

Report of the Design South East panel

# Waitrose, Bromley South

28th June 2022

## The design review meeting

<b>Reference number</b>	1852/220614
<b>Date</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> June 2014
<b>Meeting location</b>	Bromley Civic Offices, Stockwell Cl, Bromley BR1 3UH
<b>Panel/forum members attending</b>	Dieter Kleiner (Chair), architecture and community engagement Angela Koch, urban design and housing David Ogunmuyiwa, architecture and regeneration Eleanor Brough, architecture and sustainability Harriet Bourne, landscape architecture and public realm
<b>Panel manager</b>	Lizzie Atherton, Design South East
<b>Presenting team</b>	Amelia Hunt, Savills, Matthew Lloyd-Ruck, Savills Julian Carter, Savills Kenneth Harrison (Client), John Lewis & Partners Chris John, CBRE Emma Taylor, Assael Architecture Russell Pedley, Assael Architecture Gareth Rowe, Assael Architecture
<b>Other attendees</b>	Timur Tatlioglu, Montagu Evans John Birch, Glanville Group Claire Brew, London Borough of Bromley Benjamin Terry, London Borough of Bromley Ian Drew, London Borough of Bromley Xan Goetzee-Barral, Design South East
<b>Site visit</b>	A full site visit was conducted by the panel prior to the review.
<b>Scope of the review</b>	As an independent design review panel the scope of this review was not restricted. However, as the scheme has been brought to review at an early stage the local authority asked the panel to particularly concentrate on layout, height, scale, massing and servicing arrangements.
<b>Panel interests</b>	Panel members did not indicate any conflicts of interest.

**Confidentiality** This report is confidential as the scheme is not yet the subject of a detailed planning application. Full details of our confidentiality policy can be found at the end of this report.

## The proposal

**Name** Waitrose, Bromley South

**Site location** Waitrose, 45 Masons Hill, Bromley, BR2 9HD

**Site details** 1.51 Ha site located on the busy junction of Kentish Way with Masons Hill. The site is bounded to the north by the railway line, to the east by the A21 Kentish Way and a small parcel of land that lies outside the red line site boundary. To the south is Masons Hill, which turns into High Street and extends northwards parallel to Kentish Way. To the west is St Marks Rd, which is host to the recent 17 storey development known as Perigon Heights (mixed office and residential). The adjacent land parcels are owned by the council and Transport for London. The site lies across several level changes, descending in height from north to south.

The site is host to an existing Waitrose supermarket located at the south-east of the site, with an associated car park to the north and north-west. Servicing for the supermarket is from St Mark's Road to the west.

**Proposal** A mixed-use redevelopment of the site, where the existing Waitrose supermarket is being retained in its current location alongside a new Built to Rent residential development. Circa 300 units are proposed in the form of two towers reaching 21 and 24 storeys, with a connecting building in between. A new entrance to the supermarket and a café are proposed on the north-west corner, to provide access to the development from a new public square (termed 'piazza').

**Planning stage** The proposal is at pre-application stage. There have been four pre-app meetings and the design team is aiming to submit a full planning application in Autumn 2022.

**Local planning authority** London Borough of Bromley

**Planning context** Bromley has been identified as a Metropolitan Town Centre and Opportunity Area in the London plan and so densification is supported

by policy in principle. The site has not been specifically allocated but is south of the allocated Site 10. There are TPOs on site and St Mark's School to the southwest of the site is Grade II listed.

**Planning history** There have not been any significant planning applications for the site.

**Planning authority perspective** The planning authority is supportive of a mixed-use scheme that retains the existing retail floor space. The rationale for taller buildings to mark the station and to signify a sense of arrival at Bromley South is accepted by the planning authority in principle, although Perigon Heights, a newly constructed tall building adjacent to the site already exists and the nature of additional towers has yet to be agreed. An emerging tall buildings SPD by the planning authority is being developed and will succeed any determination of this scheme on the site.

In the context of forthcoming adjacent developments, the planning authority would like the design team to consider the development beyond the red line and engage with neighbouring applicants to ensure there is a coordinated vision for the wider area.

**Community engagement** The applicant is aiming to have carried out the first round of community consultation by July 2022.

## Summary

We applaud the applicant for the thorough presentation in response to a challenging site and brief, and commend the long-term commitment and aspirations for quality and sustainability. The current proposal, however, appears to be constraint-led and the brief should be relaxed to enable a broader range of design strategies to realise the full potential of this significant gateway development site. We urge the applicant to explore a more holistic and opportunity-led approach that could potentially unlock greater commercial and social value, securing long-term benefits for the client and local community.

The proposal represents a significant change to the townscape of Bromley town centre. Therefore, the rationale for, and the disposition and treatment of, the tall buildings should be carefully considered to ensure they articulate the role of the site as a gateway and successfully contribute to the emerging tall building cluster. It is important the proposal is clearly communicated, in-particular connections to local areas and user journeys through the site, to illustrate what the ambiance of the connecting spaces will be. Public consultation should also be an integral part of the design process.

We are pleased that the applicant has come to review at this early stage, and we would welcome a second review and/or workshop when our recommendations have been addressed.

## Key recommendations

1. Develop an ambitious and opportunity-driven proposal to establish a baseline from which all other design options for this site can be judged.
2. Explore alternative strategies for the retention or entire redevelopment of the supermarket, including a phased development and temporary use of other spaces on site.
3. Carry out technical studies of the site, in particular wind and light, and use them to inform the proposal at an early stage of the design process.
4. Establish the rationale and strategy for a tall buildings cluster that celebrates the south-east corner of the site and better announces this as a gateway.
5. Consider a more meaningful entrance on the south-east corner of the site that integrates a publicly accessible route to the proposed piazza.
6. Reconsider the proposal for St Mark's Road by either opening the route to ensure it is safe and accessible or repurposing it for servicing uses only, if a publicly accessible route is provided from the south-east corner.

7. Produce a strategy for the route to site from the High Street and Railway station to ensure this is legible, attractive, actively overlooked and integrated into the town centre.

## Detailed comments and recommendations

### 1. Design strategy

- 1.1. The panel welcome the proposal as a necessary response to housing need and the client's ambition to foster a community around the existing supermarket is commended. Whilst the panel recognise that the project is challenging due to the varied adjacent uses and operational requirements of the supermarket, the proposal appears to be dominated by these constraints. Instead, the proposal should seek to realise the opportunities, for example to create a new gateway and linkage through the site to the railway station and High Street. As a design approach, the design team should initially consider establishing the most ambitious and opportunity-driven proposal and then using this as a baseline from which all other design options can be compared to.
- 1.2. The proposal seeks to retain the existing supermarket and the panel questioned whether alternative strategies might lead to a more efficient and sustainable long-term solution. The retention of the supermarket is constraining the proposal as it results in awkward development areas, circulation and amenity spaces; redeveloping the supermarket entirely could increase efficiency and allow for more varied and usable amenity spaces. Alternatively, phasing the development might allow for greater flexibility in the design strategy whilst minimising impact on the supermarket workforce. Further, the supermarket operation area could be reconfigured vertically to include a first floor/mezzanine that allows for more flexible development to take place within the site footprint.
- 1.3. The design team is encouraged to consider a more ambitious and greener scheme. Play spaces at ground level should be provided and clearly indicated through public consultation. Also, the panel queried why the masterplan doesn't yet include a tree survey as mature trees were identified in the site visit and these currently have significant visual value and are a benefit to the environment adjacent to the busy main roads.
- 1.4. The identity and treatment of edges around and within the proposals is not clear or consistent. The design team should ensure edges have a clear identity and front-back relationship as this will help ensure a cohesive development. The treatment of edges should also consider relationships with surrounding built form, layout and character areas.

## **2. Energy strategy**

- 2.1. The proposal's energy strategy was not discussed in any great detail at this review. It is important that technical studies, such as wind, light and passive design principles, are considered at the early stages of the design; it will be increasingly challenging to integrate these later on. Whilst reference to high client aspirations were welcomed, sustainability performance targets should be established and clearly communicated to stakeholders, including the public, with a view to ensure these are carefully considered throughout the design process and embedded into proposals.
- 2.2. Our guidance is that at the planning application stage the proposal must produce a clear energy strategy which details how the development will optimise thermal performance, minimise the demand for energy, supply the remaining energy requirements efficiently and optimise the use of renewables in order to align with the Government's emerging zero carbon policy. This strategy should be informed by detailed modelling work informed by respected calculation methods.

## **3. Height and massing**

- 3.1. The principle of a tall building cluster was questioned given the relatively small development area and outer-London location. The design team should establish what a cluster of tall buildings is and how the individual buildings might relate to each other and the wider context. Studies of the elevational treatment of the existing neighbouring tall buildings should be carried out, with particular attention paid to materials and use of depth. Once the fundamental principles and the rationale for a tall building cluster are established, an informed decision about the height and elevational treatment of each building can be made. Distributing the location of the tall buildings is a sound approach to prevent coalescing, though studies should be carried out to ensure this is the case from all key views.
- 3.2. Exceeding the 17-storey height of the neighbouring Perigon Heights does not seem appropriate and medium storey buildings, ranging 8-11 storeys, should also be considered to provide a more varied residential offer and townscape. An overall site section is necessary to understand the proposed building heights in the context of a site with varied topographical changes.
- 3.3. The concept of a taller building located at the south-east corner of the site should be tested as this could better emphasise it as a key arrival moment to the town centre.
- 3.4. Resident community spaces should be considered at the top of each building to maximise the benefit of views out.

#### **4. South-east corner**

- 4.1. The proposal identifies the south-east corner of the site as a key gateway into Bromley town centre. The panel considered the proposal here as underwhelming and inaccessible, as only proposed residents could use the route from the south-east to the railways station and High Street. A publicly accessible route through the development should be explored to better integrate the site into its setting.
- 4.2. A building that wraps around the south-eastern corner with active frontages should be considered to better articulate the site as a gateway location. A wrap-around building could activate the hostile Masons Hill frontage and protect the interior of the development from poor noise and air quality from the busy surrounding roads. Additionally, greening the south-eastern corner, including the roof space, should be considered to improve the quality of the environment; the opportunity to integrate large trees in this corner should be explored.

#### **5. St Mark's Road**

- 5.1. A publicly accessible route to the piazza is proposed along St Mark's Road but the panel is not convinced how useful this will be. The area will feel constrained as it is cut off from the road to the south by the extension of the existing supermarket building and it will be overshadowed by forthcoming development further south. Whilst the panel understand that the client has specific operational requirements for the supermarket, removing the extension of the supermarket should be explored as this will improve permeability and ensure it feels safe and accessible. In any case, the staircase connecting St Mark's Road to the north should be made ample enough to ensure it is also a safe and accessible space.
- 5.2. A movement plan should be produced to understand wider movement patterns and establish the rationale for the proposed route from St Mark's Road. Engagement with the community should inform movement patterns and test route proposals that cross the site. The panel consider that a public route would be more effective if entering from the south-east corner of the site, the gateway moment. At the same time, St Marks Road could be retained for servicing only and this would be an appropriate location for a SUDS feature. If St Mark's Road is to be used solely for servicing purposes, the threshold between the servicing area and the proposed piazza to the north should be carefully considered and generous enough to ensure a good quality environment. There are precedents where pedestrian movement and service access have been combined successfully and the proposal should demonstrate this.



## **6. Station approach**

- 6.1. The panel consider the connection of the development to the High Street as a crucial opportunity in ensuring it is well-connected and lively. The connection to the High Street is a key opportunity to announce and signpost the development that is not being maximised at present as it is cut off by the car park and it lacks legibility and identity.
- 6.2. The hierarchy of spaces on approach to the piazza should be reevaluated to ensure the pedestrian and cycle access and experience is being prioritised; as proposed the car park will result in a poor arrival experience for users walking past, especially at night. A western section of the car park could be removed to celebrate this key moment of the user access experience by providing double storey parking or by integrating bicycle parking and maintenance with the existing railway station bicycle parking. Alternatively, the car park could be developed.
- 6.3. The character of the piazza should be established to clarify its unique 'pull' factor that might encourage non-residents to positively use the space at all hours.
- 6.4. A land swap with the neighbouring police station should be explored to maximise the pedestrian access to the site by consolidating green spaces to create a more direct and clear connection from the High Street, past the railway station and to the proposed piazza. The panel recognise this solution will be challenging considering the access requirements of the police station.

## **7. Woodland and eastern link**

- 7.1. The woodland to the east is separated from the site and not overlooked, so is at risk of attracting anti-social behaviour. The applicant should engage with the planning authority to ensure the woodland has a functional purpose for residents and the local community, perhaps as an off-site amenity. The applicant should explore how the planning authority and client could collaborate together with residents to manage the space.
- 7.2. The eastern link to the woodland runs a long a level change, parallel to the railway, that will require a structure to mediate this.

## 8. Materials and detailing

- 8.1. The approach to materials and detailing was not discussed at this review given the early stage of the proposal. Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states: *'Local planning authorities should seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).'*
- 8.2. In order to be consistent with this national policy, the applicant team and local authority should note Design South East's general guidance on material quality and detail. At planning application stage, the quality of the detailing should be demonstrated through large scale drawings at 1:20 and 1:5 of key elements of the building/landscape and should be accompanied by actual material samples which should be secured by condition as part of any planning approval.

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### Confidentiality

If the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the panel, this report is offered in confidence to those who attended the review meeting. There is no objection to the report being shared within the recipients' organisations provided that the content of the report is treated in the strictest confidence. Neither the content of the report, nor the report itself can be shared with anyone outside the recipients' organisations. Design South East reserves the right to make the content of this report known should the views contained in this report be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). Unless previously agreed, pre-application reports will be made publicly available if the scheme becomes the subject of a planning application or public inquiry. Design South East also reserves the right to make this report available to another design review panel should the scheme go before them. If you do not require this report to be kept confidential, please inform us.

If the scheme is the subject of a planning application the report will be made publicly available and we expect the local authority to include it in the case documents.

### Role of design review

This is the report of a design review panel, forum or workshop. Design review is endorsed by the National Planning Policy Framework and the opinions and recommendations of properly conducted, independent design review panels should be given weight in planning decisions including appeals. The panel does not take planning decisions. Its role is advisory. The panel's advice is only one of a number of considerations that local planning authorities have to take into account in making their decisions.

The role of design review is to provide independent expert advice to both the applicant and the local planning authority. We will try to make sure that the panel are informed about the views of local residents and businesses to inform their understanding of the context of the proposal. However, design review is a separate process to community engagement and consultation.

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