



MITCHAM SOCIETY

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## Mitcham Gasworks development

### Mitcham Society submission

February 2022

We attended a public consultation meeting held on 27 January 2022 by St William, regarding the proposed development of Mitcham Gas Works. Prior to this, on 21 January we had met the developer at the site.

These comments relate to both events and present our reaction and our expectations for the site.

We support development of the Mitcham Gas Works site for new homes which respect Mitcham's character and meet local needs.

#### Density

At a public consultation on 27 January 2022 the developer showed for the first time a diagram of proposed layout and building heights across the site, including its proposal for a 13 storey block.

This drawing crams 17 blocks onto the site.



There are no houses in the current proposal.

The site is surrounded by streets based development including both houses and flats. This should inform the development of this site.

It should be developed in character with Mitcham. It should not introduce an alien and inappropriate approach to massing and height.

The number of homes proposed for the site was stated at the public consultation as “circa 700”.

This is a rise on the 650 homes we had been previously told by the developer it was aiming for just six days previously when we met them at the site.

In its comments to Merton Council on the final consultation round on the Local Plan St William specifically asked that the site allocation be altered to say the site could deliver “circa 600 homes”.

Merton Council clearly disagrees with this number, as it did not change the site capacity in the new [Local Plan](#) as submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. This puts the site capacity at 200 – 400.

The developer has steadily increased what it thinks it can cram onto the site, and is now at almost double the maximum Merton Council believes the site can accommodate according to its new Local Plan.

It should be held to Merton Council’s planned capacity of 200 – 400 homes. In doing so, the developer could assure high quality streets based development that is appropriate for Mitcham.

### **Landscape**

The nearby Sadler Close blocks rise to 5 storeys and sit in grassed, landscaped grounds. The other flats based development nearby, Glebe Court, also sits in landscaped grounds.

This site proposes meagre open spaces compared to the density of homes, including a small number of “courtyards” in the centre of tall blocks, whose access to sunlight is questionable. The approach is evidence of the over-development of the site.

### **The 13-storey block**

The 13 storey block is the classic developer’s “landmark”. Designed to cram more homes onto a small site, it is a paean to the developer’s ego and a demonstration of the developer’s lack of sensitivity.

It is incongruous and entirely out of place in Mitcham. It brings nothing to the area in design terms and is a “landmark” only in the worst sense of the word. It is better described as an eyesore.

It has no place in Mitcham.

### **Housing type**

The homes on the site are planned to be entirely flats based. There are 0 (zero) houses proposed, something which Merton desperately needs.

This is entirely the wrong approach for this site which requires a streets based approach which complements that of the development of the other part of Mitcham Gasworks in and around Hay Drive and Seaton Road.

### **Active frontage along Western Road**

The developer plans an active frontage along Western Road and has suggested uses such as “community facilities” which are not defined in any detail beyond the mention of a crèche.

We were specifically told a café is not being considered, as Merton Council has advised against this, preferring to concentrate a focus on cafés in Mitcham Village Centre. This is misguided.

Plenty of people live nearby, more will live on site, a crèche would bring people to the site as will the existing Asda opposite. The developer has stressed to us their wish to create a community feeling both for new residents and others living in the vicinity. Many parades include viable cafés.

It will be vital that the delivery of all the active frontage proposals is guaranteed through planning conditions and other measures. We have seen too often active frontages - including for retail - granted at planning stage only to be replaced with homes during the development phase. That cannot be allowed to happen here.

### **Access from Western Road**

The access planned along Western Road will be one of two vehicular accesses into the site. It will require the development of traffic control. We would expect any new traffic control to:

- Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists
- Dovetail with the existing access to the Asda supermarket so as not to create bottlenecks for vehicles and slow pedestrian progress along Western Road
- Not result in the removal of the existing Zebra Crossing on Western Road

We expect Western Road to be the designated as the primary access, and Portland Road to be clearly demarked as secondary access.

### **Site perimeter - Portland Road**

Portland Road will become one of just two vehicular access routes into the site, which the developer currently expects to provide a minimum of 700 dwellings. Deliveries, services and residents’ parking will result in a significant uplift in traffic using Portland Road.

The developer will need to find a way to ensure the bulk of traffic enters and exits using Western Road, while minimal traffic is directed onto Portland Road.

The current proposal to create a new footway and improve pedestrian and cycle access along Portland Road will not mitigate the excess of new traffic.

### **Site perimeter –Brickfield Road**

Brickfield Road comes to a dead end at the entrance to the site.

During our site meeting with the developer they told us they propose to extend the housing style in Brickfield Road into the site. They were emphatic in this, repeating the statement several times.

Brickfield Road has three storey houses at its junction with the site.

But the building heights drawing shared at the public consultation less than one week after our site meeting shows something different: 5, 6, 7 and 9 storey blocks of flats along what would be the immediate continuation of Brickfield Road, coming to a head at the 13 storey block.

We support a streets based approach throughout the site. We support a continuation of the street of three storey house already existing along Brickfield Road.

#### **Site perimeter – open space at Hay Drive**

The developer proposes to create a seamless and permeable boundary into the site from the open space at Hay Drive. The Hay Drive open space does not provide much public benefit and is a poor approach to managing drainage.

We expect improvements to this to be made by the developer as part of their work, given that it will serve residents on its site as an important open space and will be integral to its landscape.

#### **Site perimeter – Field Gate Lane**

Field Gate Lane is an old route, it is much used and it should be much more used.

The developer proposes to enhance this route so that it is more suitable to pedestrian and cycle use. They propose to remove the wall on the site perimeter and create an entirely permeable route into and out of the site.

Much more detail on the practicalities of this is required before we can take an informed view.

We would also expect to see significant enhancements made by the developer to the link to Pear Tree Close and Westfield Road.