



Old Kent Road Community Review Panel

Report of review meeting: 310–330 St. James's Road

Monday 23 November 2020

Video conference via Zoom

Attendees

Gurmeet Sian (chair)
Lucy Atkinson
Hugh Balfour
Shelene Byer
Hazel Flynn
James Glancy
Muyi Kazim
Aaron Mo
Saidat Oketunde
Victoria Oluwables
Peter Warren
Madison Westwood

Attendees

Tim Cutts	London Borough of Southwark
Wing Lau	London Borough of Southwark
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects
Kate Trant	Frame Projects
Penny Nakan	Frame Projects

Observers

Cat Janman	London Borough of Southwark
Peter Spendiff	London Borough of Southwark

Apologies / copied to

Tyreece Asamoah	
Colin Wilson	London Borough of Southwark

Declaration of interest

Deborah Denner, Director of Frame Projects, is godmother to Beatrix Young's son. She has had no involvement in this review meeting.

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Confidentiality

As a public organisation the London Borough of Southwark is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

1. Project name

310–330 St. James's Road

2. Presenting team

Louise Scannell	Weston Williamson+Partners
Beatrix Young	Weston Williamson+Partners
Juan Jose Sarralde	Savills Heritage and Townscape
Alice Jones	Savills Heritage and Townscape
Chris Robertshaw	Exterior Architecture
Mitch Croke	Greengage
Rosanna Cohen	WSP
Sean McGrath	WSP

3. Planning authority's views

The site is a combination of three buildings and sites. Located on St. James's Road, the larger site is a former wholesale meat and poultry business and comprises a single storey warehouse building, with a smaller ancillary storage and office unit towards the rear. The site also includes Nos. 326 and 328 St. James's Road (the Roca building, which currently provides space for artists' studios, and the Firetec office site). The scheme proposes the demolition and redevelopment of the site to provide replacement commercial uses and up to 150 residential units. The development would be split into two main blocks with an east-west pedestrian route running through. The main bulk of the development would be located on the north side (No. 310-325) and would consist of a part 17-storey and part 12-storey building at the rear. Sitting on a podium, the development steps down to eight storeys at the front facing St. James's Road. To the south would be the retained and extended Roca building, and a new detached block fronting St. James's' Road.

Southwark Council asked the panel in particular for its views on:

- The public realm, permeability and pedestrian route through the site, with the possibility of a courtyard open to the public and workspaces.
- The height of the proposal, increasing from eight storeys on St. James's Road to a maximum of 17 storeys at the rear, particularly with regard to its relationship with buildings to the rear.
- Whether the site can accommodate additional homes successfully, in terms of meeting exceptional design standards and in the provision of private balconies, play space and communal amenity space.



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4. Community Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel is encouraged by the quality of design at this early stage, and makes a number of comments intended to assist further development of the proposals. The applicant's positive approach to understanding the needs of the local community is appreciated, and the panel endorses the need to carry out a programme of consultation to inform development of the scheme, including on the height of the tallest element. Both design and materials should contribute to creating a place that both feels special and sits well within its overall context, taking inspiration from local buildings. Further consideration of how tenures can be mixed, rather than separated, would be beneficial. The design team should consider in greater detail the nature of the proposed light industrial uses to ensure spaces suit a range of occupiers. There is broad support for a public route through the development; but the panel voices some concerns about the safety and security of publicly accessible areas. It also questions whether the public realm can accommodate all the types of activity proposed. The panel feels that the podium space needs further thought to ensure it caters for all the activities proposed, and for all residents. The panel encourages the team to meet exemplar, rather than minimum standards on space, light, and noise insulation. The panel has particular concerns about the possible impact of noise – from flat to flat, and between the light industrial areas, the residential units and the amenity spaces – and asks that this is considered carefully. These comments are expanded below.

Public realm

- The panel admires the ambition of the proposed public route through the development, but questions whether it is wide enough to accommodate all the proposed activities. Areas intended for different types of activity are located close to one another, for example grassed areas for relaxation adjacent to areas for children's play, and it is important that these can co-exist.
- The panel also asks that thought is given to ensuring the public route is secure. While a connected street has benefits, it is unlikely to become a well-used through route until adjacent development takes place, and there is a risk that it could feel unsafe to residents after dark. A balance should be sought between enabling access, and creating an environment that feels safe.
- As well as the new public route, the panel suggests it is also important that the development's frontage on St. James's Road is activated, as it forms part of an important link between Old Kent Road and Southwark Park Road.
- Concerns were aired about access to the site across the busy St. James's Road. The panel suggests that the proposed pedestrian crossing would be better located if it links to the City of London Sixth Form academy at the junction with Verney Road. This option should be discussed with Southwark Council.



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Heights

- The panel suggests that consultation should be carried out on building heights with the local community, to seek views on the tallest elements of the development.
- The panel suggests that options should be explored to reduce the height of the tallest element. These could include bridging the public route with an archway element with accommodation above, which could enable a reduction in the number of storeys.

Architectural approach

- The panel expresses a range of opinions about the overall design of the scheme and the proposed materials. It would welcome an architectural approach that seeks to create a balance between a distinctive design, which distinguishes the development from other recent blocks in the area, and one that reflects the architectural context.
- Local buildings should be studied to assess whether they might inform the development's design. Potential references include the Roca building; Victorian terraced houses nearby on St. James's Road; and the old Southern Railway Stables further along including, potentially, their use of pitched roofs and cobbled surfaces.
- The panel also admires the proposed use of arches, and suggests they could be also included in the St. James's Road frontage.

Tenure mix

- The panel feels that a mix of tenure would be preferable to a tenure-blind approach, with attention given to ensuring that tenure types have equal quality of space and cannot be identified through their design or materials. A mix of tenures within each block would be preferable, rather than allocating individual blocks to different tenures.
- It was suggested that studio flats do not, in general, provide satisfactory accommodation, and their provision should be reconsidered.

Internal layouts

- The panel hopes that the scheme will aspire to improve on government minimum standards and aim for exemplar status, particularly in relation to space, light and noise.
- The panel recommends further thought is given to the levels of privacy achievable across the residential element of the scheme, to flat interiors are not visible to other residents from their balconies.



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- It will be important to provide information on the number of flats that will be dual aspect, and to show how natural light will be introduced into interiors to ensure pleasant living space.
- The panel applauds the attention to detail in the provision of storage in flat layouts. It also suggests consideration of the introduction of movable walls for flexible living and working spaces, in the context of increased homeworking post-Covid. It is important that flats provide the space for residents to work from home.

Amenity space

- The panel asks to what extent the roof areas will be used to create spaces for residents — for example, roof gardens in which to enjoy the sun — and looks forward to further detail as the scheme develops.
- Concern was expressed about the way the podium amenity space will be used. The panel explained how, from experience, residential podiums — particularly those adjacent to flats with families — are often treated as safe spaces for children, which can exclude others from using the space. Equally, if the podium is surrounded by private gardens, measures such as erecting fencing for privacy can adversely affect the quality of the public space. The panel suggests careful consideration of the podium design in order to address these concerns.
- The panel suggests that the podium space may be under-used in the colder months of the year, and that an indoor/outdoor space could be created to maximise amenity all year round.

Community uses

- The panel suggests consideration is given to providing other types of non-commercial space that will benefit residents and contribute to building a functioning community. Options could include a youth club, community centre, or a co-working space. A Post Office would also be valued facility by the wider neighbourhood.

Light industrial spaces

- The panel feels that the quality of the industrial spaces will prove key to the successful activation of the development. It suggests further thought is given to ensuring that the ground floor spaces accommodate, and work well, for a range of different types of light industrial users, who will have different requirements. The design, sizes and layout of the units should be developed in more detail to show the type of the workspace they will provide. For example, the number and spacing of columns will determine potential uses.
- Glazing and lighting should be used to ensure that units are not dark towards the rear, and ensure spaces are attractive and pleasant to work in.



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- The panel also suggests that permitting industrial occupiers to work in the space outside their units may create conflict with public realm uses, and should be carefully considered.

Vehicle access

- The panel suggests that it is not realistic to assume that all those working on the site will live within walking distance, and that parking provision will be needed for those who will drive to work.
- The panel also feels that visitor parking is essential to allow commercial spaces to be serviced, and deliveries to be made to residential blocks.

Cycling

- The panel suggests that cycle routes should be considered along St. James's Road, in discussion with Southwark Council, to create a more cycle-friendly context for the scheme.
- The panel asks for further detail on provision for secure bike storage, which will be important both for the residential units and in the public realm around the scheme. A bike share scheme could also be considered.

Sustainability

- The panel looks forward to further detail on the provision of solar or other forms of renewable energy in the development.

Community engagement

- The panel strongly supports the intention to conduct full and comprehensive community consultation on the development. This will be particularly important in relation to accessibility, tenure and type of homes, and the role and provision of public and private space. The panel recommends that people on the housing waiting list should be prioritised for engagement.
- The panel supports the provision of local engagement programmes, including the potential for the creation of construction jobs during this phase of the scheme's development. It encourages further discussion with Southwark Council on how this can be organised and delivered.

Next steps

The Community Review Panel is available, if required, to provide further input once designs have reached the next stage of development.

