

DELANCEY PROPOSALS FOR CLAPHAM JUNCTION

RESPONSE BY THE BATTERSEA SOCIETY

May 2008

Proposals by Delancey for the Clapham Junction Station Approach site were presented at an exhibition on the site in January 2008. Members of the Battersea Society, the local amenity society, took part in a discussion about them with the developers' agents and architects. This response has been produced and agreed by the Planning Sub-Committee of the Battersea Society to reflect the concerns of Society members about the proposals.

The sections of the response are as follows:

1. Need for a masterplan
2. The station as transport interchange
3. Road layout
4. Retail
5. Offices and workshops
6. Housing and height of buildings
7. Community facilities
8. Parking
9. Need for wider consultation
10. Overall conclusion and timetable

1 NEED FOR A MASTERPLAN

- a) An intervention with such an impact on the 'Heart of Battersea' must be considered in the light of its effects on land beyond the red boundary line of any planning application. Decisions taken about the Station Approach site will have considerable implications way beyond the existing site boundaries, very much affecting St John's Road, St John's Hill and Lavender Hill, and also Grant Road. We set out in later sections specific respects in which that will be the case.
- b) Although it had been understood this proposed development would complement work undertaken by Urban Initiatives for the borough council on improvements to the public realm and pedestrian movement, co-ordination between the two is nowhere apparent.
- c) The Grant Road area, on the north side of the station, is also important, and is the location for other current development proposals. Delancey's proposals include a small component in Grant Road, a less than satisfactory new entrance to the station. Something much more ambitious should be included here in order to contribute to improvements to a wider area. Whilst the Grant Road area may be controlled by Network Rail/Spacia, a dialogue about it with these and other landowners must be imperative.
- d) There is nowhere any mention of development in Falcon Road outside the likely application site, nor how these proposals might relate to the land in Falcon Lane (on the other side of Falcon Road) currently occupied by Lidl, Boots and Asda. Nevertheless the fact that Delancey's proposed shopping centre is on two levels may indicate an eventual intention to construct some sort of link across Falcon Road.
- e) The surrounding area is beset at present with many environmental problems for residents and businesses alike. Redevelopment of the Station Approach site could be a very positive step. But these

proposals are likely to provide nothing that is any better, and perhaps something that is a great deal worse, than what currently exists.

Conclusion 1 - A masterplan is needed covering a wider area. Redevelopment of the Station Approach site could be the catalyst for a total upgrade of the area. It should be carried out within the context of an overall vision for Battersea Town Centre, covering as a minimum St John's Road, St John's Hill, Lavender Hill, Falcon Road and Grant Road. It is the responsibility of Wandsworth Borough Council as local planning authority to ensure a masterplan is produced.

2 THE STATION AS TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE

- a) At their exhibition Delancey called for 'creation of a sense of place'. But Battersea Town Centre already has two very well defined places, with a close historical and functional relationship between them: the principal shopping centre in St John's Road and Clapham Junction station.
- b) The station is a major transport interchange in two distinct respects: transfers between rail services and transfers between rail and other transport modes (bus, taxi, car, walking, cycling). It is already very congested at peak times. All the evidence on current trends, on future investment in rail services (including the East London Line Extension to Clapham Junction), and on future growth in population and employment indicates that the problems will get much worse unless there are radical improvements to the station and adjoining areas. Clapham Junction has been short-changed since proposals in the '70s fell through. The station and its surroundings feel neglected and unsafe, even with so many people around.
- c) The current proposals would address the problem of transfers between rail services by closing the underpass to passengers other than those changing trains and by installing lifts from the overbridge to the platforms. The lifts will be of great benefit to the less mobile and to passengers with heavy luggage. But they are being installed by Network Rail at public expense, independently of Delancey's scheme.
- d) Closing the underpass has considerable disadvantages for passengers transferring to or from other transport modes. It involves moving the station entrances to the west to align with the overbridge. That means passengers will have to negotiate two changes of level to reach the platforms, rather than one at present.
- e) The design of the proposed new entrances is weak. It has been suggested the one on St John's Hill had to be designed in that way because of the adjacent listed building, but this must be a moot point, and is perhaps an indication of lack of desire to do anything better.
- f) The proposed entrance in Grant Road looks to be cumbersome, awkward to use, and quite possibly prone to mechanical breakdown. It has had to fit within the limited amount of land available. This could be addressed by extending the study area beyond its existing limits, as recommended above.
- g) There would also be disadvantages for the surrounding area. Moving the main station entrance away from St John's Road will weaken the link with the principal shopping centre. People may well choose different routes to approach the station and this will damage the prospects for revitalising the town centre.
- h) An implicit assumption in the proposals is that, if passengers were to be allowed to enter the station by means of the underpass as well as

the overbridge, most people would choose to use the underpass and the problem of congestion would not be solved. That undermines a fundamental aspect of the scheme's design, that people using the station will pass the scheme's retail units: they will only do so if they follow a route that is less convenient in terms of distance.

- i) It is suggested that it would be too expensive to widen the underpass, and that the overbridge has greater capacity. The possibility of upgrading the underpass should be studied further. There is clearly plenty of space alongside it, probably dating from the time when each railway company had its own ticket office along this route.
- j) An even more fundamental flaw in the proposals is that they do nothing to improve conditions for people transferring between rail and other transport modes. We address this issue in more detail in the next section. In considering the future form and location of entrances to the station a critical consideration should be ease of transfer to and from other modes, and indeed between other transport modes (in particular, changing from one bus route to another). Not only are there a considerable volume of such transfers at present, policies at national and Londonwide levels are based on facilitating and promoting them as a central component of any sustainable transport strategy.

Conclusion 2 – Clapham Junction station should be made to function properly as a transport interchange, not only for people changing trains, but for those changing to and from other modes of transport. That means radical improvements for bus passengers and secure cycle parking on a large scale. At the same time the station must maintain a close relationship with the town centre. Creating dignified and attractive approaches to it must be an important objective. This would enable many development opportunities to fit around it.

3 ROAD LAYOUT

- a) The Station Approach site contains two existing roads (separated merely by the publicly open railway booking hall), plus a permanently open shopping arcade which was previously a public road. The proposals state that existing public rights in all of these will be extinguished, and at most only very partially replaced. The major parts of the existing roads will be used solely for private access in future, for car-parking and servicing the new properties.
- b) Although straightening platforms 16 and 17 will be of considerable benefit to rail users, that looks to involve; rather than giving land on this side of the site back to the railway, land that already belongs to Network Rail.
- c) The scheme would create a new pedestrian route, but that is in reality essential commercially for the viability of the proposed retail units. This scheme would dash hopes of wider local pedestrianisation, and any hope of using a possibly widened underpass to provide an additional pedestrian link between the town centre and North Battersea.
- d) There seems to be completely inadequate provision for parking, with a satisfactory level of security, for increasing numbers of people arriving at the station by cycle.
- e) No consideration seems to have been given to the needs of buses and bus passengers within the framework of this scheme, still less to the

improvements that are urgently needed and could be brought about within a proper masterplan for a wider area.

- f) This scheme would make the long road 'tunnel' under the railway lines which connects the town centre with North Battersea still more intimidating.

Conclusion 3 – Current public rights in the existing road layout would be extinguished by these proposals, with very little new public benefit provided to take their place. Redevelopment of the Station Approach site needs to make an essential contribution (within the framework of a wider masterplan) to provision for greatly increased cycle use, to measures to make pedestrian circulation throughout the town centre safer and more attractive, and to improvements in the convenience and attractiveness of bus travel.

4 RETAIL

- a) As a shopping centre Battersea Town Centre now has four main components: a department store and chains in St John's Road; speciality shops, bars, restaurants and a market in Northcote Road; the Asda supermarket (with adjoining Boots and Lidl retail warehouses); and convenience stores in the Shop Stop mall at the station.
- b) The town centre as a whole is reasonably prosperous, but has stood still, failing to attract significant investment or new chains. It faces competition from the renovated Southside mall in Wandsworth, and a major potential threat from large-scale retail development on the Battersea Power Station site.
- c) Delancey's willingness to invest is encouraging. They have correctly identified that the area is at present deficient in quality retail outlets. But there is no analysis in these proposals of why that should be the case, or how and where the deficiency could be most effectively redressed.
- d) Ironically, Shop Stop currently has the most useful range of retail units since it opened. With no hard evidence it is premature to state who would occupy the new units. Elements of the proposed layout suggest that many of the shops in this development are likely to have a poor footfall.
- e) The proposals do not mention the shops in St John's Road or Falcon Lane. St John's Road has an urgent need to attract more of Battersea's new affluence. However, this scheme might well contribute to the decline of surrounding businesses.

Conclusion 4 - How these proposals would contribute to revitalising Battersea Town Centre as a whole is nowhere addressed. The future of the shopping centre needs to be the subject of wider and more thorough analysis and planning, taken forward through discussions with the Town Centre Manager and local organisations.

5 OFFICES AND WORKSHOPS

- a) There are a number of offices currently situated in and around St John's Road; Lavender Hill and St John's Hill. The comparatively new PCSU building and the offices above existing retail units on the Station Approach site combine with these to help provide a critical mass.
- b) Local offices are important as a source of local employment and help to reduce commuting, particularly to central London. The value that

existing office accommodation on this site provides locally should be enhanced and preserved.

- c) There also needs to be suitable workshop space in the area for small businesses providing essential local services such as dry cleaning or cycle repairs. The potential of railway arches to provide such space should be maximised, and redevelopment should not be allowed to block that.

Conclusion 5 – Under these proposals the loss of existing office accommodation on this site, including the comparatively new PCSU building, would result in a significant reduction in employment, and reduce the area's viability as a local office centre. There are no workshops on the site at present, but the potential for providing workshop space in and around this site to meet local needs ought to be kept in mind.

6 HOUSING AND HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS

- a) The scheme includes a large amount of housing but, contrary to both Londonwide and Wandsworth planning policies, it is not proposed that any of it should be affordable housing. It is astonishing that the proposals are proceeding on that basis. The Mayor of London can be expected to take a close interest in the matter. While the new Mayor has said that he does not want to impose quotas for affordable housing on the London boroughs, he has retained his predecessor's ambitious target for the total amount of affordable housing to be provided over the next three years, and has pledged there will be further increases in later years. It would seem impossible to fulfil that pledge if major development schemes are allowed to proceed without a proportion of affordable housing.
- b) The proposed housing consists essentially of small units. While this means that more units can be packed onto the site (and are cheaper to construct), families, or anyone accommodating occasional guests or working from home, are not provided for. Some of the affordable housing in the scheme should be family housing
- c) Moreover the designs for the flats appear to allow for poor space standards, and no use of outdoor space.
- d) In view of the overriding importance of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, it is vital that large new developments like this are built to the highest possible environmental standards. This should mean achieving level 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes even in advance of the government's target date of 2016 to make that compulsory.
- e) The proposed height of the towers has naturally caused considerable concern to many people, including Battersea Society members. This could be regarded as a landmark site, but that is not in itself a justification for proposing very tall buildings. The only conceivable justification for such tall buildings would be a very high quality of design. So far as we can tell from the material made available, however, the towers proposed in this scheme are not of that kind of quality.

Conclusion 6 – Before a planning application is submitted there needs to be a reconsideration both of the type and form of housing it is proposed to provide and of the towers which are proposed to accommodate it. Wandsworth Borough Council should commission a new study of policy on tall buildings throughout the borough.

7 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

a) Various community facilities would be valuable on this or other nearby sites. A significant financial contribution to the cost of such facilities from the developers of a large-scale development at Clapham Junction station would seem to be appropriate.

b) The public realm should figure largely in designing a scheme for this site. That should include provision of more attractive open space for community use, including performance spaces.

c) Any development on this site needs to take into account the 24/7 character of modern living. Clapham Junction is served by an extensive network of night bus routes. It also has a major supermarket open round the clock. Redevelopment of the Station Approach site should have full regard to the needs and requirements of people during the night, but at the same time address the challenges this may present in terms of public safety and public order.

Conclusion 7 - There should be wider consultation about what community facilities are needed within, or will become necessary as a result of, this development, and about the desirable form of the public realm.

8 PARKING

a) It is understood that 280 car parking spaces are proposed, although it is not clear where these would be located. Given the plentiful availability of public transport there is little reason to provide any parking for residents, other than for disabled users and car club vehicles. However, residents in this development should not be eligible to obtain residents' permits for on street parking.

b) There should be generous provision of secure cycle storage for residents, to allow for future trends as well as current demand.

c) A parking study of the wider area should be carried out, including consideration of what parking is now, or will be, available on the other side of Falcon Road.

d) No consideration has been given to the effect greater use of local buses is having, and could have in future, in reducing the perceived need for car usage.

Conclusion 8 – The need for, and provision of, parking should receive much closer scrutiny than it is given in these proposals.

9 NEED FOR WIDER CONSULTATION

Those with a clear interest in proposals for this key site include children and young people, older people, commuters, people working locally, and shoppers (whether for day-to-day shopping or for particular products).

Conclusion 9 - It is not clear how Delancey intend to obtain the views of all these different groups. The questionnaires so far distributed do not give meaningful opportunities to contribute. Moreover, hard-to-reach groups need to be targeted.

10 TIMETABLE AND OVERALL CONCLUSION

The timetable suggested by Delancey was that a planning application would be made in May of this year. That was clearly very ambitious for a project which

is of considerable local and Londonwide significance. A longer timescale is clearly required for a proper consideration and integration of all the issues raised in this response. Most of them will be material considerations in relation to a planning application. We therefore hope the developers and their architects will think it wise to look again at all the concerns we have expressed.

Meanwhile the borough council should take the initiative in ensuring that a master plan is produced, as a much more ambitious exercise intended to maximise the potential for regeneration and transport and public realm improvements in the entire area of St John's Road, Lavender Hill, Falcon Road, St John's Hill, Grant Road and Plough Road.