



**Old Kent Road Community Review Panel**

**Report of Community Review: Devonshire Place**

Monday 22 May 2023  
231 Old Kent Road, London SE1 5LU

**Group**

Gurmeet Sian (chair)  
Mike Levitt  
Saidat Oketunde  
Peter Warren

**Attendees**

Colin Wilson	London Borough of Southwark
Tom Bolton	Frame Projects
Hanako Littlewood	Frame Projects

**Apologies / copied to**

Tyreece Asamoah	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Hugh Balfour	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Shelene Byer	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Julia Feeney	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Hazel Flynn	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
James Glancy	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Aaron Mo	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Victoria Oluwables	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Sydney Simms	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Madison Westwood	Old Kent Road Community Development Panel
Patrick Cronin	London Borough of Southwark
Tim Cutts	London Borough of Southwark
Lauretta Doku	London Borough of Southwark

**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**

Devonshire Place: land at Devonshire Grove / Sylvan Grove, London SE15 1NZ

## **2. Presenting team**

Fred Drabble	Shaw Corporation
Steve Harrington	Regal London
Natalie Ballone	JTP
Ian Fenn	JTP
James Goldstone	Connect PA
Jonathan Hoban	Lichfields

## **3. Planning authority briefing**

The site is located within Old Kent Road Site Allocation OKR16, which expects redevelopment to:

- replace existing employment space.
- provide retail on the Old Kent Road high street.
- provide new homes.
- provide community uses.
- provide new a new public square at Devonshire Grove and Sylvan Grove.

The applicant aims to deliver the Council's site allocation and Old Kent Road Area Action Plan for affordable homes, retail uses on high street frontage, community uses, a new access road to the waste management facility and public open space. The proposals consist of four new buildings of 33, 20, 19 and 15 storeys respectively. They will provide approximately 200 homes with 100 per cent affordable housing, split between 68 per cent social rent and 32 per cent shared ownership. The homes will be split between social rent and shared ownership, delivering a mix of one, two, three and four-bedroom dwellings.

This will be funded by approximately 950 student bedrooms. Flexible commercial and community units are proposed at ground floor level beneath the blocks fronting onto Old Kent Road, designed to maximise active frontage. They are envisaged as a retail convenience store (481sqm) and a general practitioner surgery (245sqm), with a letter of intent received from a surgery operator. The buildings will be surrounded by public realm and open space enhancements including play space and tree planting. There is an existing planning permission for this site, but that scheme is not considered deliverable – hence the revised proposals.

The panel previously reviewed the proposals in March 2023. Officers asked for the panel's comments in particular on the heights of the buildings, composition of massing and overall architecture.

#### **4. Community Review Panel's views**

##### *Summary*

The panel is pleased to see that the proposals have developed positively since the previous review meeting, and that its comments have been taken into account. It thinks that the stepping added to the massing of the buildings creates a more varied townscape. It also supports changes made to the architecture since the last review, including elevation and crown detailing, although it suggests reconsidering the use of lighter colours at ground floor level. The panel also supports the addition of community space and a café, which it considers offer important community value.

The panel cautions against planting too many trees, resulting in an overly dense canopy. It asks for play space to be provided for adolescents as well as younger children. If the roof is to be accessible, a shelter or canopy will be needed to mitigate wind effects. The panel also emphasises the importance of a safe public realm for all and asks detail on how this will be achieved, including a lighting plan.

Thought should be given to preventing conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, including using different surface treatments to prevent cycling through the site, and providing cycle racks and hire bike stations. Public realm designs should take account of the potential future cycle lane on Old Kent Road, and potentially include a drop-off bay for the surgery. The management of student arrivals and departures will be crucial, and details should be provided to council officers.

The panel finds the idea of a contemporary bandstand interesting, but suggests more thinking is needed on how this would be designed and used. It also suggests a barbecue area and tables for outdoor eating as options for the public space.

These comments are expanded below.

##### *Architecture and massing*

- The panel supports the changes made to the massing of the buildings, and to the architecture, since the previous review. It considers that the chamfered shoulder elements are successful in adding variety to the massing.
- The panel considers the architecture is now more refined than at the last review. The detail added to elevations, including the recessed windows and stronger vertical elements, and the use of red metalwork are positive changes. The panel also supports the elegant designs for the crowns of the buildings.
- The panel is not convinced that white material should be used at ground-floor level. It feels that positioning the palest colour at the base of the towers undermines the weakens the overall effect of colour progression across the full elevations.

### *Community facilities*

- The panel is pleased to see the addition of a café and of bookable community space. The principle of providing space that is managed by the student accommodation operator, Homes for Students, but accessible to all is crucial to the provision of community benefit.

### *Landscape and amenity space*

- The panel suggests that, while it supports tree planting on the site, there may be too many proposed. The number trees shown could lead to an overly dense canopy in a couple of decades' time. The panel notes the need to select the right species for the site which will not drop branches or create mess that is difficult to clear, and will have space to grow and mature over time without undermining the quality of public space.
- The panel also asks whether play space can be provided for adolescents as well as younger children, an equally important requirement for residents.
- The panel is intrigued by the idea of building a community bandstand, but asks for more thinking about how it would be used including how it would be used, who would play in it, and whether it would cause noise problems. It also questions whether planting a tree in the middle of the bandstand is a good idea, as it will open the space up to the weather. It also suggests that a temporary structure may be better place to meet changing needs by evolving over time.
- Raised growing beds, allowing residents for example to cultivate vegetables, could provide significant social benefit while taking relatively limited space.
- Outdoor picnic tables, which often prove popular in public spaces, could also be included. Barbecue areas are very popular in Burgess Park and, while there may be difficulties in accommodating them, they are also likely to prove a popular addition.
- The panel notes that conditions in rooftop amenity spaces at the top of tall buildings can be wild and difficult to control. It asks for assurances that, if roofs are accessible, that a shelter will be provided to make the space useable.
- The panel emphasises the importance of creating a safe environment, with a particular emphasis on the safety of women and girls. It would therefore like to see more information on the approach to pedestrian safety, in particular a lighting plan.

### *Movement and traffic*

- The panel notes plans for shared pedestrian and cycle routes through the development. It supports design to exclude cars from the development and enable both modes cycling and walking, but emphasises the need to ensure that routes are safe. Other shared spaces in the area, for example Burgess Park, experience conflict on shared routes because of the number of people using the space. This development will bring many people to the site, so it is important that the public realm is designed to manage the competing demands for space.
- The panel suggests that different surface treatments could be used to discourage cyclists from cycling into the development without dismounting, or to keep them to particular routes. It is important to create a pedestrian-friendly environment, and the panel considers measures should be taken to prevent conflict with cyclists.
- Hire bicycles could also be located on Devonshire Grove at the western edge of the development, and cycle racks provided there to help encourage people to dismount.
- The panel also notes the possibility that Transport for London will bring forward designs for a cycle lane along Old Kent Road, and an island bus stop at the entrance to the Devonshire Place development. Thinking is needed on how the development can connect cycle routes beyond its boundaries, especially to this future route. The panel suggests that a dropped kerb should be provided to connect to Old Kent Road, and further consideration given to how a future cycle junction here can be made safe.
- The island bus stop could also create problems in future for users of the development, not least those visiting the surgery. The panel suggests that a separate drop-off bay is needed to avoid patients arriving by car needing to cross the cycle lane to reach the surgery. This could be located on Old Kent Road at the corner with Sylvan Grove.
- The panel notes that the applicant is developing a management plan to stagger student arrival and departure times and prevent vehicle congestion from drop-offs. However, with 950 students on site it emphasises the need for this to be completely effective. It asks for further details of booking systems to fully demonstrate how drop-offs will be managed, and safeguards against congestion operate. A short report should be submitted to council officers to explain the system that will be put in place to prevent traffic congestion.

### *Next steps*

The panel is confident that the applicant can address its remaining comments in discussion with Southwark officers.