

Inspector, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

I'm Jasmine Ali — Deputy Leader of Southwark Council and local councillor for Rye Lane ward, which includes the Aylesham site. I also live locally, so I speak both as a councillor and as a resident who hears a great deal from my constituents and my neighbours and local residents in general about what this area needs — and what this development risks taking away.

I'd like to say straight away that Southwark is not anti-development.

We believe in building homes.

We welcome growth.

But it must be the right kind of growth — rooted in community need, respectful of local character, and shaped by genuine engagement with residents.

Growth not just in volume and returns but in quality of life. A growth that enhances the value, sustainability, cohesion and *heritage* of our community.

Sadly, this scheme fails to do so.

First - Housing that fails the families who live here

We are in the grip of a deep housing crisis in Southwark — and especially in Rye Lane.

Over 3,300 households presented as homeless last year — the fifth highest figure in London.

Thousands of families are in temporary accommodation, including many right here in Rye Lane ward.

The futures of our children are blighted.

- Children are growing up in cramped, unstable flats.
- Parents are raising families in homes they cannot afford.

Waiting times for social housing for families now stretch to 10 years or more for 4-bedroom homes.

I have had to close local schools because so many families have had to leave the area.

Despite this, the scheme before you remains skewed towards one-bedroom flats — nearly 40% of all units. This is completely out of step with local need. What we need is family housing, not another glut of small, unaffordable units that meet investor demand, not community need.

This is a once-in-a-generation site. And yet the developers have chosen to prioritise **yield** over **impact**. We are being asked to accept a proposal that delivers too little affordable housing, too few family homes, and too little long-term value for local people.

Second - A built form that damages the character and heritage of Peckham

This is not **just** about housing numbers — it's about *place*.

The Aylesham Centre sits in the heart of historic Peckham. It lies on the edge of a designated conservation area, surrounded by cherished buildings, a traditional high street, and a unique sense of scale and texture that has developed over generations.

When we thought we would get more social housing it did feel worth it!

But What this proposal offers is, frankly, the worst of both worlds:

- Overbearing towers that overshadow and dominate the conservation area
- **But without the public or affordable benefit that might justify such scale**
- Popular feeling which has been unusually clear and motivated and eloquent And which does not want a *corporate* public realm

The post-war planning was an important moment that delivered housing.

But there is a consensus that planners thought they could **erase heritage** and call it *progress*.

They did so with a combination of lofty theory and a certain disdain for the existing built environment, communities and people.

This proposal is making the same mistake, minus the lofty theory.

We have learned over the last 75 years - You get one chance to do this right — and this just isn't it.

3. A developer who listened to manage expectations, not to respond

Throughout this process, what has struck me most is not just the *content* of the scheme — but the *tone* of the engagement.

From the outset, Berkeley Group were more focused on managing expectations than meeting them.

They seemed more concerned with calibrating political risk than meaningfully addressing the needs of the community.

At every turn, we and local residents were told:

- that certain compromises were already “baked in”
- that viability meant trade-offs were inevitable; and
- that we should feel grateful for marginal gains.

This was not real consultation

If this is the outcome of a “community-led” approach, then it's no wonder that trust is eroding.

In closing

We want homes. We want change. But we want the right kind of change — that respects heritage, delivers for families, and treats communities with respect.

This scheme *does not do that*.

It gives us:

- too few family homes,
- too little affordability, and
- It *disrespects* the historic grain of Rye Lane and the *cultural identity* of one of London's most dynamic town centres.
- It *imposes* a vision that serves outside interests, not local ones.

As a councillor, as a resident, and as someone who has fought for better in this borough for over a decade, I urge you: send a message that *quality* matters. That *place* matters. That *people* matter.

Please reject this appeal.

Thank you.