

Introduction

My name is Rev Dean Pusey, the current Vicar of the parish of St Mary Magdalene Church of England Church for nearly the last year. I have responsibility for the parish which includes the Aylesham centre and people within the parish boundaries. See links below in my email signature for further information of the Diocese, Woolwich Area and Camberwell Deanery as well as my Church.

My experience is not just being Vicar and community leader currently but I have a history with Peckham growing up there for the first seven years of my childhood on the Sumner Estate, having family in the locality and other support networks, and then moving to the neighbouring borough of Lewisham retaining those links.

I am a current resident within the parish I serve so have an acute interest in this matter and the community's well-being.

I have also worked across the Diocese of Southwark from 2003-2009 which covered Peckham and the London Borough of Southwark, so have been aware of the various community challenges over time, particularly how they have affected young people and continue to see this in my current role not least around housing and poverty.

I am also of the African Caribbean heritage and but also lived outside of London and have seen the challenges of various developments not least Woking where I lived for 20 years and more recently on a new development (Wellesley) as a curate (trainee vicar) in Aldershot, Hampshire prior to moving to Peckham and so have a unique lens that is not just London Centric but living and working outside of London and then returning in my current role.

It is my intention to appear at the inquiry as an interested person and also I intend to send a written submission in due course subject to your timely notification and information on how to proceed. Some of which can be contained in my oral submission to the Southwark Planning Committee on the 15th July 2025 which is recorded via YouTube but will elucidate further to the 3 minutes given that evening.

I am against this appeal for the same reasons given by the LPA and some further reasons which will be stated in this document.

Objection

I have recently moved to Peckham since summer of last year 2024 as Vicar of St Mary Magdalene C of E Church. My association with Peckham has been for the first 7 years of my life growing up. I am struck by changes on my return. This development is part of the western end of our parish of St Mary's so this is of significant interest to me, the parish and wider parishioners, and also fellow persons in wider Peckham.

I have looked through the plans you have shared from the developer for consultation and have listened to those who have been in Peckham for over 40 years and I am hearing and seeing significant disquiet regarding these proposals that neither I, Council or Developer or Planning Inspectorate can or should ignore.

I have seen the work of development like these in town centres and it is to me a case of balancing the community's history, present and future and those current residents especially younger people having the opportunity to remain in these communities. History for historic buildings and architecture, present for the diversity of Peckham which Southwark prides itself and what has been a draw for those coming alongside and a **significant uplift to the social capital** that African, Caribbean, Asian and European diaspora brings which gives life even with challenges.

I lived a significant time in **Woking** (over a decade) and saw the development of that town centre in the 2000s with similar high rise development and its effects. This has majorly changed the town with towering buildings seen for miles around but also decimated the local high street and businesses. On a recent visit this was confirmed with more empty retail space and not thought through. This is an example that could well be learnt from. The principles are there. **Sterile zones** are not community building.

It is a model that I am deeply concerned about in relation to the flourishing and well-being of Peckham including my parishioners who only **31%** of churchgoing parishioners can live in the parish currently. What currently is proposed as I have seen outcomes that have disproportionately affected the character of towns like Woking over time in the name of progress and cannot be reversed. We have the evidence shown and it would be interesting not to take note of precedents.

I fear this particularly for Rye Lane and the micro businesses with continuing high and unaffordable rents that this will happen. I note that Rye Lane and contribution to its upkeep and development is not mentioned as a whole and the impact will be greatest there and with the current indigenous business population of Peckham which is global majority heritage. **Racial disparities** cannot be overlooked in a global city like London. It is a real and not an imagined threat. It will be a dormitory suburb serving wealthier members in the two epicentres of our capital, the City of London and Canary Wharf, two shadows that loom large in our evolution of SE London. The North Southwark development shown in **Elephant and Castle and Bermondsey** have shown massive character change beyond recognition. Does Peckham need this muscular development **displacing** historic vibrant communities? People want more than '**gentrification**' on offer but just and equitable outcomes that are in line with current policies for the Southwark Council and the GLA as well as national policy. To have gone to appeal before going through the community process in itself was morally negative and so trust is extremely low. It is regrettable and asks deep moral questions around agency and power.

I am well aware that something can be done that is **collaborative and proportionate** to history, present and future and these are my guiding principles **with imagination and political will and most importantly community consent**. I am not convinced that this is the current case as displayed by the developer and supported recently by the LPA in its verdict.

The density of housing is going to affect the makeup of the community disproportionately as well as those who can afford these homes, not least young *current* Peckham residents who see the links with family and community as strong and asked a pertinent question 'Whose Peckham?' Worth a look as there is a you tube clip available that brings out the hopes, fears but also dreams of this current generation. **What salary is affordable?** Cost of the units in relation to local demographic?

This development will have a law of intended consequences - at worst of social engineering or unintended consequences at best, for the cohesion or disintegration of this community which again paves the way for the former. There will be no reversal.

The very fact that there is a significant reduction to affordable housing in this new iteration is a massive 'red flag' and contravenes Southwark Council's commitment to its own policy and can ask whether expediency trumps integrity of its own processes and vision and the impact this has on Peckham as a significant vibrant multi-ethnic community. The **impact analysis** needs to be properly done and some of these are not accurate in measurement and we have known this in current processes we are experiencing in other consultations and a lack of cultural competency re Peckham.

The proposed development will impact existing Peckham residents where they will be **dispersed** further afield by the unaffordable prices for local residents not just here but Greater London and the social impacts away from family and friends a heavy price and not worth paying. Our own church school has just recently closed and the policies around not just birth rates but a housing policy that does not take this into account has been wholly detrimental. I reference a link below listen to its entirety please.

This will be seen as more gentrification than regeneration. As the project stands **morally** and **ethically**, as well as **socially** this current proposal is unacceptable and the council will lose a substantial amount of trust from existing residents that indicates by this going through that profit comes before the social well-being and cohesion of a community.

It seems this development and developer does not seem to understand the nature of Peckham and Southwark council bringing this as it is as it currently stands is seen as a poor advocate for its residents with disregard for equitable flourishing. Please note some of the comments from the planning committee by developers where it was spoken that those in central London would be the beneficiaries of office space not local people. It was a sobering and revealing moment that was not for the existing community.

Conclusion

I am opposed to this scheme as it currently stands owing to the **principles** outlined above and needs **a reimagined ethical look** - if not a new developer who we can have a mutual understanding of the people of Peckham rather than what can be seen as cynical profiteering for existing and future residents and a distortion of life as currently known for future generations. For some it will be about survival and not thriving and good well-being. We will become like Paris where the poor serves the rich. I am not sure this is something I aspire to in that way of being in a city I love.

The **consequences** of this will be felt and are already being felt for this and generations to come. I hope the consequences will not be felt - but should they be - the **responsibility will be for all of us** who are complicit in enacting and implementing such a decision that should this be played out will be around to accept responsibility and rectify? This is ethically and morally something that needs great consideration and acceptance of responsibility for a decision to go ahead. Neighbourliness?

It is for what is outlined above that I oppose this new proposal that is in no way an improvement on the original proposal and bewildering for fair minded persons for the planning inspectorate to allow this would contravene the local authorities' own guidelines and that nationally and would be an immense breach of trust to the community and would not enhance but deteriorate already tenuous links with local democracy to one that favours economics at all costs. Whose Peckham is this really?

Going ahead would seem **cynical, a disregard and disrespect of the strength of feeling of many that do care for Peckham's well-being and flourishing both now and in the future.**

I, as a community leader weighing this all and actually living in the community despite challenges cannot endorse the practices of this developer who has not really understood the community and meeting its aspirations not least in being clear what the community gets even from a section 106 and not least the social housing desperately needed. **Economics feels the only driver** and doesn't work without ethics and good social policy. Let's not make another mistake in Peckham.

Please note two You Tube clips supporting the above evidence for reference below.

<https://www.youtube.com/live/WsCWQv1MkbQ?si=x5GcN7UEI6fM81yD> –

Planning Committee 15/7/2025 at Southwark Council Offices Tooley Street London my own oral submission is 2hrs:31 mins in.

https://www.youtube.com/live/UwWRUoh4u_I?si=WngO-L9ha5jDuAtT – 53 mins in but listen to it all please as it gives a significant context to arguments especially our Church School closure.

Southwark Council Planning Meeting 17th June 2025 re school closures

Rev Dean Pusey

Vicar, St Mary Magdalene Church, Peckham London SE15 2EA –

28th July 2025