



SPECIFICATION FOR GREEN SPACE MAINTENANCE FOR CRICKET GREEN CONSERVATION AREA AND ITS ENVIRONS

A joint submission to Merton Council by Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage and Friends of the Canons

May 2015

1. This is a response to the request from Merton Council for information to inform the specification for green space maintenance being prepared for the procurement process to outsource this function. It has been jointly prepared by Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage - the civic society for this part of Merton - and Friends of the Canons.

2. This is a complex area which will require detailed and sensitive specification of maintenance works to conserve and enhance the Conservation Area and its environs. As Merton Council's Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan states:

"The conservation area is more a collection of distinct localities than a specific place..... Each retains its own identity, whilst at the same time relating to the heart of the area. The most dominant feature within the conservation area is the visual impact of the large areas of green space. Built form is clustered around the greens forming well defined edges."

3. Maintenance of the distinctive character provided by the complexity of different open spaces is both a statutory requirement and a policy priority which needs to be secured under any future arrangements. The open spaces include historic designed gardens; local nature reserves; woodland; recreation space; ponds; sports grounds; and commemorative trees, boundaries and woodland. They are integral to the qualities that underpin the designation of Cricket Green Conservation Area and to the setting of nationally and locally listed buildings. The area also contributes to the wider context of the Wandle Valley Regional Park. Many of these assets have other statutory designations, including:

- Registered Town Greens – Lower Green West & Lower Green East, Cranmer Green, Three Kings Piece
- Sites of Local Importance to Nature Conservation – Cranmer Local Nature Reserve, London Road Playing Fields, Mitcham Parish Church churchyard, The Canons carp pond, Three Kings Pond & Commonsides Rough
- Public rights of way

Conservation and maintenance of this diversity of open spaces is also a central policy objective of Merton's development plan, Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the character studies for both Cricket Green and Mitcham.

4. We ask that the specification for green space maintenance in this area:

- Establishes different maintenance requirements for each of the different green space components within the area, including:

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- London Road Playing Fields
 - Mitcham Parish Church churchyard
 - Lower Green West (including Preshaw Crescent)
 - Mitcham cricket ground
 - Jubilee Corner (opposite White Hart)
 - Opposite Mitcham Police Station
 - Former News of the World Sports Ground
 - Bellamy's Copse
 - Front of The Canons
 - Rear of The Canons, including walled garden and historic carp pond
 - Mitcham Bowling Club
 - Obelisk public realm
 - Cranmer Green
 - Cranmer Green Local Nature Reserve
 - Three Kings Piece
 - Three Kings Pond
 - Commonside Rough
- Clarifies responsibility for maintenance of Tramway Path, Church Path and the isolated area of green space at the extreme western end of Lower Green West
 - Continues the tradition of commemorating important historic events – including ornamental planting at Jubilee Corner (opposite White Hart) and annual initiatives such as the “poppy fields” planted during 2014
 - Secures maintenance and watering of street and park trees to avoid any stress
 - Secures succession planting of trees throughout the area
 - Secures maintenance of the area's rich collection of mature and specimen trees
 - Secures sensitive maintenance of important boundaries, such as the holly hedge at Mitcham Bowls Club (avoiding use of a flail), hedging around Mitcham cricket ground, Canons yew hedge, Canons walled garden, Three Kings Piece fruit hedge and all railings and boundary walls
 - Minimises waterlogging on Three Kings Piece and the former News of the World Sports Ground
 - Maintains the function of Bellamy's Copse and the shrubbery around Canons Leisure Centre and Madeira Hall in both screening and protecting important views
 - Secures maintenance of marginal fragments of open space, including at the entrance to Caesar's Walk and at Preshaw Crescent
 - Avoids use of any herbicide on weeds other than invasive species (Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and floating pennywort)
 - Maintains the quality of existing wildlife habitats throughout the area and with positive maintenance for wildlife for the designated Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation and for Bellamy's Copse
 - Can secure the long term maintenance of the area to benefit from Heritage Lottery Fund investment under the Parks for People Stage 2 application (to Green Flag standards)
 - Rationalises the bins, signs and other potential clutter in the area to reduce overall maintenance costs and enhance the area's visual appearance
 - Maintains waymarking for the area's public rights of way
 - Maintains the area's existing public noticeboards and interpretation panels
 - Maintains sensitive lighting which respects the character of the area and avoids light pollution
 - Secures removal of all grass cuttings and hedge trimmings from the area, including at Mitcham cricket ground
 - Replaces existing tarmac pathways with more suitable materials as part of the annual investment program – with that running across Lower Green East from opposite Mitcham Police Station as a priority
 - Improves the community waste area and routine litter collection within The Canons grounds
 - Addresses the wider connections to Wandle Valley Regional Park

5. With respect to the standards to be adopted we ask that:

- the general condition, safety and level of maintenance, measured by the condition of the area's green spaces and the number of hours invested in maintenance will not fall below the current levels as of May 2015
- the level and qualification/experience of those advising on or maintaining the green spaces under outsourced contract will be at the same standard of expertise, knowledge and skills as the current in house team as a minimum

6. The specification cannot assume the continued commitment of local volunteers to maintenance of the area's green spaces because volunteer motivations will be very different if expected to be working alongside commercial contractors. Future volunteer commitment is also uncertain because of the impact of the breakdown in trust between Merton Council and local groups as a result of the mishandling of the outsourcing arrangements. Nevertheless, we ask that the specification includes requirements for close collaboration with our two organisations who contribute much to maintenance and care of the area. This should include discussion and agreement on future maintenance plans and their delivery.

7. Along with other Friends Groups and interested organisations across Merton we would welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft specification before it is included in the procurement process.