

SOUTHWARK DESIGN REVIEW PANEL 9 JULY 2018

Chair: Chris Williamson

Panel Members: Cannon Ivers; Raj Roprai; Joe Morris; Niall Monaghan; Joseph Watters; Steve Webb

MALT STREET

Architects: Rolfe Judd

Applicant: Berkeley Homes

Planning Consultant: Rolfe Judd

Project Description:

The Site is in the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area and in the draft OKR AAP OKR10 area. It occupies an area of approximately 2.31 hectares (ha) located in north Peckham, east of Burgess Park. It is located within the Old Kent Road Opportunity Area and comprises three primary components:

1. Bianca Road: Vacant open storage land of 1.16 ha;
2. Acorn Wharf: Travis Perkins Builders Yard of 0.5 ha; and,
3. Surrey Wharf: Underutilised warehouse building of 0.24 ha.

The application in July 2017 was for a residential-led mixed use development incorporating up to 1,050 dwellings and up to 5,500 sqm of non-residential floorspace (A1 to A4, B1, D1 and D2). The proposals were based on 20% affordable housing with a 50/50 (rented / intermediate) split.

The addendum submission will now comprise development of up to 1,250 homes and up to 7,000 sqm (GEA) of non-residential floorspace. The affordable provision will be 35% with a 70/30 (rented / intermediate) split.

Public Realm: The proposed scheme provides over 55% of the site area as high quality public realm including a new permeable pedestrian and cycle 'Green Route' through the Site reflecting the route of the former Grand Surrey Canal. This will provide future pedestrian and cycle links between Burgess Park and the Old Kent Road. The design also references other canal features such as basins and wharves to create widenings in the park, with pockets of space for activity and a large Central Square.

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this important scheme and they thanked the Applicant for their clear and thorough presentation. The presentation included an analysis of the context and its relationship to the OKR10 area of the Draft AAP, a large model of the linear park, the landscape design for the linear park and the square, typical plans and elevations, ground floor land-uses, the distribution of height, rendered 3D visualisations and a façade study model for the tower, a proposed palette of materials, descriptions of the neighbouring buildings and developments, block model of the proposal in the context of OKR10 and various townscape views.

The Panel investigated further:

- The Linear Park design
- Vehicle access to the site and the park
- The balance of hard vs soft landscape
- The provision of commercial spaces and in particular affordable work space
- Height of the towers
- The structure of the hybrid application – detail vs outline and the rationale for this
- Number of units across the site
- Car parking provision
- The design of B10 relative to Space Studios
- The distribution of height relative to the linear park and other open spaces
- Sunlight/daylight on the public realm (not presented)
- The land-uses on the ground floor
- Wind and micro-climate studies prepared (not presented)
- The distance from the site to the nearest Tube station in future
- Total number of homes
- Routes and permeability across the site
- The main route to the Old Kent Road
- The number of jobs on the site relative to the Draft AAP
- Extent of the basement
- Servicing, emergency access and refuse collection
- Sustainability strategy for the site
- Type of commercial accommodation provided
- Cycle route in the linear park
- Green space strategy
- Percentage of open space across the site
- Main desire lines from Burgess Park and the Estate to the OKR
- The use of water in the landscape design
- The design of Block B9
- The proposed changes to the application

The Chair expressed the Panel's disappointment that the proposal had not been presented to them earlier in the process. Given the ambition of the proposal such a scheme would have warranted a series of reviews taking onto account every aspect of the proposal including the public realm, the design of each tower in detail and the design code for the outline proposals. Further, the best stage for the reviews would have been at the pre-application stage, not some months after the application has been submitted to the council. The pre-application period is an important stage for design review, because this is when the Panel is best able to influence the design. The planning application stage is after the design has been 'frozen' and means the Panel is limited in its ability to influence the proposal.

Having said that the Panel raised a number of issues which they felt the scheme should still address especially as the Applicant is considering an amendment to the scheme which will affect the height and massing of certain buildings and in turn affect the nature and character of the public realm around which the entire scheme revolves.

The Linear Park

The Panel endorsed the concept of the Linear park and felt the proposal as a whole benefitted from the development of this large urban gesture and they wanted to

ensure that this is deliverable across OKR10. They also welcomed the involvement of Fabrik in the detailed design of the Linear Park and were encouraged that the design principles established on this site had followed through into the design of the public spaces – including the Linear Park – on neighbouring plots and sites.

This has the potential for being the equivalent of the High Line in New York – a snaking linear park that has spurred real estate development in adjacent neighbourhoods, increasing real-estate values and prices along the route in an example of the ‘halo effect’. The High Line combines industrial heritage, landscape design and urban design very successfully.

Given the scale and ambition of the Masterplan in the Draft AAP, the Linear Park is a key aspect of the future vision for the area. As such it is important that this piece of public space is defined by its landscape and is accessible to current as well as future residents in the area. In that respect the Panel felt the public realm was dominated by hardscape and was not ‘green’ enough. They challenged the designers to maximise the number of trees and truly green spaces in the linear park. They also encouraged the greater use of water and SUDS in the landscape. Its links to the route of the historic canal (albeit not in its original location) gave the Linear Park a well-defined character that tapped into the industrial heritage of the location. The Panel felt this aspect of the canal route had not been adequately integrated into the landscape design and it should be strengthened.

Whilst the Panel generally applauded the work that the design team have put into the Linear Park, they raised concerns about the impact that the Space Studios Yard would have on the Linear Park. At this western entrance to the Linear Park the Space Studios Yard, with its high wall, interrupts the Linear Park and severely constrains access to it from the west and Burgess Park. The Panel encouraged the Applicants to continue their dialogue with Space Studios and to try to resolve this issue to ensure that the Linear Park is successful in its principle aim to enable east-west permeability across the area.

Finally the Panel questioned the need for a cycle route along the length of the Linear Park. In addition to the severe narrowing at Space Studios and the added requirement to provide emergency and pedestrian access to the park the need to also provide a dedicated cycle route in the park is likely to reduce further the amount of green space in the Linear Park. As the most significant piece of public realm in the OKR10 area, the Linear Park should be a primarily landscaped space in the view of the Panel and every effort made to keep it clear of vehicles. The Panel urged the designers to consider how they can re-direct the cycle route elsewhere on the site in order to ensure that the Linear Park remains a primary landscaped place.

Land-use

The Panel raised a concern about the limited extent and variety of uses proposed at the ground floor. They questioned whether the proposal met the requirements of the Draft AAP which requires a minimum of 750 jobs to be provided on this site. (this figure was extrapolated from projections published in the draft AAP) The success of the development (which is well set back from the OKR) will rely on its capacity to attract commercial activity away from the OKR along Malt Street to the public space and the Linear Park. To do this the development will need to activate the edges of the Linear Park and the main routes with commercial spaces including retail and work spaces which the current proposal proposes in limited areas. The Panel encouraged the Applicants to maximise the commercial uses on the ground

floor (including the provision of affordable business space) especially on the east-west route along the edge of the Linear Park as well as the north-south link from the Square to the OKR and especially along the Malt Street frontage.

Block B9

The proposal is centred on the main public space at the core of the development. When they considered this space the Panel felt that building B9 will play a very important role in the success of the development and the success of the main public space. At over 10-storeys tall and as a large footprint residential block, this building dominates and overshadows the public space to the detriment of the public space. The Panel challenged the Applicants to reconsider the scale and nature of this building because of its importance to the site and its effect on the public space.

They asked the designers to look carefully at the sunlight/daylight study for this important public space and suggested that this building would be better designed as a 'jewel-like' element or pavilion building which will also be the focus of the new public space. In that respect they felt this building should be significantly reduced in size to 3 or 4 storeys (max) and designed as a one-off public building like an art gallery or a cinema. It could even be an architectural competition. They suggested the Applicant look at the New Street Square at Holborn which is an example of such a jewel-like building in a public space. The reduction in scale in this location will benefit the new public square significantly, allow the sun to penetrate across the square and Linear Park and create a destination for the square. They Panel felt the accommodation lost as a result of the reduction of B9 could be re-provided (at least in part) elsewhere on the site – on Blocks B2 or B6 for example.

Quality of design

The Panel generally endorsed the masterplanning approach to the site. Whilst there were differences of opinion amongst Panel Members on the merits of some aspects of the individual buildings the Panel generally acknowledged that the application held some promise. They were satisfied with the direction of travel and the general aesthetic qualities of the proposed buildings and, whilst they were not able to look at every building in detail, they supported the design principles established on the site.

At the same time, the Panel reiterated the concern that the proposal had not been presented to the DRP in time for them to consider it in detail. Going forward they asked the Applicant to ensure that subsequent phases should return to the DRP as each plot comes up as a 'Reserved Matters' application. They endorsed the involvement of the design team in defining a vision for the site and they suggested that they prepare a set of Design principles or codes for the subsequent phases. The panel also suggested that the Applicant consider using other architects for subsequent phases – as had been done recently at Elephant Park – in order to ensure that the whole site did not appear to be dominated by a the design of one architectural 'hand'.

Conclusion

In conclusion the Panel generally endorsed the masterplanning of this proposal. Whilst they expressed their concern that it had been presented to them too late to have a meaningful influence on the design they expressed their confidence in the capabilities of the architects/masterplanners to deliver a high quality design. They requested changes to the design of the Linear Park, the distribution of land-uses and the design of Block B9 which they would like to see in the amended proposal due to be submitted to the council shortly.