



The Peckham Society

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Rachael Gleave
Southwark Council
Development Control Officer
Southwark Planning
Environment and Housing
160 Tooley Street
London SE1

09-AP-2487: Objection to Planning Application for 143-149 Rye Lane and 1-15 Bournemouth Road, SE15 4ST

Dear Ms Gleave,

The Peckham society strongly objects to this planning application for a number of reasons. For one, the existing buildings along this important corner site are of real quality and contribute much to Peckham's townscape on Rye Lane, the most important north-south route in our district. It seems a sad waste to demolish these buildings and build such a dense, intensive housing project without seriously investigating reusing the former Holdron's showrooms and offices here.

Earlier year English Heritage published its Peckham Historic Area Assessment, which singles out this group of buildings as being of architectural merit. As the principal surviving range of the well-known south London department store Holdron's, these buildings are a unique survivor of Peckham's commercial heyday in the early and mid 20th century. This interesting group of Peckham's high-status commercial architecture has social as well as the architectural significance established by English Heritage.

The Peckham Society has been following this case for some years now and has argued that a more intelligent and environmentally sound approach to this site could be to re-use the existing buildings, which, particularly in the case of the Bournemouth Road showrooms, with its generous interiors, could have been marketed as luxury 'loft style' apartments. We have also argued that the cheerful Edwardian buildings on Rye Lane, amongst the best Edwardian commercial architecture in Southwark, should be sensitively restored.

With their determination to squeeze 65 small flats on this site, the developers appear to be offering dwellings at the bottom range of the market. This site is flanked by two large social housing projects. We wonder if there could be a mix of low-cost and more generous, luxurious dwellings, so the centre of Peckham could be more socially diverse. Conserving parts of the historic structure could be a route toward this. The perception here is the raw, commercial orientation of the developers to fit in as many flats as possible, no matter how small the rooms and associated amenity space is. A look at the plans shows how small the flats are - with particularly tiny bedrooms.

Sadly no spatial generosity is shown here, 'stack them and pack them in' seems to be the principal design driver with this scheme. Again, it appears the spatial standards of Southwark's new housing schemes falls so far below the standards being built for people on continental Europe. A comparison of these plans with Walter Menteth Architects' new

award-winning social housing project, built nearby on Consort Road, shows how cramped the proposed layouts are. The building of tough, tiny flats like these does not bode well for a happy community in Peckham's centre.

If Southwark is minded to grant planning consent for this substantial project we suggest that they consider these suggestions:

1. Please take a more conservation minded design approach to 143-147 Rye Lane. As the historic photograph pasted below shows, these buildings were fine shops when originally built. There are some excellent photographs of these buildings in the Southwark Local History library showing in detail how these shop fronts were constructed. As an offset to the proposed demolitions on Bournemouth Road, the Peckham Society sees an excellent conservation opportunity here at 143-147 Rye Lane, bringing back some of the turn-of-the-century elegance that Rye Lane was once famous for.

As the buildings are well documented in local collections, a great conservation project could be initiated here, going beyond the reluctant façade retention approach the architects have agreed to. We would like to see the rooms, fenestration and any intact joinery retained and restored here. As the photographs show, this was originally a long uniformly designed façade of which only three bays are left now. The surviving fabric on this street must be handled with care.

2. This is a large housing project for Southwark, which if built, will dominate this end of Rye Lane. If it has not already, we hope that this scheme will go to the Southwark Design Review Panel for peer review. This could help focus the design, and strengthen Southwark Design and Conservation comments on this application.



Yours Sincerely,

Benedict O'Looney *M Arch, RIBA*
Committee, the Peckham Society

cc.

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