

23 August 2023

London Borough of Southwark (the “Council”)

160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2HZ

By email: communityrighttobid@southwark.gov.uk

To Whom it May Concern,

Peckham Rye station Old Waiting Room – Asset of Community Value Nomination

Please find enclosed a nomination form, and with 5 images, to nominate the former waiting room at Peckham Rye train station (referred to in this letter as the “**Old Waiting Room**”, as it is known) as an asset of community value. This letter sets out the reasons why the Old Waiting Room meets the statutory tests for listing. In particular, it contains responses to the boxes on the nomination form requesting:

- *“detailed reasons why the authority should conclude this is land of community value”*; and
- *“[w]hat area of social interests...the Assets further[s]” and “reasons why you believe the principal (ie main) use of the asset furthers, or has recently furthered social wellbeing or social interests (ie cultural, sporting or recreational)”*.

About the Old Waiting Room

In 2007, the local community through the Rye Lane & Station Action Group (“**RLSAG**”) uncovered the derelict Old Waiting Room above the current Peckham Rye station ticket hall. The Old Waiting Room was built in 1865 by the noteworthy architect Charles Henry Driver. It was originally used as a waiting room for train passengers and then as a billiard hall for train staff and the public; however, following the demolition of the Victorian Platforms 1 & 2 in the 1960s, the Old Waiting Room was bricked up and left unused.

A community campaign led by the Peckham Society and promoted by Peckham Vision helped to secure in 2008 a grade-II listing of Peckham Rye station, which includes the Old Waiting Room. These community groups also worked to secure funding from the Council’s Cleaner Greener Safer programme and the Railway Heritage Fund to open up for use the Old Waiting Room. The works began in 2008, with an initial phase to allow the Old Waiting Room to be used for events. The final works in this initial phase, completed in 2017, included restoration of the ornate Victorian staircase and an extension to it to allow access to the Old Waiting Room without passing through the station ticket barriers. The nomination includes the staircase. Since the renovation, the Old Waiting Room has been used for various community and social events; there are plans for further community and social events in the future, which are further detailed below.

The freehold of the Old Waiting Room is owned by Network Rail. In 2019, Network Rail granted a 150-year lease of the railway arches and Network Rail buildings not used for rail operations to CDR Nomineco 1 Limited and CDR Nomineco 2 Limited, on behalf of Arch Company Properties Limited (collectively referred to as “**Arch Co**”). This lease includes the Old Waiting Room; we believe the lease does not include the staircase, but understand the Arch Co has a right of way over it.

About Peckham Vision

We are a resident-led local citizens' association of individuals who live, work or run a business in Peckham. Our vision is to support Peckham town centre as a thriving and sustainable social and commercial centre, and to contribute to its being a good place for all to live in, work in and visit. Our objects are to:

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- promote and encourage citizen action to help Peckham town centre to become an integrated and resilient place which links past, present and future for the benefit of all who live and work there; and
- create and nurture ways of connecting people in Peckham who share enthusiasm and desire to help develop and realise the potential of Peckham, and to make the lessons learnt through this process available beyond Peckham.

We are local people who value the diversity and vibrancy of Peckham. We work together to help ourselves and others engage with shaping the future of Peckham town centre, making it a better place for us all to live and work in.

Peckham Vision played a key role in raising local community awareness of the Old Waiting Room and securing funding for its restoration. Since then, Peckham Vision has been involved in organising community and social events in the space. Peckham Vision is an unincorporated community group with at least 21 members who are on the Electoral Register in Southwark. Names and addresses are attached as evidence of eligibility to nominate. Also attached is Peckham Vision's constitution.

In 2011, Peckham Vision helped create an informal group, known as "Friends of the Old Waiting Room", which organises events in the Old Waiting Room and explores opportunities for its long-term community use.

More information about Peckham Vision can be found here:

www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Peckham_Vision:About

The statutory tests

Section 88 of the Localism Act 2011 allows voluntary and community organisations, such as Peckham Vision, to nominate a building to be entered onto a local authority's register of assets of community value if both of the following statutory tests are met:

- (a) *"an actual current use of the building or other land that is not an ancillary use furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community"*; and
- (b) *"it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community"*.

The act defines social interests as cultural, recreational or sporting interests.

The test in (b) above is met if *"it is realistic to think that there is a time in the next five years when there could be non-ancillary use of the building or other land that would further (whether or not in the same way as before) the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community"* (section 88(2)(b), emphasis added).

If these statutory tests are met then, under section 90, the local authority must accept the nomination and list the building as an asset of community value. We explain below why the statutory tests are met in respect of the Old Waiting Room.

The current use of the Old Waiting Room

We will here explain why the first statutory test is satisfied, i.e. the actual current uses of the building that are not ancillary further the social wellbeing and social interests of the local community.

The Old Waiting Room in itself has social interest from an architectural and historical perspective, which its grade-II listing is testament to. It is a beautiful room demonstrating the best in Victorian design. The local

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community can visit and be transported back to the lives of those who lived and worked in Peckham over 150 years ago. It is a calm space away from the hustle and bustle of the centre of Peckham, which can enhance visitors' wellbeing.

Many social and cultural events have already been put on in the Old Waiting Room since the restoration. Currently, the Old Waiting Room is hosting an art installation by Sarah Sze, called "The Waiting Room" as part of her "Timekeepers" series. The project was commissioned by ArtAngel, an organisation that focuses on art that responds to its environment. The Evening Standard gave the exhibition five stars, describing the work as a "transcendent experience" and "utterly compelling"¹. The review said of the Old Waiting Room itself: "the room bears its scars but retains a magnificence". The Guardian gave a four-star review of the installation, calling it "an astonishing phantasmagoria" and "exhilarating"².

Art has an inherent social value, and plays a key role in people's wellbeing. A further dimension of social interest arises by virtue of the art responding to the space. The exhibition is free and open to the public. It is an important part of Peckham Vision's aims to ensure the events and culture they facilitate remain accessible and can benefit the entire local community.

Non-ancillary use

The social/community use of the Old Waiting Room is its primary use and is not ancillary to any other use. It operates separately to Peckham Rye train station. The separate staircase created as part of the renovation works allows public access without having to pass through the ticket barriers.

The future use of the Old Waiting Room

We here go on to discuss why the second statutory test is satisfied, i.e. it is realistic to think that there is a time in the next five years that there can be a non-ancillary use of the building which will further the social wellbeing or interests of the local community (whether or not in the same way).

The current art installation at the Old Waiting Room will run until September 2023, which in itself sufficiently demonstrates future social/community use. Furthermore, Friends of the Old Waiting Room is planning a programme of other exhibitions, community events and workshops running from Autumn 2023 into the New Year and beyond. Friends of the Old Waiting Room have been in discussion with various arts organisations and community groups who are keen to utilise the Old Waiting Room, including Peckham Vision, Peckham Heritage, the Peckham & Nunhead Free Film Festival, CLF Art Lounge, Multi Story Orchestra, South London Gallery and Mountview. The majority (if not all) of the ideas proposed by these groups have a focus on community engagement. These plans are being supported by Southwark Council through the Thriving High Streets fund, in its grant to Making Connections. This is a collaborative venture between Peckham-based non-profit arts organisation Lost Text/Found Space and Friends of the Old Waiting Room, with local arts and community partners. We are confident that there will be great interest from even more local organisations over the next five years, and Arch Co has been amenable to these community/social uses.

It is important to note that there are major proposals to redevelop parts of the Peckham Rye train station and surrounding land. These proposals do not include any redevelopment of the Old Waiting Room itself. They do include the provision of a lift to platform 3 which will also serve the Old Waiting Room. This would give step-free access for the public to the Old Waiting Room. The proposed works may occasionally

¹<https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/exhibitions/sarah-sze-the-waiting-room-peckham-rye-station-review-artangel-b1081640.html>

²<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2023/may/18/sarah-sze-the-waiting-room-review-peckham-rye-station-london>

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temporarily prevent access during the redevelopments, but it is not anticipated that this would cause ongoing issues or closure of the Old Waiting Room. Redevelopment of the front of the station has already begun and is likely to complete by 2025. These works will not interfere with use of / access to the Old Waiting Room. From conversations with Network Rail, we understand that the redevelopment of the rear of the train station is now not expected to commence until 2026/2027 at the earliest, meaning these proposals will not have any effect on the use of the Old Waiting Room for the next three years at least. Peckham Vision is in close contact with both the Council and Network Rail regarding these works, and will continue to plan events around the development timeline.

The events proposed will have an artistic, cultural or community-based focus, rooted in and engaging the local community. They would offer a space for the community to meet, relax, socialise, share ideas and get creative. Accordingly, these proposed uses will clearly have the potential to further the social wellbeing and social interests of the local community. Throughout all these uses, the architecture of the Old Waiting Room itself will continue to hold significant social interest.

As with the current use, the proposed events will be the primary use of the Old Waiting Room, and will not be ancillary to any other use.

Conclusions

The above information clearly demonstrates that (a) there is an actual, current and non-ancillary use of the Old Waiting Room that currently furthers the social wellbeing or social interest of the community and (b) it is realistic to think there can continue to be similar use. Therefore, the statutory tests under section 88 are clearly satisfied, and the Council accordingly seems obliged to list the Old Waiting Room as an asset of community value.

We note that under Regulation 7 of the Assets of Community Value (England) Regulations 2012, the Council must decide whether to make the nomination within eight weeks of receiving this nomination. We expect therefore the Council to respond before the end of October 2023.

If the Council has any queries regarding this application or believes that any further information should be provided, please contact Peckham Vision at the email address provided above.

Yours faithfully

Eileen Conn
Chair & Coordinator
Peckham Vision