

# Peckham Area Character Study

## Initial Community Discussion - Summary

**Location: Peckham Levels + Online (via Zoom)**

**Date: 16 May 2023**

**Time: 7pm – 8.30pm**

### 1. Introduction

*Michael Tsoukaris, Head of Design, Conservation & Transport, Southwark Council*

An introduction to area character studies.

### 2. Our previous approach to area character studies [Presentation slides attached]

*Stephen Lovejoy, Urban Designer, Southwark Council*

An explanation of our approach for past area character studies. Camberwell area character study was used as an example:

- Firstly, we agreed the area to be covered in the Camberwell area character study. This needed to align with existing planning policy documents (especially the Southwark Plan 2022) so that the study works with our existing policies. We also considered ward boundaries so that we could involve ward councillors in the process. This aligned to Camberwell Green and St. Giles wards.
- We reviewed the existing information and data available for the area.
- This was used to map the physical, social & economic, and experience information for the area.
- This information was used to identify character areas.
- This was followed by a consultation in Camberwell from 11<sup>th</sup> October – 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023. The consultation included surveying and interactive mapping. We held pop-up

events in the town centre, as part of the Saturday market, in the Butterfly Walk shopping centre. We also attended local community group and TRA meetings.

- We also had a consultation website. This matched the questions and activities from the in-person events. Visitors could see the anonymised responses submitted by others and choose to agree with responses.
- The consultation had 1628 contributions from 461 respondents.
- The responses were combined with the research to create detailed character area summaries. This including a summary of the views of the area.
- This is being used to agree the next steps for each area of the study.

The area proposed for the Peckham area character study includes the Peckham and Rye Lane wards.

### **3. Group discussion points - Peckham area**

- One of the strengths of Peckham is diversity, both in terms of people and buildings. There is a space for everybody.
- The varied built form of Peckham provides interest, excitement and an opportunity for discovery. There is a positive mix of historic and new buildings.
- Areas are distinctive and the contrast between spaces is important. In particular, the contrast between quiet spaces (like Bellenden Road or Lordship Lane) and vibrant spaces like (Rye Lane). The contrasting spaces work together and are both destinations in their own right. Despite this contrast, spaces do not feel fractured.
- There are many beautiful and historically significant buildings in the town centre, including those from the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The town centre benefits from the vibrancy of Rye Lane and locations like the markets and Khan's Bargains.
- Rye Lane serves as a busy central 'spine'. It is vibrant with many sounds and sights. It can also be messy, chaotic and lacking in cleanliness.
- Narrow alleyways and arcades run off this spine leading to interesting and unexpected places and public spaces that radiate out.
- The low-rise (3-5 storey) buildings around the alleyways stop them from being dark spaces. Some serve as 'sun traps'.
- Much of the public realm lacks accessibility. This is particular an issue for those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, pushing prams or pulling wheeled bags. This is often due to features such as narrow pavements or street clutter. Some shops and stalls leave boxes outside shops or have signs or stalls that extend out to the pavement.

These act as a barrier to movement. There is also an issue with fly-tipping in the town centre.

- There is a strong local focus and sense of community. The atmosphere is friendly. There are many varied close-knit communities.
- There are few modernist buildings in Peckham town centre. In contrast, there are few historic buildings in northern Peckham.
- The closed roads during the Covid-19 pandemic helped with the accessibility of the public realm in the centre.
- Peckham benefits from lots of open space. There are safe places for kids to play.
- Peckham is a changing place. It used to be a place with a negative reputation. Now it is recognised as a desirable place to be, but as a result is at risk of gentrification.
- Peckham is valued as a destination for visitors, such as for shopping.
- Young people are an important part of Peckham. This includes the students who study in the area, the teenagers that live and visit Peckham and the children who live in the area.
- Peckham is book-ended by two large green spaces – Burgess Park to the north and Peckham Rye Park & Common to the south. Central Peckham is dominated by hard concrete landscaping. There are some valued smaller green spaces throughout Peckham. Examples include the Surrey Canal and Holly Grove Shrubbery.
- Peckham Square serves as an important meeting space. It is used by people from all walks of life. It is also used by some of the most disadvantaged residents of Peckham. As a result, it is a place where you can see some of the issues that these residents have. There could be more involvement of the community in Peckham square.
- Peckham Library has a strong feeling of community.
- There is lots of activity always taking place in Peckham, such as recording for television or film.
- Peckham is well connected, with good public transport and opportunities for walking, cycling and other active travel.
- There is a rich history in Peckham, but for some groups the archive of that history has been lost.
- Different communities and groups will have different experiences of Peckham. The landmarks will be different for different community groups. For example, Elim House is an important landmark for the Caribbean community.

#### **4. Questions and observations on the study**

**Q** When will the consultation be?

*A Once we have taken the feedback from the session on board and agreed what the study will cover, we will develop the consultation timescale. There will be some further workshop events as we develop the initial information and identify the character areas. This is anticipated to take approximately 6 months. This will be followed by a minimum 3-month public engagement*

**Q** Will there be an opportunity to comment on the boundaries of the character areas before the draft is sent out for consultation?

*A We will arrange a workshop focused on the character areas before the consultation draft is published.*

**Q** Would it be possible for Commonplace to facilitate a 'forum' / a more traditional discussion board online for the consultation?

*A We will raise this query with Commonplace.*

**Q** Concern that the Character Area Studies would replace the public consultation process for planning applications in the area

*A The Character Area Study is a supplementary resource used to inform planning and strategic decisions. It will not replace the planning process. All planning applications will still be required to include engagement and public consultation.*

**Q** Concern that the consultation for the Character Area Study would be online only

*A The consultation will include both online and in-person events.*

**Q** Why was the Camberwell consultation over winter?

*A This was not a deliberate decision. We started the consultation as soon as the consultation draft was ready. We extended the consultation period to allow for the time when people would be busy over the festive period.*

**Q** How does the Character Area Study timeline compare to the Aylesham pre-application / application timeline? Berkeley promised a reflection of the character of the area in their design brief. The discussion tonight has been superior to any discussion held with Berkeley over the past two years. It would be beneficial to link or integrate the Character Area Study project with the pre-app process for the Aylesham – there is a concern that a full application will be submitted by Berkeley prior to the completion of this study. Will the draft Character Area Study (i.e. consultation version of the study) be applicable as a draft planning document / policy?

*A The Character Area Study is intended to supplement rather than replace the planning process. The information and findings of the study will be shared with the Developers as well as the planning officers overseeing the Aylesham scheme to inform their decision making process. The consultation draft will also be made*

*publicly accessible when available and will gain planning weight through consultation.*

**Q** We should find ways to target those who feel alienated from the planning process. Targeted consultation will be required for a number of groups within the area. Special concern should be given to translating documents / having translators present at consultation meetings. Consideration should also be given to the rich history of activism in the area. Character areas / sites / places may hold significance but do not currently have a blue plaque etc. This should be reflected in the study.

*A We will look at the census information for most common languages spoken in the area and explore the options for translation to improve accessibility. The consultation during the study will allow all groups to highlight areas / sites / places that hold significance to them.*

**Q** How will the consultation be advertised non-digitally?

*A We will distribute printed pamphlets/postcards with information about the consultation.*

**Q** What will be happening in the six-month period from now prior to the consultation opening?

*A We will review the existing information and data available for the area. We will use this to map the physical, social & economic, and experience information for the area and arrange a workshop with the community before we publish the draft character study.*

**Q** How will the ward councillors be deeply involved in the process?

*A We will work with ward councillors to include all communities in the consultation process.*

**Q** Can a write-up of the discussion held today be circulated after the meeting?

*A We will circulate a write-up of the meeting.*

**Q** What is the purpose of the diversity monitoring form? Race, age, gender etc. may inform the characterisation of Peckham, perhaps this should be taken into account in the study?

*A We will ask voluntary questions about age, ethnicity, religion, marriage & civil partnership, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation. This information is kept anonymous. We compare this information with census data to ensure that our consultation is as representative as possible of the Peckham area. This is done during the consultation. This is to allow us to include further targeted engagement, where appropriate.*

**Q** Will we be consulting with local schools or young people? Teenagers have very valuable voices for Peckham.

*A We will be working with Southwark Youth Parliament, Southwark Young Advisors and Local Schools to engage young people in the study process.*

**Q** Can a copy of the Camberwell Study and the slides from this presentation be circulated after this meeting?

*A We will share the presentation slides. We will also distribute a link to the consultation draft of the Camberwell area character study.*