

Old Kent Road Community Review Panel

Report of Community Review: Bermondsey Place

Monday 19 May 2025
231 Old Kent Road, London SE1 5LU

Panel

Deborah Denner (chair)
Simon Donovan
Margaret Higgins
Mike Levitt
Rahul Mani
Aaron Mo
Saidat Oketunde
Sarah Osei
Daniel Quinn

Attendees

Tim Cutts	London Borough of Southwark
Paul Ricketts	London Borough of Southwark
Kirsty McMullan	Frame Projects
Yingli Tang	Frame Projects

Apologies / copied to

Gurmeet Sian	Old Kent Road Community Review Panel chair
Alex Cameron	London Borough of Southwark
Jessica Potter	London Borough of Southwark
Colin Wilson	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

Bermondsey Place (formerly Malt Street Regeneration Site and Nye's Wharf)

2. Presenting team

Joe Ward Aldam	Berkeley Homes
Molly Brennan	Berkeley Homes
Carolina Ferrando	PRP Architects
Samuel Birtles	SpaceHub
Matthew Williams	Avison Young

3. Planning authority briefing

The site is located within Old Kent Road Site Allocation OKR10. The Area Action Plan (AAP) expects a residential-led mixed-use development, to include retail, community, employment, and commercial uses. The proposal would qualify as part of Phase One of the Old Kent Road Housing Delivery Pipeline.

The AAP also expects the site to deliver the spine of the Greener Belt Strategy – the Surrey Canal Park that runs along the alignment of the historic canal previously linking Burgess Park to the Old Kent Road. This will provide safe walking and leisure routes for children and families, and connect existing local park spaces to each other. The park will be delivered in sections as the development sites are built out. There will also be new sections of road for residential servicing access only.

In line with the stations and crossings strategy, the scale of development is greatest at the crossing where Peckham Park Road and Rotherhithe New Road meet the Old Kent Road. Building heights then reduce towards the west of OKR10 where the Glengall Road Conservation Area and Burgess Park are located.

The applicant benefits from hybrid planning permission: detailed for Phase One, and outline for Phases Two and Three. The alternative scheme now proposed would deliver approximately 200 homes less than the existing consent, which is a total of 1400 homes. This proposal will not affect the approved Phase One scheme but is a re-design of Phases Two and Three. This is due to viability issues relating to materials, scale, architectural design, and the need to provide enhanced fire safety measures. The basement has been removed, building heights have been reduced, and double stair cores have been incorporated, among other design changes. The quantum of affordable housing is not yet agreed. The amendments also bring both sites into a single permission to ensure a cohesive approach to redevelopment.

Officers asked for the panel's comments on connectivity and integration into the wider context; non-residential uses; height and massing; architecture; and the quality of the emerging landscape and housing proposals.

4. Community Review Panel's views

Summary

The Old Kent Road Community Review Panel welcomes the proposal for a mixed-use development to regenerate the site and reconnect this part of the city. Further work is needed to ensure that the scheme will create a strong community, and provide high-quality homes and landscaping that meet their needs.

The scheme should aim to create a cohesive community, with local facilities and a sense of human scale. The masterplan will improve connectivity in the area, especially between existing public open spaces. Segregated cycle and pedestrian routes are recommended, and there should be convenient routes to key amenities. The amount of green space is welcomed, but microclimate testing is needed for it to be well-used. The landscaped spaces should create a new offer for the area, be inclusive, and increase biodiversity. The provision and design of the bandstand should be further considered as it could be a source of disturbance for residents. The ground floor uses should be curated to support both the new and the existing wider community. This will help to embed the scheme socially, as well as physically, into its context. The light industrial spaces should be flexible, avoid competing with nearby offers, and activate the public realm. The height and massing should be tested in street level views. Block Nine's distinctive architectural character is successful. The other blocks would benefit from more variety. This will also contribute to wayfinding and creating a strong sense of place. Further information is needed to assess the quality of the homes, particularly internally. The project team is encouraged to provide winter gardens, instead of projecting balconies, for better year-round use.

Community

- The panel asks for more work to create a cohesive community with local facilities. A helpful precedent for a well-integrated scheme is the Elephant Park development, by Lendlease, in London's Elephant and Castle.
- The unknown quantity of affordable housing, together with the likely number of homes for rent, could create a transient population. As people are more likely to contribute to the community if they are invested for the long term, the panel recommends maximising the number of social rent and shared ownership homes that will be provided.
- More opportunities for young people should be incorporated into the proposals. In both the indoor and outdoor spaces, the scheme could build connections to local youth groups, bolstering their programmes.
- Apprenticeships, education and employment opportunities would also be valuable to young people and would strengthen the community.
- Considering the long timeline for construction, a meanwhile use should be considered for the Phases Two and Three sites. This would contribute to a sense of place and improved public perception of the development.

Connectivity

- The panel supports the masterplan layout. It will improve connectivity in a currently disjointed part of the Old Kent Road area, including linking existing public green spaces.
- Malt Street boulevard and Bianca Road linear park are particularly positive additions and will help to bring the wider community into the development.
- The Surrey Linear Canal Park nearby is heavily used, and cyclists often travel at high speeds. Segregated cycle and footpaths are recommended to avoid similar issues.
- There should be convenient routes to key amenities for future residents. This analysis should also inform the locations of the block entrances.
- The panel asks for direct access to the Asda supermarket car park, as well as a new link to its entrance on Old Kent Road.

Public realm

- The amount of green space provided is commendable, and will be especially valuable in an area where most people live in flats with no gardens.
- However, the panel is concerned that the public realm will not be well-used if it is windy and overshadowed by tall buildings. Microclimate testing is required to refine the proposed height and massing of buildings, and demonstrate that the new public realm will be comfortable, with sunny areas for a large part of each day.
- In the panel's experience, the green spaces around the residential buildings in post-war estates, such as Longland Court nearby, are not well-used because they do not offer a range of high-quality spaces and are often overshadowed. The scheme landscape should be developed with this in mind, to create areas with different characters and uses.
- The panel suggests drawing on the local heritage of the Surrey Canal, and incorporating water into the proposals. A lido, for instance, would offer a useful new community leisure facility and bring people together in the central square.
- Opinions were divided on whether a bandstand is appropriate in the central space. Some panel members felt it would be a positive feature, but concerns were raised about noise from events disturbing nearby residents.
- If the bandstand is retained, then the design should mitigate this as far as possible. A sunken arrangement with an acoustically designed roof could help, and would also work for seating.

- The project team should also consider how the bandstand would be programmed to encourage uses that residents will enjoy, and that will discourage anti-social behaviour. The panel enjoys how the existing bandstand in Southwark Park, for example, is used as a practice space for Latin American dance by locals.
- The uses and lighting throughout the masterplan, but particularly on Latona Road, should ensure active frontages with good natural surveillance and overlooking, to create a safe and welcoming environment.
- The panel asks for more detail on the planting strategy. It suggests working with the London Wildlife Trust to find appropriate native species and improve biodiversity. There should also be a clear maintenance and management plan.
- As the landscape character areas are developed, the designs should include sensory planting, and places where residents could bring younger siblings to play. The landscaping at Kidbrooke Village may provide a useful reference.

Ground floor uses

- The ground floor uses should respond to the needs of the community, not only to market research. The project team should work with the local authority to find out if there are amenities, such as a dentist or nursery, that are in demand. These uses could enclose and contribute to a civic central square.
- The range of non-residential uses in Old Kent Road have changed significantly over the past 60 years or so. The project team is encouraged to think about how they might change in the next 60 years.
- The spaces should be flexible, to futureproof the scheme and attract the widest possible range of tenants. This could include consideration of modular design, moveable internal walls, sufficient extraction, sound proofing, and internal ceiling heights to allow for the future addition of mezzanine levels.
- Care should also be taken to ensure that the ground floor uses do not replicate provisions in nearby emerging developments, or compete with local high streets.
- The project team should consider allocating some ground floor units for learning and creative production. This would complement the bandstand and help to activate the public realm. Spaces for events could also be used by local schools, artists and residents.
- The degree of activation at night from the ground floor uses should contribute to the safety and comfort of passers-by.
- The ground floor uses should also attract people from the surrounding area into the development. A successful local example of this in action is the Bottle Factory, on Ossory Road.

- The project team should consider engaging with Space Studios and the Arch Climbing Wall in Bermondsey, who may be looking for new spaces.
- The ground floor units could appeal to small, light industrial uses, such as independent breweries or small hospitality businesses looking to move on from a market stall to a permanent workspace.
- If this kind of light industrial use is desirable, then the servicing strategy should be adapted as they may require direct vehicular access to their unit.

Height and massing

- While the panel did not specifically comment on the proposed height and massing, it is concerned that they will create windy, overshadowed spaces at ground level.
- Southwark Council should assure itself that the scheme will create sunny, comfortable spaces, in its assessment of the tall buildings proposed.
- Some people could find it daunting to move through a development of this scale, particularly at night. Street level views should be produced to test and develop the proposals.
- The project team is encouraged to think about creating a distinct identity that will feel safe and help people to find their way around, avoiding a monotonous skyline or amorphous mass of development.

Architecture

- The appearance of Block Nine, designed as the landmark building, works well. The panel enjoys the specialness and character created through materiality and colour. The project team is encouraged to consider how similar personality and delight could be spread throughout the masterplan.
- Using brick as the primary external material for all other buildings references the Victorian industrial context and heritage of the area, but could become homogenous. There should be more variation in design and materials between buildings to create distinct identities within a cohesive development.
- More work is needed on wayfinding, navigation and sense of address for future residents. The designs should allow people to easily describe to a visitor which block they live in and floor their flat is on.
- The panel enjoys the industrial warehouse aesthetic, and thinks that it can work well on smaller scale buildings, for example, at One Tower Bridge. However, it can feel intimidating when applied to tall buildings. Further consideration of the façade treatment is needed.

Housing

- Limited information was presented on the quality of the homes. The panel asks for details of the internal layouts, internal views, and materials.
- Issues such as the acoustics between homes should be considered during the next stage of design development to ensure liveability.
- Given increasing summer temperatures, the provision of private outdoor amenity space brings benefits including natural light, air, and a place for residents to dry laundry and relax.
- However, the panel questions the usability of projecting balconies, especially on the upper levels of tall buildings. These could be windy and feel exposed.
- The project team should explore whether winter gardens could be provided instead. As well as creating amenity space that is usable year-round, winter gardens provide an acoustic barrier from the noise of the surrounding construction site for residents of the earlier phases.

Next steps

- The Old Kent Road Community Review Panel is available to review Bermondsey Place again should this be helpful to officers.