



Local election 2022 – questions for Cricket Green candidates

Mitcham Cricket Green Community & Heritage – the local civic society for this part of Merton – asked each of the candidates standing for election in Cricket Green ward a series of questions. The unedited responses are below.

	Merton Conservatives [Peter Ludvigsen, Barbara Mansfield, Gary Watkinson]	Merton Greens [Christopher Stanton]	Merton Labour [Usaama Kaweesa, Gill Manly, Michael Butcher]	Merton Liberal Democrats [Vincent Bolt, Gail Morrison, William Woodward]	Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition [Alex Forbes]
Q1 What is your most important priority for improving the quality of life in Cricket Green?	<p>The priority for improving the quality of life in Cricket Green is to resolve the many problems which have developed over the last 12 years of Labour running our Council. We need to clean our streets, target crime, rejuvenate town centres like Mitcham, stand up for motorists, reform planning, support young people and provide real value for money.</p>	<p>My priority for Cricket Green is to improve air quality. Emissions from motor vehicles damage the health of residents, employees, visitors and wildlife - as well as contribute to the climate crisis. There must be a comprehensive review of how motor traffic moves around and through the ward, with the aim of creating various initiatives to reduce the number of miles driven. This should be accompanied by hard work to improve infrastructure to facilitate and encourage walking and cycling, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working systematically to improve footways, cycleways, crossings, signage, and lighting, in order to create a more coherent and safer walking and cycling network - 	<p>There are a number of key priorities as follows:</p> <p>Public health and safety: that includes more street lighting, CCTV where most needed, repair of unsafe pedestrian walkways e.g. we recently had a PROW on the Green resurfaced following the complaints by many residents.</p> <p>Air quality, and heavy traffic, especially when extended road works diversion occur that increase fumes and pollution.</p> <p>Building more social housing, (and genuinely affordable housing) to accommodate the consistently growing need, and to hold Clarion and housing associations to account on repairs in a meaningful way.</p>	<p>Housing is the bedrock that ensures families feel a strong sense of home, security, and community. Merton Liberal Democrats' top priority is for more decent, affordable housing with the development of appropriate services and encouragement of local enterprises. We will achieve the new 50% affordable homes target with robust affordability and viability criteria (Labour have repeatedly achieved only 13%).</p> <p>The development of Benedict Wharf is an ideal opportunity for mixed and affordable housing based around new streets and green links as a natural extension of Mitcham. We will develop local planning rules to embrace new ways of living and working, such as encouraging communal</p>	<p>Mitcham is blighted by through traffic of no benefit to local residents. I will work with amenity groups to campaign for improvements to public transport to reduce traffic. Extension of the tram route should be planned with local residents. Rather than cutting public transport Sadiq Khan needs stand up to the Tories to provide a sustainable transport system.</p> <p>Poor air quality is a health issue which has a major effect in poorer areas like Mitcham.</p>

		<p>for journeys to work, school and the shops, as well as for leisure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working to upgrade all cycling infrastructure to meet the requirements set out in the government's Local Transport Note 1/20 guidance on cycle infrastructure design - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120 • Installing more facilities that allow people to store their bicycles securely, safely and, where possible, for free. • Prioritising the implementation of measures to reduce injuries to and deaths of pedestrians and cyclists. This includes lobbying the Mayor's Office and the London Assembly to bring forward the target in Transport for London's Vision Zero action plan, from 2041 to 2030. Vision Zero aims to eliminate all deaths and serious injuries from London's transport network. <p>Increasing canopy cover will help too. Hence I will seek funding and donations for the planting of more trees - both street trees and trees in green spaces - and work with idverde and other relevant bodies to ensure good management of these precious resources.</p>	<p>Empowering residents to feel ownership of their environment and homes, to encourage them to take an active part in decision making by leading public meetings whereby their voices can be heard. We wish to encourage the community spirit and really engage so that people feel they have a voice.</p> <p>Assessing the increasing lack of development of buildings and sites left untouched by owners/developers. Empty shops that are in serious disrepair and look tired and dirty. They destroy the character of Cricket Green as much as poorly designed new buildings.</p>	<p>working areas in new developments. More emphasis will be placed on street design to encourage cycling and walking. We will provide real support for renters, through our new Tenants' Champion scheme; bring empty homes back into use to cut our temporary housing waiting list by up to 20%; start prosecuting rogue landlords; work nationally to end cladding and leasehold abuses; and end the Council's practice of offering social housing more than 90 mins from Merton. This will be done with the full engagement of local communities.</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>The Cricket Green Charter is laudable, and we certainly support the vast majority of its aims. We will work with the community to ensure people are happy with their environment and that new developments help, not hinder our community.</p>	<p>Merton Green Party respects the Cricket Green Charter, which is to be applauded for its ambition and clarity, and for reflecting the views of residents. I will definitely use it to guide my actions.</p>	<p>We value all the work that MCGC&H have done and continue to do as outlined in the thoughtful production of the Charter. We look forward to supporting and working in a co-operative spirit with the group. Its aims are for the good of the ward and it is particularly heartening that as volunteers, so much time and effort is put into their work. The core values of working as a community</p>	<p>In short – yes! We support the Cricket Green Charter. Merton Liberal Democrats are committed to the creation of Neighbourhood Plans to give people real control over development in their area. This would turn residents' views into planning rules. This approach would build on community efforts to develop the Cricket Green Charter and ensure that Merton Council acts in the interests of all residents in the decisions it takes.</p>	<p>Merton Council need to use its powers to rationalise the road system, eliminating one-way systems and uniting the Vestry Hall island with the adjacent residential area.</p>

			for the community are at the heart of our campaign.		
Q3 How will you demonstrate your commitment to protecting Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area and its environs?	As local Conservatives, we are committed to brightening up our parks and green spaces, as well as ensuring our community is cleaned up. Across Merton local Conservatives have been working hard to protect our environment and have had many successes – even opening a brand-new pocket park on Gap Road. If elected, we will be very active in ensuring that the Conservation area benefits from our hands-on approach. We would also like to bring in a supplementary planning document which will guide development in this area and would seek community input into its setup.	Cricket Green is fortunate to have various groups of residents working hard to protect the Conservation Area, including, of course, Mitcham Cricket Green Community and Heritage. Hence I aim to both work with the groups and ensure that the Council listens to and works with them. Scrutinising planning applications and seeking to influence outcomes will be an important part of my role.	We stood for this Ward as not only residents, but because we care deeply for it and want it to blossom into a place that is worth visiting and worth staying in. No longer a drive-past, but somewhere people want to shop, entertain, live peacefully and safely and enjoy the green spaces. Our built heritage is a jewel in the crown, and we relish the opportunity to further explore and develop Cricket Green that respects the integrity and heritage but also becomes a place we are all proud to live and work in	Development in the Conservation Area and its environs must respect and add value to the area and the life of the people who live here. enhance the existing environment. Ensuring community involvement in the development of Neighbourhood Plans will be a key step to achieve this. We will ensure that The Canons refurbishment is managed effectively.	So-called 'back office' savings such as reducing the number of planning officers, environmental health officers, road inspectors and tree staff have degraded the environment. I will work with amenity groups to campaign for these services to be restored and challenge the other parties to support this. Merton Council has had to re-employ staff to manage contracts and rests on an aging workforce. As they leave there will be a significant loss of knowledge and experience. This will further harm places like the conservation area. The privatisation of refuse collection, street cleaning and parks maintenance has broken the link with the local community and must also be reversed.
Q4 What will you do to help secure a long term future for Mitcham Cricket Club and its pavilion and equipment shed?	In this year's Council budget local Conservatives proposed the creation of a £250,000 fund to support community organisations. This was sadly not supported by Labour or the Liberal Democrats. We will work with community groups and help them to continue providing high-quality services which enrich our local community. We will support the cricket club to apply for grants from the government or other organisations to help secure its future.	I will work with the members and supporters of Mitcham Cricket Club on securing its long-term future, including its pavilion and equipment shed. It is an historic, important and unique institution, and I learned from its Chair recently about the current precarious state of play with Phoenix Group Investments, as well as the staggering number and diversity of people who use the facilities. Cricket Green simply cannot be without its Cricket Club!	This building has a long-standing (over 10 years) legal issue with the Freeholders of the Burn Bullock, and as such we would want to undertake further discussion with the Cricket Club and its members to understand where it currently is seated, and what they are doing to make progress. We look forward to having what we hope to be constructive discussions with a view to safely securing the clubs future. Supporting the survival of oldest cricket pitch in the world must continue	Mitcham Cricket Club is a vital part of the identity and future of Mitcham, and a core component of the Conservation Area. The cricket green must be protected as a sporting field, the pavilion preserved and improved, and the Club supported to expand its already impressive junior cricket programme - this is the most sustainable and socially beneficial approach and will help to bring financial sustainability to the Club. Merton Liberal Democrats will work with professional and amateur sports clubs to improve local sporting, outdoor gym and children's play facilities and get more young people playing sport and exercising. We also aim to be named a London Borough of Culture, and will work with local	I will campaign for the Council to use its compulsory purchase powers to acquire the Burn Bullock. The Council should also use its sports development service to work with the Cricket Club to support community usage. The Council should work with Surrey County Cricket Club's outreach programme to support initiatives to bring cricket to more young people

				groups, including Mitcham Cricket Club, to attract funding to promote our heritage and encourage visitors.	
Q5 How do you think the development of the Wilson Hospital and its grounds for a new health centre can best respect the historic site and provide for more than the health needs of the local community?	Following the pandemic, we need to have serious discussion, thought and dialogue about how our healthcare system operates locally. This isn't something which will happen overnight, and it will need the support of the NHS, so we cannot immediately promise anything here, but developing the Wilson Hospital site is worth considering. An example of where this has worked well is the Nelson Hospital on Kingston Road, which includes a pharmacy, a high capability GP surgery and some outpatient NHS functions. Also the building design is sympathetic and in keeping with the historic surroundings whilst offering a modern NHS service. Mitcham deserves the same offering, and we'll lobby the NHS on this.	The future of the Wilson Hospital and its grounds has been debated for years. I believe that a growing population, especially an ageing population, requires a community health hub, and that the site should retain the best parts of its current architecture and landscaping in order to retain its original character in accordance with the Cricket Green Charter. However, more importantly, I will help residents to work with the NHS (the South West London CCGs) on planning for its future.	Following the 2-year pandemic, during which time the Wilson was used as a fantastic vaccination hub, the community recognised what a wonderful and much needed community building it still is, together with its landscaping and gardens. Moving forward we fully recognise the importance of Mitcham and the Wilson, securing the health services that our community so desperately needs having been let down time and time again. For example, the Wilson got only a portacabin, while the Nelson received huge amounts of funding. If elected we will continue to work closely with our MP to fight for the health services that our community so clearly needs.	Merton Liberal Democrats campaigned against the closure of the walk-in centre at the Wilson Hospital, and the replacement GP Access Hub doesn't meet the same need. We want to use the site to improve health provision across Merton. We will prioritise the issue of low vaccination rates amongst children and adults and seek to open "walk-in" surgeries to improve access. Merton Liberal Democrats will preserve the classical frontage and other original elements of the locally listed building, increase the green space, and provide a new drop-off point for Cranmer School to ease congestion and reduce air pollution associated with the school run. The creation of Neighbourhood Plans will give people real control over the redevelopment.	The Wilson Hospital site needs to be kept out of the hands of private developers interested only in profit. The form, massing and architecture of the existing buildings need to be respected in any redevelopment. If there is surplus space on site after all health provision has been provided for, this could be used for other community needs such as a replacement for the lost sure start provision at Lavender Fields and replacement youth facilities.
Q6 Do you support development proposals for blocks of flats in Mitcham taller than the existing highest buildings?	No. We support development which enhances the community, not high-rise blocks which do not fit in with the character of our area.	Building height must complement its environs and I believe that blocks of flats that are higher than the existing buildings will not do so. They will block out crucial light and change the skyline for the worse. Furthermore, in light of the climate crisis and the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, there must be demonstrable need for blocks of flats. As building height rises, its building material requirements and ongoing	Merton, and London as a whole, is in the midst of a housing crisis. We have approximately 10,000 people on our local housing register - these are people who are currently living in temporary and wholly unsuitable housing. We need to build more homes in the borough. As Merton has very limited spaces available on which to build new properties, notwithstanding our many beautiful parks and green spaces (which we all want to protect for future generations to enjoy), the only option available	In short – no! Merton Liberal Democrats will not allow a developers' free-for-all. We will adopt a new approach to planning by bringing the community, local businesses, social housing providers and commercial developers together to discuss competing priorities and necessary compromises. This will reflect the community's priorities on issues like building heights, etc. In Parliament, Liberal Democrats have fought the Conservative plan to allow developers to add 2 extra storeys to blocks of flats without	No. However, Sadler Court is a monstrosity and should not be used as a precedent. Clarion has demonstrated a wilful disregard for its residents. Rather than just producing design briefs the Council should develop sites itself so they benefit the community rather than private developers with no commitment to Merton. See attached appendix for more detail about the baleful effect of Clarion [available on request]

		<p>maintenance requirements become exponentially greater and measurably less sustainable environmentally.</p> <p>In general, Merton Green Party supports high-density housing development where there is demonstrable need, and opposes proposals for large-scale, high-density housing development which does not include substantial and demonstrable advantages to occupants, the wider community, and the environment.</p> <p>Indeed, we will push for a review of the existing target for new housing and the type of new housing needed, as the pandemic has seen a number of people move out of London and brought increased home or hybrid working. In particular, home or hybrid working makes equal access to well-maintained green spaces essential, hence we will endeavour to ensure that this is built into plans from the outset.</p>	<p>to us in many cases is to build up, which means taller buildings.</p> <p>However, any new development needs to be considered in terms of how it will fit in with its surrounding environment, and the impact it will have on existing communities. We pledge to ensure that all new planning applications in Cricket Green are considered carefully against requirements for mass, height, setting, position, and Conservation Area planning law. We also pledge to represent the views of residents whenever necessary by speaking on behalf of the local community at Planning Applications Committee meetings when called to do so.</p>	<p>needing planning permission. In Merton, Liberal Democrats proposed to limit building heights in Wimbledon town centre, but this was voted down by Labour. We do support roof gardens and vertical greening - both are attractive, improve the urban environment and air quality, and contribute to carbon reduction.</p>	
<p>Q7 What will you do to improve the character and vitality of Mitcham Village?</p>	<p>Vibrant high streets and town centres are the lifeblood of our communities. But Labour has neglected high streets and ignored residents' priorities. We will work with residents and local businesses to enhance the retail and social experience in Mitcham. We will actively promote investment to regenerate Merton's high streets, providing jobs and opportunities.</p>	<p>Improving the character and vitality of Mitcham Village requires working with residents on planning for its future. My personal view is that a greater variety of businesses need to be encouraged to come to the area e.g. different types of places to eat and drink, and different types of shops. There is not enough choice at the moment, particularly when it comes to healthy eating options.</p>	<p>Examining the townscape of Fair Green to assess the lack of variety of shops, tackle the proliferation of antisocial behaviour and drug dealing, push for the market to become a lively and interesting square with a variety of specialist weekend markets, festivals, and to encourage fresh and vital entrepreneurship. We intend to create an arts-based community hub with a healthy eating café, rooms for projects, affordable meeting space for local societies and groups, as well as healthy living classes (yoga, meditation). We will also support development of a broad range of outdoor community</p>	<p>The renovation and use of the Burn Bullock and the White Hart are obvious priorities, as is the preservation of the cricket pavilion. Protecting and enhancing our community assets, including green spaces, is essential to improve the character and vitality of Mitcham Village. Improving air quality, encouraging local enterprises, and ensuring clean streets are also vital.</p>	<p>Mitcham is blighted by traffic and poor air quality. It is also blighted by poverty. The Tories, including in coalition with the Lib Dems, reduced real wages and welfare benefits. Housing association rents have also increased dramatically. The consequences of these policies, which Labour had failed to adequately oppose, are starkly shown in areas like Mitcham.</p> <p>Mitcham Fair Green and neighbouring areas are dying on their feet. The withdrawal of Tesco, Nationwide and Barclays are symptomatic. The planting programme at the Fair Green ignored the opinion of the</p>

			<p>events, e.g. Annual summer fete, craft fair, food festivals, supporting the growth of the Heritage Day events, sports days. We would like to make better use of our green spaces such as Cricket Green and the Canons to host these events. One of our first tasks will be to ensure the new Canons Café is opened and operating as soon as possible as a vital community asset.</p>		<p>Council's Arboricultural Manager so the wrong species were planted.</p> <p>Living standards need to be restored. The Council needs to use its powers to fight the cost of living crisis. See tusc.org.uk for further information.</p>
<p>Q8 What will you do to ensure swift enforcement against breaches of planning laws and fly tipping?</p>	<p>Merton is a great place to live but no one wants litter on the ground. As a borough, we suffer from high levels of fly-tipping, and it is one of many enforcement areas that a Conservative administration is determined to improve.</p> <p>We will work with Veolia to ensure that waste and rubbish collection improves and use local improvement plans to focus on areas that suffer from persistent waste collection issues.</p> <p>We will ensure that Building & Development Control has the staffing resources to ensure that breaches of planning permissions and structures built without consent are prosecuted and our communities protected.</p>	<p>I will remain vigilant for and respond to reports of breaches of planning law and fly-tipping by following them up with the Council and, in the case of the latter, Veolia too.</p> <p>Veolia's approach to dealing with fly-tipping is unacceptably lax and, shockingly, the standards in the contract were revised downwards last year. I aim to work with the Council on improving both the contract and its management by the Council</p>	<p>We are encouraged by the use of the new Fix-my-Street app, that we have been using ourselves whilst we walk around meeting the residents. 96% of FlyTipping reported on Fix-my-Street has been picked up within 24 hours. Whilst not all reports can be dealt with as they are on private land, our experience has been very positive. We have already been in contact with the Council and held a meeting on 18th February 2022 at the Willow Lane site of serious flytipping attended by SiobhainMcDonagh MP and local residents. MCGC&H were invited to attend this meeting. Willow Lane has a complex ownership status but we are happy to say that a bid is in process for funding to clear the fly tipping, erect taller and stronger fencing and introduce better prevention. The current CCTV camera is regularly monitored, and we are informed that a number of prosecutions have been and are continuing to be made.</p>	<p>Merton Liberal Democrats will ensure planning enforcement is properly resourced to deal with 'cowboy' developers and ensure planning rules are followed and put more emphasis on waste storage and collection solutions before planning permission is granted. We will learn from the Liberal Democrat run councils in Richmond and Kingston on how they get a better service from Veolia - the same waste contractor who are currently failing Labour run Merton.</p> <p>We have demanded action on fly-tips, after just 2% of fly-tippers were fined in 2021; challenged Council bosses for paying Veolia an extra £1m per year to simply provide the service they'd originally agreed; and worked with Council officers to address chronic litter problems on streets with flats above shops, with simplified collection and tougher enforcement. We will provide a waste service that works for residents by prioritising street sweeping after collections; introduce 'pop-up' waste skips in neighbourhoods; work to manage existing waste contracts better; solve waste collection issues for flats; and get tougher on fly-tippers.</p>	<p>When the refuse and street sweeping contracts were privatised staff numbers were cut by 30% and inflexible contractual arrangements were introduced.</p> <p>The Environmental Health Housing team was cut from 10 people to 5. As a consequence the council has barely used its enforcement powers against illegal Homes in Multiple Occupation and has failed to implement landlord licensing schemes.</p> <p>Developers and landlords appreciate that they can wilfully ignore their responsibilities and are unlikely to experience enforcement.</p> <p>The Council needs to employ an adequate number of staff. Cutting essential staff was a political decision. Rather than bowing down to Tory austerity a Labour Council should mount a campaign with the local community to demand adequate resources to provide the services community needs</p>

<p>Q9 What distinctive response do you think we can all make in Cricket Green to the climate and ecological emergencies?</p>	<p>We are passionate about making our streets pleasant and green - that is why our volunteers have planted tens of thousands of daffodils across the Borough and our Councillors have worked to promote schemes such as green walls and city trees which are very effective ways to remove pollution from the atmosphere. We will continue to support green measures and work to protect our local environment.</p>	<p>As detailed in my answer to Q1, I believe that addressing emissions from motor vehicles is crucial. Ergo, whilst I recognise that vehicle ownership is vital for those with limited mobility and with particular jobs, and that Electric Vehicles (EVs) play their part in reducing emissions, I urge everybody to choose walking, cycling or taking public transport as much as possible.</p>	<p>Use our cars less, and walk more. Look after our green spaces, discourage/stop shops from giving out plastic bags to every single shopper (corner shops are the main problem), encourage takeaways to use more recycled and recyclable containers. Encourage further planting of trees, especially as we have the benefit of the Queen's Green Canopy project which is providing several thousand new trees for Merton.</p>	<p>Merton Liberal Democrats jointly sponsored the Council's 2019 Climate Emergency Declaration – and ensured it contained measurable targets and included residents in the working group. Cricket Green has some fantastic outdoor spaces, and the local community can make a meaningful response to the climate and ecological emergencies. We will develop robust tree <i>and</i> biodiversity strategies - unfortunately, Labour voted against our proposal to include both strategies in the Council's current Climate Action Plan. We will look at putting public open space into trust, to give the community a real say over land use and provide more protection. We will develop strategic cycle routes and enhance pedestrian routes throughout the area, including new links through Benedict Wharf, the Wilson, Worsfold House and the Birches, and to the Wandle Trail, Watermeads and Morden Hall Park. We will install more Air Quality monitors and give local people real-time access to their readings – and then actually <u>use</u> that data to inform other action. We will help residents to reduce their carbon emissions and promote civic pride with street planting competitions. Much will depend on whether the Mayor of London extends the ULEZ to Merton – if he does our focus will be on fairness, giving people the time and support to switch to more environmentally friendly vehicles. We will also replace the Council transport fleet with electric vehicles, develop a strategy for electric charging points across the borough, and work with Transport for London to introduce more low-emission buses, and limits to heavy 'through traffic'.</p>	<p>See answer to Question 1. Traffic, air quality and poor energy performance along with the cost of living crisis are all key issues.</p>
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<p>Q10 What is your favourite place in Mitcham Cricket Green Conservation Area?</p>	<p>There are too many to name though if we had to, we would choose the Cricket Green itself. Wimbledon may have the tennis, but there's nothing like watching the cricket on the green.</p>	<p>Currently, my favourite place in Cricket Green is a beautiful little courtyard in the grounds of The Canons. I have enjoyed opening the big wooden door and taking refuge on a bench surrounded by greenery and birdsong.</p>	<p>GILL MANLY: This is so difficult as there is so much to love and appreciate, but I have to say the Mary Tates Cottages with their fantastic history and architecture and the view across the oldest cricket pitch in the world and the Canons. I joined MCGC&H 4 years ago when I moved here for precisely my love of the heritage area. I value and treasure the area and hope to help create a positive impact with the work I do. I was responsible for Mary Tates Cottages participating in Heritage Day for the first time and for organising the 190th anniversary celebration of their founding. I have received certificates of Appreciation from Mitcham Society for the work I do to maintain and tend the front formal gardens of the cottages</p> <p>USAAMA KAWEESA: I have a huge passion for history ever since I first studied it as a GCSE back at Mitcham Vale High School. One of my favourite hobbies since then has been visiting sites of historical significance and in particular memorials marking such events. That's why I really love walking around the Cricket Green Conservation area and I'm especially drawn to sites like the Mitcham War Memorial. Every Remembrance Sunday I'm constantly inspired by its ability to bring together all sections of our community to remember the over 500 local fallen heroes we lost in the Great War. It's a powerful reminder of the enormous value of our local culture and heritage in bringing people together, and why I will always strive to champion it.</p>	<p>Mitcham Park: a beautiful residential street.</p> <p>Watching cricket on the green.</p> <p>The Canons.</p>	<p>Unfortunately my four favourite places around the Cricket Green have all closed in recent years. I particularly like the Cannons but it suffers from the degradation of the wider area.</p>
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