



# Morden Park Baptist Church

Lower Morden Lane, Morden, Surrey SM4 4SP

Future Merton  
London Borough of Merton  
12<sup>th</sup> Floor Civic Centre  
London Road  
Morden  
SM4 5DX

14<sup>th</sup> March 2012

## **Re: Sites and Policies Development Plan Document – Site Proposal 10**

Dear Sir,

I became aware a few days ago of the consultation happening in respect of the Assembly Hall next to Morden Park Baptist Church when a friend emailed me to ask if we were aware. I was somewhat surprised to discover that proposals concerning our immediate neighbour had not been drawn to our attention by yourselves. I was even more surprised on reading the proposal to see a suggestion of a joint enterprise between the council and the church, without any discussions with us first.

A few years ago there was a proposal to replace the Assembly Hall with residential property. This did not happen, in part due to the feelings of local residents and community groups. At that time it was suggested that the Assembly Hall was not being used which was not in fact the case. Since then there has been extensive work done on the Assembly Hall and it seems that the use by community groups has increased. We also hire our hall for community purposes but are limited as to some of the things that we can have within our buildings as we cannot have anything conflicting with our Christian ethos, otherwise we risk losing our charitable status as well as running against some of the central tenets of our beliefs. We are also bound, by the trust under which we hold the building, to prohibit alcohol from our premises. I therefore frequently pass the details of the Assembly Hall to those looking for premises, so I know that the demand for community space is high.

We would be very concerned to lose the community facilities available through the Assembly Hall. I know that the proposal suggests that the site would only be exclusively residential if suitable community facilities could be provided elsewhere, however the danger I perceive in this is that they would be somewhere outside Lower Morden which has a distinct community hub around the Beverley roundabout with the shops, pub, Assembly Hall and a couple of churches in that area. It would not make sense to remove the community facilities from that area.

Should the alternative proposal of a community facility with accommodation above it be considered, we would again have concerns. When our church building was constructed in 1991 we were encouraged by Merton Council to apply for planning permission for a church building with flats above it. Once outline planning permission was granted we then spent a considerable amount of money on drawing up plans to have them turned down on the basis that the accommodation

---

Minister: Pastor David Sunman

Email: [mordenpark@gmail.com](mailto:mordenpark@gmail.com)

Telephone: 020 8337 0918

Website: [www.mpbc.org.uk](http://www.mpbc.org.uk)

would be looking into the bedrooms of other properties on either side of the building. It is hard to see how this proposal differs in any way from that, except that any new building there would look into the bedrooms of more homes than the church as it is slightly further up the street.

Additionally, any new building would be likely to remove or significantly reduce the parking provision outside the community hall. It is difficult to have any community facility without parking. The removal of the car park would have an adverse effect on the shops, pub, school and church as well as leading to more roadside parking along Lower Morden Road which already has significant difficulties with a high volume of traffic and cars parking along the road, especially at the start and end of the school day.

When this matter was considered previously there was a suggestion of a joint venture which we, as the church, would operate for the council. That was turned down by the council, with the effect that nothing happened. I cannot see a way in which a joint scheme could work due to the difficulties we would have in welcoming faith groups of other faiths onto property run for the promotion of the Christian faith. For the avoidance of doubt, I, as pastor, our leadership team and our members would not be interested in any joint scheme as our buildings are already in very regular use and we would struggle if we were unable to determine how our own buildings were used.

Given the nature of residential property above community halls I suspect that such property may not bring in the revenue that the Council would hope as there would be regular noise from late parties and no time during the day when residents could guarantee peace and quiet.

Should the council consider developing the Assembly Hall as a community facility we would encourage that; however I suspect that the current consultation is being driven more by efforts to save money than to develop existing facilities. The other consideration to maximise return on that facility would be to charge for the car park. This could easily push drivers to park on the road rather than in the car park, but, if there were a modest fee at key times (i.e. during the school day 9:30-2:45) so as not to inconvenience parents dropping their children at Hatfeild School then this might bring in some money, though possibly not enough to cover the cost of enforcement.

It seems that the Assembly Hall is being regularly used and brings in some revenue to the council. With some better marketing this might be increased, however any significant changes to the use of that site would be opposed by myself, as a local resident and community leader, and by the community in the area.

Yours faithfully

David Sunman

---

Minister: Pastor David Sunman

Email: [mordenpark@gmail.com](mailto:mordenpark@gmail.com)

Telephone: 020 8337 0918

Website: [www.mpbc.org.uk](http://www.mpbc.org.uk)