

LOCAL MEETING – BLACKHEATH STATION CARPARL

THURSDAY 3 JULY 2025

DC/25/139604 - Construction of three buildings ranging between 3 - 5 storeys, comprising 45 residential units (Use Class C3) , flexible commercial and learning and non-residential institution space (Use Class E and Use Class F1), the provision of a farmers market and landscaping works including public square, cycle parking, car parking, plant and associated ancillary works at Car Park, Blackheath Station, Blackheath Village SE3.

Panellists

Chair:

- Cllr Amanda De Ryk (Ward Councillor)

Ward Councillors:

- Cllr Pauline Dall
- Cllr Luke Warner

Council Officers:

- Angus Saunders (DM Team Leader – North Area)
- Alfie Williams (Principal Planning Officer)

Applicant Team:

- Reece Harris (Avison Young – Planning Agent)
- Jacqui Macqueen (Acorn – Applicant)
- Julian Hampson (Acorn – Applicant)
- Scott Collier (Acorn - Applicant)
- Adam Jundi, (JPA - Architect)
- Lucy Markham (Montague Evans – Heritage Consultant)
- Jack Williams (SLR Consulting – Transport Consultant)

Notes of the meeting

Chair – Welcomes everybody to the meeting and introduces the panel. Then provides a brief introduction detailing the purpose and rules of the meeting and emergency procedures.

Reece Harris and Adam Jundi – Give a presentation beginning with the history of the site, the background to the application and the policy context. Then provides an overview of the

proposed development including details of the site layout, the three main blocks and the main features.

At this stage of the meeting the chair opened the meeting for questions and comments.

Questions and comments (Q) from members of the public and the answers (A) given by the application team and Council Officers are detailed below:

Q: Question from local resident representing Collins Street resident's noting that the architectural quality of Collins Street is downplayed within the applicant's appraisal in contrast to the Council's Conservation Area Character Appraisal which identifies Collins St as a positive contributor to the Conservation Area (CA). Asks why the character appraisals differ?

A: Lucy Markham – Explains that she is advising on heritage and conservation matters and agrees that Collins St makes a positive contribution. States that Block B responds positively to the character and appraisal utilising modern stock brick.

Q: The same resident raises concerns with the scale and layout of the development and impact to the living conditions of the properties on Collins St. Also highlights concerns with the materials and design which contrast with the traditional architecture. Asks why principals that are applied to householder development have not been applied to the proposed development?

A: Lucy Markham – Notes that the site is in a valley which minimises visual impact and explains that pastiche is not the best approach for new development and that contemporary design can still respect the historic character and appearance.

A: Adam Jundi – states that the design team are proud of the development and highlights that the third storey of Block B would utilise natural slate in reference to the traditional roofscape.

A: Reece Harris – Explains that there was a four-year pre-application process including several meetings with Council Officers as well as two reviews by the Council's independent Design Review Panel (DRP). Also referenced that the 16m separation distance on Collins Street is greater than on Southvale Road.

Q: Statement from a group representing 300 local residents. Acknowledges that housing is needed in this area but questions if this is the right location and right scheme? States that good design solve problems but that residents oppose the development as this development would cause problems.

Q: Second representative from the group asks question noting that the Council carried out a character appraisal for the Blackheath CA is 2007 identifying several character areas. References that the village has its own character area and argues that the village is the most important area within the CA. Notes that the applicant team has defined their own areas, moving the site into the railway environs character area. Asks why the applicants assessment departs from the Council's Character Appraisal?

Reece Harris engages in brief exchange with the audience

A: Lucy Markham – States that this difference stems from the differences between the townscape assessment and heritage statement. Explains that heritage statement has been

carried out in line with Historic England guidance and clarifies that the site has been placed in the railway environs within the townscape assessment.

Q: Question from the resident's group about financial viability referencing the applicant's Financial Viability Assessment (FVA) which identifies that the scheme is not viable. Asks for reassurance that the site will not be sold on or be mothballed with viability used to force through more dense development at a later date.

A: Reece Harris – Notes the FVA was reviewed by the Council's independent assessor and the outcome is that 21% is the maximum AH that can be provided. Developer has accepted a lower profit on current values on the assumption house prices will rise. Notes that review mechanisms would be included within the Section 106 Agreement to capture increases in values. States commitment to bring the scheme forward.

A: Scott Collier– Adds that Acorn develops 98% of sites that secure planning permission and fully intend to develop the site.

Q: Question from a John Ball School parent raising concerns with pedestrian safety as parents and children will be prevented from walking through the carpark on the journey to and from school. Also highlighted a safeguarding concern due to direct overlooking of the school, nursery and playground from the new buildings.

A: Jacqui Macqueen – Explains that the applicant team have worked closely with the school to minimise impacts through the location of balconies and the internal layouts. Further explains that the commercial space within Block C has been offered to the school as a potential nursery space.

Q: The parent continues highlighting that the school made alternative provisions due to the recent heat wave week and questions why the applicant is proposing a high-density development without green infrastructure and inadequate pedestrian and cycle routes.

A: Reece Harris – Disagrees highlighting that the scheme will be greener than the carpark with almost all of the existing trees retained and a new playground provided. Also points to the new route through Collins Cut onto Collins Street which will provide a new accessible and safe route with a segregated footway and play opportunities representing an improvement on crossing a carpark. Explained that the development would reduce vehicle movements and that the applicant is working with the school to produce a travel plan.

Q: Question from a local business owner explaining that the economic environment is very difficult with an increasing number of vacant units. Identified the farmers market as a critical source of footfall for the village, with Sunday the biggest trading day. Raised concern with the potential loss of this footfall and questions why local businesses were not consulted.

A: Ian Smith (Director of London Farmers' Markets Ltd) – Explained that London Farmers' Markets (LFM) run 20 markets and that they are pleased with the level of support and engagement for the market in Blackheath.

Some exchange with the audience and query why the traders are not represented.

Chair: intervenes to request that the audience allow the question to be answered.

A: Ian Smith - Continues that that they have lost markets before but consider that this development would retain a viable market.

More exchanges with the audience regarding the traders.

A: Ian Smith - Replies that traders have been consulted, and a wide range of opinions were received.

Extended discussion with audience about where vans will be parked

A: Ian Smith – explains that vans tend to deliver to the market and go to different markets.

More interjections from the audience

Chair - requests that questions go through the chair

A: Ian Smith – concludes that this a viable solution for the market noting that the land will be developed and that the proposals offers a long-term future for the market. States that in the short-term alternative locations are being discussed with Council Officers with two potential options

Further back and forth with the audience.

Chair: Clarifies that Ian is there in a personal capacity and is not part of the applicant team. Requests that the discussion moves on to the question of engagement with local businesses and invites a question from the Blackheath Society.

Q: A representative of the Blackheath Society explains that's the society have been liaising with LFM and have agreed to disagree. Notes that the Society counted more than 2000 shoppers at the market the previous Sunday. Questioned why the applicant has not undertaken a professional retail assessment of the impact of the development to the market and wider village. Also raised concern with the narrow layout and potential for congestion and loss of trader in the western stretch of the market adjacent to Block B.

A: Reece Harris – Planning requirement is to replace the market which is being achieved through the provision of space for 40 stalls with scope to expand further, representing a 70% increase on the demise of the market. Highlights that a number of markets successfully operate in street formats, such as Columbia Road and points to the potential for footfall from the residents approaching from the west.

A: Jacqui Macqueen – LFM have successfully run the market for 20 years, so they have extensive experience and are best place to advise on the viability of the market. States that Acorn are passionate about the market and do not want an adverse impact. Explains that the current licence is for a smaller area than proposed but emphasises that confined spaces can help generate a buzz.

Chair: requests that Jacqui Macqueen answer the question on local business engagement.

A: Jacqui Macqueen – States that a consultancy was employed to run public consultation which included leafleting local businesses and hosting a pop-up stall within the market.

Interventions from the audience stating that businesses received no consultation responses.

Q: Statement from a local shop owner explaining the economic challenges for retailers. Emphasises the importance of securing an alternative location for the farmers market due to the high levels of activity generated within the village.

Chair: Asserts that the Council is discussing meanwhile locations with two potential locations identified.

Q: A representative from Blackheath Halls states that they were not consulted by the applicant and details that events at the Halls receive approximately 50,000 visitors annually. Queries what assessments have been done on the impact of the loss of parking?

A: Jack Williams – Explains policy position that brownfield sites and station car parks should be developed as they are an inefficient use of space, combined with other policies that seek to reduce car usage. Summarises the outcome of the parking surveys carried out over several years beginning in 2018. States that they have been encourage to reduce the number of spaces over the pre-application process, with feedback from DRP encouraging reduction at each review. Explains the survey also tried to establish where people using the car park would go, and summarises the broad splits, with school, village users and commuter parking. Notes the school are advocates of reducing car usage and that the developer is working with the school on their travel plan. Adds that commuter parking is not supported by policy and that it is likely people are driving to use the car park because it is convenient. Cautions that the surveys did not specifically consider event day parking and accepts there will be impacts but that a balance needs to be struck.

Intervention from the audience asking over how many days was the surveys were carried out?

A: Jack Williams – explains that the surveys were carried out on one day to provide a snapshot but that multiple surveys have been carried out over a period of several years.

Chair: announces that there is 20 minutes remaining.

Q: A second representation from the Blackheath Society comments on the difficulties of the site and speculates on private analysis noting the significant local opposition and site constraints. Advises that it is time to pause and consult with residents as this is an over ambitious scheme that has upset residents.

Chair: asks if there is scope to change to scheme?

A: Julian Hampson: States that it is a difficult site but explains that Acorn is experienced in developing difficult sites including those with heritage sensitivity. Explains that Acorn provides quality schemes with good housing and place making. Concludes that they are using award winning architects and have engaged in long consultation.

Interjection from audience disagreeing and questioning whether there is a need for another tower block particularly in this is beautiful village?

A: Julian Hampson – agrees that it is a beautiful village but asserts that the carpark is not beautiful and that this scheme will improve it. Acknowledged that there is subjectivity in assessing design.

Q: Statement from local business owner employing 26 people in Blackheath. Recognises that change can be good but casts doubt on the potential for positives from this proposal. Asks how the development will provide independent, affordable, commercial property and questions whether the village can continue to accommodate more big-name retailers. Opines that the scheme will not be good for the village and will destroy it.

Chair: Reframes question to ask how the applicant will protect viability of local businesses?

A: Reece Harris – Details that there will 430sqm of commercial floorspace proposed on site of which the commercial floorspace in Block C would potentially be in education use with discussions ongoing with school. Block A is within the town centre boundary and planning

policy is supportive of new commercial development in a town centres. Evidence from the Local Plan is that Blackheath is the healthiest in Lewisham.

Audience state that the evidence is out of date.

Chair: Agrees and states that recent evidence shows that Blackheath has not recovered its pre-pandemic spend which is not the case for other town centres in Lewisham.

Q: Statement from local resident opining that car parks are not valuable, so operators are more interested in the development potential of the land. Speculates that the car park operator has increased prices to reduce the use of the car park. Claims that there is a significant air quality problem in Blackheath which poses a threat to schools with potential for closures. States that the development will make the poor air quality worse.

A: Reece Harris – acknowledges the strength of local feeling about the redevelopment of the site. Reiterates that brownfield site car parks are identified on local and national level for development. Acknowledges that Acorn are a business with profit incentive but also highlights that Acorn are committed to making high-quality places. Explains that future residents would not be able to secure permits for the controlled parking zone in Blackheath and states that there would be a reduction in transport emissions arising from the development. Concludes that emissions from construction would be managed and that the scheme would be air quality neutral.

Q: Question from a resident of Baizdon Road noting that Baizdon Road would be the main route for construction traffic despite being a school street with traffic calming measures and other constraints. Asks how large construction vehicles will be managed and highlights the lack of consultation on Baizdon Road.

Q: Question from local resident asking about the sustainability of the farmers market during the construction.

Chair: Explains that the Council share residents concern about the temporary location of the market and are exploring alternative locations. Confirms that residents will be informed about the proposals.

A: Jack Williams – A draft construction management and logistics plan has been submitted with the application. Commits to consulting residents on that before it is submitted. No plans to remove residents parking bays but cannot develop it in detail until a contractor is in place. States that if there is a need to temporarily suspend parking bays, alternatives could then be provided.

The chair brings to meeting to a close at this stage and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend

The head teacher from John Ball Primary School clarifies that the school will not be given a unit within Black C confirming that it would be a commercial transaction which has not yet been agreed.

End