

Peckham Rye Station Gateway Project

Email 21 October 2013 from Eileen Conn to Cllr Fiona Colley, and Fiona Colley reply

Dear Fiona

We have read the architects' Design Brief and the Council's agreement with the GLA, which we were given in response to our FOI request at our recent meeting with you, and have now seen your final report circulated to the Cabinet for tomorrow's meeting. We are puzzled and disappointed by some aspects of what is being said in these documents and need some clarification.

ARCHITECTS' DESIGN BRIEF

The Design Brief (para 4.1.2) requires applicants to submit their ideas and responses to the preferred option layout which is shown in Appx A on page 16 of the Brief (map attached for reference).

We note that this is a detailed land use design concept. At the Scrutiny meeting, when we said that there had been no discussion with us or public engagement about the conceptual design, we were told there had been no conceptual discussion to involve us in. But it looks from this map as if the concept has been decided and submissions invited on its implementation.

RESERVATIONS

The preferred design concept seems to show a major redevelopment of the buildings and land behind the station and along Blenheim Grove. This looks like a major one-off reconstruction of the whole of Dovedale Court, Blenheim Grove and Holly Grove commercial buildings. Such a development would be consistent with the aim to secure vacant possession which we drew attention to in the deputation last April as one which would likely kill off existing creative enterprises, and probably produce premises not conducive to the kind of organic growth that you have said the Council is aiming for.

In Schedule 5 page 47 to the GLA agreement it says that the proposal is to build on the success of the thriving local bar scene for example the popular Bar Story located there within the arches, which is complemented by a strong artistic community in the locality. But in fact the preferred design option would finish Bar Story and the other cultural enterprises which are located in Dovedale Court/Blenheim Grove.

We are pleased to see that The Arches in Blenheim Court are not now included in the design concept, but note that this does not preclude that area from being swept up under refurbishment in line with the model which appears to be being imposed on the rest of the site.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE DESIGN CONCEPT

Over the last 12 months we have expressed our concern that there has been no point at which the public and various stakeholders have been able to contribute to the thinking before what appears to be a detailed land use concept stage has been reached. This is contrary to what we were told at the beginning that there would be some form of competition, the results of which would be displayed in public to invite public engagement in this conversation, and so enable a public discussion about the different options for the developments related to the creation of the station square.

Indeed we see that the Council's agreement with the GLA in Schedule 1 on page 29 is explicit in the importance given to a creative and meaningful engagement with the stakeholders and local community and that the programme of community engagement will both inform the design process and ensure the widest possible support for the project. This is the opposite of what has happened. There has been no meaningful engagement with stakeholders or wider community. Businesses have been so uninvolved on the site that when last week what looked like architects, preparing to submit proposals in relation to the brief, are seen on site no one has any idea who they are or why they are there, because they know nothing of the architects' brief or the commissioning process which has already got to the stage of a preferred option.

Many local people who support the creation of the new square will not be aware that, after all that has been said, this still appears to be tied to the wholesale clear out of the area to the side and behind the station in one go. This instead of letting it find its own organic development, building on the success of the businesses already thriving there, as Schedule 5 page 47 says is the aim.

We only know because we have had to seek these documents under FOI to discover the basic information that the conceptual design stage has been completed without any stakeholder having a chance to contribute ideas. This seems in breach of the provisions in Schedule 1 of the Agreement with the GLA.

SOLUTION?

Maybe we haven't understood accurately the documents or the stage which has been reached, so we would be glad if you could clarify for us as soon as possible exactly what the planning application to be prepared by the architects for submission in February will cover. Is it the whole of the Gateway project or just the parts directly related to the new station square?

We feel that to comply with the agreement with the GLA the commissioned architects will need to have the scope to modify or interpret the brief in the light of feedback from the public, especially the concepts underlying the nature of the new square and the range and scope of developments in the buildings in Holly Grove, Blenheim Grove and the arches at the rear of the station. Without that scope to be flexible, it will be difficult, maybe impossible, to achieve community support.

The idea of an architectural competition and exhibition, which was initially promised but now has been dropped, would have given the local community a meaningful opportunity to help shape this, once in a lifetime, re-working of central Rye Lane. In the absence of this, can you ensure the chosen design team have the flexibility to work up some variants of their Gateway designs for public display? This may be your only opportunity to bring forward a scheme that has real community support, as they would have a voice in it.

After our useful meeting with you on 10th October we were looking forward to working with you and Council officers to develop closer collaboration between local people and the development of the Gateway project. We hope therefore that you will confirm there will be scope to modify the preferred option in the light of public feedback.

Eileen Conn

<http://www.peckhamvision.org>

Email from Fiona Colley in reply 22 October 2013

Hi Eileen

I can reiterate again that there is no intention from the council for a complete clear out of all businesses around the station. We made that clear with the Cabinet report in June and that hasn't changed.

Appendix one of the design brief contains a preferred design from the Landolt and Brown Study which we shared with Peckham Vision in September. This is a base document and provided as a reference point. As you note within your email, Section 5 asks for applicants to submit ideas and responses to this plan and does not require compliance. The council is in continuing discussion with the GLA and Network Rail about the scheme and I can assure you that there is no agreement of a final scheme.

Over the upcoming four months there will be an opportunity for the community, the council, Network Rail and the GLA to engage in the design of the scheme and to shape the final scheme for which planning permission will be sought. I wish to reassure you that there will be an opportunity for the community to input and see into emerging designs over this period.

Regards

Fiona

CLlr Fiona Colley

Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Corporate Strategy Labour Member for Nunhead Ward