



Old Kent Road Community Review Panel

Report of Community Review: OKR13 Masterplan and Design Code

Monday 19 June 2023
231 Old Kent Road, London, SE1 5LU

Group

Gurmeet Sian (chair)
Aaron Mo
Hugh Balfour
Peter Warren
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Mike Levitt
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Attendees

Jessica Potter	London Borough of Southwark
Ali Weatherup	London Borough of Southwark
Colin Wilson	London Borough of Southwark
Deborah Denner	Frame Projects
Hanako Littlewood	Frame Projects

Apologies / copied to

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

OKR13 Masterplan and Design Code
Area around Sandgate Street, Verney Road, and Old Kent Road (south), London, SE15 1LE

2. Presenting team

Katerina Karaga	Farrells
Tara Gbolade	Gbolade Design Studio
Delagah Dadbeh	Exterior Architecture

3. Planning authority briefing

The Council has appointed a multi-disciplinary design team to undertake a review of the existing Old Kent Road masterplan and provide a set of design codes. The study will apply to schemes between Sandgate Street, Verney Road and Old Kent Road (south) that do not already have planning consent and are not in Phase 1 of the plan's delivery. The study intends to refine the proposed mix of uses and adaptability of site allocation OKR13, including a set of illustrated design requirements which will provide a toolkit with specific detailed parameters for the development of the area.

The Council has previously taken part in a similar commission for site allocation OKR16 (Hatcham and Ilderton Road Design Code) that was reviewed by the panel in July 2021. The preparation of the design code and its structure will be informed by this previous coding document and the Government's advice on National Model Design Codes.

Key components of the masterplan include the following.

- A proposed linear park along the alignment of Verney Road.
- The introduction of new open spaces, including a significant new park on the gasworks site and a pocket park to the rear of the Canal Grove cottages.
- Improved north-south connections between Verney Road and Old Kent Road.
- A revitalisation of the Old Kent Road as a high street.
- An intensification of the development, providing homes, workplaces, shops, and leisure uses.

The emerging Area Action Plan (AAP) establishes a vision for the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area as well as detailed policies and allocations to manage growth. Much of the growth envisaged in the area is expected to occur through intensification of sites currently in industrial and warehousing use. These sites will be redeveloped for a mix of uses including the re-provision of industrial and warehouse uses, residential, a range of commercial uses, and supporting infrastructure. The AAP identifies site allocations which provide additional guidance for individual sites or groups of sites. The intention is to commission further design guidance for remaining site allocations forming part of the evidence-based documents for the AAP.

4. Community Review Panel's views

Summary

The Old Kent Road Community Review Panel welcomes this opportunity to comment on the revised masterplan and design codes at an early stage in its development. The panel is broadly supportive of the proposals, whilst highlighting some issues that would benefit from further thought. The mix of industrial and residential uses builds on the economy of the area, but clarity is needed about the type of uses that are envisaged. As part of this process, it will be important to consider the number and quality of jobs the development will create. The principle of improving cycle routes through the area is supported by the panel, but it raises questions about how well these connect to the surrounding area, and potential conflicts with pedestrians. The masterplan should also make a realistic allowance for essential parking, for deliveries, servicing, businesses, and residents who need a car for their job. The panel suggests that the street hierarchy and sections would benefit from greater clarity and simplicity. The proposed new open spaces and urban greening are welcomed, and the panel made comments on its detailed design. The concept of industrial intensification, alongside residential development will mean that ground floor space is at a premium, and it is essential that provision is made for leisure and community facilities. As design work continues, every effort should be made to engage a wide range of local voices in decision making, especially to allow young people to influence the design of open spaces.

Land uses

- The panel understands that the masterplan and design code envisage land uses changing over time, subject to completion of the proposed Bakerloo line extension.
- It supports the intensification of industrial uses in early phases of development, with more residential development once the Bakerloo line extension happens.
- The panel asks for more clarity about the type of industrial uses that the Council wishes to encourage. The area currently includes 'dirty' industrial uses that may not be compatible with residential development.
- The design code proposes views into industrial units at street level, but this may not always be desirable, or enhance the streetscape.
- It would be a shame if the masterplan and design code created a push factor for businesses unsuited to being visible from the street.
- Consultation with existing businesses in the area will be key to understanding who would like to stay, and who is likely to relocate elsewhere – so that this can inform the plans.

- As part of this process, the panel highlights the importance of considering the number and quality of jobs the development will create. Some uses like storage tend to provide only a small number of low paid jobs. Start-up businesses could be encouraged with smaller office or industrial spaces.
- Where commercial uses may be envisaged, for example on Old Kent Road, the panel notes the vacant units in recently completed developments nearby.
- Historically there were five churches on the site, and faith uses could be more viable than commercial space, at least in the short term.
- However, the panel notes that local churches draw people from a wide area, so the impact of faith uses on parking in the area would need to be considered.

Cycle routes

- The principle of improving cycle routes through the area is supported by the panel, but it raises questions about how well these connect to the surrounding area, and potential conflicts with pedestrians.
- The masterplan currently proposes a north-west to south-east shared pedestrian and cycle route, parallel to the Old Kent Road. This will provide a safer option for cyclists, but careful thought is needed about how conflict with pedestrians can be avoided.
- Use of chicanes may be one way to slow cyclists sharing a pedestrian route. This may also be effective in slowing scooters which are also likely to use the shared route.
- Increasing use of e-bikes which are faster than traditional bikes, makes it all-the-more important that pedestrian safety is considered.
- The panel also notes that true east west connections remain limited in the masterplan, and only indirect routes link beyond the site to the north-east.
- It would encourage further thought about how to maximise pedestrian and cycle permeability in all directions.

Traffic, parking and public transport

- Around 2,000 new homes are proposed in the masterplan area, which could bring around 5,000 people to the area.
- Most of these homes will not have a parking space, with only disabled parking being provided. Never-the-less this number of new homes will generate significant traffic, with deliveries, servicing etc.

- There will be some people who need to park all day, for example to service lifts, which will be essential with the proposed tall buildings.
- Businesses in the area are also likely to need vehicles – one panel member noted that their small business requires three vans for its operation. Could parking inside industrial units accommodate this?
- The panel also notes that many people require vehicles for their work, for example tradespeople and taxi drivers.
- The panel asks the Council and design team to consider what level of parking will be essential, for deliveries, servicing, businesses, and residents who need a car for their job. The masterplan should make a realistic allowance for this.
- A last mile delivery facility is planned for the area, with cargo bikes distributing parcels to homes and businesses. The panel welcomes this but thinks vehicular parking will be necessary in addition.
- It also notes that if the Bakerloo Line extension is not completed, existing public transport would not be sufficient to support the 2,000 proposed homes.
- Whilst the masterplan discourages environmentally damaging petrol and diesel cars, the masterplan should retain flexibility to adapt for a future when electric or hydrogen cars could become the norm.

Street hierarchy and sections

- The panel suggests that the street hierarchy and sections would benefit from greater clarity and simplicity.
- With the density of residential development proposed, wide pavements are likely to be needed.
- Seven Dials is noted as a good example of a shared space, where vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists coexist successfully.
- Where all three modes are sharing a route, it may be worth considering one as being dominant. For example, some routes could be primarily pedestrian, with cars and bicycles permitted but secondary.

Green and open space

- The green space included in the masterplan promises to be an important amenity for residents, as well as enhancing the character of the area.
- The masterplan includes the Canal Grove Cottages, and the panel thinks the creation of an open space in front of them would be a great improvement.

- The panel understands that residents of the Cottages would like the existing brick wall between their homes and the new open space to remain, as this provides privacy.
- Further exploration of how the opportunity to create a positive relationship between the Cottages and open space is needed, in consultation with residents.
- Larger open spaces could be designed to attract people from outside the area, as well as meeting the needs of local people.

Facilities for the community

- The masterplan may bring around 5,000 new residents to the area, and it is essential that the facilities this community needs are provided.
- The concept of industrial intensification, alongside residential development will mean that ground floor space is at a premium, and it is essential that provision is made for leisure and community facilities.

Public consultation

- Every effort should be made through the public consultation to bring in a wide range of local voices.
- Liaising with local Tenants and Residents Association about consultation events would be encouraged.
- The consultation process should aim to reach people of all ages, including children and families – especially on the design of green and open spaces.

Next steps

The community review panel is available to review the masterplan and design code again if required, once proposals have developed further.