

Report of the Design South East panel

Waitrose, Bromley South: Second Workshop

17th November 2022

The design review meeting

Reference number	1917/021122
Date	2 nd November 2022
Meeting location	Bromley Civic Offices, Stockwell Cl, Bromley BR1 3UH
Panel members attending	Dieter Kleiner (chair), Architecture, Community Engagement Angela Koch, Urban Design, Housing Harriet Bourne, Landscape Architecture, Public Realm
Panel manager	Lizzie Atherton, Design South East
Also attending	David Rothwell, JLP Russel Pedley, Assael Architecture Ed Sharland, Assael Architecture Gareth Rowe, Assael Exteriors Julian Carter, Savills Evie Gracey, CBRE Ltd Zoe Avery, CBRE Ltd Luma Ifram, Publica Henry Burrows, Hoare Lea 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.
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	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.

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**

Public consultation has commenced. The outcomes of this were not presented or discussed in detail.

Key recommendations from the first review (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.

Key recommendations from the first workshop (5th October 2022)

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.

Summary

We welcome the team's rapid progression on a 'living well' offer to the community, residents, and neighbours. Delivering genuine public benefits will be crucial to the success of this place. Only with a quality public realm and amenity offer at ground floor can height start to be explored. Whilst we are broadly supportive of the proposed amenity and connections, reassurance is needed that those improvements outside the redline will be delivered and that those within the applicant's remit are meaningful enough in their own right to offset the proposed scale of development.

Microclimate and movement analysis must be informing the scheme's detailed design. As the design develops the team should specify convincingly, beyond principles, how the scheme provides an exemplar offer to Bromley South in a detailed sense.

We look forward to further sessions focussing on townscape and architecture.

Key recommendations

1. Analyse the impact of the proposed scheme on pedestrian and cycle movement, compare to the analysis of the existing condition, and ensure conclusions feed into the design.
2. Ensure the piazza ambition is achieved by creating a destination that supports activities of value to local people and by programming spaces around its edges to activate the ground plane. Consider increasing the size of this space and explore how maximum flexibility of the hard surfaces can be achieved without overly subdividing the area.
3. Explore the covering of service yard, as an extension to the piazza, and how it could contribute positively to the development.
4. Overlay the sunlight and daylight analysis onto the play and public realm proposals to create high quality play and dwell spaces.
5. Demonstrate how the needs of youths and older children will be met. Explore whether play and dwell space for youths can be provided on site. Consider the use of the woodland and route under the bridge as potential destinations.
6. Increase the functionality and environment of the carpark. Provide trees and landscaping and ensure all non-adopted road surfaces are permeable.

Detailed comments and recommendations

1. Vision and strategic context

- 1.1. This scheme presents an opportunity to develop a place where shoppers, residents, and the surrounding Bromley South community of all ages come together and use shared spaces. The planned community engagement should seek to identify uses of value to local people, and the team should demonstrate how these uses have been integrated into proposals.
- 1.2. The design should be rigorously tested to explore how spaces are intended to perform in different day and night scenarios and evolved to support these uses. For example, considering how a parent and child who are shopping might use the play space and café and then walk back to the car park, or cycle home. An inclusive approach should be taken to considering different users and different times of day.
- 1.3. The pedestrian movement and experience analysis of the existing condition is welcomed. Further analysis of the proposal is planned, and this should be used to shape and test the scheme for optimising the pedestrian experience rather than post-rationalise the design approach.
- 1.4. As this will be a car free scheme, other than providing car parking for shoppers, improving cycling and the experience of cycling for users should be a key ambition that will transform active mobility choices in and around Bromley South. There is an opportunity to celebrate cycling and sustainable transport more.
- 1.5. The narrative of how people live here, circulate, and interact should be strengthened and supported by at least one outstanding public benefit offer which focuses on producing uncompromised quality amenity, which may be the piazza.
- 1.6. The team should clarify in what respect the scheme meets policy, and what is offered in additionality to policy requirements. Framing the proposals in this way will clarify how the development is exceeding policy and proactively benefiting the community.

2. Public realm and service yard

- 2.1. The ambition for a piazza space is the right one, however it currently performs as a movement space with activity pushed to the side. Subdividing the space also limits opportunity. A meaningful destination and gathering space able to accommodate community activity should be the focus of proposals. The piazza must work as a genuinely multifunctional space that can support community need during the day and night.
- 2.2. It was suggested that the public space could be extended over the service yard, and/or the north-west building line at ground level could be pushed back to create a more generous flexible and productive space that works as a piazza. Additionally or alternatively the possibility of this space accommodating photovoltaics should be explored in order to enhance energy performance.
- 2.3. Increasing activity around the edges of the piazza to create a vibrant, attractive and safe space should be the ambition, by introducing internal uses of benefit to local people. The build to rent concierge is a private and largely inactive space in the most prominent location on the north-west corner, whilst the public entrance to Waitrose and its café are set back and less evident – this arrangement should be reconsidered to better animate the piazza and create a more public welcoming arrival experience. Every edge and corner should be activated and animated. The café chairs and tables could be loose to promote further flexibility and open up the space. There is a risk at night, when the store is closed, that this becomes a lifeless cul-de-sac space.
- 2.4. The public realm proposals for the town centre gateway are developing a positive and more civic character. This should echo through the piazza. The programming and use of both spaces should be further developed. Large trees will be required on the south-east corner to respond to the scale of the junction and building.
- 2.5. The threshold between the service yard and piazza should be detailed. We are also concerned about the impact of the service yard on residents in flats. Analysis of the impacts of noise and visuals related to day and night operations should be investigated.

3. **Play**

- 3.1. The play provision for young children is generous, which we welcome. However, an over provision of smaller play spaces at the expense of truly high-quality play at scale in the right places should be avoided. To understand the conditions of spaces and establish where children will play, the daylight, sunlight, and microclimate analysis should be used to inform and develop the play strategy to a detailed stage. Dwell spaces should be in sunnier areas, whereas some dedicated areas for playing could be in shadier areas. Some areas of play appear compromised due to pollution and noise, such as the 'play along the way' parallel to the railway line and the play along Kentish Way. The play along the way may be better located along the length of the piazza in the form of a linear timber piece of play equipment.
- 3.2. The present condition of Kentish Way is a hostile, busy road with poor air quality, therefore we question locating play along this edge. This space should be interrogated further considering existing and future conditions of the road.
- 3.3. The play and meeting experience for 12 years+ children should be explained further, and we strongly encourage direct consultation with young people who are often underrepresented. As proposed, no space for youths is provided on site. The flyover area could perhaps offer this in a creative use of this space. The team should also set out the routes older children will take to nearby play spaces off-site, either walking, cycling, or scooting. This should be shown as actual routes along footpaths / cycleways and not concentric circles.
- 3.4. The podium play strategy is positive, this is a well overlooked space with passive surveillance. Consideration has also been given to microclimate and protection from wind and noise, which we welcome.
- 3.5. Mounding should not be considered as play within the calculations.

4. **Landscape**

- 4.1. The car parking and railway line are depicted as being separated by a tree-lined green edge in the visuals. However, there are no trees in the plans. Trees must be incorporated along this edge and throughout the carpark to provide shading and prevent this space overheating. This move would enable a green corridor connecting the woodland to the piazza.
- 4.2. Further development of the woodland space is needed to enhance the experience of this space and utilise the area further.
- 4.3. The team should clearly describe which trees are being removed and where they are being replaced.

5. Movement and connectivity

- 5.1. Those cycling to Waitrose may be bringing cargo bikes or have child bike seats or trailers. These will require extra storage space which should be provided and worked into the design.
- 5.2. The link through between the town centre gateway and piazza is welcomed and offers a safe, surveyed route for the public. A more generous approach could be to extend the hours this route is open, beyond the store opening hours, as an offer to the Bromley South community and embedded into the management of the scheme.
- 5.3. All roads that are not adopted should be permeable to maximise SUDs drainage opportunities.

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.

The North Kent Architecture Centre Limited

trading as Design South East

Admirals Office

The Historic Dockyard

Chatham, Kent

ME4 4TZ

T 01634 401166

E info@designsoutheast.org

The logo for Design South East, featuring a stylized yellow map of the South East of England. The text "Design South East" is written in white on the map.

Design
South East