Peckham town centre: an integrated approach

Peckham town centre, as a commercial area today, has a variety of characters and issues. There are three main shopping areas with distinct characteristics: the north of the centre, central Rye Lane around the rail station, and south of the station area to Peckham Rye. Rye Lane running north to south through them is a long narrow linear shopping street, with a poor pedestrian experience.

Over several decades the Council has tried a variety of ways to improve the urban environment and attract a wide variety of good quality retail, but no attempt has succeeded. There have also been several unsuccessful attempts to encourage the businesses to work together as a town centre management team.

The last decade has seen residents who have been most affected near the town centre, initiate projects and campaigns to improve the area around the station, and collaborate with the small creative enterprises there. Peckham Vision grew out of this work, and then led the community efforts for a more integrated approach to transform the central Rye Lane area. This resulted in £11m being allocated in 2012 by the Council and the London Mayor / GLA to transform by 2015/2016 the area in front of and behind Peckham Rye station.

Peckham Vision's displays outline this work; describe the growing role of the cultural creative enterprises in the local economy, and some challenges posed to that by the regeneration plans now being developed by the Council and Network Rail; explain the importance of the local rail services and how they need to be protected and improved for the sake of the local economy; and describe the community aspirations for restoring and developing the Old Waiting Room into a community managed focal point in the transformed station area as the gateway to the transformed town centre.

Nine of the exhibition posters can be found on the following pages:

- Peckham Town Centre today p.3
- Transforming Central Rye Lane - an integrated plan p.4
- Transforming Central Rye Lane - new pedestrian spaces and links p.5
- Peckham’s Cultural Hub? - an introduction p.6
- Peckham’s Cultural Hub - some creative enterprises p.7
- Peckham’s Cultural Hub - the challenge? p.8
- The Old Waiting Room - restoration & future use p.9
- Peckham Rye station - Tube connections p.10
- Peckham Rye station - rail services vital to revitalization p.11

The remainder of the exhibition displays illustrated the extent of the historic buildings in Peckham town centre, and told some of the story of restorations so far and plans and ideas for further restorations; and gave some information from Southwark Council about their work on this, and from Southern Rail on their work as manager of the station rail operations. They are also available and downloadable as collated pdf’s from these web pages.

2
PECKHAM TOWN CENTRE TODAY

Introduction

Rye Lane, Peckham High Street and Peckham Hill Street - and a few adjacent turnings – make up the town centre. The streets are lined with retail shops and a variety of businesses. People live in the town centre which is integrated tightly with the residential area. Its impact spreads widely throughout Peckham because of its physical, social and economic effects. Today there are different character areas: in the north, the centre and the south.

Town Centre North

Peckham High Street’s junction with Rye Lane and Peckham Hill Street, and south to Hanover Park and Highshore Road, form the focal point of the northern hub of the town centre. It contains many properties in the historic buildings restoration scheme over 2013-2018. Council policies for many years aimed to focus town centre commercial and community activity in this northern part, with large public investment in the new Town Square. Big parts of the surrounding land on north and south of the High Street are development sites. The needs of pedestrians have been neglected and a major challenge for the PNAAP developments is to remedy the defects in this urban design.

Rye Lane Central

Rye Lane at the heart of the shopping area is a long narrow linear shopping street, with several development sites. The core of this area is Peckham Rye station and the emerging Copeland Cultural Quarter (CCQ). In Rye Lane outside the station the pavements are very narrow and often too full and pedestrians spill into the road amongst the traffic. Plans now being implemented to remove the 1930s buildings in front of the station, to restore the original public square, will enable a redesign of that part of Rye Lane to make it pedestrian friendly.

Town Centre South

South of Bournemouch Road, small shops line both sides of Rye Lane as it winds its way to Peckham Rye village and the beginning of Peckham Rye Common. To the east are two small semi ‘squares’ - Parkstone Road and Atwell Road - and to the west Choumert Road street market. The public realm - the street, the pavements and fronts of buildings and shops – suffer from a lack of consistent attention by the Council and the property owners. More joined-up working by all concerned could make a big improvement for the benefit of shoppers and small businesses.

Peckham Town Centre Forum

Peckham Vision’s Town Centre Forum emerged from collaborative work, over 10 years, between local groups to encourage the revitalisation of the town centre. It is nurturing a growing network of enthusiastic individuals who can contribute ideas and action to imaginative new initiatives.

Key themes emerging from the Forum include:

- more joined-up working in the Council for its town centre responsibilities
- need for a cross-sector town centre team
- nurturing creativity, entrepreneurship & cultural enterprises
- restoring and benefiting from the historic buildings
- extending facilities for young people
- joining together community initiatives for overall sustainability
TRANSFORMING CENTRAL RYE LANE

This is an outline illustration of a new way of imagining the central area of Rye Lane. First produced by Peckham Vision in 2008.

An Integrated Plan

Peckham Vision has promoted the alternative idea of the town centre as an integrated matrix with old and new buildings interlinked with a network of open pedestrian spaces and pathways. This widens it to include the areas east and west of Rye Lane between Elm Grove and Bournemough Road, with Peckham Rye station and the emerging Copeland Cultural Quarter (CCQ) at its heart. This replaces the current experience of Rye Lane as a long narrow linear, overcrowded shopping street.

The buildings and the spaces are showing they are flexible enough to accommodate new needs of the growing arts and cultural scene in Peckham. The organic emergence of cultural enterprises in the Copeland Cultural Quarter, in Blenheim Grove, and in the multi-storey car park, strengthens and enhances the business case for the transformation of Peckham Rye Station.

This integrated plan could transform central Rye Lane, and potentially consolidate Peckham as a significant cultural place in London. Some of the ideas have been incorporated in the Council’s draft PNAAP (Peckham & Nunhead Area Action Plan). This approach needs to influence property developers, and Network Rail as the major property owner in this part of central Peckham.

Network Rail as the major land & property owner in central Rye Lane

Indication of Network Rail land and property

This map also shows the outline ideas for the station development project, and the organic development of the Copeland Cultural Quarter CCQ.

The shaded area on the map shows the wide extent of Network Rail’s property in this central area. It has a very significant impact on the commercial, cultural and community life of the town centre. Network Rail supports and promotes, nationally, local community involvement through community rail partnerships and station adoption schemes.

Peckham Vision proposed in 2011 that Peckham Rye station should be adopted formally through the community station adoption scheme. This would enable the community to continue to contribute effectively to the revitalisation of the town centre in this central area. This includes the restoration of the station as the significant gateway to the town centre.

We hope that Network Rail will soon respond positively and enable our Peckham Rye station to be formally adopted.
TRANSFORMING CENTRAL RYE LANE

Central Rye Lane can be transformed from a narrow over-crowded north-south linear shopping street to a place where pedestrians can walk in multiple directions. The restoration of the public square in front of the station should lead to major redesign of the pedestrian places in Rye Lane.

At the same time, existing spaces, neglected and unobserved, and newly created spaces, can be linked with new paths and courtyards.

Red arrows indicate potential for expanding pedestrian movements in the central Rye Lane area.

Some existing and potential pedestrian spaces, courtyards and walkways in the central area of Rye Lane.

Peckham Rye station new public square

The restoration of the original station square will transform central Rye Lane with a new large public open space instead of a crowded dark arcade with not enough room for pedestrians on the Rye Lane pavements.

There will be access from the new square to a new open space, at the rear of the station, for small businesses as a new commercial part of town. The plan will now be implemented with nearly £12m funding from the Council and London Mayor/ GLA and others. The possible date for completion might be 2016.

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PECKHAM’S CULTURAL HUB?
An Introduction

Central Rye Lane

This is an outline illustration of a new way of imagining the central area of Rye Lane. First produced by Peckham Vision in 2008.

A gradual organic emergence
Artists and people in related occupations have over many years settled in Peckham and surrounding districts, growing in numbers gradually because of its location between Camberwell College of Arts and Goldsmiths in New Cross.

By the 1990s there was already a substantial community of artists in the Bussey building behind Rye Lane on the Copeland Industrial site, and in The Arches off Blenheim Grove at the Bellenden Rd end.

Over the following 10 years, more artistic activities began to become apparent. For instance, Bar Story, and the linked Sassoon Gallery, emerged in Blenheim Grove, nestled between industrial businesses.

Peckham Vision’s campaign
Peckham Vision’s community campaign from 2005, to save the Copeland industrial site from demolition, publicised the site’s potential.

As a result the CLF Art Café took root in the Bussey building in 2007, and the Hannah Barry Gallery in a warehouse on the site next to the Bussey building in 2008.

Creative Industry Social impact
New social meeting places have been growing over time in nearby streets for example Bar Story, The Montpelier, Victoria Inn, Petiou, Gowlett, The Rye, Frog on the Green, and the CLF Art Café and the Provisional Soup Kitchen on the Copeland site.

The increase in visitors attracted to the Peckham cultural activities indicates that there are further small business opportunities for more social leisure meeting places in and near the town centre.

A Place To Be
The enterprises in the Bussey building and the Copeland Courtyard now provide a focus for cultural activity in Central Rye Lane, the area as shown on the map.

These organic developments are transforming Peckham town centre, especially this area, into a place to be.

Beyond that, there are an increasing number of other creative enterprises in the neighbouring streets and also across Peckham and Nunhead, with many informal networks underpinning it all.

The Local Economy
The creative industries are therefore now a significant stimulator of the local economy in a myriad of ways. They create jobs directly and indirectly and potentially offer significant transforming learning for all ages.

Is it useful to think of this central Rye Lane area as Peckham’s cultural hub?
PECKHAM’S CULTURAL HUB
- Some creative enterprises

The Hannah Barry Gallery has a flexible warehouse space on the Copeland site, and runs exhibitions of modern artists. They also have a Bond Street Gallery and temporary galleries elsewhere. The Gallery was founded to help young artists develop their ideas in reference to our time, and to progress this kind of work. The Gallery created its successful summer project Bold Tendencies’ in the under used multi-storey car park nearby. www.hannahbarry.com

The Last Refuge is a multi-use arts space in the Bussey building and in Copeland Courtyard. It is a theatre production company, screen production company, watering hole, and rehearsal space combined. The 92-seat theatre will be open full-time in September 2012. Before this, the space is playing host to visiting theatre companies, exhibiting artists, community projects and music events. www.thelastrefuge.co.uk

Garudio Studiug is an artists’ collective in the Bussey building, in screen printing, jewellery and painting; they design and create products for sale nationally. In collaboration with Peckham Space, they created the Nation of Shopkeepers, an interactive illustration exhibition based on every building on Rye Lane, and the Peckham Peace Wall, a permanent artwork memorial to local residents and their wall of post-it notes after the summer 2011 riots. www.garudiostudiug.com
www.peckhamspace.com

Bold Tendencies is the highly successful annual summer sculpture show for new work by international artists, held on the top floors of the multi-storey car park. The accompanying Architecture Programme, designed by Practice Architecture and built by Practice Construction, consists of the straw Auditorium, a timber entrance, and Frank’s Cafe. The Events Programme explores a range of art disciplines including, music, dance, theatre, film, and literature. www.boldtendencies.com

In Blenheim Grove, alongside the station, there is a lively arts and cultural scene including the Sunday Painter studios and gallery, Bar Story restaurant and the Sassoon Gallery, and the studios and small businesses in The Arches near the Bellenden Road end. This could be further enhanced by the creation of a new area for town centre commerce to the rear of the station.

CLF Art Cafe operates on several floors in the Bussey building, hosting leading club nights, live music events, art exhibitions, creative workshops, theatre productions, film programmes & more. Modern dance music attracts hundreds of young people, and the Art Cafe is a growing social place to meet. The floors buzz with theatre and music rehearsals, community meetings and workshops. It was the base for Royal Court’s 2011-2012 Theatre Local. www.clfartcafe.org

PeckhamPlex, the cinema, is embedded in the front half of the multi-storey car park, with the entrance from Rye Lane. It is independent with a programme developing to meet the needs of particular groupings in the local community. The weekly screenings for adults with babies is an illustration. There is also liaison and collaboration with other nearby cultural enterprises so that their events are complementary. www.peckhamplex.com

Son Gallery, a contemporary art gallery in the Copeland Quarter, works with artists who develop extensive bodies of work, supporting them to turn progressive ideas into practice. Exhibitions focus on lens based and digital media, bringing these into relationship with other art forms. With Bold Tendencies, they have hosted the 2012 Copeland Book Market - four days with many book publishers from across the world, events and showcasing recent work. www.songallery.co.uk

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PECKHAM’S CULTURAL HUB

The Copeland Cultural Quarter

The Copeland Cultural Quarter (CCQ) is the large area next to the railway line between Rye Lane, Bournemouth Road and Copeland Road. A major part is owned and operated by Copeland Industrial Park (CIP), and so is known as the Copeland Cultural Quarter (CCQ).

It is at the heart of the widening cultural Hub on the east and west of central Rye Lane, and there is an increasing demand for spaces from creative and cultural enterprises. Peckham Vision’s outline integrated plan indicates how the site could develop organically while not squeezing out cultural enterprises.

The continuing demolition threat?

The Copeland Quarter was half of a very large site identified in 2004 as the location for a tram depot. Peckham Vision was born from the campaign to show that the site was not derelict and had great potential as a thriving mixed area for commerce, housing, cultural enterprises and community uses.

The Challenge

How can we all work together to ensure that developers do not kill off the goose that is providing the golden eggs for Peckham’s future economy?

Bussey Building and Copeland Courtyard

George Bussey, a Victorian entrepreneur, was a sporting goods manufacturer. The factory made cricket bats from its own willow farm.

There are magnificent views of central London from the three roofs. The former CIP House, also known as the Bussey Building, and the Bussey Warehouse, this former factory is a significant part of the emerging Copeland Cultural Quarter.

It is a solid well-made building capable of a long life with modern rehabilitation, as part of a creative development of the overall site. It looks run down but has always been well used and is thriving with artists’ studios, cultural enterprises, small businesses and community uses. It is included in the new Conservation Area. How can its role in the burgeoning cultural hub be protected?

Multi Storey Car Park

Across the railway tracks - in the multi storey car park - the top three floors have been used for a summer large sculpture exhibition, and series of cultural events, by Bold Tendencies.

Thousands of visitors flock to enjoy the exhibitions, the events, the experience, the food and the views. The independent cinema, embedded in half of the car park structure, is a lively cultural focus engaging a wide variety of the local population.

The car park & cinema are proposed for redevelopment in the Council’s plans. The structure has failed as a town centre car park, as predicted by local residents in 1982. The successful temporary reuse of the upper third of the car park has prompted moves to explore a permanent reuse for a commercial cultural centre fit for 21st century Peckham. This would be a significant boost to the local cultural economy.
THE OLD WAITING ROOM
The Secret Room above the Ticket Hall

The huge magnificent empty space above the ticket hall began to come to light again during recent years through local community campaigns.

It was referred to as the Old Billiard Hall, as for many decades railway staff used it as a recreation room. But it was closed and the windows bricked up over 40 years ago, and remained a secret stilt place inhabited mainly by pigeons. It was originally the Waiting Room for platforms 2 and 3, so it is also referred to as the Old Waiting Room. Over the last few years, it has been revived and opened to view again. This has been inspired and led by Benedict O’Looney, local architect and historian, from the Peckham Society, with Community Council CSG funds.

The building, designed by Charles Henry Driver, was listed in 2008. The restoration to the external staircase is continuing. This will be the public entrance to the Old Waiting Room and make it useable for public activities. Read on to find out more.

The Old Waiting Room comes back to life! April 2009

Daylight now floods, just as it used to, through large Victorian windows into the magnificent huge Old Waiting Room above the ticket hall at Peckham Rye station. This huge room above the ticket office has been derelict for many years. The recent restoration is the result of collaboration between the Peckham Society, Rye Lane & Station Action Group, Southwark Council, Southern Rail and Network Rail. This is an example of the success from all sectors working together, and making a significant contribution to the transformation of the gateway to the Town Centre through central Rye Lane.

Read more from this article at www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Old_Waiting_Room

What we have done so far...

Through the work of the local community, and the support of Southwark Council, the Old Waiting Room has begun its journey to be renewed to its former beauty.

First the windows were unbricked and revealed original Victorian paint. Then the work reached another important stage with the original wooden floor and the electrics repaired. New paving and new cycle racks, carrying the architectural motif of the station, have been installed in the forecourt.

SECRET HALL BEYOND PLATFORM 3 HOLDS KEY TO PECKHAM’S FUTURE?
9 June 2010 Kevin Quinn

A waiting room left hidden on platform three of Rye Lane Station could be the key to unlocking future investment in Peckham.

Like something out of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter, this enormous space opened as a waiting room in 1863 and was turned into a billiard hall in 1950 until it closed in 1982. Forgotten, over the years this space was left to fall into disrepair. But now it is being opened to the public (subject to grants), but for those waiting to attract future investment into Peckham town centre the space represents a way forward.

Celebrating the initial restoration: 14 July 2010.

Your suggestions for how the space could be used:

We asked how you would like the Old Waiting Room to be used and there have been many suggestions. These include:

* Dance or fitness studio
* Cinema
* Art gallery
* Music venue
* Cafe or restaurant
* Multi purpose venue

The main theme has been to create a multi purpose use, with catering facilities, managed by the community. So our aim is to set up a community company to seek the lease from Network Rail, and run the Old Waiting Room as a flexible lettings space.

If you have experience that is relevant to this task, please contact us at: oldwaitingroom@gmail.com

Next steps for the Old Waiting Room:

The resident-led work continues to transform and restore the Old Waiting Room so that it can be used by everyone, local people and businesses, in our community and beyond, and provide an inspiring attractive space in the gateway to Peckham town centre. The next stage is likely to be in the autumn of 2012; revealing the original staircase, and then adding the last half flight of stairs to give it external access to the Old Waiting Room. Peckham Vision design plans for full access, and final restoration are being developed and will be fed into the Council’s station restoration project.

Peckham Vision’s work on this depends on volunteer offering their skills and time. A range of different kinds of skills are needed to take this forward, including management, administration, and fundraising, as well as urban design, and buildings maintenance.

If you can help, please contact us at: oldwaitingroom@gmail.com
PECKHAM RYE STATION IS ALREADY CONNECTED TO THE TUBE

But the TfL map will show Peckham Rye, Denmark Hill and Queens Road cut off from central London!

Peckham Rye will be on the TfL Tube map in December 2012, when the East London Line from Canada Water is extended to link with Clapham Junction via Peckham Rye (14 trains per hour).

However, the TfL map will show Peckham Rye, Denmark Hill and Queens Road cut off from central London. This is because it shows only TfL train services, which will not go east and west and not into central London.

So the SRLG (Southwark Rail Users Group) rail map shows how Peckham Rye station is connected directly now, within 30 to 35 minutes, to six lines of the Tube in central London.

Please take one of the pocket sized SRLG folded maps:

• one map shows the services on the South London Line (SLL) but no East London Line (ELL);
• the other map shows the service after December 2012 with ELL but with the new SLL services.

Each map also shows the other map services from show stations not run by TfL. This shows how many short direct connections there are from Peckham Rye to the Tube in central London.

This map is in development, so please take one and find back to your comment on how to improve it, email to join the mailing list and give comments to SRLG railusers@outlook.com. For further information visit www.southwarkrailusers.com.
HELP US SAVE OUR VITAL RAIL SERVICES – REALISE OUR TOWN CENTRE’S POTENTIAL!

We live here, we know that a new local cultural industry has been evolving for years. Now it is beginning to break through. We know there are problems for young people. We know they can be helped by the innovative concept of putting a train stop in Peckham, Gav Peckham is the name!

- Save our Victoria services
- Keep our St Pancras services
- Improve our rail services
- Keep Peckham’s connections to central London

One of the wonderful things about living in Peckham is that Peckham Rye station is almost like a Tube station. It is one of the easiest under-ground stations in central Peckham, so a place to live, to work and to visit.

TUBE CONNECTIONS

It has direct trains to central London stations connected to the Tube. It is almost like a come up and go station in the central tube network. Really only one Tube change to get on to six different Tube lines – Victoria, District, Circle, Bakerloo, Jubilee, Northern (both loops).

CENTRAL CONNECTIONS CUT

But between 2018 and 2017, the tube from London Bridge and Victoria is being cut in half, and there will be more in the coming six months in to from Victoria to London Bridge. The tube from London Bridge and Victoria in December will be replaced by the new East London Line east to Elephant and Castle stations. These new tube connections are very useful, but they can’t replace our direct trains to the central stations. And now the existing direct connection to St Pancras is being reduced in the current Thameslink franchise conditions.

GOOD RAIL ATTRACTS INVESTMENT

SRG campaigns against this destruction in Peckham’s connections to central London. Peckham is a vital cultural and creative hub, and great new theatre spaces and great office spaces are being opened. Keeping our direct connections to central London Tube stations is vital to build our city, and secure the innovative quality commercial movement that Peckham town centre needs.

CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE SERVICES

We call on all users of Peckham Rye station to join the mailing list to support the campaign to save and improve our direct rail services to Victoria, St Pancras and London Bridge. Email info@peckhamvision.org.
Peckham Vision Town Centre Exhibition, The Old Waiting Room, Peckham Rye Station
2nd – 4th August 2012

http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Old_Waiting_Room

Peckham Vision:
the local consortium of residents, artists + businesses
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