

SOUTHWARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL REPORT

12 MARCH 2024

Chair: Toby Johnson

Vice Chair: Honore van Rijswijk

Panel Members: Artur Carulla; Tom Coward; Daniel Press; Zeyna Soboh;

AYLESHAM CENTRE

Masterplanners and Lead Architects: DRMM

Architects: Jas Bhalla Architects
Feix & Merlin
DFA
Nimtim

Landscape architects: Gillespies

Clients: Berkeley Homes

Planning Consultants: Avison Young

Project description

The proposal is for the comprehensive redevelopment of this central Peckham site. The site has been allocated within the Southwark Plan for the provision of a residential-led mixed use development (NSP74 in the [Southwark Plan 2022](#) : Aylesham Centre and Peckham Bus Station). This gives an indicative residential capacity of 850 homes, and also references the retention of supermarket as well as retail space.

The site comprises approximately 2.7ha and comprises primarily a 1980s shopping centre, known as the Aylesham Centre. There are 19 individual commercial units within this space as well as a variety of 'carts' which provide a range of services from food and drink to health, beauty to retail, and which are connected to the Morrisons Supermarket. There is also a petrol station as well as a car wash located in the south eastern part of the site.

The site is bordered by:

- Peckham Bus Station, several retail / residential units facing Peckham High Street to the north;
- Rye Lane, beyond which lies retail / residential units and Lidl Supermarket and associated
- carpark to the west;
- Hanover Park, beyond which lies low-rise residential and commercial units, as well as Rye Lane Baptist Church, to the south; and
- McKerrel Road, beyond which lies multiple 6-storey residential blocks and Clayton Road, to the east.

The project involves:

- Demolition of all existing buildings and structures on the site;
- Approximately 850 new homes;
- Re-provision of Morrison supermarket (approximately 4500m² of floor space – Class E (a))
- Provision of approximately 10,500m² of new commercial space (Use Classes E, F and sui generis);
- Buildings ranging from 4 - 20 storeys, new single storey basement providing associated car and cycle parking;
- Private, public and communal amenity space;
- Creation of new public realm and landscaping;
- Provision of internal vehicle access routes;
- Car and cycle parking; and
- Associated infrastructure including servicing facilities and plant.

Link to aerial view:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Rye+Ln,+London/@51.4730382,-0.0692555,251m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m6!3m5!1s0x487603a1a22c33cb:0x464f01ff0f1494b5!8m2!3d51.4696406!4d-0.0682458!16s%2Fg%2F1tf23kbg?entry=ttu>

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this important proposal and thanked the Applicants for the thorough and detailed presentation. The presentation had been circulated in advance to the Panel, some of whom had visited the site earlier in the week or were familiar with the site. Some members of the panel had reviewed previous submissions for the site. The designers presented a number of printed boards and elevations on paper. The panel considered the issues in two stages, Part 1: Aylesham Masterplan, Public Realm and Movement presented by DRMM and Gillespies and Part 2: Individual Buildings – presented by DRMM, Jas Bhalla architects, NimTim architects, DFA and Feix and Merlin architects.

Part 1: Aylesham Masterplan, Public Realm and Movement

The Panel investigated further:

- Density – if a lower density had been explored with same amount of units but lower height.
- If the diagonal route through was appropriate
- Is the landscape design specific to Peckham and if the landscape design is realistic given the access requirements
- Affordable housing provision and local offer
- Understanding of heritage assets and massing adjacent to the conservation area
- How townscape and character had been considered to create a new piece of town centre.
- What places in London are comparable with the proposed spaces and landscape, specifically the “Yard” area, central gardens, linear park.
- How would the retail loop work in reality
- Location of parking Inc. disabled parking.

- Bus station design and pedestrian links to Peckham Road

Masterplanning, including height, massing and arrangement

The panel reflected that the site was wonderful and challenging. The Panel supported the big moves of creating structured permeability through the site and the key linkages were positive. The panel supported the concept of the “retail loop” and the fully integrated connections through to Rye Lane. With regards to the distribution of the massing, the panel found this acceptable but felt that the ‘devil is in the detail’ in terms of the character and architecture, which is yet to be realised fully. The broad strategy of the massing is sound and it is a positive move and to try to break up the taller buildings massing using stepping. The panel supported the orientation of the buildings to create longer vistas through the site. The panel advised that walls of unbroken height should be avoided, although some blocks could be joined at ground floor to create simpler servicing.

However the panel found the character of the different spaces and buildings connections to be unclear and lacked a clear hierarchy. There was a generic homogeneity in the way the different spaces were presented that was at odds with the different physical and functional characteristics. For example; Hanover Walk feels like it could be a more semi-public space – conceived of as a communal space for residents – in contrast to Aylesham Gardens and Market lane which constitute the main public route through the space. Similarly the streets around Block E appeared to have neither the character of ‘Garden Walks’ / ‘Green Links’ or that of Peckham Yards.

Some of the ideas of the spaces resonated positively, for example Peckham Yards. The Panel felt that with the right curation and management this could become an interesting and vibrant new addition to Peckham’s street scene. However how the spaces are designed and how the buildings that enclose these spaces support the activities proposed will be key to their success and have not been fully explored. Again with Aylesham Gardens the ideas are unclear about its purpose and character as a space.

The panel would like to see clear precedents for the characterisation of the different spaces, along with a narrative for how these precedents relate to Peckham

Given the importance of the ‘retail loop’ as a generating factor to the masterplan, it is vital that this is realised on the ground and that any obstructions or level changes are addressed as part of these proposals.

The panel wished for more surprise and delight in the arrangement of the buildings and spaces. The panel felt that the masterplan was very orthogonal – even to the serrated edge to the diagonal route - and would like to see more kinks and inflections that respond to the geometry of the site and the masterplan. The panel felt that there may be too much permeability in places.

Block H currently creates a pinch point and cuts into the line of sight down the main diagonal route. This should be reviewed to reinforce the clarity of this urban gesture.

Also, the termination of this route appears to be a residential entrance rather than the Morrison's entrance which is the main anchor to the development.

The panel felt the edge to McKerrell Road and Hanover Park was underdeveloped and needs further work, particularly in relation to the impact on the neighbouring residential blocks and in relation reducing the visual impact of the access to the loading bay – see below. The Hanover Park elevation needs to be given more coherence both in architectural and landscape terms.

The panel also felt that the relationship to the bus station was disappointing given that this will be an important point of access to the site and recommended further collaboration with TFL.

Part 2: Individual buildings

This section was presented in a “charrette” style conversation with a short presentation from each architect, with immediate feedback and discussion with the panel. In general, the panel felt the architectural approaches were underdeveloped.

Rye Lane Building (Feix and Merlin, DFA and Jas Bhalla)

- This is the building to be the most considered as it relates to the high street and has a lot of challenges including an ambition to have three architects working together. The panel felt there was a lack of clarity as to the aim of the building – one building or three? Three different authors does not mean three separate designs.
- As presented it was felt that the architectural design was a bit of a mess. While the brief may be to create diversity, it was evident that there needed be more of a framework for this diversity to exist within.
- It was noted that the way that the elevational treatment of the Rye Lane Building is broken down does not reflect the plan form of the buildings. Creating some relationship between the elevation and planning of the buildings should be considered to add some discipline and structure to the proposals
- Whilst there are some nice individual ideas, the analysis of Rye Lane suggests vertical, narrow shopfronts are the primary precedent this is not being reflected in the proposals. The shopfront plinth is strong and welcomed, however as noted above a “framework” for designing above should have more of a vertical emphasis. The architects should consider designing more vertical emphasis into the elevation and it should reflect the rhythm of Rye Lane – which would suggest breaking down the façade into more bays.
- For example, the plot widths could be determined, giving a clearer structure within which to play with façade design. If the building was approached with six plots, more scope for playfulness in height, levels, openings, materials and relationship to plan form. The panel challenged the need for height in the centre with symmetrical arrangement and felt that it was important that there was a strong consistent parapet/ string course to pick up the prevalent datum on Rye Lane.

- No information was provided in relation to the east façade. This needs to be considered in terms of placemaking, activation or frontages and identification and celebration

Building G (Jas Bhalla)

- The principle elevation lacks prominence and interest. The panel raised concerns regarding the entrance position – and question current shown location.
- Missed opportunity to express the break / splice further the upper storeys.
- The plan would likely include a long corridor - without daylight so windows are needed. This could also help with façade articulation to add windows to the side.
- Concerns were raised about a narrow deck access and proximity to bedrooms
- The communal entrance should find a more prominent architectural expression.

Building F (Nim Tim)

- The panel felt that the block appeared as a taller building that has been truncated and opportunities to explore a step up and down in massing have been missed.
- The panel also urged the exploration of utilisation of the roof space and felt that seeing the building in context is important.
- The panel questioned the extent of variation to each façade and the corner conditions.
- The panel felt that the architecture could be simpler - conceiving the building as a simple pavilion.
- The communal entrance should find a more prominent architectural expression.

Building L (DRMM)

- The panel liked the stepping of the gallery access
- The architecture of the return block felt repetitive and generic.
- Concerns were raised about a narrow deck access and proximity to bedrooms and the internal corners do not work well in this arrangement.
- The GF condition needs more development. The elevation to the bus station seems a lost opportunity given the very public face of this elevation. The base conditions need some expression and unification.

Building M (DRMM)

- The panel expressed the view that there were some interesting attempts to break down the massing, but still resulted in a heavy appearing building and further thought could be given to breaking down the scale.
- The articulation of the base needs more work.

- As the most important public facility on the site the entrance to Morrisons needs a more prominent architectural expression that mediates between Block L and M. The communal entrance should find a more prominent architectural expression between Morrisons and other base uses.
- Some panel members felt the building could be taller, but this would exceed the site allocation and has caused problems with previous schemes.

Building N (DRMM)

- The panel felt that the proposals needed more work.
- The panel raised particular concerns about the Hanover Park elevation and the integration of the loading bay and car park entrance. Whilst the panel supported the quirky 'collage' composition, it felt that the car park and loading bay should be integrated into the design more and be given a stronger architectural expression that either works better with the scale and materiality of the residential blocks, or develops a strong and exciting identity of its own. As it stands it feels like a void in the design.
- The architecture of the podium link between Block M and N, and the planning and architectural expression of the entrance to Block N needs to be developed further.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Panel understood that the proposed masterplan including height and massing could be justified and connected well to the surrounding town centre of Peckham. However, they raised substantial concerns about the lack of developed character areas and understanding of how the landscape and architectural design responded such characterisations. This is an area that requires more development and should be supported by relevant precedents. More attention has to be given to realising the 'retail loop' and to the impact of the new development on the character of McKerrell Road and Hanover Park.

The diversity of the architecture across the site was welcomed and there was some interesting ideas being developed. However, the all the buildings are in the very early stages of design and require more design development. Overall the design should be evolved further and return to the DRP in the future for a more in depth review.