



## **DEVELOPMENT OF QUEEN'S HEAD FOR FLATS**

**Application number 17/P2053  
February 2017**

1. Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage takes an active interest in the future of the Cricket Green Conservation Area and its environs. We are the civic society for this part of Merton and part of the wider civic movement through membership of the national charity Civic Voice. We have been closely involved in the development of the Borough Character Studies, the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and in influencing numerous development proposals in the area. We also undertake practical work, including producing an audio trail for Cricket Green and our cleaning local landmarks project which won a national design award from Civic Voice. We contribute to local listing and have worked with the London Borough of Merton and our local councillors to produce the Cricket Green Charter which establishes our approach to development and change in the area and was acknowledged in finalising the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Cricket Green (<http://mitchamcricketgreen.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/cricket-green-charter.pdf>). We are also partners with Merton Council in the development and future delivery of a £4m Lottery bid for The Canons across the road from the scheme.
2. The Queen's Head is a prominent and significant building within Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area. It stands opposite the registered Town Green lying at the heart of the Conservation Area and occupies a corner location making it visible from two sides and at a distance from across the Green and along Cricket Green road. The public house has served the area since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is recognised as making a "positive contribution" in the Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and is a heritage asset (making a "positive contribution") located within a heritage asset (the Conservation Area).
3. We have considered the proposals for conversion of the Queen's Head and two flanking developments for eight flats in the light of adopted development plan policies, the Conservation Area Management and Maintenance Plan and the Cricket Green Charter.
4. We applaud the way the applicants have approached the formulation of these proposals, engaging us in conversations both before pre-application advice was obtained from Merton Council and ahead of the planning application. We commend this approach to others considering development in the area. This positive experience has informed the proposals and some important modifications have been made as a result. We particularly welcome changes which reduce the intensity of development and pay more

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attention to the new public realm which will be created along Bramcote Avenue and the corner with Cricket Green, including design details such as the low zig zag brick wall.

5. Notwithstanding the welcome evolution of the development proposals we have the following objections:

Loss of community use – the contribution of the Queen’s Head as a public house has been an important community asset for decades. We believe the best use for the current building is for its original purpose as a public house. Further steps should be taken before dismissing this option as economically unviable. Policy DM R5 explicitly requires the applicant to “*demonstrate that the public house as a business is no longer economically viable; and, to demonstrate that full and proper marketing of the site at reasonable prices for a period of 30 months (2 ½ years) confirms the non-viability for these purposes.*” The Queen’s Head has been closed for less than a year so the applicant is unable to provide such evidence.

Incongruous and unsympathetic design – the proposals crowd the existing building and damage the positive contribution it makes to the Conservation Area in a number of respects:

- the asymmetric frontage to Cricket Green is poorly conceived with the larger block along Bramcote Avenue damaging the street scene as a result of its excessive height and unsympathetic, blocky design. This overpowers the existing building and harms the visual amenity of the registered Town Green and protected open space of Cricket Green
- the design fails either to take its cues from the existing building or offer sufficient contrast to make a new and positive contribution to the street scene
- the design pays too little attention to the intersection of Cricket Green and Bramcote Avenue which is framed by the open sweep of Bramcote Court and Parade (currently subject to a local listing proposal). This spacious intersection provides a sense of arrival moving from Bramcote Avenue into the Conservation Area and green spaces of Cricket Green. The high, cranked, flanking building will cramp this open sweep and create a built channel at the entrance to Bramcote Avenue. The proposals will create a visual pinch point rather than “turn the corner” in a manner which adds to the street scene
- while welcome, the additional area of planting and new public realm on the corner will be heavily shaded. Its benefits are limited and it serves only as mitigation. Given its significance an appropriate design treatment to the corner site should have been integrated into the project from its inception.

Intensive use – this small site is unable to accommodate the level of development proposed, including the lack of car parking spaces and loss of a mature tree

6. We ask that any planning consent is conditional on agreeing the choice of trees and other planting and satisfactory arrangements to ensure their ongoing maintenance and management. It is not sufficient simply to require trees to be replaced if they do not survive.

7. As a consequence we object to the proposals as currently conceived on the grounds of a negative impact on the Conservation Area and conflict with NPPF paragraph 48 (refusing poorly designed development) and Policies DM D1, DM D2, DM D3, DM D4, DM O1, DM R5, CS8 and CS14. Given the positive contribution made by the existing building we believe a much more sympathetic approach to any development of the surrounding land needs to be taken. We stand ready to continue to support the applicant in further development of the proposals.