

Planning application 08/03821/P
Menta planning application for Cherry Orchard Road
Objection from the Canning & Clyde Road Residents Association

We would like to object to the Menta planning application.

Although we welcome regenerative, sustainable and suitable development on this site, we do not feel that the Menta proposal is suitable and doubt whether in the long run it will be regenerative or sustainable.

We object for the following reasons.

We believe that tower blocks of 27, 37 and 51 storeys are far too high adjacent to a suburban residential area where homes are of two or three storeys. They would be an oppressive presence for residents in neighbouring streets. They would have a huge impact on the light and skyline for those residents. They would be detrimental to the quality of life of a large number of residents in the nearby area without providing a good quality of environment for residents living in the blocks themselves. The fact that the towers would block TV reception for so many residents is a reflection of their dominating and negative impact.

Such very high buildings will have an impact on far more homes than just those in the immediate vicinity. They will overlook the whole of Addiscombe which is mainly a residential community, the vast majority of residents living in low rise homes. The western side of Addiscombe has very little open space and such extremely tall buildings would create a sense of being crowded.

Throughout their *Planning Statement*, Menta make repeated references to Croydon Council's planning documents including *Vision 2020* where the site is included in Central Croydon's Southern New Town and designated as '*suitable for quality high rise building*'. What Menta ignore is that SPG11 defines high rise as '*six storeys and above*' and goes on to say '*There may be opportunities for some, which could be considerably higher, for example 20 storeys or more in height. Such proposals would be considered on the merits of the proposed development.*' The height of their proposed towers is way above six storeys and would better be described as '*very high rise*' rather than merely '*high rise*'. Menta claim that their development is in line with other high rise buildings like the NLA Tower but ignore that this is only 24 storeys high, very different from 37 and 51 storeys. They also point to the Stanhope Schroder development as being high rise but there is no real comparison as the buildings in Ruskin Square would only be between 10 and 32 storeys, nothing like 51 storeys; nor are they adjacent to a suburban residential area.

Menta's *Planning Statement* says there will be little wind effect. We find this improbable. They do admit that there will be increase in wind speed in the area west and south of the proposed Building A. This is the corner of Cherry Orchard and Addiscombe Road which is already a wind tunnel in anything other than still weather, hence the sight of broken umbrellas. A large number of commuters pass through this area every working day and in windy weather it would be even harder to walk through. Menta also state that there will be an increase in wind speeds on East Croydon Station in winter; this would be detrimental to thousands of commuters, especially if a service is delayed.

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Our residents have expressed concerns that high rise flats can lead to the sort of social isolation seen in the 1960s and 1970s. High rise living tends to work best with luxury flats whose owners have homes elsewhere and/or strong social networks not necessarily within the immediate community. We would welcome the provision of space for community or leisure use in buildings C, D, E and F but notice there is no explanation of exactly what use they would be put to and more importantly who would fund them. Would the facilities be open to the complete cross section of the community? Without this information, the promises are tenuous and there would be a danger that people would be left in socially isolated units. We would like to see a development with a larger proportion of attractive, affordable homes.

We fail to see how Menta can state the proposed development has no effect on conservation areas and even '*preserves or enhances their special interest*'. St Mary Magdalene Church on Canning Road (East India Conservation Area) is a Grade II listed building. Looking at the front of the church (i.e. facing west) Tower D would probably be visible behind the church (judging by the view we have of Altitude 25 which is further away). The 51 storey Tower C would likely be visible behind or immediately adjacent to the church tower. Given our relative proximity to Cherry Orchard Road, the visual impact on this beautiful and iconic listed building would be to mar significantly its appearance and character.

We would suggest very high rise buildings would be better placed in an area like Wellesley Road.

We have not found in Menta documents any mention of the fact that the western part of Addiscombe contains a number of springs. Although these would not constitute a flood risk, we wonder if they exist on the site and, if so, would they have an impact on the construction and stability of very tall buildings.

One last point on the height of the towers – has thought been given to the practicalities of demolishing such very tall buildings once they become obsolete at some point in the future? They would be adjacent to a railway line and suburban homes.

We believe that the developer has been incredibly unrealistic about the number of workers and residents who would want to use their own cars. The traffic in the area is already heavy. On the Addiscombe Road, priority is given to trams; the Lower Addiscombe Road experiences very heavy traffic with hold ups in the rush hour. The surrounding roads cannot cope with any more parking. We find the number of potential cycle spaces unrealistically high; the roads around the area are highly unattractive to cyclists. This is evidenced by the very few cyclists seen nowadays around Cherry Orchard Road and the empty cycle spaces in front of the Post Office.

Although the ability for taxis to exit the station via Cherry Orchard Road would be an improvement on the existing arrangement, we believe other improvements to the transport infrastructure: East Croydon Station and concrete proposals for increased bus and tram services, need to be a lot firmer before planning permission is given.

We feel that GP provision and its funding should be agreed with the PCT before planning permission is granted.

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We feel that the amount of public space planned is very small in comparison with the extra number of people living and working in the area. Moreover a lot of the public space would be a walkway rather than recreational.

We believe that a '*replacement facility*' for the 129 year old Porter and Sorter is woefully lacking in imagination and understanding of our South East London heritage. We do not wish to see yet another characterless bar of which there are many in the town centre. Argent managed to work closely with English Heritage on the Kings Cross site to preserve traditional buildings and incorporate them into the development. If they had the will to do so, Menta could do the same for the Porter and Sorter.

We are concerned about the loss of the mature trees by Cherry Orchard Gardens. Such large, mature trees serve to soften a highly built up area and are important to the quality of the environment.

The so-called 'consultation' exercises with local residents were largely PR window dressing. Residents were invited to comment on superficial aspects, such as style of lighting rather than the fundamental and vital questions like the impact of very high rise buildings. Although Menta made some changes, these were of relatively small impact.

We would welcome a vibrant, regenerative, sustainable development on this site with iconic buildings. With a will and imagination (vision), this could be achieved with simply high rise rather than very high rise buildings. It needs to be the right development adjacent to a suburban residential area and offer a good quality of life to all living nearby.

Menta claim that the current proposal could change perceptions of Croydon. We would warn that it may merely reinforce them.