

Peckham Town Centre and the Proposed Tram Depot

A briefing* from *Peckham Vision*
Revised January 2007



Site 63P/71P (red hatched area) in the heart of Peckham Town Centre.

"There are however important matters in the selection of this site that greatly trouble me... Site 63P is far from derelict.. I suspect that besides the actual number of jobs on it, the land provides good opportunities for new and small businesses... The erroneous description of site 63P is unfortunate, to put it mildly."

Inspector's Report on Objections to the Southwark Plan paras 1.9.3.46/49

Contents

1. Front Cover
2. Summary of Briefing
3. Comparison of size of Single-site with Split-Site plans
4. Role of Site in Integrated Growth of Peckham Town Centre
5. Selection of Peckham for the Tram Depot
6. Impact of Tram Depot on Peckham Town Centre
7. The Way Forward

* The material in this briefing is drawn by *Peckham Vision* from various sources, including UDP documents, and reports and plans released by TfL under the Freedom of Information Act.

2. PECKHAM TOWN CENTRE AND THE PROPOSED TRAM DEPOT

Summary

This briefing pack is designed to outline the issues raised by the proposal to locate the Cross River Tram Depot on Site 63P/71P in the heart of Peckham Town Centre, and to indicate the way forward. Whereas the tram promises significant regeneration benefits for Peckham as a whole, this is not the case for the tram depot. More jobs and businesses would be lost than created by the depot.

Strategic importance of Site 63P/71P in integrated development of the town centre.

Site 63P/71P is the major development proposal affecting Peckham in the UDP, and page 4 in this briefing outlines its importance in the integrated growth of Peckham Town Centre. It covers nearly 7 acres of the town centre (about 4 football pitches). It is at the heart of significant economic, social and community activities.

Flawed assessment and ‘defective’ decision to locate depot in Peckham

The decision to designate site 63P/71P for the tram depot (and the bus depot) was based on a flawed assessment of the existing uses and activities on the site. Page 5 gives some of the details of this.

‘Split-Site’ Plans not smaller in effect

The new plans for a ‘split-site’ depot have not resolved this as the land required is similar in scale to the original ‘single-site’ plans. This is illustrated by the maps on page 3 comparing the footprint of the different plans. The UDP provides no constraints on the size of the depot, thus allowing the TfL plans still to close off this very large area of Peckham from town centre use.

Disturbance and destructive impact on current uses

The current uses on the site, all of which are now threatened with blight, dislocation and possible destruction, are very varied – hundreds of jobs, many small businesses, a large artists’ community, 9 Black & Minority Ethnic faith community groups. Both on the site and adjoining it are hundreds of homes all of which will suffer disturbance from the operation of a tram depot. Page 6 outlines these aspects in more detail.

Right location for the tram depot

Peckham is at the end of the line for the proposed Tram. There are strong technical, operational and cost reasons for the end of the line not being the ideal location for the depot. For the sake of the Tram project, it is critical to select the right places for the depots for the Cross River Tram. A comprehensive transparent review of all depot site options along the entire proposed tram route is therefore essential.

The Way Forward

- Council to recognise the strategic importance of Site 63P/71P for the integrated development of Peckham Town Centre, and to support the effective participation of the community through the joint Community Council PAAP (Peckham Area Action Plan) working group in assessing the impact of the depot plans on the town centre.
- Council to ensure a transparent and fair depot site selection process and to press TfL to make public, before the tram depot consultation, the time frame and criteria used in identifying and assessing all the potential sites, including an accurate assessment of the depot impact on each.

Peckham Vision is a community consortium of local residents, artists and businesses that has come together, with the Peckham Society, to seek information about the development plans for Peckham Town Centre, including the tram & depot, raise public awareness of these issues and stimulate an informed discussion about the future of Peckham.

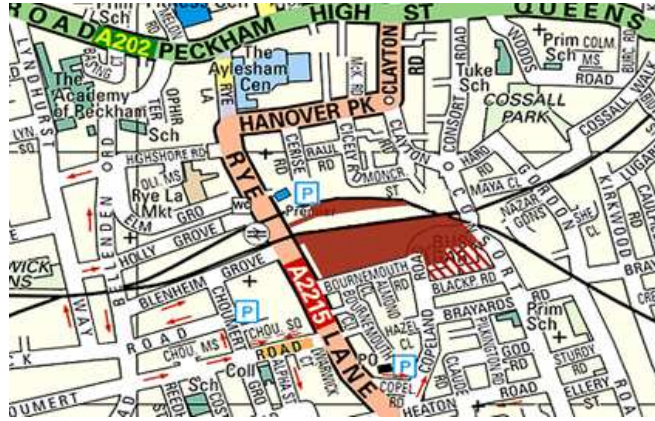
info@peckham.vision.org

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ORIGINAL 'SINGLE-SITE' PLAN COMPARED WITH NEW 'SPLIT-SITE' PLANS

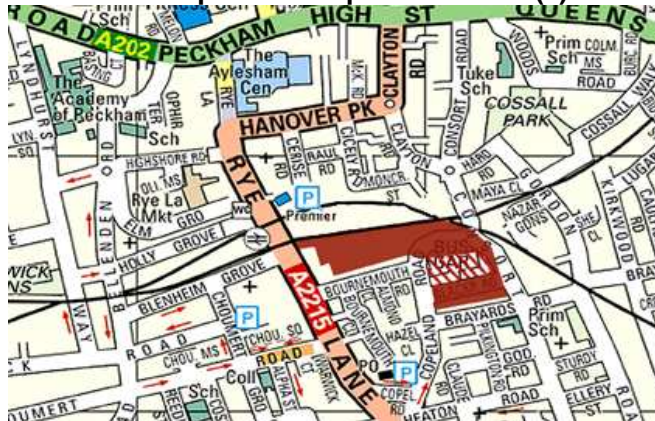
Key: depot plan shaded red; bus garage hatched red
Maps illustrate depot outlines to show relative sizes and locations

Original 'Single-Site' Depot Draft Plan



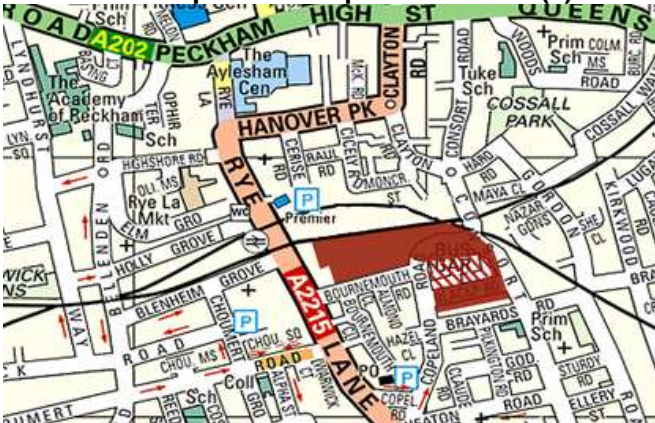
Size: approx 28,000 sq metres, 6.9 acres, 4.7 football pitches

New 'Split-site' Depot Draft Plan (1)



Size: approx 26,300 sq metres, 6.5 acres, 4.4 football pitches

New 'Split-Site' Depot Draft Plan (2)



Size: approx 26,300 sq metres, 6.5 acres, 4.4 football pitches

4. ROLE OF SITE 63P/71P IN INTEGRATED GROWTH OF PECKHAM TOWN CENTRE

Adaptable varied buildings

Peckham is an expanding and flourishing south London community, and 'site 63P/71P' is an active and interesting contributor to the economic, social and cultural life of Peckham. This positive change has been evolving naturally over the last decade. It is made possible because the site is characterised by a mixture of commercial and industrial buildings.

- The buildings provide numerous varied and flexible spaces capable of adapting and being converted to a variety of economic, trading, creative, social and community use, including housing, office and studio spaces or retail.
- the current diverse uses of this site show that these old buildings have been nurturing some of Peckham's emergent businesses producing a variety of products and services.
- The site provides a secure base for new & emerging trading and creative enterprises, contributing significantly to the local economy, including hundreds of jobs.

Historical Industrial Architecture

One of London's architectural success stories has been the re-use of its industrial buildings. Southwark in particular has some excellent examples: re-use of warehouses and mills in Bermondsey and Shad Thames, the re-inhabiting of factories around Southwark Street amongst others.

- Site 63P/71P has two noteworthy industrial buildings in good shape, The Bussey building and the former Holdron's stores on Bournemouth Road.
- The Bussey building is one of the most significant examples of historic industrial architecture in this part of Southwark. George Bussey was an innovative and leading British manufacturer on this site of Sporting goods equipment in the 19th and 20th centuries, and a contributor to the British war effort.
- The present building is a good example of early steel and 'ferro-concrete' industrial architecture dating from the turn of the 19th century.
- This and several other buildings on the site form an important part of Peckham's industrial archaeology.

Creative industries and enterprises

Artists helped lead the regeneration of Southwark's riverside industrial buildings, finding cheap, flexible spaces suited to their diverse work.

- The Bussey building on site 63P/71P in Peckham currently has more than 60 artists' studios. A successful series of exhibitions over the past two years have brought artists and interested members of the public to Peckham from all over London.
- The studios and gallery at the Bussey Building have become a popular outlet for new work alongside the South London Art Gallery and Area 10 at the old canal head.
- This is all part of the wider creative economy which has been naturally evolving and emerging in Peckham for the last few decades. Many aspects of the performance arts and related parts of the leisure economy have put down roots in Peckham.
- Site 63P/71P is already playing a role in this, and has potential to make an even more significant contribution.

Community & social uses

The rejection of the original depot plan has saved the new and planned housing on the Rye Lane frontage. There is much scope for more attractive housing, complementary to the industrial buildings.

- Meanwhile, the views over Peckham & central London from the roof of the Bussey building are worth the trip alone, and could become a feature of further integrated development.
- there are 9 faith community groups with congregations meeting in spaces on this site.
- There is scope for other community uses including voluntary & community sector accommodation and facilities.

Strategic Vision

- The designation of a major part of site 63P/71P for a single high security use, closed off from the rest of the town, is a loss of its significant potential for integrated growth, and will reverse the regeneration which is underway. It is counter to the basic principles of good urban design.
- The site is a place for Peckham to expand into and develop for mixed uses, building on the commercial and cultural presence on the site, as part of the strategic vision to open up the space in front of the magnificent Station buildings, and transform that central part of Rye Lane.

5. SELECTION OF THE PECKHAM SITE FOR THE TRAM DEPOT

Background to Choice of Site

In 2003/4, there were 2 studies of over 25 potential sites commissioned by TfL. Site 63P (now called Site 71P) was rejected in the first study, but was one of 5 sites on the second short-list.

- In 2004, the consultants' report compared the 5 sites for their suitability for the depot, and the regeneration impact the depot would have.
- The Peckham site 63P was assessed as 'derelict' and so locating the tram depot there was said to have only positive regeneration effects and no economic or social losses.
- This was compared with the losses in other locations where existing uses were properly acknowledged in the comparison.
- Peckham was chosen because it was said a depot could only be beneficial, because the site was derelict.

Inspector on the Choice of Peckham (Site 63P)

The Inspector said:

- "Surprisingly, the Depot Study .. refers to ... the existing derelict status of the site" ... "My detailed inspection of buildings and other land convinces me that that these descriptions are simply not true, and that the Study's findings ... are wide of the mark." [1.9.3.46]
- "... *there is a serious risk that mis-information has resulted in the premature discarding of alternative sites and the doubtful selection of site 63P for a tram depot*" ... "*The comparative evaluation and site selection process have been defective*" .."*On this matter alone I do not endorse the Council's proposals for the land*" ... [1.9.3.49]
- "*I am not convinced that site 63P is the only feasible option for a single or principal tram depot*" [1.9.3.49]
- "*Better access to Peckham is not a strong argument in favour of the depot*" [1.9.3.64]

Split-Site Depot

So, the Inspector rejected the original plan to locate the very big whole 'single-site' depot on Site 63P. He said there should be a smaller depot in Peckham, with another part elsewhere, called a 'split-site'. He recognised that a 'split-site' solution

- "...would result in loss of existing jobs and attendant disruption, albeit less so. The extent of this harm would depend on the size of the depot and its arrangement within Site 63P" [1.9.3.61]

But he said it would be possible for a partial 'split-site' depot to provide

- "adequate space and suitable type and layout of buildings to ensure reasonable protection of the majority of the jobs and of residential amenity." [1.9.3.62]

New 'Split-Site' Plans

TfL's new plans provide stabling (parking) for 35 trams instead of 48, plus the same light and heavy engineering maintenance facilities.

- This is rearranging the depot, rather than making it substantially smaller: reducing it by less than half an acre from 6.9 acres to 6.5 acres.
- Most of the existing activities on the site would be destroyed, and many more homes would suffer disturbance.
- This does not reflect the spirit of the Inspector's report that a 'split-site' depot should give reasonable protection to the majority of jobs and residential amenity

Redressing a defective decision

The choice of Peckham followed a flawed selection process in which the proposed site was wrongly described as 'derelict' and not compared accurately with others. New-split site plans have not addressed this, nor the impact of closing off a very large strategic area from town centre use. To redress this:

- TfL needs to do a comprehensive transparent review before the tram depot consultation of all the possible tram depot locations, including the accurate assessment of existing uses and respective roles of the sites.

6. IMPACT OF TRAM DEPOT ON PECKHAM TOWN CENTRE

The earliest the tram would be in operation would be 2016. Yet Site 63P/71P, a large part of the Town Centre, will be blighted and will deteriorate throughout that time. This central area already has vibrant small businesses, creative arts and places of worship. The depot plan would destroy these and close off the heart of Peckham to town centre activities. The effects of this have never been examined. There are sound reasons why there is an urgent need to examine the impact of the tram depot on Peckham and compare this with other site options before settling for site 63P/71P as the preferred location. The impact includes:

Loss of hundreds of jobs

The Government Planning Inspector rejected the original depot plan because of its local impact and loss of jobs. He recommended instead a 'split-site' depot with a part in Peckham and a part somewhere else. But the new plans do not make any significant difference and still have very disruptive and damaging effects.

Closure of small businesses

There are currently 40 or more local businesses, most of them run by Black and Ethnic Minority traders. Many of these businesses have built a customer base that relocation will seriously disrupt. Despite any compensation, there is no guarantee that these businesses will be relocated to premises that they can afford. Moreover it is likely to take several years for these businesses to rebuild their customer base in a new location

Places of worship & faith community groups

The most recent TfL report (Tram Berthing and Maintenance Facility Phase 2 Report, September 2006) wrongly states that there is 1 place of worship on site 63P/71P. Over 9 Black and Minority Ethnic community faith groups have places of worship on the site. Many of these faith groups provide social support for some of the most disadvantaged members of our community who often have difficulties accessing mainstream services. The tram depot development will disrupt this local social support network.

Destruction of a thriving local artists' community

Far from the site being 'derelict' it is home to over 60 local artists' studios. This vibrant artists community have working space on the site and have held a number of unique local exhibitions over the past two years.

24 hour 7 day week operations close to hundreds of homes

Other examples of tram depots in the UK provide extensive sterile areas containing nothing more than sidings; engineering works, washing sheds, floodlighting and security fencing. Such depots are traditionally kept away from residential developments. Despite arguments that the impact of light and noise pollution will be mitigated, these remain matters of serious concern, considering the closeness of the proposed depot to residential properties on Atwell Estate, Copeland Road, Consort Road.

Traffic

Current plans for the tram depot mean that trams would have to share the road with other traffic at Consort Road railway bridge. This is likely to result in traffic congestion there and dispersal of traffic across Peckham. In addition, Blackpool Road and part of Copeland Road will be closed off, diverting traffic to the doorstep of the primary school. This will be further compounded by plans to relocate both the reconfigured Bus Depot entrance and the delivery access to the tram depot stores on an already congested Copeland Road and Brayards Road.

7. THE WAY FORWARD

We suggest that there are two key questions which need to be answered:

Q1. *What is the right place to locate the Tram Depot?*

Q2. *What is the right use of site 63P/71P for the future of Peckham Town Centre?*

The following proposals suggest some ways in which these questions can be explored.

Proposal to the Councillors

1. Location of the Tram Depot

* A recent TfL report ('Tram Berthing and Maintenance Facility Phase 2 Report Sep 2006) comments:

- "Ensuring that there is a sound, defensible, comprehensive basis to the selection of depot sites is fundamental to [the Cross River Tram]." [para 20.3.2]

And recommends that there should be a:

- "- Comprehensive site review, initially property based, exploring potential sites over entire Cross River Tram network area.
 - Further investigation into existing use and users of sites explored in this report."
- [para10a & 10b]

Such a review is needed before the tram depot location consultation, and would provide the information necessary to have an informed public discussion.

We ask that the Council uses its position on the Cross River Partnership to press TfL to;

- commit to the comprehensive review of depot site locations, before the tram depot consultation
- make public the details of the review, including the timeframe, and the criteria used in identifying and assessing all the potential sites, including an accurate impact assessment on each location.

2. Strategic Importance of Site 63P/71P & Community Engagement

We ask that Councillors:

- recognise the role and future of Site 63P/71P as of strategic importance for the future of Peckham Town Centre.
- back the joint working group that has been agreed between Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Council and Peckham Community Council as a way of involving the community in influencing the Peckham Area Action Plan and in discussing regeneration issues affecting Peckham Town Centre including the future of this site, and the effect of the tram and tram depot proposals.