

The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future

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Please reply to:
Alan Piper, RIBA,



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1st August 2020

For attention of:
Michael Cassidy,
mcassidy@lambeth.gov.uk

Your ref:
20/01347/FUL

20-24 POPE'S ROAD, SW9 – Proposed Development (Revised):

Dear Mr Cassidy,

I heard from other sources that revisions have been made to the above application. I am disappointed that you did not advise us directly, given that this is a prominent site within Brixton Town Centre.

After reviewing the amended documents, I can confirm that our original objection still stands. Our comments on the changes are as follows:

1. Height & Massing:

The height is unchanged and the link between the two towers is proposed to be one storey higher, so clearly no mitigation has been offered by the applicants.

2. Materials & Finishes:

No changes have been made to the treatment of the upper floors, so the façade treatment, heavy detailing and dark facing materials continue to reinforce the impression of excessive height and bulk.

3. Microclimate effects:

The updated report on wind effects has been reviewed.

Outside the site, the Microclimate Assessment still fails to illustrate results for elevated locations such as the railway platforms, the entrance to the Brixton Recreation Centre, and balconies/ terraces at the rear of Walton Lodge, Carney Square and The Viaduct. These are all more vulnerable to adverse wind effects.

Even at ground level, there will still be increased windspeeds below and beyond the Popes Road/ Station Road railway bridge, in front of the proposed tower, and along the rear approach from Valentia Place.

Brixton Station Road and Pope's Road should remain important parts of the street market, and we are anxious that they do not become unattractive to shoppers and a more difficult working environment for stall-holders.

4. Impact on Daylight for Nearby Flats:

The effect of setting back the taller block from Pope's Road only has a marginal effect on the previous daylight and sunlight results for the surrounding buildings and sites. Indeed, instead of any mitigation, there is a slight adverse effect on a few properties as a result of the link between the two towers being raised one storey higher.

The extent of surrounding properties affected remains substantially the same as in our original objection letter of 11 May. At that time, we highlighted that 119 windows among 8 sites would no longer receive adequate daylight.

5. Privacy and Outlook:

As before, the proposed office blocks will be unduly close to the rear windows of The Viaduct and Carney Place, creating mutual privacy issues and undue enclosure, in defiance of Local Plan policies Q2 (ii) and (iii).

6. Weaknesses in Retail Layout:

We note some minor improvements to the ground floor layout to improve links to the Brixton Village arcade and Brixton Station Road.

We remain in favour of the ground floor retail use, with a central performance space, but continue to doubt that the first floor retail or café uses will attract enough footfall, unless escalators are also included.

Experience of demand for other Brixton sites in recent years is that a significant part of the demand from potential tenants will be for café/restaurant uses, so provision for extract ventilation needs to be designed-in from the outset. It is still not clear how this will be done in relation to the two towers above.

7. Amount of Office Floorspace:

The massive amount of office floorspace proposed looks increasingly like a white elephant, which is very unlikely to be fully taken up. Our concern is that it would then be converted into sub-standard residential accommodation under Permitted Development.

The shift to much more home-based working, accelerated by the Coronavirus epidemic, has undermined the demand for conventional office floorspace, particularly outside the established London office locations. Historically, market interest in Central Brixton office space has been limited, sustained only by the Council's own needs, lately much reduced.

8. Planning Benefits:

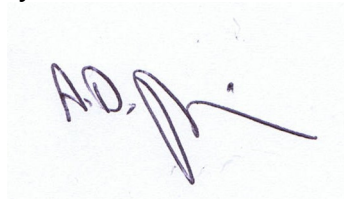
We are pleased to see this addressed in the revised Design & Access Statement (section 2.5) and Planning Statement (paras 4.20, 5.1 & 6.1) but the concessions remain modest in comparison with the adverse impact of the development. Several turn out to be inevitable obligations for any development of this scale.

In particular, the Council should be seeking a contribution to the reinstatement of East Brixton Station, to provide local access to the London Overground rail service. In itself, this would make the site more attractive to future office occupiers.

9. Noise Impact on nearby dwellings:

Our previous comments on the proposed top-floor restaurant above the eastern block, and late-night uses generally, still stand.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the initials 'A.D.' followed by a stylized, cursive flourish.

Hon. Secretary