

Old Kent Road Community Review Panel

Report of Community Review: Rotherhithe New Road Greening

Monday 12 December 2022

Via video conference

Group

Gurmeet Sian (chair)
Tyreece Asamoah
Hugh Balfour
Shelene Byer
Julia Feeney
James Glancy
Mike Levitt
Saidat Oketunde
Victoria Oluwabless
Sydney Simms
Madison Westwood

Group apologies

Aaron Mo
Peter Warren

Attendees

Tim Cutts	London Borough of Southwark
Lauretta Doku	London Borough of Southwark
Benita Meli	Bonamy and Bramcote Tenants' and Residents' Association (TRA)
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Abigail Joseph	Frame Projects

Apologies / copied to

Alicia Chaumard	London Borough of Southwark
Colin Wilson	London Borough of Southwark
Juliette Young	Greater London Authority
Kiri Pieri	Bonamy and Bramcote TRA
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects

Confidentiality

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. 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 and site address

'Greening Rotherhithe New Road': Rotherhithe New Road, London, SE16 3HF
The boundary of project extends from where Rotherhithe New Road meets Verney Road (close to John Keats Primary School) up to the junction of Ilderton Road.

2. Presenting team

Lucy Whimster	The Landscape Partnership
Dianne Western	The Landscape Partnership

3. Planning authority briefing

Rotherhithe New Road is located within the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area which is set to experience very significant growth, including 20,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs. The Old Kent Road Area Action Plan (AAP) sets out the strategic vision for the redevelopment of the Opportunity Area, with the support of the Greater London Authority and Transport for London. One of the key themes of the AAP is the idea of the Greener Belt. This is a network of green spaces, connecting Pimlico with Rotherhithe, to provide valuable green lungs and to be an integral part of the way people move around the area.

The Council's project will contribute to the development of the Greener Belt, and is specifically identified as providing an opportunity to create a strategic connection from the Old Kent Road to Southwark Park and the Canada Water Opportunity Area.

Rotherhithe New Road is located on the northern edge of the Bramcote and Bonamy Estates. The project ties in with several local initiatives, including planned improvements to Bramcote Park, and proposed improvements to play spaces on Bonamy Estate.

The Landscape Partnership have been appointed by Southwark Council, with funding support from the GLA. The emerging proposals for Rotherhithe New Road Greening will form the basis of a bid for delivery funding from the GLA.

The Council asked for the panel's comments, in particular, on the following issues:

- the proposed level of greening;
- the introduction of seating and incidental play.

4. Community Review Panel's views

Summary

The Old Kent Road Community Review Panel is enthusiastic about the Rotherhithe New Road Greening plans and welcomes the opportunity to comment on the emerging designs. A range of comments were given on the two options presented. The panel understands a hybrid solution is likely to be developed, taking forward the positive aspects of each. A key issue to resolve is the challenge of providing a safe cycle route, whilst avoiding conflict with pedestrians. The location of existing trees, and the relatively narrow and busy street make it difficult to create segregated cycle routes either on or off-road. The panel suggests that it may be possible to slow off-road cyclists through a combination of a speed limit, and landscape design that signals pedestrian priority. The ideas about edible planting and encouraging wildlife are positive, and could be taken further with provision of raised beds for community gardening, and a mix of trees including blossom trees. The panel also made comments on the ideas about playable landscape, the location of seating, and lighting design. Ensuring that the scheme is inclusive for all ages, abilities, and a wide range of activities will be important. Dog walkers should be considered, with dog waste bins, bag dispensers and drinking points integrated into the design. Finally, the panel highlights the importance of good maintenance and litter collection. Careful thought should be given to the location of bins, which are most likely to be needed near seating, bus stops, the community centre and MUGA. These comments are expanded below.

Options presented

- The presentation described two options for the scheme: Option 1 – minimal intervention; and Option 2 – greater intervention. However, the panel understands that the intention is to take forwards aspects of both these options.
- Most panel members expressed a preference for Option 2, which offers the greatest potential to transform this section of Rotherhithe New Road into a linear park.
- However, the route is busy at the start and end of the school day, so ensuring there is enough clear space for these times will be important.

Pedestrians and cyclists

- Providing a safe cycle route, whilst minimising the risk of conflict with pedestrians is a key challenge for the scheme.
- The location of existing trees makes it difficult to provide an off-road segregated cycle route.

- However, Rotherhithe New Road is relatively narrow and congested, so there is limited space to create segregated cycle routes on this street.
- The panel encourages further thought about the potential options for accommodating cyclists, with the aim of balancing the needs of cyclists and pedestrians.
- It may be possible to slow off-road cyclists through a combination of a speed limit, and landscape design that signals pedestrian priority.
- Given the expected increase in the population of the area, maximising the quality and safety of both pedestrian and cycle routes will be essential.

Trees and planting

- Where tarmac is being lifted to make space for planting, care will be needed to avoid damaging the roots of existing trees.
- The panel supports the idea of planting fruit trees and thinks these will be valued by the local community.
- Blossom trees would also be beautiful in the spring, and having a mix of trees could enhance biodiversity.
- The panel would encourage the team to consider providing some raised beds for community gardening.
- Whilst the aim to create wildlife habitats through the planting design is welcome, some concerns were raised about encouraging pigeons and foxes.

Playable areas

- One panel member felt that it would not be appropriate to provide playable areas as part of the scheme, because it is alongside a busy road.
- Others were pleased to see that the designs provide opportunities for informal play, such as boulders, stepping-stones and logs for jumping off.
- The panel also suggested involving local schools in the design process, for example to help design paving patterns, to add interest to the scheme.

Seating

- The panel welcomes the careful thought given to seating, especially close to the community centre and where it will allow people to watch children playing, or sports on the multi-use games area (MUGA).

- However, seats should not be placed too close to existing homes, to avoid people talking late into the night disturbing residents.

Lighting

- The presentation did not include details of lighting plans for Rotherhithe New Road Greening, but this will be important to its success.
- The panel would be keen to hear more about the lighting design at a future review.
- It suggested this could help give the area a special identity, for example with programmable lighting that could be set to rainbow colours during Pride or sparkle at Christmas and New Year.

Inclusive design

- The panel highlighted the importance of ensuring the scheme is inclusive for all ages and abilities, and a wide range of activities.
- Dog walkers should be considered, and dog waste bins, bag dispensers and drinking points should be integrated into the design.
- Well placed seating will be valuable to older people, helping to allow them to enjoy being among younger people.

Maintenance and bins

- The long term success of the Rotherhithe New Road Greening will depend in large part on a good maintenance regime.
- The panel notes that areas that are neglected and collect rubbish, tend to encourage further littering. It suggests that weekly maintenance will be needed to avoid this.
- Careful thought should be given to the location of bins, which are most likely to be needed near seating, bus stops, the community centre and MUGA.
- The panel suggests that a review of bin locations should be carried out after the scheme is completed, so that bins can be repositioned if needed.
- Tree maintenance should also be part of the maintenance strategy, to ensure that branches do not obstruct the pavement, and that leaves are cleared in autumn.
- The existing taller wall around the Bonamy Estate is in a poor state of repair, and would benefit from being mended as part of the scheme.

Next steps

The panel understands that the scheme will be worked up in more detail following a funding application to the Greater London Authority. It would welcome an opportunity to comment again at a detailed design stage.