

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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19 July 2019

Your ref:
18/05438/FUL

9-15 ELECTRIC AVENUE, SW9 – Proposed Redevelopment:

Dear Miss Shallcross,

I understand from neighbours that the above application is due to go before the Planning Applications Committee on 30 July.

As previous objectors to this proposal, we are to say the least disappointed that you did not see fit to notify us directly.

However, what I find more disturbing is that the applicant has made a number of changes to the original plans, but that you have not bothered to publicise those changes or to seek our comments on them.

This is a prominent site within the Brixton Town Centre Conservation Area, and I must remind you that the Society continues to **object** to the following aspects of the proposals:

1. Excessive Overall Height

We were disappointed that the designers ignored the comments to this effect that we had 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 resulting bulk 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 stair tower and the adjacent Reliance Arcade is preposterous, and does great harm to the setting of this Listed Building.

Although the clumsy advertising hoarding has been deleted from the top of the stair tower, the substantive height is still needlessly excessive alongside the rear façade of Reliance Arcade, where restoration works are now underway.

The 1970s-style façade treatment proposed for this tower element is completely out of sympathy with the historic context. 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 (used on 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. 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 of the former Photofusion Gallery. This will contravene Lambeth Local Plan Policy Q2 (iv) and the BRE design guidance quoted therein.

5. 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 over-night 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).

6. 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.

7. Office Reception arrangements:

We are concerned that the latest version of the ground floor plan removes the separating partition between the entry/ reception area for the office floors above, and Retail Unit No.4. This will not only make letting the shop more difficult, but any goods displayed for sale will create a fire hazard, inhibiting the escape route from the upper floors.

Comment on Mix of Uses:

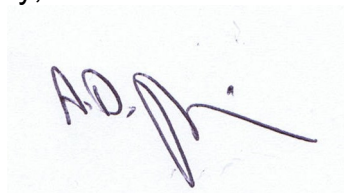
We are sympathetic to the provision of new workspace in Central Brixton, provided this is fully accessible, to comply with Local Plan policy Q1(a). The long-term attractiveness of Brixton Town Centre depends on maintaining a mix of uses within it, and not allowing A3 and A4 uses to dominate to the detriment of core retail uses.

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

Lambeth Local Plan policies PN3(a), ED6 and ED7 should be applied.

We broadly support the proposed mix of uses, and our main concerns remain the excessive scale and clumsy external design. The developers need to bring forward a less bulky design that does not totally dominate its surroundings.

Yours sincerely,



Hon. Secretary