

To: Future Merton Team

I am responding to the Pre-Submission Estates Local Plan for Eastfields.

I do not feel there has been enough time to fully process and research the plan, having received it after the 16th January. Especially for those of us who work full time and have young/elderly families to support. Also, the Design workshops planned by Circle, supposedly to give us a fuller understanding of design, design principles and how these fit with local planning have not yet been completed; the last one is not due to be held until the 28th February.

As a homeowner, I am also concerned about the mixed messages being received from Circle Housing and Merton Council. Whilst the plan, and covering letter, infers that the regeneration will go ahead, we were told by Merton representatives, at a meeting last year, that Eastfields was highly unlikely to be regenerated due to flooding, insufficient space for new builds (before houses could be demolished), and one road in, one road out making it impossible for lorries and building work to access the estate safely, and without major disruption to residents. How has this suddenly changed?

The plan itself only appears to focus on the 'negatives' within the estate and, whilst I agree Eastfields does look slightly shabby (predominantly those dwellings owned by Housing Associations), I was concerned about Eastfields being seen as a 'Fortress'.

████████████████████ the sense of community is strong, as witnessed by the attendance at meetings and the anger and dismay of being told Eastfields was being regenerated.

More specifically:

Health & wellbeing

2.12 Who was involved in the health impact assessment? Does this relate to health and wellbeing during the whole process, or just once regeneration is agreed and takes place? And whose health and wellbeing does it relate to?

Obviously not those of use currently living here. At no point during the past four years has our health and wellbeing been discussed. The stress and upset of not knowing what will happen to our homes has been immense. This has been made worse by crass and insensitive comments by both Merton and Circle staff during the consultation, i.e. 'You're lucky you haven't got a mortgage. My husband left me and I've got to pay mine mortgage for another 20 years.' (but they aren't at risk of losing their home). 'You should feel lucky you are getting a new home which is better than where you live now, and will be worth more.' We do not feel lucky at all! We have worked hard to pay our mortgages and keep our properties in good order, as have many of the housing association tenants. We may now be forced to move out of our homes (Circle representatives did admit, in a public meeting, that compulsory purchase would be used if residents didn't agree to their offer), or move into temporary accommodation whilst Circle houses are being built! We will then have to live on a building site for up to 10 years whilst the regeneration is completed.

Urban Design principles

2.4 '...promote biodiversity through open space, street trees.....'

There will be much less open space once regeneration takes place, with over twice the amount of dwellings/units as there are currently. One of the features that attracted us to Eastfields was the open space, which creates light within our homes. Under the new designs, houses will be much closer together and overlooking each other, making them darker inside.

2.8 Permeable, legible and accessible layouts

Eastfields is accessible and easy to get around. Many local people from 'off the estate', are able to walk or cycle to Eastfields station, to local bus stops and to Mitcham Town Centre. There is nothing on the estate that restricts this.

Site analysis

3.23 & 3.27 'Access for vehicles is confusing as the estate is part access from Acacia Road and part from Woodstock Way.' 'This inefficient layout restricts accessibility for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.'

The road closure was put in place to stop commercial and private vehicles, from off the estate, using the road as a rat run, causing danger to children, and air pollution. There were also young moped riders using it as a race track, with several accidents.

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How can vehicle access be restricted when it is predominantly residents who live here driving onto the estate?? By opening up the road you risk the road becoming a rat run again, and greater car usage through the estate will cause higher pollution levels. Why is it ok for public roads to have barriers restricting cars but estates can't?

3.30 '...the smaller spaces leading off this are less successful, as they are enclosed by the back gardens of the surrounding houses.'

This is precisely what has supported the community feel within the estate. Children have a safe space to meet and play, where parents can keep an eye on them. During summer months, people use the smaller spaces to socialise.

3.36 '.....to make the BMX track less visually isolated.'

Whoever has been involved in this plan has not taken anyone's views into account regarding the BMX track and the major issues it causes. Noise; air pollution, from the dozens of cars attending events; danger from cars; road rage; residents not being able to park, or get into their own properties easily as BMX spectators have parked in front of their houses. [REDACTED] these are just some of the issues which [REDACTED] d at meetings and ignored. Whilst the BMX track is a great idea for children, there needs to be some consideration of the problems caused.

Site specific policies

Justification

3.61 'Eastfields is located in an area with a low Public Transport Accessibility Level...'

We have a mainline railway station, within 10 minutes walk, with easy access to London Victoria and London Bridge, as well as many local stations, including Balham, Streatham, Sutton, Wimbledon and Kingston. We can also get the train to local tram stops. There are two local buses that stop just on the edge of the estate, both go through Mitcham, where other transport can be accessed. Ten minutes walk away are buses to Croydon and Streatham. These bus stops can also be accessed via the local buses. Whilst I appreciate that people with disabilities may find access difficult, it would not be because there is a lack of public transport. During our many previous meetings with Circle, one thing that was raised was the good transport links, with people who have moved to Eastfields as it's easy for them to get to London for work. The cynical amongst us are wondering whether this is being 'played down', as new properties could bring a premium price being so close to the station.

To be honest, I could add more points but I have run out of both time and motivation (I can hear you cheering!!). And have no faith that these comments will be acknowledged, especially as

they are the same comments that we, as residents, have put to both Merton Council and Circle Housing time and again, and which continue to be ignored.

Regards

[REDACTED]