

## **NSP56: Cinema & multi storey car park.**

**Comments on Southwark Council's Preferred Option** *(shown in italics)* by

**Eileen Conn local resident (SE15 4LE), & coordinator of Peckham Vision located in Rye Lane.** April 2017

### **Council text: Description of Site**

*The multi-storey car park will be used to house temporary cultural and creative workspaces, Peckham Levels, prior to comprehensive redevelopment.*

### **Site vision**

*Redevelopment of the site must:*

- *Provide a new arts hub to support the thriving small business, creative and cultural employment cluster in Camberwell and Peckham. At least 50% of any development floorspace must be provided as creative and cultural small business workspace;*
- *Provide new homes;*
- *Enhance permeability, including new north-south pedestrian and cycle links aligned with Cerise Road and Cicely Road, and a new east-west pedestrian and cycle link;*
- *Provide new public open space;*
- *Provide high quality frontages at appropriate ground floor locations.*

### **Required uses**

- *Small business workspace (B1) – at least 50% of the development*
- *Residential (C3)*
- *Open space*

### **Other acceptable uses**

- *Town centre uses (A1, A2, A3, A4, D1, D2) – at ground floor*

## **EC COMMENTS**

### **Site Vision**

The proposed preferred option allocation of this site and building for ‘comprehensive redevelopment’ should be replaced with a recognition in the site vision that there is more work to do before taking a final decision about the site’s detailed future. This could be achieved by something on the lines of:

“Over the last 10 years this building and site have contributed to the development of Peckham as a centre of culture and creativity. This site will continue to play a role in this growing local economy and place for social activities. The uses and future uses of the existing building have shown that it may be capable of significant long term use as a repurposed building. A review of the costs and benefits of the potential long term uses of the building will be carried out before the current temporary leases expire by 2023. A report comparing them with the costs and benefits of comprehensive redevelopment will be published for public discussion before a final decision is made about the development of the site.”

### **REASONS**

This building has over the last 10 years established itself along with Copeland Park & Bussey Building, Blenheim Grove and Holly Grove, in Central Rye Lane as a place of creativity and culture creating a whole new dynamic economic sector at the heart of Peckham town centre. Over the next six years this will be enhanced even further by the creation of Peckham Levels opening in September 2017. Its importance to the local community and the London wide audience now for Peckham as a destination has been exemplified by the over 5000 people who have sent in their comments to the Council, through the webportal provided by Peckham Vision, seeking a review of the future potential of the building before deciding for ‘comprehensive redevelopment’ as the ‘preferred option’ proposes.

In his PNAAP report in 2014, the Government Planning Inspector said that he was not satisfied that the Council’s plan for redevelopment of the Peckham Multi-Storey building “has been adequately justified by the evidence base. I conclude that the PNAAP is unsound in this regard and that the Council has much work to do in order to finalise a properly substantiated proposal for this site. The pending preparation of the borough-wide New Southwark Plan provides an opportunity for this to be tackled.” [see report pages 28-29, paragraphs 127 - 134.](#)

No evidence to show that this work has been done has been produced. Moreover since then the Council has leased the empty levels to MakeShift company for Peckham Levels which is opening in September 2017 until 2023. So there will be more useful information emerging over the next few years about the practical issues of reusing the building in the longer term, and also scope for exploring wider potential uses. It is premature to take the final decision about the future of the

building before using the experience and information being generated by Peckham Levels and the other uses in the whole building to examine the practicalities and costs and benefits of reusing the building, and investigating its potential, as the Inspector said should be done.

This was recognised by Cllr Williams as reported in the Evening Standard Online on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2017: “Bold Tendencies is well established, and once Peckham Levels join them, we’ll gain a real insight into how the building adapts to a more intensive use than the previous poorly-used car park.” This will however be after the New Southwark Plan has gone through its further stages and the Examination in Public (EiP). So the allocation in the NSP should not pre-empt this examination of the potential for longer term uses of the building.

Cllr Williams also recognised in the same article the importance of the PeckhamPlex and the other USES: “Peckhamplex is a very popular local venue and we want to see them continue in Peckham. Together with Bold Tendencies and Frank’s Bar on the upper levels, and the new Peckham Levels below - which open in September - the multi storey car park is a centre for the arts and culture.” The Council has said that it will aim to relocate the cinema so it can stay in Peckham. But there is a significant risk that the cinema may not survive in the relocation process as a successful relocation cannot be guaranteed.

It is welcome that the Council now acknowledges the importance of the accommodation at this location for “arts and culture”, and this is a step in the right direction beyond the original allocation the site was given in the submission version of the PNAAP. However, the embedded social and economic value of the building itself, with over 15 years as a cultural hub that it will have by 2023, is an asset that should be thoroughly appraised before the final decision about its future. Arts and culture enterprises are intertwined with their locations, in a bio-socio-economic eco-system and can be killed off by interfering with their physical environment. (see here for further elaboration: [http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Transforming\\_Central\\_Rye\\_Lane#.27SSCI.27\\_a\\_Site\\_of\\_Special\\_Cultural\\_Interest](http://www.peckhamvision.org/wiki/Transforming_Central_Rye_Lane#.27SSCI.27_a_Site_of_Special_Cultural_Interest) ) This risk needs thorough appraisal before decisions are taken to allocate this building for comprehensive redevelopment.

There is ample time for this work before the end of the temporary leases. The Council should discuss with local stakeholders the brief for an examination of the potential longer term uses of the building with costs and benefits comparing comprehensive redevelopment with reuse and refurbishment. This would comply with the Inspector's recommendation and make use of the forthcoming experience of Peckham Levels, in addition to the continuing uses by Bold Tendencies and Franks Café, and PeckhamPlex. It would also give a sound basis for the decision about its long term future.

**Council text: Design & Accessibility Guidance**

*Comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment of the site could include taller buildings subject to consideration of impacts on existing character, heritage and detailed townscape analysis. Redevelopment should link to new access through the railway arches to the south. The site is not within a borough designated archaeological priority area or conservation area. The site is within the setting of Rye Lane Peckham conservation area. The railway viaduct to the south of the site is an important undesignated heritage asset. Archaeological potential will have been compromised by the basement level over a quarter of the site and by the foundations for the six storey concrete car park structure.*

**EC COMMENTS**

**Design & Accessibility Guidance**

To accommodate a decision for a review and postponement of the final decision for the site, the text for the Design and Accessibility Guidance could be revised on the following lines:

“The Design and Accessibility Guidance will be provided following the public discussion of the report on the different options for the building and the site. The report will be the product of a collaborative examination of the costs and benefits of reusing the building in the long term compared with the comprehensive redevelopment of the site in the next [10] years.

*With or without the existing building, the site should link to new access through the railway arches to the south. The site is not within a borough designated archaeological priority area or conservation area. The site is within the setting of Rye Lane Peckham conservation area. The railway viaduct to the south of the site is an important undesignated heritage asset. Archaeological potential will have been compromised by the basement level over a quarter of the site and by the foundations for the six storey concrete car park structure.”*