

Old Kent Road Community Review Panel

Report of Community Review: Mandela Way Masterplan and Design Code

Monday 13 November 2023
Treasure House, 682 Old Kent Road, London, SE15 1JF

Group

Gurmeet Sian (chair)
Mohammed Bentaleb
David Clarke
Julia Feeney
Hazel Flynn
Rebecca Lefort
Mike Levitt
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Sarah Osei
Sydney Simms
David Stoker
Lin Vong

Attendees

Tim Cutts	London Borough of Southwark
Jessica Potter	London Borough of Southwark
Colin Wilson	London Borough of Southwark
Lucy Block	Frame Projects
Sharon Williams	Frame Projects
Abigail Joseph	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

Old Kent Road (Sub Area 1, OKR3, and OKR4), Mandela Way, SE1 5SE

2. Presenting team

Blazej Czuba
Erin Towsley

Maccreanor Lavington
Maccreanor Lavington

3. Planning authority briefing

The London Borough of Southwark has appointed Maccreanor Lavington and a consultant team, including Architecture 00, Deft.Space, and Civic Engineers, to review the existing masterplan and develop a design code for Old Kent Road site allocations OKR3 and OKR4. The masterplan refresh and design code will focus on sites that do not currently have a planning consent and are in Phase 2 of the delivery of the Old Kent Road Area Action Plan (AAP).

Located to the north of Old Kent Road, the traditional industry uses that previously characterised this sub-area, have largely been replaced by high value storage and distribution uses serving central London, including specialist art storage for the Tate. The entire Mandela Way Industrial Estate, which is still contained in part within its historic walls, has an enclosed and inward-looking character set apart from the surrounding communities and high street.

The OKR4 site allocation is a car-dominated retail area, which will be transformed into a vibrant hub on Old Kent Road with a new Bakerloo Line underground station that will help reinforce Old Kent Road as a high street. However, partially due to the industrial heritage of the area, there is little open space, which the masterplan seeks to improve.

Council officers would welcome the panel's feedback on the current designs, massing, the identity and character of the masterplan and design code, the proposed uses, and the level of open space provided. It would be helpful to hear the panel's comments on how well the proposal will meet residential demand in the area.

4. Community Review Panel's views

Summary

The panel broadly supports the project but is concerned about its dependence on the delivery of the new Bakerloo Line underground station. As the project has a lengthy timeframe, the panel would like to see more consideration of how a sense of place could be achieved during the construction phase as well as upon completion. It will also be important that the masterplan responds to the current and emerging contexts. The panel acknowledges the delivery of a large number of homes but is concerned that this will not meet the local demand for affordable and family sized homes. It advises further community engagement with local residents and groups to inform the masterplan and ensure that the project meets local housing demand.

The panel recommends shorter tower blocks, noting that taller buildings may compromise the pedestrian experience and cause high wind levels on the ground. It would like to see more exploration of how best to combine the residential and industrial uses. The panel recommends referring to examples of successful mixed-use schemes in the UK and internationally. Providing industrial units of varying sizes will help attract a good mix of businesses, especially local businesses which will contribute to the project's character. The panel also suggests refining the town centre designs and clustering of retail uses across the masterplan area.

Further consideration of minimising parking and congestion issues due to the project's density is recommended. The panel suggests locating a service access nearer to the Old Kent Road to ease traffic movement through the site. The new public park is positive, and the panel encourages maximising public access to the gardens and play spaces.

Phasing

- The panel is concerned that the project's delivery is significantly dependent on the delivery of the new Bakerloo Line underground station. It suggests exploring ways in which earlier phases of the project could be designed and delivered independently of the station. This would be beneficial in case there are any issues or delays with the station's development.
- The panel advises more analysis of how the project delivery can adapt to the fragmented landownership.
- It would like to see more consideration of how disruption to local residents and businesses will be minimised, particularly in light of the project's long timeframe.
- The panel recommends the inclusion of meanwhile spaces, which would help the site deliver placemaking and community benefits during the construction phase.

Residential quality

- The panel acknowledges the project's delivery of a large number of homes.
- However, it is concerned that the project may not meet the high demand for affordable family homes in the area. There is a risk that the new housing is more appropriate for multiple occupancy by young professionals, creating a monoculture that doesn't reflect the diversity of the Old Kent Road.
- The panel also questions whether high-rise living would be suitable for families with young children.
- A 2020 report by researchers from the London School of Economics titled *Living in a denser London: how residents see their homes* explores residents' quality of life in high density areas. The panel encourages the design team to refer to the report's findings to inform the residential designs.

Layout, massing and height

- The panel is generally pleased with the design of the masterplan layout.
- However, as the masterplan proposes buildings up to 35 storeys, the panel has concerns that this will result in high-level wind levels on the ground which would lead to an unpleasant pedestrian experience. Further assessment should be done to enable people to enjoy outdoor amenity space at all times.
- The panel acknowledges that an approved scheme nearby is taller than the tallest block proposed within the masterplan area. However, it is concerned that this sets a precedent and result in construction of more tall buildings for the area.
- The panel suggests considering basements, given the density of the project and the likely demand for storage. These spaces could also provide parking and electric vehicle charging points which could help futureproof the design.

Commercial, town centre and industrial uses

- The panel recommends further exploration of how best to co-locate the industrial and residential uses, and it would like to see reference to case studies of successful examples.
- For example, the two uses could be separated, with the inclusion of planting to conceal or soften the appearance of the industrial units. Alternatively, integration could allow for industrial and retail units at the ground floor and residential units located above them, as seen in mainland Europe.
- It questions whether changing the ratio of industrial to residential use could affect the delivery of the project. For example, the returns from including more industrial units could support funding of the housing provision.

- The panel recommends providing units of varying sizes so that different types of businesses can be accommodated. For example, including microunits would allow local sole traders and startups to use the space.
- The panel suggests providing incentives to local businesses to improve their likelihood of using the space. Their presence would add more character than offering a branch of one of the national supermarket chains, for example. It would also minimise the possibility of units being left empty over time, as was the case with the Hackney Fashion Hub.
- The new residential development near Burgess Park integrates residential and light industrial uses relatively successfully, with cafes and restaurants on-site, as well as a bicycle workshop.
- The panel would like to see further refinement of the design of the town centre. It suggests revising the clustering of uses to make the area feel more like a destination and be a place where people can stay for longer.
- It would like to see more places for food and entertainment included in the proposals. One local example which does this successfully is La Placita Mall, a South American hub on New Cross Road.

Access strategy

- The panel advises more consideration of how to minimise likely congestion and parking issues given the density of the scheme.
- It suggests increasing the number of cycle routes and seeing how best existing local buses could meet the future transport demand. This would also decrease the project's reliance on the new station.
- An additional service access could be located nearer to the Old Kent Road to service the industrial spaces and reduce heavy goods traffic through the centre of the site. This could also act as a buffer between the industrial and residential units.

Landscape and play space

- The panel welcomes the new public park and suggests exploring the possibility of making this larger, if possible.
- It advises providing public access to the communal podium gardens and play spaces across the site.
- The panel is pleased with the proposed play space. It encourages increasing the level of provision specifically for older children.
- Including other shared facilities in the park could also be considered, such as barbecues which would be popular in the summer.

Response to surrounding context

- Principles from the Old Kent Road AAP should be integrated into the masterplan proposals to ensure that the scheme has a strong sense of place and feels like an authentic part of the area.
- There is a concern that the project lacks character and appears too similar to schemes in other parts of London. The panel would like to see more vibrance and multiculturalism of the Old Kent Road reflected in the designs.
- The panel would like to see more consideration of what is currently onsite, especially in terms of the occupiers of the warehouses and any other companies which may have long leases.
- It also questions whether existing social infrastructure in the area could meet the increased demand that the project would bring. For example, sufficient healthcare provision will be essential.
- The panel advises exploring how the project will adequately meet the needs of the area and its communities in the long-term. These are likely to change over time, especially in light of other recently approved schemes in the area. The panel encourages an adaptable approach so that the project can respond to the current and emerging contexts, and apply lessons learned over time.

Community engagement

- The panel recommends working with local cyclists, Friends of Burgess Park, and local businesses to help inform the access strategy, landscape design, and industrial provision, respectively.
- Engagement with current residents along Mandela Way, as well as people on housing waiting lists, will help the project better meet local demand for affordable homes.
- The panel suggests considering how to attract the wider community to the site. This has been done successfully with the festivals and events held at Elephant Park.

Next steps

- The panel looks forward to seeing how the masterplan and design code develops. It would be happy to review the proposals again, if helpful.