

**LONDON**  
**REVIEW PANEL**

  
Hondo Enterprises

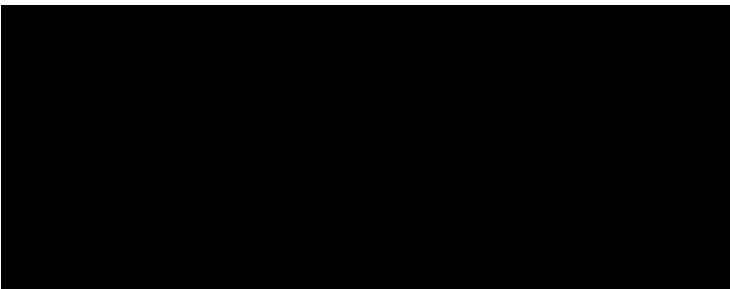
April 2022

Dear 

**London Review Panel: 20-24 Popes Road**

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of the 20-24 Popes Road on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer ongoing Mayor's Design Advocate support as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,

  
Mayor's Design Advocate (London Review Panel Chair)

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Philip Graham, Executive Director of Good Growth, GLA

Louise Duggan, Head of Regeneration, GLA

# LONDON REVIEW PANEL

## Report of London Review Panel meeting for 20-24 Popes Road, LB Lambeth

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2022

Review held remotely.

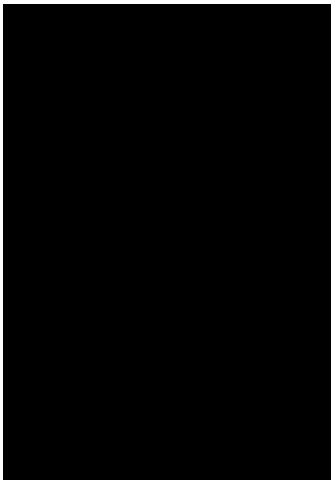
Site visit did take place ahead of the review on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2022

### London Review Panel



MDA  
MDA  
MDA  
MDA (Chair)

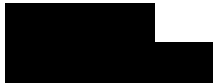
### Attendees



Adjaye Associates  
Adjaye Associates  
DP9  
DP9  
Frame Projects  
GLA Planning  
GLA Planning  
GLA Planning  
GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)  
Hondo Enterprises  
London Borough Lambeth  
London Borough Lambeth

### Apologies/report copied to

Jules Pipe  
Philip Graham  
Louise Duggan  
John Finlayson



Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills  
GLA Executive Director of Good Growth  
GLA Head of Regeneration  
GLA Planning  
GLA Regeneration  
GLA Regeneration

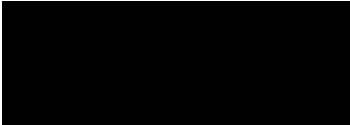
### Confidentiality and publication

Please note that while schemes not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review. Review reports will target publication to the London Review Panel webpage six months following the review unless otherwise agreed.

## Project location

20-24 Popes Road, Brixton, LB Lambeth

## Presenting team



London Borough Lambeth  
Hondo Enterprises  
Adjaye Associates

## London Review Panel's Views

### Summary

The London Review Panel welcomes this opportunity to comment on the proposals for Popes Road, an important site at the heart of Brixton, which has a rich and diverse cultural history. It offers comments on the scheme with the aim of supporting the planning process, to ensure high quality development that celebrates and responds to its unique site. The panel members all agreed that the ground floor layout requires further work, to ensure it is well integrated with, enhances the surrounding area and it can function efficiently and effectively as a market/retail/office building. Challenges of site ownership mean that the scheme currently has a highly constrained frontage including two fire exits and access to toilets facing Popes Road. Service access is located towards Valencia Place. Two strips of service access are required by Network Rail to the north and south boundaries. The panel worries that these will feel unsafe, particularly at night. There was also consensus that the internal arrangement of the ground floor would benefit from more thought, to create a more generous main entrance, more prominent office lobbies, and to interrogate the realism of market stalls with access from two sides. Panel members expressed differing views about the proposed height of up to 20 storeys, and the arguments for and against are set out below. However, there was agreement amongst the panel that the 9-storey block appears bulky, and refinement of its massing and / or architectural expression should be explored. The panel felt the use of red brick and white concrete to reference nearby historic mansion blocks could risk an appearance of pastiche. A more ambitious approach to low carbon design and sustainability would also strengthen the scheme, and the panel notes that BREEAM Outstanding is becoming the norm for newbuild offices in London.

### *Scale and massing*

- The panel members expressed differing views about the proposed scale and massing, and a consensus was not reached through the discussion.
- Although the site is not allocated for tall buildings in Lambeth's Local Plan, some of the panel felt the height of up to 20 storeys could be an appropriate marker for Brixton's economic regeneration.
- The panel understands that tall building proposals are emerging on the nearby International House and Pop Brixton Sites, supported by local planning policy. In this context the 20-storey building at Popes Road would form part of a cluster of tall buildings noting that the allocation for the adjacent

site suggests heights of 65m AOD and the site / area is not identified in current planning policy / guidance as being for a tall building cluster.

- As part of its assessment of the application, the panel trusts that GLA planning will consider the sunlight, daylight and wind impacts of the tall building on surrounding streets. This information was not presented to the panel.
- Some members of the panel questioned whether a tall building is necessary as a marker of an already vibrant economy. It was suggested that the key issue is creating a critical mass of employment space, which could be achieved across several sites.
- Brixton is already iconic in its culture, history, and character of place - and a tall building is not necessary as a landmark from this point of view.
- The applicants' townscape and visual impact assessment conclusions were challenged by some panel members, who disagreed that a 20-storey tall building terminating Electric Avenue would be an enhancement of this view.
- Similar concerns were raised about the visual impact of the scale and massing proposed in views from Windrush Square, opposite Brixton Town Hall. The wider south elevation will be seen here at an oblique angle.
- It was suggested that the massing of this element should be reduced in height, and gaps created to give views of sky.
- Other suggestions were that refinement of the architectural expression, to create greater depth, variety and vertical emphasis could make the 9-storey element successful.

*Relationship to surroundings: access and integration*

- The panel members all agreed that the ground floor layout requires further work, to ensure it is well integrated with, and enhances the surrounding area.
- The public realm improvements on Popes Road, opposite the potential entrance to Brixton Station promise to be successful.
- However, the site ownership is constrained, with the railway arches owned by others, and Network Rail requiring access behind these, both to the north and south of the site boundary.

- Similarly, the site ownership does not extend all the way to Valentia Place, and the scheme responds poorly to this condition by locating bins and service access here and creates a back of house feel to this part of the site.
- The panel does not think it is acceptable that the frontage to Popes Road includes two fire exits and access to toilets, with main entrances either side. Some concern was raised that the toilets proposed were not visible at street level/in the basement and that detracted from their functionality.
- It recommends that a commitment is made to securing north-south access through the site, through at least one railway arch on each side of the site.
- A more positive relationship with Valentia Place is required, and this should become a secondary entrance - not just service access - to create activity and ensure this area feels safe.
- A secondary entrance on Valentia Place would also avoid the internal public space being a cul-de-sac.
- Where two strips of service access are required by Network Rail either side of the site boundary, and the panel worries that these will feel unsafe, particularly at night.
- Further thought is needed about whether these can be successful as public routes, especially as the panel questions the realism of market stalls with access from two sides as currently shown.

#### *Internal ground floor layout*

- The panel queried some aspects of the internal ground floor layout, in addition to the concerns about integration with the context outlined above.
- The main entrance from Popes Road, and the internal office lobbies appear inconspicuous and lacking in generosity.
- Welcoming and prominent lobbies are important to maximise the value of office accommodation and would contribute to the success of the scheme.
- As noted above, the panel does not think it is acceptable for access to public toilets and two escape doors to occupy such a large proportion of the main frontage on Popes Road.
- Other panel members appreciated the desire to create an atrium space that blurs the boundaries between public space, market, and offices in an innovative way.

### *Architecture*

- The panel recognises the track record of the architects in designing high quality developments in the UK and internationally.
- The proposals draw on the arcade shopping typology which is characteristic of Brixton.
- Some panel members considered the original designs with darker concrete and simpler articulation to be bolder than subsequent iterations.
- Some panel members appreciated the lightness of the elevations facing Popes Road and Valencia Place, with its concrete truss structure.
- However, the panel asked for assurances that the concrete truss structures are fulfilling a structural function, rather than being decorative. The extensive use of concrete was questioned, because of its high embodied carbon, in the context of the climate emergency.
- The desirability of the office space would be enhanced by more generous entrances and lobbies.
- The panel also suggests the external terraces provided at the upper storeys of the tall building could be provided throughout, enhancing the quality of the office spaces.

### *Sustainability and low carbon design*

- Although the presentation did not cover the project's sustainability aspirations in detail, the panel feels more ambitious response to the climate emergency would strengthen the scheme.
- The panel understands that the scheme currently targets BREEAM Excellent.
- BREEAM Outstanding is becoming the norm for newbuild offices in London and would be a benefit when marketing the office space.
- The panel would expect a tall building proposal on this key site to be exemplary in its approach to sustainable design.

### **Next Steps**

The panel thanks the applicant for its clear presentation of the scheme and is available to review the scheme again if requested to do so by the GLA.