

App no: 22/EQ/0015

Site address: Aylesham Centre

Design and heritage comments DRAFT

Recommendation; compliant with policy/seek amendments

Policy context:

NPPF Chapters 12. Achieving well-designed places & 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

London Plan 2021: D1 Design, character and capacity for growth; D4 Delivering good design HC1 Heritage conservation and growth

Southwark Plan 2022; P13 Design of places; P14 Design quality; P19 Listed buildings and structures; P20 Conservation areas; P26 Local list; AV14 Peckham Area Vision; NSP74 Aylesham centre and Peckham Bus Station

Heritage SPD 2021

Residential design standards SPD 2015

Other guidance Rye Lane Conservation area appraisal; Historic England: The Setting of Heritage Assets - Good Practice Advice in Planning no.3 (December 2017)

Local policy context:

Area and site specific guidance is retained the adopted SP 2022 policies AV14 Peckham Area Vision NSP74 Aylesham centre and Peckham Bus Station. In particular, both policies recognise the need for development of this underutilised brownfield site in a sustainable location and the NSP74 has a list of “musts” that any redevelopment needs to bring forward. A checklist of compliance against these requirements would be helpful in the DAS or planning statement. Previous pre-application discussions have resulted in a design that would have resulted in unacceptable overdevelopment of the site, and while the latest series of meetings and renewed constructive process has resulted in a calmer and more proportionate approach, certainty of compliance with the NSP site requirements would be useful going forward. For example, the site capacity is c.850 residential units but no precise figures have been submitted as part of the pre-application process.

Design policy summary

Chapter 12 of the NPPF “Achieving well-designed and beautiful places” para. 131 states “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities” while para 135 requires that decisions should ensure that developments meet the expectation of the NPPF as set out in points a-f, while para 139 states “Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes”.

The policies mentioned at the beginning this consultation response are also material considerations.

Emerging masterplan (inc height, scale and massing)

Extensive discussions have taken place with officers over the masterplan of the site, including layout, access, tall building location plus heights and distribution of uses. The general masterplanning of the site includes a simple north/south “green” route from the bus station to Hanover Park, plus a route diagonally from Rye Lane, to the bus station. This has been informed by space syntax analysis and the aspiration for a north/south bus route to the future and is a sensible layout championed in the NPS74 policy. In addition, along these routes a principal garden space, and green route in the north/south route provide focal landscaped points providing relief to the density and high quality open space. Towards the rear of the High Street in the north of the site, this area is proposed to also be open space, providing yards character between the buildings and the rear of the buildings. Reinstating the street to Rye Lane with a replacement frontage building with both the larger southern access to the street behind and the northern alley access is also welcomed. There is generally good distribution of active frontages around the edges of the site, and towards the “Aylesham Gardens” and “Floral Walk” areas of the site. Concern is raised on the reliance on green landscaped areas in the areas where there will also be service access, and the realistic prospect that these areas will not be as “green” and planted as indicated in reality.

With regards to the locations of taller buildings, the applicant team have worked constructively to provide views from Peckham Road towards the Higgins and Jones building, and the taller buildings are currently towards the south of the site, leaving views of the head and shoulders of clocktower free from a clutter of buildings in the background. There is also a general acceptability of the organisation of heights across the site, with no building breaching the 20 storeys height limit in the NSP74, and located in the east area of the site, away also from the conservation areas, and the Bussey rooftop views towards the city and St Pauls. Views from Peckham Hill Street over the rooftops of the locally listed 100-105 Peckham High Street will be impacted by the development, but the layering effect that is currently proposed would be part of an evolving townscape, with a scale and calm architectural language that would be appropriate in this location.

The masterplan also broadly utilises three linear blocks; to the east; a podium block, with taller buildings and the supermarket in the base and ground floor (blocks L, M, N, P & Q); a central block with both individual and a smaller podium block with F&B and retail uses facing the Floral Walk and Aylesham Gardens (blocks G, H, J & K), and a western block that includes Aylesham Gardens, the workspace building and the Rye Lane frontage (A, B, C, D, E & F). This simple layout is permeable and creates routes and connections through the site, with a hierarchy of spaces and character areas informed by existing spaces in the Peckham area. Further efforts to reinforce these characters should be concentrated on the following areas:

- “Peckham Yards” area to north
- MeKerrell Road interface/pavement including adjacent to Purdon House
- To the rear of block A & B.
- To the north of block L and inface with the bus station

- Combining blocks D & E to address amenity and design issues, and potential for anti social behaviour in the small alley between the blocks.

Scale, massing and architecture

- The “podium block” (buildings L, M, N, P & Q);

In general, a distribution of scale and massing across the site is acceptable. Concern is raised regarding the articulation of the massing of blocks M and L, particularly with the height and massing of the east/west section of block L, facing the bus station. A reduction in height of at least 2 storeys to bring the building closer to the height and massing of nearby Purdon House and leaving a corner tower is encouraged. This will align it more closely with the established approach to massing of Block K nearby. The reduction is also required to reduce the harsh impact the scale of the building would have on the experience of the bus station, soften this important outer edge of the development and could help improve the amenity and outlook of Purdon House.

Block M, the tallest tower, would benefit from a most slender profile; this could be achieved by the inclusion of a crown top and distribution of balconies to the facades. Some offset of the loss of units in this location could be assisted by combining blocks D and E. The combination of taller elements of blocks N and P, and the shorter areas of Q and above the service entrance would translate to an acceptable juxtaposition of the massing, and easily identifiable features of the street. The height of Q relates well to the outer edges of the site and book ends Hanover Park appropriately.

The view along Hanover Park would be successfully articulated with a general shoulder height to the street frontage of block F, H, J and N, with the taller elements behind; please ensure that the balcony style on these frontages are integrated and not overhanging.

Generally the architecture is welcome with a combination of brick and tile led mansion block style, with detailing around the base, shopfront fronts, fenestration and balconies; There are some stand out buildings in this part of the site that reflect the lively character of Peckham; the pink and green elements of building N, the wash of colour of building Q but concern is still raised to the vertical stripes of building P, and its dark colours.

- The central block (buildings G, H, J & K)

This central block with both individual and a smaller podium block with F&B and retail uses facing the Floral Walk and Aylesham Gardens includes residential and retain blocks, with active ground floors and maisonettes to the southern edge. The height and massing is generally successful and recent moves to create a more coherent building line to block J is welcomed. Further articulation to the ground floor maisonettes and balconies have been discussed with officers, as also to the Folral Walk facades of the buildings.

- The workspace building, Aylesham Gardens and the Rye Lane frontage (A, B, C, D, E & F).

The distribution of massing of this area of the masterplan is generally lower and quieter in character than the east of the site, responding well to the townscape and conservation area. Raising the height of the ground floor frontage to block F, would help integrate better into the townscape of Rye Lane and officers have previously suggested combining blocks D & E to address concerns raised about overlooking, amenity and lack of active frontage to the alley. Since this alley no longer relates to the access route from Rye Lane this space not a natural desire-line across the Masterplan and likely to appear narrow and canyon-like. The architectural details of building D, with arched windows at ground floor is acceptable but the south elevations needs more articulation. Officers have suggested combining building D with the building E and enlarge the open space to the south of E to avoid this narrow alleyway. Further information on the relationship of building D to the “yards” landscaping and service route is needed.

Building E feels more complete in its form and architecture; retail space facing Aylesham Gardens and a double height plinth with projecting double bay creates a successful handsome appearance to the building, although more glazing at first floor may assist in providing a more meaningful base. Officers remain concerned regarding the architectural composition of Building F, a slight height increase to accommodate a double height ground floor may help to emphasise the building’s verticality; its cube shape appears squat in the townscape and a hierarchical approach to the facades would assist this design; primarily however the architecture of this building is likely to require a general rethink.

Blocks A, B and C, the Rye Lane frontage block is within the conservation area and has been successfully articulated as a vertical framework with tall ground floor shopfronts facing the street, with a coherent style taking its cues from the historic shopfronts found in the Higgins and Jones department store. The locations of the alleys, a large double height cut through to the south, and a smaller more intimate alley to the north is welcomed; successful elements of these include glazing lining the passageways presenting opportunities for overlooking and activity. The overall height of this block – set at 7-storeys – rising sheer on the Rye Lane frontage with a limited set-back proposed is still considered a concern.

The TVIA includes local views View 9 and View 30 that have raised concerns about the height, massing and alignment Blocks A, B and C which will have a direct and enduring impact on the significance of heritage assets. View 9 is a strong linear view of the conservation area taking in both the bank building and the historic landmark of the Jones and Higgins clock tower. The views demonstrate that Blocks A, B and C block out views of the clock tower and how dominant the upper-most floors will appear in what is essentially a 4-5 storey historic townscape. View 30 is not a protected view but is nonetheless a characterful view of Peckham with the World City in the backdrop. From this elevated location the view takes in a clear view of St Paul’s Cathedral. The proposed View 30 demonstrates that the upper-most floor off Blocks B and C blocks out this strategic landmark from the viewer. The harm arising as a consequence of A, B and C to the conservation area is considered to be medium to high. Less than Substantial harm as defined by para 208 of the NPPF.

There also remains some concern regarding the massing at roof top; the top two floors lack flair and articulation worthy of such a prominent location; the conservation area is

dotted with characterful rooflines and gables, and more of a sculptural element would be welcome. The desk access to the rear aid activity fronting the Aylesham Gardens, but the ground floor with its residential entrance alongside a sparsely landscaped street with service access could be improved. It is unlikely that the retail units will use both the street and rear access making for missed opportunity. An art scheme or other interactive façade in these locations would help. The vertical emphasis has evolved over a series of meetings with officers and we are encouraged with the general attention to detail of the materials and their arrangement. We encourage further discussion on these elements although in principle the themes are heading in the right direction.

Ground floor experience

Generally, the ground floor experience throughout the site is welcome, with entrances to residential units, plus F&B and retail units facing the street, with the principal routes, especially the Flora Walk and around Aylesham Gardens in commercial use, with a wayfinding emphasis towards the primary supermarket entrance in the east of the site. The extension of the architectural facades of the podium blocks to the ground is also welcome, grounding them properly in the streetscape. Further work regarding the ground floor experience of block D, K and L, especially in relation to the Yards and the bus station is required however to reinforce these aspects of the street experience. The ground floor experience of blocks Q and P facing McKerrel Road lacks architectural flair and particular with block Q, is harshly against the back edge of pavement.

Conclusion on townscape and design

The overall masterplan is heading towards compliance with the NSP74 site designation; there is a good level of permeability and legibility, and the massing is appropriately distributed across the site. There are clear areas of activity and a variety of spaces that would complement the existing townscape of Peckham and add vibrancy and interest to a complex and mature existing townscape. In detail, there are areas of concern and some harm identified which need addressing prior to the submission of the application, but the general principles are acceptable and would be heading towards compliance with D1 Design, character and capacity for growth; D4 Delivering good design

Heritage policy and legal background summary

The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act').

Section 66 (2) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any listed building or their setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay 'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

With regards to the NPPF 2023, the paragraphs in Chapter 16, Conserving and enhancing the historic environment are of material consideration. In particular, para.

205 requires “great weight” to be given to the assets conservation irrespective of any harm. Para 206 requires any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Para 208 advises that “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

Southwark Plan policy P19 Listed buildings and structures and P20 Conservation areas requires proposals to sustain and enhance the significance of listed buildings and conservation areas and both of their settings.

P26 Local list requires “Development must take into account locally listed buildings and structures that positively contribute to local character and amenity”. With regards to design issues.

The policies mentioned at the beginning this consultation response are also material considerations.

Impact on heritage assets:

Rye Lane conservation area

The applicant team have worked with officers to minimise the impact on the Rye Lane conservation area, of which the site is partially within. A new infill building (A,B,C) has been designed to be of an appropriate scale, although further articulation of the upper storeys could make the building more successful in the wider townscape. A strong shopfront presence and vertical emphasis within a wider framework is largely successful, as is the transition between the adjacent buildings, both the former bank and the Higgins and Jones. There is some concern regarding the massing of the building, both the depth and the height would be out of character with the prevailing massing of the other buildings in the conservation area. Whilst there is room for a larger building within the historic context that existing, a medium to high level of Less than Substantial harm to the conservation area has been identified in respect of Blocks A, B and C. The architectural detailing with ground floor shopfront emphasis the street and vertical rhythm of the bays and detailing across the façade is a helpful and characteristic reminder of the historic H&J building. This in turn preserves the conservation area and its character.

In longer views of the site from the south, blocks A B & C would be prominently visible in the townscape, anchoring the middle of the street, adjacent to the Higgins and Jones building; the taller elements of the site (blocks buildings L, M, N,. P & Q) would be visible in longer views from the south, but in the background providing point blocks in the distance; from the junction of Rye Lane and Hanover Park, the buildings’ mass to the Hanover Park steps down providing a successful streetscene of buildings with active frontages at ground floor.

The buildings would be visible in the context of **43-49 Rye Lane (local list, former HSBC bank)** and affect its setting, but its setting has changed throughout its history and the building would remain a prominent decorated corner building within an historic High Street context; the proposed A B C building adjacent follows the established

hierarchy, typology and materiality of this street block and steps down and back from the 43-49 Rye Lane building, providing an appropriate transition and visual break in street frontage.

At the junction of Rye Lane and Peckham High Street, there are a collection of locally listed buildings that make up the historic and contemporary townscape of Peckham. These are a mix of terraces (**Shards Terrace – locally listed** - 12 strong curved terrace facing the street of three stories with commercial shop front on the ground floor), the two pubs or former pubs at 109 and 119 Peckham High Street, and 86-88 Peckham High Street, a handsome red brick 3.5 storey building with traditional shopfront at ground floor. These buildings are positive contributors to the conservation area and good examples of locally significance High Street architecture and character. The setting of these buildings would be impacted by the development as the taller elements of the proposals would be visible within their context, however this impact would not harm their significance as Victorian town centre building and they would remain positive contributors to the conservation area.

Higgins and Jones (locally list)

This important local landmark of townscape value sits pride of place at the junction with the High Street. While it has been altered historically, it still has architectural detail and cultural impact on the locality and is positive reminder of the area's town centre prosperity. The taller buildings in the site have been clustered away from the "head and shoulders" of the clock tower, and in views from Peckham Road, the top of the clocktower outline remains free from clutter behind when viewed in the more important views along Peckham High Street from the west.

The taller buildings would come into view in some townscape views, but there are many other un-cluttered views available within the street, mostly from the southern side of Peckham High Street. In closer experiences of the H&J building, the development would be visible as a new piece of townscape, replacing the out of character and dated current Aylesham Centre façade on Rye Lane. The proposals would therefore preserve the significance of the H&J building. However details of the south façade of the building adjacent to the proposed smaller alleyway are required as part of the application.

98-104 High Street (local list)

The taller buildings would be visible in the background context of the buildings to the south side of the High Street. Townscape layering can have wide impacts on well established street patterns and scale, and the applicant have worked positively with officers to achieve a suitable size of buildings (blocks D & K) in the rear of 98-104 High Street, as well as a positive architectural language – warehouse aesthetic to block D and a point block to the corner of block K in an art deco style, and a simpler warehouse adjacent. The scale and architectural development of these buildings is heading in a positive direction with regards to minimising impact on the Rye Lane conservation area and locally listed buildings of 98-104 High Street. These buildings also create a ground of buildings facing north, with the Peckham Yards space at ground floor, improving the immediate rear setting of this group of buildings.

Baptist Chapel – grade II

Rye Lane Baptist chapel is a grade II listed Victorian chapel, with stucco front and pilasters imposing onto the street. It is a recognisable anomaly in the wider townscape of Rye Lane due to its set back from the pavement, community and religious use, form and materials, however it greatly contributes to the townscape and is a well-known building within Peckham. The setting is the immediately Victorian and Georgian townscape, with residential to the rear and the setting contributes to the significance of the building through this clear historic link.

The taller elements of the development, and the ABC building would be visible within the same context as the chapel, however they would be visible within a wider townscape, and not impinge on views or the experience of the chapel from Rye Lane or from the rear. The proposals would preserve the significance of the grade II listed building.

58 High Street – grade II

This 18th century house is nestled in the middle of a terrace and the upper storeys are glimpsed over a Victorian shop build-out and modern shopfront. Its primary significance lies in its materiality, and it has lost its original neighbours. It contributes positively to the conservation area by adding to the tapestry of ages and designs of the buildings surrounding. The proposals would be visible in the setting of the building, but they would preserve the building's significance.

Peckham Hill Street CA

The significance of Peckham Hill Street conservation area is as a good example of speculative suburban development in the early 19th century, of terraces and villas fronting a principle street, largely built in London stock brick to 3-4 storeys. The former Peckham branch of the Surrey Canal ran to the western side of the street. The north/south linear street frames the view of the site from the north. The taller elements of the development would be visible in longer views, but primarily impact the Rye Lane CA, rather than the suburban significance of Peckham Hill Street CA. This significance would remain preserved.

Holly Grove CA

Holly Grove Conservation Area is situated to the west of Peckham town centre to the south of Peckham Road. A railway line runs east-west through the conservation area with Rye Lane forming a boundary to the east. The Holly Grove Conservation Area, essentially a 19th century planned suburban development with a strong landscape element, contrasts with its immediate surroundings of the town centre and former industrial areas associated with the canal and railway.

The taller elements of the scheme would be visible in glimpses from Highshore Road, Holy Grove and Lyndhurst Way; but other elements of the townscape are also visible in these views including the school buildings of Harris Academy in Lyndhurst Way, and the rear elevations and roof tops of buildings on Rye Lane when viewed from Highshore Road and Holly Grove. The buildings would be far enough away as to not

impact the Holly Grove conservation area in a negative manner, as the suburban townscape would overall be preserved.
END