

2 May 2024

Station to Station's response to Site 18's inclusion in Lambeth's SADPD.

Station to Station BID Response to Lambeth's SADPD for Site 18 Lambeth's plans for Site 18 will have a transformative - be it positive or negative - impact on West Norwood's town centre and the area as a whole. No other SADPD consultation in the borough will have quite such a huge and potentially devastating effect on the 'beating heart' of a much loved high street.

Development of the vacant and derelict land is necessary and could be highly beneficial to the area, but it needs to happen with the consultation and consent of those who will be most affected by it - the business and residential community.

Station to Station, as the BID for West Norwood & Tulse Hill, are looking to collaborate meaningfully with Lambeth on what happens on Site 18. We know that Lambeth needs to build more homes and that West Norwood's Site 18 could potentially accommodate 150 families and other local people, a substantial number in the context of this area. This could be beneficial for the local economy, especially if lines of communication are kept open about the expected demographics of those moving to the area so that businesses can plan and adapt for the new inhabitants.

However, we as representatives of our local business must also be mindful - and make the council mindful - of the potential risks to our community should developers buy up the commercial premises and close existing businesses while they redevelop these buildings.

Unless sensitively handled, this will have a negative effect not only on those businesses directly affected/closed by the development, but also on those businesses nearby, whose current footfall and spend would be negatively affected by customers staying away due to disruption (building work, traffic, noise) or because anchor stores (B&Q, Platinum bakery and 2 x butcher shops) are no longer open. We have seen negative precedents in other neighbourhoods for this; the development of Network Rail /Arch Co premises in both Herne Hill and Brixton for example. This led to lengthy building works that resulted in the closure of much loved independent businesses, hiked rents and long term vacancies in the very core of these town centres, rendering them less vibrant destinations for shoppers.

Moreover, the valuation of the land on Site 18 versus the building costs referenced in the SADPD document, seems to show that currently developing this site is not financially viable. This puts at risk the quota of affordable housing, as well as the need for developers to build tower blocks far higher than local precedents allow. It also increases the risk of blight; with the combined issues of the length of time would-be developers wait for the market to improve, while existing businesses don't feel able to spend money on improvements during this period of uncertainty.

On behalf of the West Norwood & Tulse Hill businesses community, Station to Station BID is seeking a meaningful contribution via a 'seat at the table' in conversations with developers serious about investing in our town centre, and at the EIP into the SADPD document. We ask that Lambeth, the appointed Inspector and any potential developers guarantee the following:

- Protection of a key anchor store (B&Q) which brings in visitors from outside the local area, and whose customers add footfall and spend to the high street as a whole. We accept this does not mean protection of the bricks and mortar but could instead be a modern facility to meet the current needs of an anchor store, rather than those prevailing decades ago when the store was built

- Protection that will ensure the continued existence of current local independent businesses operating within the two parades of shops within the current 'red line', some of whom have been there for 40+ years
- Small grants and other support to enable improvements to premises rather than their demolition
- Small grants (£2-5K each) for existing/ new businesses returning / moving to the new redeveloped commercial premises
- Business mentoring for new/existing businesses so they can compete and be successful in the new environment, and so they can plan for and capitalise on the change in demographic that any new housing brings
- Temporary premises provision (perhaps via 'boxpark' units while the development happens, preferably within Site 18 or in the nearby West Norwood area)
- Redevelopment to provide small premises (mirroring what is currently available), not large spaces with expensive footprints that only nationals can afford
- Marketing to maintain the footfall to the businesses during the development
- Business rates relief/reductions for the surrounding area in recognition of the financial impact of the business disruption across the whole high street of any redevelopment works (as was put in place when Thames Water did 18 months of mains work on the Norwood Road)
- No compulsory purchase orders for any premises, and free legal advice for businesses who are subletting or on rolling leases so they can be afforded the same protection that other leaseholders/landowners have
- Protection of light industrial workspace - there is a huge demand locally for 'messy, dirty, smelly' spaces (see Avison Young's West Norwood & Tulse Hill Business Space Demand Study, commissioned by Station to Station and Lambeth Council as part of the High Streets For All funding) and we would not like to see this element removed from site 18.

As the BID Manager for the area I would like to state my intention to make personal representation to the Inspector.

Charlotte Ashworth
 BID Manager
 Station to Station business improvement district