focused events. The long term effect has been negligible. Today the market is a wasteland. A thriving market is vital. It would bring people in to Mitcham Village. Investment is urgently needed, but it must be properly targeted, well managed, and this time, have clear long term objectives in mind.

As a start various types of market should be brought in. An Artisan Market could be promoted. Attract stallholders by offering low/no rates, and vet the viability of prospective traders. A Farmers' Market should also be offered. Ensure high-reach advertising, and that every penny invested is invested for the long term.

Mitcham Village, including the market, needs a full time manager on the ground to look after it.

- **Provide the public toilets** that were promised but which have never materialised. The scheme whereby some shops provide access to their loos is broken. There is no significant advertising of the fact, people are unaware it exists and the loos are not available when the shops are closed. It a poor attempt at a solution to a significant problem.
- **Protect the Green** by delivering on the promise made as part of Rediscover Mitcham to register the additional areas of Mitcham Fair Green as Town Green. Future Merton has had this on its 'to do' list for many years, it is a simple task, and completing it would show the council has faith in Mitcham Village as well as providing protection for the remaining grass at Fair Green.

Encourage people to spend time in Mitcham Village

A thriving market and public toilets and protected greens are good steps to making Mitcham Village a place people want to be. In addition, it is imperative to:

- **Deal with persistent fly tipping and street refuse.** Some sites are notorious for their fly-tipping and the leaving of street refuse. Nobody wants to spend time near a pile of rubbish bags or loose trash.
- **Eliminate persistent and regularised pavement parking.** The market square in particular is often blighted by fly-parking, but it also affects much of Mitcham Village.
- **Close Upper Green East and Upper Green West to through traffic.** These were made more car-friendly as part of the Rediscover Mitcham project. The effect is to surround Fair Green by cars and create a crossroads at its heart. Remove the cars and return Fair Green to a true village setting.
- **Remove all short term parking bays.** Several were put in as part of the Rediscover Mitcham project. They turn the village streets into a car park. They deter walking and cycling. People travelling by car contribute less to the local economy than those travelling by cycle or on foot. [TFL research](#) shows that people walking and cycling to high streets spend more time in the street, with a 216% increase in activity such as going into a shop, stopping at a café or sitting on a bench.
- **Pedestrian areas should be just that.** Cyclists, especially those using electric bikes, on pavements are a danger, but at present there is no enforcement. Provision of more cycle bays would encourage more cycling within the centre.
- **Improve the greenspace.** Thousands of pounds were spent on unnecessary planting as part of the Rediscover Mitcham project. Strips down the middle of Holborn Way are among sections which are now litter strewn and notably devoid of anything close to urban planting. Maintenance of the whole area has been poor. An excursion to neighbouring borough of Sutton shows what can be achieved with relatively little outlay. The floral displays, properly watered and maintained, are a real invite to Sutton centre. Mitcham Village centre is far smaller than Sutton's, and should be easier to make appealing.

Respect Mitcham Village

- **Recognise Mitcham Village** as the correct reference for the centre of Mitcham in the Local Plan and Borough Character Study as well as any other relevant policy documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- **Make shop frontages more attractive.** This will enhance the village feel, encourage people to want to spend time in Mitcham Village, and encourage new vendors to the area. With Covid having hit a number of retailers, this is an ideal time to attract new forward-thinking businesses. Incentives are an absolute must. Make a start with Mitcham Village's oldest buildings 5-11 Upper Green East and 4-7 Upper Green West which have been proposed for local listing.
- **Where there are empty shops, take steps to provide meanwhile uses.** Arts groups and other organisations would welcome the opportunity to locate in Mitcham Village for a short

while. Meanwhile uses are recognised as preferable to empty shops, and would be an asset to Mitcham Village.

- **Support active frontages** through policy that does not support development which results in the loss of shop fronts to private homes, or to other uses which remove active frontages. The Mitcham Village shopping parades are vital.
- **Invest in shop fronts.** Attractive shopping parades are a huge asset, and other shopping parades in the borough have benefitted from Council investment. Do the same for the Mitcham Village shopping parades.
- **Introduce a “no tall buildings” policy** for Mitcham Village and its immediate surroundings. The Barclays Bank Building on Upper Green East should set the height limit. We do realise there are extant permissions which go higher, but these should be the last permissions to do so.
- **Make the most of Merton Council owned land** by using it to make Mitcham Village more resilient with cultural, community and health uses alongside retail and residential, including on Sibthorpe Road and Raleigh Gardens car parks.
- **Recognise and embrace the community.** Merton’s Local Plan does not demonstrate a real understanding of the diversity of the local community. Do more work, learn about the vibrant communities that are part of Mitcham. Truly work to develop social capital. Encourage and financially support community led projects – including on the smallest scale.
- **Tackle street drinking and antisocial behaviour.** This has long blighted Mitcham Village, and makes the place an unappealing one in which to dwell for many. This blight on the village centre should be a priority. Residents invariably quote the street drinking groups, and their overall bad behaviour, as being the major reason for not shopping here.
- **Celebrate Mitcham Village’s heritage** with a programme of local listing and conservation works, developing stronger connections to Mitcham’s other Town Greens, creating a greater profile for the Grade I listed Eagle House and railings and demonstrating raised ambitions for the re-use of historic buildings including the Holborn Workhouse.

More information about Mitcham Society and what we do, including our public comments on planning applications, can be found at our web site mitchamsociety.org.uk