

APPENDIX 6

Community Review Panel

Reference:	23/AP/1862
Proposal:	Phased mixed-use redevelopment of the site, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demolition of all existing buildings/structures, site clearance and excavation;- Construction of buildings to provide residential dwellings (Class C3) and flexible commercial, business and service space (Class E);- Construction of buildings to provide purpose built student accommodation including associated amenity and ancillary space, flexible commercial, business, service and community spaces within Classes E/F2(b) (Sui Generis); and- Provision of associated car and cycle parking, open space and landscaping, means of access and highway alterations, installation of plant and utilities and all other associated ancillary works incidental to the development.
Location:	747-759 & 765-775 Old Kent Road and Land at Devonshire Grove, London, SE15 1NZ

Feedback from Community Review Panel Round 1, 20 March 2023

Summary

1. The panel considers the proposals well thought through, with the potential to create a successful development, but requests development of aspects of the design, of ground floor uses, and of management arrangements. The panel is concerned that the building could become empty if the student rooms do not prove viable in the longterm. It also raises concerns over the way the student and residential elements will work alongside each other. Care will be needed to prevent students disturbing residents, through both design and high quality management. Thinking is also needed on how residents and students can mix, through ideas including a shared space such as a food hall.
2. The panel encourages bolder architecture to distinguish the building from other recent local developments, and act as a marker. Fenestration should add greater depth to façades, potentially using framing and different shapes to reflect local architectural heritage. Colour transitions in the brickwork should be less abrupt and more refined. The Block A crown should be revisited to ensure it does not increase the impression of height, or obscure views from the roof.
3. The panel asks for consideration of more adventurous uses than a supermarket, with more potential to activate the street frontage. Ideas include smaller units, and affordable workspace. A café within the development could help bring different

groups together. The community space should be larger if it is to be useable. More parking is needed for deliveries, trades and GP surgery. A new Old Kent Road pedestrian crossing is needed, and thought should be given to how local bus capacity can increase to serve new residents.

4. These comments are expanded below.

Student accommodation

5. The panel understands that the 900-bed student accommodation capacity is determined by viability considerations. However, it emphasises the need to be sure that there is sufficient demand to keep these rooms filled in the long-term. The development must remain in full use and not become empty, if it is to make a positive contribution to the area.
6. The success of a large student development, especially alongside residential accommodation, will depend on very efficient and effective management. For example, it will be important for flats to be well-soundproofed, to mitigate against disturbance from students congregating in the outside spaces, and returning late at night.
7. It will also be particularly important to ensure the development is cleaned regularly, with litter cleared away and bins emptied every day.
8. The panel suggests that the design team considers 24 hours in the life of different people living on the site, to provide more detail on the way spaces will be used, and inform the overall design approach. It will be essential to create a place that works for everyone.

Architecture

9. The panel supports many elements of the designs, which it thinks represent an improvement in comparison to the previous planning application. In particular, the decision to remove the podium between Blocks C and D is a very positive move.
10. The panel considers that the architectural approach could be braver and bolder, to add excitement and advertise the development beside one of the major routes into London. The development has the potential to deliver a 'hero building' that does not look like other new architecture in the area. The panel encourages further thinking on how this can be achieved, and suggests the reclad Tustin Estate towers as a positive local precedent.
11. The panel also thinks that the building would benefit from greater variety and depth, and a less uniform appearance. The brick façades could be broken up by framing windows, perhaps reflecting the combination of square and arched windows found in Victorian buildings on the Old Kent Road, and using a different material such as stone. Painting the window reveals could also add greater richness and detail.

12. The panel also feels that the brick palette for Blocks B, C and D would benefit from less colour gradation. The change from top to bottom seems a little harsh, and emphasises the verticality of the buildings. A more unified palette would work better, and stronger horizontal elements could also be considered.
13. The panel suggests that the Block A crown make an already tall tower seem even taller. It also points out that its structure could obscure views of the sky from the rooftop amenity space. This element could be revisited and refined to address these issues.

Amenity space

14. The panel asks for more landscape design detail to show how the amenity spaces will provide facilities for different groups. In particular, the amenity spaces should be designed to be used successfully by both families with children and by students. More detailed thinking is needed to show how spaces will be provided that are suitable for both groups, avoiding conflict.
15. The panel also suggests that outdoor mirrors could be used in some areas to increase the sense of space, and potentially allow amenity space to be used for exercise or dance routines.
16. The panel also points out that the Southwark Recycling Centre is the source of unpleasant smells, which could have a negative impact for residents. It advises the applicant to investigate this further and consider whether mitigation is needed.

Community space

17. The panel considers it important that the size of the community room is increased. The current design is too small to be used for gatherings, but there is a lack of community space in the area. A larger space would provide a valuable local resource.
18. The panel emphasises the importance of community building on the Old Kent Road, which presents a significant challenge in the context of major change. It asks for thinking about how the local community can be made to feel welcome, and people other than residents attracted to use its spaces. For example, local artists could be invited to paint a wall or contribute a sculpture to draw in visitors.
19. The panel is also keen to see integration across the development, between residents and students. For example, it suggests that a space such as a food hall could be included that would provide a natural place for both groups to mix. It asks for further thinking about how the social architecture of the development can promote integration.

Uses

20. The panel questions whether a supermarket is the right use to occupy the ground floor retail unit. There are other supermarkets in the area already, and a different, more exciting use would deliver greater variety and value to residents.

21. The panel also thinks that a supermarket is unlikely to create active high street frontage on Old Kent Road, as their units usually include areas of blank frontage space. It asks whether other uses could be considered, including providing affordable workspace or dividing the ground floor up for smaller businesses.
22. The panel also notes that there are successful African restaurants on Old Kent Road that attract significant custom, and that a restaurant could also be considered as an option for the ground floor.
23. The panel suggests that a retail unit should be located within the development, close to amenity space. A coffee shop on the ground floor in the north-east corner of Block D could be used by parents while their children play, as well as by students. This would help to animate the development and provide all-weather communal space. It would also help to bring residents and students together naturally.

Movement and parking

24. The panel is not convinced that the proposed provision of four spaces for deliveries and trades will be sufficient. They are likely to be heavily used by delivery vehicles, and the proposed surgery would create additional pressure with patients requiring pick-up and drop-off. The panel asks for further thinking on this aspect of the proposals.
25. The panel points out that it is difficult and dangerous for pedestrians to cross the Old Kent Road from the site. It is important that plans are implemented to improve road crossings to provide for the large number of new residents the scheme will bring.
26. The panel also notes that bus routes along the Old Kent Road are overcrowded especially at rush hour. It asks the applicant and Southwark officers to discuss how public transport provision can be improved to serve the increase in population.

Feedback from Community Review Panel Round 2, 22 May 2023

Summary

27. The panel is pleased to see that the proposals have developed positively since the previous review meeting, and that its comments have been taken into account. It thinks that the stepping added to the massing of the buildings creates a more varied townscape. It also supports changes made to the architecture since the last review, including elevation and crown detailing, although it suggests reconsidering the use of lighter colours at ground floor level. The panel also supports the addition of community space and a café, which it considers offer important community value.
28. The panel cautions against planting too many trees, resulting in an overly dense canopy. It asks for play space to be provided for adolescents as well as younger

children. If the roof is to be accessible, a shelter or canopy will be needed to mitigate wind effects. The panel also emphasises the importance of a safe public realm for all and asks detail on how this will be achieved, including a lighting plan.

29. Thought should be given to preventing conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, including using different surface treatments to prevent cycling through the site, and providing cycle racks and hire bike stations. Public realm designs should take account of the potential future cycle lane on Old Kent Road, and potentially include a drop-off bay for the surgery. The management of student arrivals and departures will be crucial, and details should be provided to council officers.
30. The panel finds the idea of a contemporary bandstand interesting, but suggests more thinking is needed on how this would be designed and used. It also suggests a barbecue area and tables for outdoor eating as options for the public space.

Architecture and massing

31. The panel supports the changes made to the massing of the buildings, and to the architecture, since the previous review. It considers that the chamfered shoulder elements are successful in adding variety to the massing.
32. The panel considers the architecture is now more refined than at the last review. The detail added to elevations, including the recessed windows and stronger vertical elements, and the use of red metalwork are positive changes. The panel also supports the elegant designs for the crowns of the buildings.
33. The panel is not convinced that white material should be used at ground-floor level. It feels that positioning the palest colour at the base of the towers undermines the weakens the overall effect of colour progression across the full elevations.

Community facilities

34. The panel is pleased to see the addition of a café and of bookable community space. The principle of providing space that is managed by the student accommodation operator, Homes for Students, but accessible to all is crucial to the provision of community benefit.

Landscape and amenity space

35. The panel suggests that, while it supports tree planting on the site, there may be too many proposed. The number trees shown could lead to an overly dense canopy in a couple of decades' time. The panel notes the need to select the right species for the site which will not drop branches or create mess that is difficult to clear, and will have space to grow and mature over time without undermining the quality of public space.
36. The panel also asks whether play space can be provided for adolescents as well as younger children, an equally important requirement for residents.

37. The panel is intrigued by the idea of building a community bandstand, but asks for more thinking about how it would be used including how it would be used, who would play in it, and whether it would cause noise problems. It also questions whether planting a tree in the middle of the bandstand is a good idea, as it will open the space up to the weather. It also suggests that a temporary structure may be better place to meet changing needs by evolving over time.
38. Raised growing beds, allowing residents for example to cultivate vegetables, could provide significant social benefit while taking relatively limited space.
39. Outdoor picnic tables, which often prove popular in public spaces, could also be included. Barbecue areas are very popular in Burgess Park and, while there may be difficulties in accommodating them, they are also likely to prove a popular addition.
40. The panel notes that conditions in rooftop amenity spaces at the top of tall buildings can be wild and difficult to control. It asks for assurances that, if roofs are accessible, that a shelter will be provided to make the space useable.
41. The panel emphasises the importance of creating a safe environment, with a particular emphasis on the safety of women and girls. It would therefore like to see more information on the approach to pedestrian safety, in particular a lighting plan.

Movement and traffic

42. The panel notes plans for shared pedestrian and cycle routes through the development. It supports design to exclude cars from the development and enable both modes cycling and walking, but emphasises the need to ensure that routes are safe. Other shared spaces in the area, for example Burgess Park, experience conflict on shared routes because of the number of people using the space. This development will bring many people to the site, so it is important that the public realm is designed to manage the competing demands for space.
43. The panel suggests that different surface treatments could be used to discourage cyclists from cycling into the development without dismounting, or to keep them to particular routes. It is important to create a pedestrian-friendly environment, and the panel considers measures should be taken to prevent conflict with cyclists.
44. Hire bicycles could also be located on Devonshire Grove at the western edge of the development, and cycle racks provided there to help encourage people to dismount.
45. The panel also notes the possibility that Transport for London will bring forward designs for a cycle lane along Old Kent Road, and an island bus stop at the entrance to the Devonshire Place development. Thinking is needed on how the development can connect cycle routes beyond its boundaries, especially to this future route. The panel suggests that a dropped kerb should be provided to

connect to Old Kent Road, and further consideration given to how a future cycle junction here can be made safe.

46. The island bus stop could also create problems in future for users of the development, not least those visiting the surgery. The panel suggests that a separate drop-off bay is needed to avoid patients arriving by car needing to cross the cycle lane to reach the surgery. This could be located on Old Kent Road at the corner with Sylvan Grove.
47. The panel notes that the applicant is developing a management plan to stagger student arrival and departure times and prevent vehicle congestion from drop-offs. However, with 950 students on site it emphasises the need for this to be completely effective. It asks for further details of booking systems to fully demonstrate how drop-offs will be managed, and safeguards against congestion operate. A short report should be submitted to council officers to explain the system that will be put in place to prevent traffic congestion.