

ATKINSON MORLEY SITE

URGENT NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE PLANS FOR OPEN LAND

GOOD NEWS!

Copse Hill will finally have an appropriate frontage to the Atkinson Morley site. Berkeley Homes has listened and responded to the views of local people as to what would work on this part of the site, presented their proposals at an exhibition in February and now submitted a planning application. The feedback we got after the exhibition suggests people are generally happy with the built development.

OUR CONCERNS WITH THE DEVELOPER'S PLANS FOR THE OPEN LAND

However the proposals are also about what will happen to the 17 acres of open land below the hospital and Firs sites, a large part of which it is proposed will be transferred to the Council. The Council area would comprise 3 pitches and one former pitch will be used for an attenuation pond and nature area. An area of woodland is also to be transferred. The scouts would remain on the south west corner and take on the use and maintenance of the old tennis courts area. There would be public access to the playing fields and nature area but there are a number of important issues to be resolved.

- To make the public area financially sustainable it needs to be adequately funded with secure sources of revenue, good facilities and a clear business plan. We believe that some parts of the plan submitted by the developer do not stand up to scrutiny e.g. high rental value for the groundsman's cottage after very basic restoration.
- The developer plans to use spoil from the building site to 'level' the playing field area, thus saving the cost of disposal. The raised ground level of the pitches will create banks of around 2.5 m above the Lindisfarne / Cottenham Park Rd path and around the scout site. The public path around the playing field will be below this bank with no view onto the playing fields. The lack of visual access onto the path will create security problems. There would be no access for machinery to maintain the path and banks, and a fence would be needed to stop balls rolling down it.
- The increased banking and introduction of ditches around the Scout site would block their physical and visual access to the playing fields and could increase the risk of flooding.
- Surface water from the development would be piped to the attenuation pond and from there south across the playing fields to public drains in Cottenham Park Road. This drainage system does not meet the criteria to be adopted by Thames Water. Responsibility for ongoing maintenance is not clear but failure to control the flow from the attenuation pond or to maintain the system could create problems for the already overloaded surface water drains in Cottenham Park Road.

You can view the planning application at <http://planning.merton.gov.uk> Select 'application search' and enter planning application number 11/P0346

OUR CONCERNS WITH THE COUNCIL'S LACK OF PLANS FOR THE OPEN LAND

The Council needs to be clear about what will be needed from the developer through the planning application for its part of the open land, so that it can be properly run for years to come e.g. specifications for the pavilion, sports pitches, and cottage. This has to be sorted before the planning application goes to Committee, which could be as early as June. Funding requirements need to be assessed in a business plan and then specified in the conditions of the planning agreement. The Council business plan needs to be in place before the planning conditions are agreed so urgent action is required. LUNG is very willing to help with this, as it did with the 2005 application, but so far our offer has not been accepted. PTO for key questions that you might want to ask the council about its plans.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE COUNCIL ABOUT ITS PLANS FOR THE OPEN LAND

What plans does the Council have for the use of the playing fields? (e.g. organisations that will use them, sports to be played, hours of use, number and ages of players to be catered for)

Will the facilities proposed by Berkeley Homes be consistent with this use? (e.g. the developer's specification of the pavilion and pitches they will provide)

What capital sum is required to ensure long term financial sustainability of the open land? If costs of maintaining the open land (woodland, nature area, sports pitches) exceed revenue, how will the shortfall be funded?

What plans does the Council have for the management of the open land? Will it be managed by a community trust? If yes, how will it be constituted?

Will the capital sum in the planning agreement (and net income) be ring fenced to this site? How will the Council propose to secure the funding just for this site?

Has the Council explored the potential impact of the drainage and levelling plans, and what assurances can be given?

If you share our concerns you can write to the council officers listed below and copy as suggested ASAP, and if possible by the end of March

- comment on the developers plans
- ask the Council key questions about its own plans for the open land

Include a reference to Planning Application 11/P0346

Contacts to address comments on the planning application and questions to:

Sue Wright (Planning Team Leader) – sue.wright@merton.gov.uk

Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration – chris.lee@merton.gov.uk

James McGinlay (Head of Sustainable Communities) - James.McGinlay@merton.gov.uk

Please also copy to

Ged Curran (Chief Executive) - chief.executive@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Alambritis (Leader of the Council) - stephen.alambritis@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Andrew Judge (Cabinet Member) - andrew.judge@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Samantha George - samantha.george@merton.gov.uk

Cllr John Bowcott - john.bowcott@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Philip Jones - philip.jones@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Richard Chellew - richard.chellew@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Rod Scott - rod.scott@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Linda Scott – Linda.scott@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Margaret Brierley - margaret.brierly@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Diane Neil Mills - diane.neilmills@merton.gov.uk

Cllr Henry Nelles - henry.nelles@merton.gov.uk

Or by post to the 3 contacts at London Borough of Merton, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX

Distributed by LUNG, the Residents Association of West Wimbledon and the North West Wimbledon Residents Association
enquiries@amhlung.org.uk
See www.amhlung.org.uk for more information

March 2011

