

Report of the Design South East panel

Waitrose, Bromley South: Second Review

17th October 2022

The design review meeting

Reference number	1895/14334007
Date	5 th October 2022
Meeting location	Bromley Civic Offices, Stockwell Cl, Bromley BR1 3UH
Panel/forum members attending	Dieter Kleiner (Chair), architecture and community engagement (previous panel) Angela Koch, urban design and housing (previous panel) David Ogunmuyiwa, architecture and regeneration (previous panel)
Panel manager	Lizzie Atherton, Design South East
Also attending	Trishla Chadha, Design South East Julian Carter, Savills Kenneth Harrison (Client), John Lewis & Partners David Rothwell, John Lewis & Partners Emma Taylor, Assael Architecture Russell Pedley, Assael Architecture Gareth Rowe, Assael Exteriors John Birch, Glanville Group Timur Tatlioglu, Montagu Evans Claire Brew, London Borough of Bromley Benjamin Terry, London Borough of Bromley Ian Drew, London Borough of Bromley
Site visit	A full site visit was conducted by the panel in the first review held in June 2022.
Scope of the review	As an independent design review panel the scope of this review was not restricted. However, the local authority asked us to particularly concentrate on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing context and townscape, principle of immediate and wider setting;• physical design, place making, urban design principles and processes;• sustainable strategies including planning for climate change;• the scale, massing and density of the proposal;• engagement with local land owners and public participation;• movement and parking strategies, mobility planning with respect to vehicular and pedestrian

Panel interests	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	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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 beginning of 2023.
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	<p>The planning authority is supportive of a mixed-use scheme that retains the existing retail floor space. The rationale for a taller building 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Community engagement	Public consultation has commenced. The outcomes of this were not presented or discussed in detail.

Previous key recommendations (14th June 2022)

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.

Summary

We welcome the applicant's return to design review and recognise the amount of work undertaken by their team in response to the panel's comments and recommendations to re-evaluate design options and clarify their design direction. Some encouraging improvements have been identified that will positively benefit local people, future residents and store users, increase store activity and operational flows and capacity.

However, it was not possible to understand the full suite of benefits and amenity on offer for local people, building users and residents, as would be required to mitigate the significant density, built form and distribution of height of development suggested.

The design strategy should now focus on ensuring that this offers enjoyable public, communal and private amenity spaces and homes, making it a carbon zero and liveable new part of the neighbourhood. This requires further review of the public realm strategy, landscape network, movement patterns, energy strategy and parking provision for all modes to achieve a practical yet outstanding response to the setting for existing and future residents.

There are still significant matters to be resolved in terms of the building mass, scale, character and integration with the existing supermarket and the larger context of Bromley.

We would welcome the opportunity to review the building layouts and detailing of architecture and landscape and carbon/energy strategy, as it was beyond the scope of this workshop to explore these in any detail.

Key recommendations

1. Explore how the scheme will impact the townscape and enhance the Bromley skyline.
2. Describe the experiential qualities of spaces and its use from a ground level perspective. Understand the lives of the residents and users and shape a proposal that creates a sense of community, safety and privacy.
3. Develop the movement strategy focusing on key pedestrian routes and cycling by reducing the dominance of car parking and operational optimisations in the layout, aligned with new road user hierarchy and improving connections to the site and internally.
4. Ensure that the design responds to the distinct characteristics of the different edges of the site, especially how it sits within the Green Infrastructure Network. The panel

considers it as paramount to fully integrate well-being, form factor and full carbon life cycle assessments and optimisation into this stage of the design development.

5. Reconfigure the massing for certain parts of the development particularly towards the east which could enable further landscaping and ensure sufficient light and ventilation in all parts of the development.
6. Review the relationships between public, semi-private and private spaces to ensure the proposal fosters community and enhances the public realm with active frontages of buildings by producing architectural building sections to understand the patterns formed. London Plan Policy requirements of Child Space Provision and Urban Greening Factor in a tall building cluster provide reason to integrate good place-making with green and social infrastructures.

Detailed comments and recommendations

1. Strategic context

- 1.1. The panel welcomes the approach of the design team in presenting a range of options considered and evaluated for the scheme along with a physical model presented. The team has been successful in establishing a baseline for the options presented and there have been significant positive moves in the design proposal since the last review. The intent behind the concept is convincing, however this is not yet translating through the 'Stage 2 Developed' option which should focus more on the experiential journey of the public and the townscape perspective of the scheme.
- 1.2. The team should consider the Bromley skyline as part of the public realm and must design a scheme that will enhance it. This will require an exemplary approach to form, detailing and architectural expression. The proposed buildings do not yet sit comfortably in their wider context, thus a clear narrative that supports 'shifting the gravity' and focal area of the town centre towards the south of the railway line is required to be tested with wider local stakeholders. There is a fundamental challenge of the volume of development.
- 1.3. There is still merit in the team considering what could be achieved by a truly opportunity-led proposal - one unencumbered by constraint. This was previously suggested to identify positive strategies around which a deliverable scheme could be shaped. This applies equally to public benefit such as by provision of a new sustainable transport hub and wider connectivity as it does to creating an excellent environment with good levels of natural-light, landscape and amenity provision.

- 1.4. The panel recognise that the project is challenging due to the varied adjacent uses and operational requirements of the supermarket as the redevelopment of the store is not economically, structurally and commercially viable. However, the proposal with the retained supermarket should seek to realise the opportunities, for example to create strategic station approach gateway and the town centre gateway to benefit the public realm, setting and townscape. In addition, the proposal must include a far more ambitious and integral approach to sustainability than is currently being pursued.
- 1.5. The presentation lacked analysis of what the daily experience might be like for an average resident of the scheme. Key destinations and routes should be identified and analysed. The design team should study upcoming development in the area to understand how nearby amenities may change in the future. The team should consider how the proposal will bring existing and new residents together and how are public-private thresholds treated to encourage social interaction.
- 1.6. A clear concept and vision for the social infrastructure along with the spaces, amenities, and facilities for the residents should be used to drive the whole scheme. There is ample opportunity for the scheme to be an aspirational place where social interactions happen between the people residing in the scheme. A narrative should be built around the scheme highlighting the experiential qualities and use of the spaces.

2. Sustainable design

- 2.1. The emerging approach to sustainable design and renewable energy was not discussed in detail at this review. The panel considers it as paramount to fully integrate well-being, form factor and full carbon life cycle assessments and optimisation into this stage of the design development.
- 2.2. Our guidance is that at a subsequent design review and at planning application stage the proposal must produce a clear strategy that details how the development will minimise embodied, operational, and transport-related carbon emissions, and optimise the use of renewable energy to align with the Government's legal commitment to Net Zero Carbon by 2050. The proposal should demonstrate its compliance to a respected zero carbon pathway, for example the UKGBC Net Zero Whole Life Carbon Roadmap for the Built Environment. The sustainability strategy should be tied to measurable targets and detailed modelling work informed by respected calculation methods, and address water use, biodiversity net gain, and waste reduction in construction and operation through circular economic principles.

3. Movement, parking and connectivity

- 3.1. The proposal must promote and support good connectivity to the local context and community, as part of a commitment to lasting and sustainable development.
- 3.2. The team should clarify the ground floor pedestrian experience with key views charting the route along and through the northern and south-eastern edge of the site. The treatment of edges should also consider relationships with surrounding built form, layout and character areas. Changes to the ground floor plan to provide active uses along the building edge to this area should be undertaken to ensure that there is positive sequence of high-quality, active public spaces throughout this area.
- 3.3. The overall design and integration of the site with the surrounding community should be such that it promotes low carbon sustainable travel and suppresses car dependency. Fundamental to such a strategy is the integration of walking and cycling infrastructure, connectivity to the town centre and public transport nodes and low car parking provision. There is strong demand for pedestrian route across the bridge which needs consideration.
- 3.4. While the panel acknowledges the 4-meter setback from the railway boundary, the parking appears very dominant and makes for an unpleasant route to the scheme. The setback should be used as an opportunity to provide a green boundary and soften the dominance of the parking. The location of the car park seems practical, allowing the proposal to achieve the minimum parking standards of 3%. However, the layout should be revisited to prioritise safe and enjoyable cycle and pedestrian access and act as a successful screening tool to the supermarket in the front of the scheme.
- 3.5. Cycling should be promoted as a viable and popular transport option for residents. Easy and flexible options for cycle access and storage must become a part of the scheme. The panel appreciates the provision of dedicated cycle lifts accessible from the ground floor to the first floor. Non-standard cycles need considering too – such as cargo bikes for carrying children which are increasingly popular.
- 3.6. The purpose and character of St. Marks Road needs further thought. The lane is only meant as a service yard whereas it provides a better opportunity for a public realm with the perigon heights as a frontage. Whilst there are service and management considerations for Waitrose, it is worth pursuing the option of public access through this lane by promoting pedestrian informed design measures.

4. Landscape and public realm

- 4.1. Since the last review, some useful studies have been undertaken, including a detailed ecological analysis. It would be helpful to define the landscape character, not just the ecological profile, paying particular heed to the edge of the woodland meeting Kentish way and providing a new frontage. The character of the existing woodland and its integration with the scheme needs further thought.
- 4.2. The approach to landscape, whilst improved from the earlier iteration of the design, remains negatively impacted by the relationship with the buildings. The relationship between the buildings and the open space should be clearer and more coherent, including in terms of how it is accessed and ensures social interaction. The purpose of the different open spaces should be more specifically defined, and should be clearly private, public or communal space. It should be made easier for the appropriate users to access open space.
- 4.3. With a scheme of this scale, calculations are required to demonstrate the quantum of green space required for the scheme. We understand that the team is aiming to meet 0.4 factor in consideration with the new London plan for urban greening factor. This can be achieved by proposing green infrastructure on various floors of the proposed towers, retention of the existing woodland, and provision of bio-diverse green roofs across the scheme.
- 4.4. Instead of minimising the development's impact on its surroundings, the qualities of the landscape should be used to positively shape the design. Greater interplay between indoor and outdoor spaces might assist in this regard.

5. Form, scale and mass

- 5.1. We are pleased the proposal identifies the south-east corner of the site as a key gateway into Bromley town centre. The building that wraps around the south-eastern corner with active frontages should activate the hostile Masons Hills frontage and improve the quality of the environment through generous green spaces. A publicly accessible route through the development is welcomed and should be explored further to better integrate the site into its setting and to increase the time of its use, by for example moving overnight site uses that would increase safety.

- 5.2. We encourage the team to be clearer about the intention behind the buildings so that each one has a definite and understandable purpose in the townscape composition. Currently, the southern tower stands in contradiction to the emerging pattern of development and should significantly reflect the transition of stepping down in terms of height from north to south direction. The southern tower can be lower in height and sit comfortably in the townscape setting with public spaces on the 16-18 level and roof restaurants thus providing an exemplary social environment for the residents as well as commercial viability.
- 5.3. Even though the principle of a tall building is accepted, the proportions of the blocks make the massing of the tall towers extremely bulky, and the buildings lack articulation, variety, and elegance. Greater variation in scale should be studied with optimising and reducing form-factors as a result.
- 5.4. Although the overall plan requires further refinement, the scale and massing of the towers, on the northern corner of the site, is felt by most of the panel as currently the more successful and offers a good legibility and identity to the whole scheme. The corresponding building to the south side of the scheme might benefit from similar articulation of its positioning, massing and implied townscape aesthetic.
- 5.5. A robust views, sun and wind analysis will help direct key design decisions about layout and massing, including the relationship with the national railway and the surrounding context. It might indicate that the building blocks could be lower and/or opened up in places, allowing for better and more natural light and ventilation.
- 5.6. Alternative layout arrangements should be explored to break down the bulk of the building structures. The three blocks proposed are close to one another and are coalescing to appear as one large mass. There may be scope for a reduction in bulkiness and achieve distinction between the building masses in the proposal.
- 5.7. The connection between the two towers is important, operationally and visually. We remain doubtful about the benefits and practicality of the link block on the eastern edge, with its proximity to the towers and appears bulky thus blocking out the sunlight and ventilation to the central space and forming a rigid enclosure of buildings on the three sides. Changes like reduction in the massing and scale of the east block should be undertaken to provide a positive sequence of high quality public active spaces throughout the site.

6. Materials and detailing

- 6.1. 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).'*
- 6.2. 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.

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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