



PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF LA SPORTA
Application number 18/P2297
October 2018

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 numerous development proposals in the area. We 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 has been acknowledged in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Cricket Green (<http://mitchamcricketgreen.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/cricket-green-charter.pdf>). We have also contributed to production of the Merton Heritage Strategy as a member of the Merton Heritage Forum. We are members of The Canons Steering Group delivering a £5m Lottery funded project and also undertake practical projects, organise walks and run Mitcham Heritage Day and Community on the Green.

2. The La Sporta building occupies a prominent location at the gateway to Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and in the setting of the nationally listed Mitcham Parish Church and Old Vicarage. The site also has potential to make a significant contribution to the future development of the emerging Local Plan site allocation for the Suez waste transfer facility, car pound and land along Hallowfield Way.

3. There is only limited information provided with this application and no indication of future plans. We note there is a covenant preventing future residential development. The accompanying Planning Statement says "*there have been no attempts at repurposing the La Sporta Community Centre after it ceased operating*" in 2012. This is not a true statement. The site was cleaned up following requests we prompted from Merton Council in 2016. It has been used on a number of different occasions since – as a church, for parties and wakes, and advertised as a Stay and Play café (see below). Its Facebook profile (<https://www.facebook.com/LasportaCommunityCentre/>) has comments from as recently as March 2017. It is accessible by public transport.

General enquiries: info@mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk
Web site: www.mitchamcricketgreen.org.uk
Twitter: @MitchamCrktGrn

Registered Office c/o MVSC, Vestry Hall, 336/338 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 3UD
Company registration no. 04659164 Charity registration no. 1106859



4. We have considered the proposals against the principles of the Cricket Green Charter and the development plan. Our own submission to the Local Plan seeks a repurposing of the La Sporta building for community use and is below:

1. Benedict Wharf



Current uses – Waste transfer & processing (SUEZ), Car pound (Cappagh), Public open space (London Road Playing Fields), Highways (Hallowfield Way), Private open space (along Hallowfield Way (Merton Council) and Tram line (Transport for London)), Private hall (La Sporta)

Preferred future use – Residential (C3) & public open space, Community (D1) with ancillary retail (A1, A3) and employment (B1)

Existing planning & other issues – Strategic Industrial Location, Open Space, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, Green Corridor, boundary of Mitcham Cricket Green & Wandle Valley Conservation Areas, setting of Grade 2* (Mitcham Parish Church) and Grade 2 (Vicarage) listed buildings, Locally listed buildings, Archaeological Priority Zone, Wandle Valley buffer, Overhead lines

Future opportunities – The most important development opportunity in Mitcham for the period of the Local Plan (see Site Opportunity Map and "From waste to place" [blog](#)) including:

- Significant social housing contribution
- Mixed housing delivery mechanisms, including community land trust
- Green corridor and public access link from London Road to Morden Hall Park via Benedict Wharf and Phipps Bridge
- Improved access to an invigorated London Road Playing Fields (renamed as Baron Fields) through Fenning & Baron Courts & from Church Path & Baron Walk
- Restore ancient Ravensbury Path between Church Road & Ravensbury Park
- A gateway to Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area to be proud of by Mitcham Parish Church
- Development and public realm improvements along Hallowfield Way to reduce width and improve frontage
- Public realm investment in London Road Playing Fields, Church Path and Baron Walk
- New relationship and removed boundary between Benedict Wharf and London Road Playing Fields
- Recognise route of Surrey Iron Railway (first public railway in the world)
- Significant overall increase in area of public open space
- Investment in community infrastructure (e.g. repurposing La Sporta Hall & investment in Mitcham Parish Centre)

5. We are concerned that this is a building still in D1 community use with the potential to contribute to the Core Strategy's Spatial Vision. Any loss would not be consistent with Policy CS11 "We will support the provision and improvement of infrastructure of the borough for those living, working and visiting Merton and to accommodate population growth by.....resisting the net loss of social and community facilities particularly where a need has been identified." The onus is on the applicant to

justify the loss of this building and without any information on future use we do not believe this has been done. We object to the proposal.

6. We are also concerned to ensure if demolition were to proceed that the management and care of the vacant site would be secured through planning conditions to avoid it becoming an eyesore or a focus for anti-social behaviour. It will also be important strictly to manage the hours of working and vehicle size and movements during any demolition process given the proximity of residences and the restricted nature of Church Road.