



Local election 2014 – questions for Cricket Green candidates

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage – the local civic society for this part of Merton – asked all the candidates standing for election in Cricket Green ward a series of questions. These were the responses.

	Merton Conservatives	Mitcham Independent Party	Merton Labour	Merton Liberal Democrats
Q1 What is your most important priority for improving the quality of life in Cricket Green?	<p>There are many different factors that contribute to the overall quality of life, however we would regard getting a grip on planning being one of the most important. For us, this falls into the following two main categories:</p> <p>* Respecting the requirements of the Conservation Area: Whilst Cricket Green has been afforded some additional protection through its designation as a Conservation Area, it is critical that the all future developments respect this. We would be active campaigners against proposed developments which would scar our environment. An inappropriate building or alteration to an existing building can be produced within a few weeks but can last for years. We would work to ensure that a higher bar was set for planning applications, ensuring that quality</p>	<p>The most important priority for us in improving the quality of life in the Cricket Green would be to seek the continued preservation of the Area and its Historic Surroundings.</p>	<p>You will have seen our 5 campaign promises setting out our commitment for the next 4 years so we will not repeat them here; however, all our campaign promises are intended to improve the quality of life and life chances of all of the people in the whole of the Cricket Green Ward; and we will focus on things that matter including the protection of local health services, the provision of decent homes, providing the highest quality education for children in the area, leisure opportunities for all ages and the protection and promotion of employment opportunities.</p>	<p>We are calling for £2m to be taken from reserves to establish a Wellbeing Innovation Fund. This will provide an opportunity for organisations to submit ideas for ways of tackling isolation and improving health and wellbeing, particularly for our most vulnerable citizens. See also below the answer to qu 5, we believe 20mph speed limits on residential roads would improve the quality of life of residents.</p>

	<p>became the watch word. There is no excuse for the use of cheap materials or poor design. We would only support developments which therefore enhanced or maintained the unique character of the Cricket Green and the surrounding area.</p> <p>* Tougher enforcement: Developers and unscrupulous individuals have often regarded Merton as a soft touch when it comes to enforcement of the planning rules. The Conservative election manifesto for 2014 ('Unlocking Merton's Potential', which is available at www.mertonconservatives.org) makes a commitment to strengthening planning enforcement and we will ensure that the benefits of these are rolled out to Cricket Green. Illegal use of premises for car sales etc would be stamped out. We will work to ensure that once a developer has promised to meet the high standards demanded of them that they do then carry out their promises in full.</p> <p>Cricket Green is already a beautiful corner of Merton, but it needs the right support to ensure that this is maintained and improved. This is what we offer.</p>			
<p>Q2 Do you support the Cricket Green Charter and how will you use it in your work for Cricket Green Ward?</p>	<p>We can confirm that we fully support the Cricket Green Charter. We have already covered much of how we would support the 'Character and context' section in our answer to question 1. In terms of the other sections, please see more detail below:</p> <p>* 'Open Space': We fully support the principle that there should be no loss of open space. Conservative councillors elsewhere in Merton have been engaged in similar battles with the current Labour administration over the last four years and we would be equally protective of open land. The space</p>	<p>Yes we support it as part of the answer to Q1. We would, wherever possible seek to adhere to its principles to keep the Cricket Green and the ward in which it sits in order to keep the whole area free from poor and irresponsible development. If we are successful at the elections we would welcome the opportunity to discuss how, if at all, this charter could be enhanced.</p>	<p>No response provided</p>	<p>In representing the views of local residents we will certainly refer to the charter and the ambitions set out in it.</p>

	<p>should be there for all to enjoy and we therefore support the other points made in the Charter under this section. In terms of retaining and enhancing the character of Cricket Green Road in any future Birches Close or Brook House redevelopment, we would be happy to work with you, local residents and the developer to ensure that this is a key minimum requirement of any future development.</p> <p>* 'Walking': Our 2014 election manifesto stresses how we will support schemes which increase the amount of walking and cycling undertaken by our residents. We will happily support any schemes which support this principle.</p> <p>* 'Quality': As per our answer to question 1, 'quality' will be our key requirement for all new developments. We are fully supportive of this principle. Insensitive decisions by the Council, such as on Willow Lane, suggest that quality has often taken second place to expediency no matter how inappropriate the proposals and how much better they could have been if greater consideration had been given.</p> <p>* 'Lighting': Whilst some areas of the borough have insufficient lighting, making pedestrians feel unsafe when it is dark, other areas have too much lighting causing issues with pollution. A wider study of the location and appropriateness of lighting in our borough is therefore required and we would ensure that Cricket Green was included in this. As for new lighting, if required, then we would insist that it was appropriate for the area both in terms of design of the infrastructure and strength of the beam.</p> <p>* 'Affordability': A lack of affordable housing is a key issue both our area and the whole of London. That is why we have</p>			
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	<p>made an explicit manifesto commitment to support the development of new homes. As per our previous answers however, these homes should be designed in a way which respects and enhances the local area and does not detract from it.</p> <p>* 'Activities': Creating and supporting a vibrant local community is essential for Cricket Green and the whole of Mitcham. We will support new business, shops and groups into the area through the use of business rates holidays, innovation zones etc. This will both increase visitor traffic and also boost local employment. In terms of the cultural offering, we would support the designation of the 'island site' and support the use by groups and social enterprises of a refurbished fire station.</p> <p>* 'Canons House and Park Place': We will work with others to secure the necessary funding to restore Canons House and Park Place to their full glory. Conservative colleagues elsewhere in Merton have successfully worked with local resident groups in their area to achieve similar things and we will look to replicate this great work here.</p> <p>* 'The island site': A cultural and leisure hub that seeks to enhance Cricket Green and Mitcham would be an excellent addition to the area. We would work with both council officers and local businesses and residents to deliver this exciting new feature to Mitcham.</p> <p>* 'The development process': Our 2014 election manifesto clearly states that we would launch the creation of a list of 'Assets of Community Value'. This would provide the community with a head start on owning any assets on this list if they were to be sold for development at a later date. This</p>			
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	<p>could include pubs, libraries, halls etc. In terms of greater community involvement in running current assets, we also refer to this in our election manifesto. We do not believe that the Council (or councillors) have a monopoly on the best ideas for providing a service or a facility. If others can show us that they could do a better job without increasing the overall cost to the taxpayer, then a Conservative-run council would look favourably on such proposals.</p>			
<p>Q3 What will you do to minimise light pollution and maximise affordable public access to the new multi-use games area in the Canons' grounds?</p>	<p>If elected, we will seek an urgent meeting with both the Planning and Leisure departments at the Council and also Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), the organisation which manages the Canons Leisure Centre on behalf of the Council to determine a way forward which seeks to address both the issues with light pollution and also affordable access to the new facilities. As you will be aware, planning permission was granted without these conditions being placed upon the application so we will have to work to try and find an alternative form of redress outside of current planning policy.</p>	<p>This Multi Use Games Area is a typical example of how irresponsible development has gone against the Cricket Green Charter. The light pollution this is likely to cause needs to have strict controls on it and we would seek to have the lighting turned off when not in use and also have a timed control as to when it should be switched off. This games area is likely to be under the control of a private leisure company and unless previous agreements have already been negotiated to give affordable public access then it may prove difficult to achieve this in retrospect. If elected we would hope to impress upon the owners the need for this affordable kind of access as we feel that all sports facilities should be at a reasonable cost to everyone.</p>	<p>No response provided</p>	<p>New lighting technology can provide lighting that enables use and minimises lighting 'spill'. We would seek to obtain the best advice and work with local residents to get the best solution for all. Clearly it is important to enable access to local facilities so we would want to balance the needs of the wider community with those of residents who are immediately affected. As part of our commitment to wellbeing we would want to see sport and leisure activities available at an affordable price and will work with providers to deliver that.</p>
<p>Q4 Are you committed to protecting Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and to resisting all development that fails to enhance its special qualities?</p>	<p>Yes, we are. Through better use of the Council's planning policies we believe that this can be achieved. For those areas of the ward, and Mitcham as a whole, which falls outside of the Conservation Area we will also look at working with local residents to develop local neighbourhood plans to further finesse the Council's policies and ensure that only developments of the highest quality and which add to the local area are granted permission.</p>	<p>Yes, along with all parts of the Cricket Green Ward.</p>	<p>We are very conscious of the significance of the Conservation Area. The Council's development plan Policies require all development proposals to impact positively on the character and quality of the public realm, seek to ensure that any new development respects, reinforces and enhances the local character of the area in which development is proposed. All proposals for development within the</p>	<p>We would support the conservation area. In our manifesto we have committed to a review of planning policy and the development of neighbourhood plans which would influence the nature and style of future development.</p>

			Conservation Area (or anywhere else) will be determined having regard to the principles in the Council's Local Development Plan. We will continue to deal with all planning proposals on their merits.	
Q5 Will you support a ban on lorries using Church Road by helping revoke its designation as a route for heavy good vehicles (HGVs)?	We have absolute sympathy with those residents who live on Church Road and who have to suffer the inconvenience and unpleasantness of the lorries which use the road or park up overnight on Hallowfield Way to use the SITA site. It is our understanding that Church Road is a Transport for London road. If elected, we will proactively engage with our local London Assembly Member, Richard Tracey AM, to take the case to TfL and City Hall that the road needs to be improved with HGV traffic either removed or at least reduced. We are particularly keen to ensure that Hallowfield Way is not used as a lorry park and would at least seek this assurance in the short term whilst a longer term plan to reduce or remove HGV traffic altogether is put together for Church Road.	Yes, we are in full support of a lorry ban in that part of Church Road between the Parish Church and the Cricket Green. The designation of a heavy goods lorry route of that part of the road is totally unsuitable and we would seek to have it un-designated. If that proves to be difficult, we would at least seek to have a heavy goods access in one direction only. This is the least we could see happening in order to make the area safer for pedestrians especially children that attend the local schools in that area.	You are aware of the pressure we have been (and are) exerting to bring about traffic changes in Church Road.	You raise a good point about the impact of large vehicles on our roads. We would want to review the impact of any changes to the wider road network. Our 20's Plenty campaign to reduce the speed limited on residential roads to 20 miles per hour is aimed at improving road safety for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users. The issue of road safety is a key priority for us.
Q6 What will you do to help secure a long term future for Mitcham Cricket Club and its pavilion?	We are absolutely committed to ensuring that cricket continues to be played on the Green and will work hard to ensure that the Club and pavilion survive, and thrive, well into the future. We will seek to garner third party support to help both the Club and the pavilion. In other parts of Merton, Conservative ward councillors have successfully worked with local residents groups to build new changing rooms, install nature walks and lay down new plants and trees. We will use this for the benefit of Cricket Green by accessing this experience and new sources of funding, working with the Club and yourselves at the same time.	We would support all efforts to encourage the Cricket Club's own management of the grounds that would secure a long term future for Cricket on the green and the use of the pavilion. This may also mean party support in negotiations with the owners of the ground and also bringing what powers could be brought into use to encourage the owner to either provide a good lease or even sell the freehold to the Cricket Club. We would also oppose any plans that might jeopardise the lively hood of the club and/or the pavilion.	We have supported the retention of Cricket on the Green and assisted the Cricket Club over the years and will continue to do so.	We want the Council to be more proactive in enabling the voluntary and community sector to access grant funding. We are keen to take advantage of the powers in the Localism Act and see this as a way of protecting community assets.

	We do hope that you have found these answers to be to your satisfaction and look forward to working with you should we be successful on election day.			
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