



**Old Kent Road Community Review Panel**

**Report of Community Review: Murdock Street Pocket Park**

Monday 24 June 2024

Treasure House, 682 Old Kent Road, London, SE15 1JF

**Panel**

Gurmeet Sian (chair)

Simon Donovan

Rebecca Lefort

Mike Levitt

Sydney Simms

**Attendees**

Jessica Potter

London Borough of Southwark

Ali Weatherup

London Borough of Southwark

Colin Wilson

London Borough of Southwark

Lucy Block

Frame Projects

Yingli Tang

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**Apologies / copied to**

Tim Cutts

London Borough of Southwark

Deborah Denner

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.

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## 1. Project name and site address

Murdock Street Pocket Park, Murdock Street, Southwark SE15 1LW.

## 2. Presenting team

Barbara Kaucky	Erect Architecture
Cherng-Min Teong	Erect Architecture

## 3. Planning authority briefing

The emerging Area Action Plan (AAP) establishes a vision for the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area, which will see significant growth over the next 20 years including 20,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs. There is a distinct lack of open space within the area, which the AAP masterplan seeks to address through the delivery of several new open spaces. Murdock Street will provide a link between the proposed green spaces and provide an opportunity for additional planting. A key priority for the masterplan is to create permeability from the north of the site allocation OKR13 to the south, enabling greater accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists to the Old Kent Road and its businesses, which the delivery of this park would support.

The council has appointed a multi-disciplinary team to design a pocket park on Murdock Street. The design intends to create a green link to connect existing and planned green spaces within the area. The proposal is part funded by the Future High Streets Fund from the Department of Levelling Up and Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Construction on the adjacent development, Land Bounded by Ruby Street, Murdock Street and 685-695 Old Kent Road (application reference 18/AP/0196), is currently paused. The development will be a mixed-use building, which will deliver 111 new homes, a new space for the church with ancillary community facilities, and floorspace for workspace and retail fronting on to the Old Kent Road. The development will also provide hard and soft landscaping at street level, linking to and forming part of the proposed Murdock Street pocket park.

The panel is invited to comment on whether the design supports the use of the park for different times of day and different seasons and on the proposed reuse of the existing materials within the park. Comments are also sought on the play elements of the park, the inclusivity of the scheme, and on opportunities for integrating the history of the site into the proposals.

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## 4. Community Review Panel's views

### *Summary*

The Community Review Panel is supportive of the pocket park and commends the imaginative use of the small, awkward site. Given the proximity to the new Livesey Park on the existing gasholder site, it recognises that this space will function as a quieter place to walk through, sit and rest. The panel therefore supports the minimal approach taken, avoiding duplication of the sports uses and play facilities provided within the larger park. Further consideration of wayfinding is recommended, to ensure that the space feels inviting and safe to move through at all times of the day and year. Accessible and inclusive signage, as well as feature lighting, could help encourage people to use the space.

The planting and tree selection is positive, particularly the choice of plants which promote biodiversity. The panel suggests considering further habitat enhancements, for example birds and bat boxes, alongside the log piles and gabions that may be attractive for invertebrates. The retention of the existing carriageway surface and reuse of construction waste materials for the gabion seating is positive and will help reduce the carbon footprint of the park. The panel suggests exploring further opportunities for material reuse, such as metal offcuts or ducting.

As the delivery of the pocket park is largely reliant on the adjacent development bounded by Ruby Street, Murdock Street and 685-695 Old Kent Road, there are concerns that the park may not be delivered for a long time, given the delays on site. Meanwhile opportunities or interim solutions should be considered to introduce features of the pocket park ahead of the development. The panel would like to see more community involvement in both the design and delivery of the space, as well as potential opportunities for ongoing management and stewardship. For example, areas for communal food growing would be well-used and could be integrated with the café use, using products grown on site within the kitchen. The panel also suggests incorporating more artwork within the park, to enhance the references to the industrial heritage of the area.

### *Connectivity and wayfinding*

- The panel is supportive of the scheme and feels that the site will positively contribute to the network of green spaces proposed throughout the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area.
- It commends the imaginative use of the small, awkward site, which manages to provide a multi-layered space with a good variety of areas for seating, informal play and planting.
- Given that the new Livesey Park will be nearby, the panel feels that it is appropriate that the pocket park acts as a quieter place to walk through, sit and rest.

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- It supports the decision to keep the design simple, avoiding cluttering the space or duplicating provision within the larger park.
- The reference to the site's manufacturing history is positive and will create a strong identity for the park. The panel suggests incorporating more artwork within the park, to enhance the references to the industrial heritage of the area.
- There are some concerns that given the secluded nature of the site, there could be a risk of antisocial behaviour. The panel would like to see how this would be addressed through the design and the relationship with the active uses within the adjacent development and existing buildings.
- Further wayfinding and signage should be considered, to ensure that the pocket park and route through the site feels inviting and attractive to use.
- If the café comes forward as planned, this will lift the space and provide vibrant, active uses that would help attract people to the pocket park.

### *Planting, biodiversity and habitat*

- The generous areas of planting proposed are positive, particularly the number and variety of trees.
- However, the panel feels that silver birches are overused. Alternative species may be more appropriate, to create a more unique character and provide additional shading.
- Maximising biodiversity and habitat opportunities through the planting and natural features proposed is positive. The panel would like to see provision for bats and birds, alongside invertebrates.
- It suggests consulting with the Friends of Burgess Park, drawing on valuable local expertise to review the final selection of planting.
- The panel feels that the informal design of the planting and boundary condition adjacent to Plot 15 is sensible, given the uncertainty of future development on this parcel of land.

### *Materiality, street furniture and lighting*

- The retention of the existing carriageway surface and reuse of construction waste materials for the gabion seating is positive, and will reduce the carbon footprint of the park.
- The panel suggests exploring further opportunities for material reuse, for instance reuse of offcuts or ducting within the space.

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- Consideration of the number and placement of bins should be discussed with the council's highways team. This will help ensure that the space is well-maintained and kept tidy.
- The panel suggests considering including a drinking fountain, which are becoming popular in other public open spaces across London.
- The decision to limit cycling through the park is supported, and the panel feels that this will help make the space comfortable for pedestrians and people sitting.
- However, it questions how this will be achieved, particularly as the cycle store for the new development will be accessed through this space. Bollards or similar street furniture may be needed.
- The proposed lighting is well-considered, and the panel likes the reference to the existing gasholder.
- It suggests exploring options to light the tree canopies, as well as street lighting. This could be particularly successful for the specimen tree at the entrance from Old Kent Road, to highlight the entrance to the pocket park as an additional wayfinding measure.
- The panel suggests reviewing the signage and wayfinding, to ensure that it is inclusive and accessible for all. There are concerns that white text on the orange background could be difficult to read.
- Including QR codes on signage and information boards could give information about the history of the site, as well as how it sits within the wider vision for the Growth Area.
- Given the multi-cultural character of Old Kent Road, adding minority languages could also be beneficial.

### *Play*

- The panel recognises that the site is not appropriate for formal play equipment, but it welcomes the provision of informal areas that provide a safe place for parents to sit with children.
- The provision of a chess board is positive, and the panel would like to see more of these types of features included, if possible.
- Outdoor table tennis could be very popular, but the panel appreciates that the space may be too small. It would, however, like to see the option tested.

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## *Stewardship and community*

- The panel would like to see more community involvement in both the design and delivery of the space. Potential opportunities for ongoing management and stewardship should be discussed with community groups and residents.
- Providing areas for communal food growing should be considered. These could also be integrated with the café use, with products grown on site used within the kitchen.
- Working with local groups, such as the Friends of Burgess Park, could help to initiate community activities in the pocket park once complete.

## *Phasing and delivery*

- The panel has concerns that the delivery of the pocket park will rely on the adjacent development coming forward. As progress on site has stalled, it would like to understand whether elements of the garden could come forward in advance of the building work.
- Meanwhile opportunities or interim solutions could be considered, to introduce features of the pocket park ahead of the development. The panel references other local examples, such as the temporary garden at Elephant and Castle, which used movable planters and timber palette structures.

## *Next steps*

- The panel looks forward to seeing how the project progresses and the development of the final designs.