I am Cllr John Batteson – the Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency, Jobs and Business including responsibility for business support, which forms of key part of our economic strategy, and our major town centres of which Peckham one.

Lots has been said about the vitality and vibrancy of Rye Lane and the character and appearance of Peckham as a town centre. The businesses currently based on or around the site form a key part of that – whether that be the handcart traders, independent businesses or the food and beverage businesses in Market Place which add so much to the vibrancy in Peckham.

Those traders and businesses have built up a local customer base from years of operating in the shopping centre where they have developed a reliable customer base to support their livelihoods.

The business relation strategy submitted as part of this application was based on an expectation that if the application were to be approved, the site where businesses are currently located was not expected to be developed for several years. This meant very little detail is provided on how the businesses will be supported through any development and how they would be accommodated in the completed scheme.

The scheme highlights the retail offer that will come through this application. However, meaningful engagement with the businesses has not taken place. A survey was undertaken to understand the needs and aspirations of existing businesses and the application says Berkeley would identify which tenants can be relocated to a new unit space once the proposed development has been completed.

Following meetings with Rye Lane ward councillors and the Southwark Law Centre last year, I wrote to Berkeley last December requesting a more detailed business relocation strategy around three main points:

1. Confirmation of those businesses classed as independent which will be supported and the plan for the multiple food and beverage businesses in Market Place Peckham who sit under one roof.

2. The results of the business survey that was conducted. The survey questions were attached as an Appendix to the business relocation strategy, but the results were not shared, and the survey did not ask businesses the very simple question of whether or not they want to return to the development upon completion.

3. Detail on what physical and affordable options will be available for existing small businesses, including handcart traders, within the final development which will be suitable for their business model and needs.

I requested acknowledgement to this letter, which I received on 7th January, and answers to the questions in the form of a more detailed business relocation strategy by Friday 14th February, which I did not.

For local businesses to be able to continue operating and succeed they need security and adequate protections that allow them to plan for not just the next 5 years but beyond. Without that, this is a business relocation strategy in name only.