

The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future

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Lambeth Planning,
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For attention of:
Lauren Shallcross,
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Please reply to:
Alan Piper, RIBA,



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2nd February 2019

Your ref:
18/05438/FUL

9-15 ELECTRIC AVENUE, SW9 – Proposed Redevelopment:

Dear Miss Shallcross,

Thank you for your recent letter about the above application. This is a prominent site within Brixton Town Centre, and the Society must **object** to the following aspects of the proposals:

1. Excessive Overall Height

We are disappointed that the designers have ignored the comments to this effect that we had already made at the pre-application consultation stage. We would find it difficult to accept even two attic storeys rising above the main facades, but three storeys is plainly ludicrous and completely unbalances the design. The result is totally out of scale with its surroundings.

Overall, the design fails to meet Lambeth Local Plan policies Q2 (i), Q7 (ii) and Q22 (a).

As a taller building than its immediate surroundings, it also fails to meet Local Plan policy Q26 (a).

2. Adverse Effect on Listed Building:

The contrast in height and scale between the office entrance block and the adjacent Reliance Arcade is preposterous, and does great harm to the setting of this Listed Building.

The 1970s-style façade treatment proposed for this tower element is completely out of sympathy with the historic context. To cap it with what appears to be an advertising hoarding is adding insult to injury. A variation on the main façade pattern would be more appropriate, but more vitally, a reduction in height and bulk are essential.

The proposals fail dismally to comply with Lambeth Local Plan policies Q5 (b) and (c), Q7 (ii), Q20 (ii) and Q22 (a).

3. Façade Treatment:

This is needlessly fussy. We remain in favour of the vertical facades above the shopfronts repeating the heights and fenestration pattern of the original Electric Avenue development of 1888. The details need not match the originals, and in fact simplified versions would be preferred.

Acceptable brick colours would be in the range from dark red-brown (as Electric Mansions) to light brown (as for the Boots building at the Brixton Road corner). Alternatively, a mix of plain yellow stock walls with red brick details and string courses would be acceptable.

At attic level, the dormers should be reduced in height by raising the cills, to give an appearance more in keeping with the residential scale of the original Electric Avenue.

4. Public Art:

The applicants have referred to providing some form of public art (in response to policy Q4) as a replacement for the existing Foxes and Cherries feature on the roof-line. However we do not see how any artwork can redeem or disguise the grossly out-of-scale and clumsy nature of these proposals. The high-level hoardings shown on the drawings only exaggerates the undue height of the whole structure, and anything in that location would be far too remote to be admired from street level.

5. Adverse Effect on Daylight & Sunlight to Surroundings:

The bulk and height of the proposed building will be much more substantial than the present structure, and an increase even on the original 1888 buildings. Therefore there will be a considerable adverse effect on the daylight and sunlight received by surrounding buildings. In particular this will affect the residential upper parts of 8-16 Electric Avenue, the nearer block of Electric Mansions, and the 1st floor premises occupied by the Photofusion Gallery. This will contravene Lambeth Local Plan Policy Q2 (iv) and the BRE design guidance quoted therein.

6. Restricting Hours of Use:

Upper floors above nearby buildings have been gradually returning to residential use in recent years. However, the Council's failure to control overnight activities in the Town Centre has resulted in a very difficult living environment, due to noise, litter and anti-social behaviour, including use of the highway as a public toilet.

Therefore no part of the property should be in use after 11 pm, in order to maintain Lambeth Local Plan policy ED7(b).

7. Plant Housings & Ventilation:

Plant rooms and lift motor rooms should be set well back from the street frontages.

External ventilation ducts should discharge well above the height of windows of nearby residential accommodation, and should be sited in relatively unobtrusive positions. Ventilation flues from any cooking, food-preparation or manufacturing processes should include odour filters and sound-proofing.

Local Plan policies Q2(v) and (vii) should be followed.

Comment on Mix of Uses:

We broadly support the proposed mix of uses, and our main concerns are the excessive scale and clumsy external design.

We welcome the reinstatement of ground floor retail use, though we would prefer if pavement lights were reintroduced, to provide some natural light to basement storage.

We are sympathetic to the provision of new workspace in Central Brixton, provided this is fully accessible, to comply with Local Plan policy Q1(a).

The long-term attractiveness of Brixton Town Centre depends on maintaining a mix of uses within it, and not allowing A3 and A4 uses to dominate to the detriment of core retail uses. Lambeth Local Plan policies PN3(a), ED6 and ED7 should be applied.

Yours sincerely,



Hon. Secretary