HUNDREDS OF angry residents crowded into Rye Lane Baptist Chapel on Saturday to tell Network Rail what they thought about the latest plans for Peckham Rye station.

Following a public consultation event in December, architects Weston Williamson released their first concept designs for the £25 million station revamp and were met with a “bubbling hatred,” according to James Fisher, co-owner of Peckham Refreshment Rooms.

The main changes to the provisional scheme presented in December are the addition of four blocks of flats between four and seven storeys high in Blenheim Grove and Holly Grove and buildings in Blenheim Grove now earmarked for businesses instead of houses.

Business owners and community group Peckham Vision are frustrated that the council is going ahead with this plan, which will oust businesses behind the station, despite Fiona Colley, Southwark Council cabinet member for regeneration and corporate strategy, saying at a council meeting in May that it “did not need full vacant possession at the rear or sides of the station, but only at the front.”

Cllr Colley said at the same meeting that what Peckham needed was more “leisure and cultural facilities such as bars, restaurants and galleries... such as Bar Story and the Sassoon Gallery...” These same businesses, along with the Hannah Barry Gallery in Holly Grove and Peckham Refreshment Rooms in Blenheim Grove, will have to leave and could be priced out if the rents are too high when the development is finished.

“It’s breaking my heart,” said James, who ploughed £50,000 into doing up the Peckham Refreshment Rooms in Blenheim Grove. “It’s my life savings I’ve put into this place.”

Eileen Conn, of Peckham Vision, said the council was going to wipe out Peckham’s new arts scene before it had a chance to get established. “It’s like an embryo growing in the womb, hacking off its leg and still expecting it to grow.”

Eileen said the angry public reaction at Saturday’s meeting was because residents were “shell shocked” at the council’s decision to proceed with the larger scale development despite public opposition.

“The council says the ongoing criticism about a lack of consultation is unfair and that the plans revealed on Saturday took into account the comments received in December, as well as additional consultation planned for March before the planning application is submitted in April. Cllr Colley said: “It was apparent at Saturday’s public meeting that there is still lots of work to do on the plans. Specifically, we need a clearer vision for Dovedale Court at the rear of the station, with a guarantee from Network Rail that the thriving creative industries in the area will form a part of the plans and not be priced out.”

“This event was intended to give people an opportunity to comment on the early plans, and we have heard and taken on board their comments. We don’t want to do this without the support of local people and therefore the council will now be working with its partners to ensure the next set of plans more closely reflect what residents and businesses want to see.”