

Peckham and Nunhead Community Council Meeting Deputation notes

We've come here today on behalf of the Peckham Planning Network and over 4,500 people who have signed our online and paper petition since August last year to ask Southwark Council to put on hold inviting development proposals including a tall building on the site of the Aylesham Centre and Morrison's car park.

In May 2014, the planning inspector decided to remove the cinema/multi-storey car park from the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan, so that "following further research, a more considered proposal for the site could be devised... during the preparation of the New Southwark Plan."

We are therefore asking Southwark Council to consider any proposal for the future development of the Aylesham Centre and Morrison's car park, jointly with that for the cinema/multi-storey car park, and not before.

Peckham's reputation both in London and further afield has improved dramatically in recent years, thanks in part to investment by Southwark Council but also due to the increasing number of cultural events that have been based here.

Bold Tendencies and Frank's Café on the top level of the multi-storey car park and Rooftop Film Club and the Zubrowka bar on the roof of the Bussey Building have become flagship venues for the area, attracting tens of thousands of people to Peckham during the summer months.

These businesses are a significant part of the new developing creative and cultural industry sector which is enormously valuable to Peckham's local economy because people spend money not only at these venues but also at other shops, bars and restaurants nearby. This new sector is the fastest growing one in the UK economy, and it widens considerably the skills set potentially needed in the local economy. This is of great significance to the theme of this Community Council meeting of Education, Employment and Training.

But the role of these venues isn't purely economic. They provide spaces for people to experience beauty and life transforming cultural opportunities, like the spectacular view and the amazing multi-story orchestra. These opportunities are in turn linking with innovative developments in local schools programmes. They have also generated a great deal of positive publicity for Peckham in the London, national and international press, helping to transform its image in just a few years of operation.

The Evening Standard, Metro, Time Out, The Times, The Financial Times, The Mail, The Guardian, Vogue, Conde Nast Traveller, Glamour, Kinfolk, British Airways High Life magazine and Virgin Australia's Voyeur magazine are just some of the publications that have run features on Peckham and specifically its rooftop venues. Coverage has consistently mentioned the spectacular views across the city that the venues offer – a view that would be threatened if a 20-storey tower were built directly in front of the multi-storey car park and the Bussey Building.

Here are some examples:

"A view north London could never offer: the major landmarks in a neat line." British Airways High Life magazine on Frank's Café, June 2013.

"The space boasts incredible views of the city skyline and beautiful sunsets." Vogue magazine, May 2012.

"Feast your eyes on Central London from afar - you can see the Gherkin, the London Eye and the Shard among the city skyline." Conde Nast Traveller.

"Where else offers 360 degree views of the city?" London Evening Standard feature on Peckham, April 2014.

The view from Bold Tendencies, Frank's Café and the Bussey Building has become iconic and is as much a part of the experience of visiting Peckham as going to the rooftop venues themselves, and so we believe its importance should be taken into account in any planning decisions.

We also believe that there are many possibilities for the cinema and multi-storey car park building other than demolition. We have been in touch with the Council's Head of Regeneration in Peckham, Neil Kirby, who has agreed to discuss with us the ideas we are currently exploring.

In presenting this petition, we're not seeking to oppose redevelopment of the Aylesham Centre and Morrison's car park. We're not seeking to oppose the building of a large number of homes on the site. We're not even seeking to oppose the building of a tower itself. They are matters which will come up in responding to a planning application.

What we're asking is for Southwark Council to put on hold encouraging plans for a tall building on the site until the future of the cinema/multi-storey car park site has been discussed and agreed so that the best decision for Peckham as a whole can be made.

At this stage when the Council is consulting until 6th March on the issues and options for the New Southwark Plan, it seems very appropriate to ask the Community Council to support our request.

I'd just like to finish on a quote from someone who has signed the petition to protect Peckham's rooftop views on Change.org:

"A petition to protect a view from a multi-storey car-park. Could anything sound more frivolous?"

Only if you've been up there on a summer's evening and soaked up the city can you appreciate how this is one of the most breathtaking experiences London has to offer. It would be a terrible shame to lose it."

Thank you.