

Leegate Local Meeting – 2 October 2025

Chair:

Cllr Eva Kestner

Applicant Team:

Mark Gibney (Montague Evans, planning agent) (MG)

Ricardo Rosetti (London Square) (RR)

Adam West (CZWG Architects) (AW)

Doug Hickman (Cole Easton, Transport Consultant) (DH)

LB Lewisham:

Geoff Whittington

Cllr opens meeting at 19:02

Panel introductions

Applicant presentation (19:07 to 19:32)

Cllr advises the 5 key themes that will be addressed during the meeting:

- Scale of development including height;
- Viability;
- Highways matters;
- Climate/ Pollution;
- Ecology.

Cllr Erheriene requests a copy of the presentation to be shared with some residents.

Cllr reads out the themed questions submitted in advance of the meeting

Scale of development including height

- ***Lee Manor Society questions***

On what basis does the developer London Square consider that Lewisham Council should override the legally adopted Lewisham Local Plan (July 2025) which sets out in relation to the Leegate site (at Policy QD4) that 'the maximum height of buildings shall not normally be more than 32.8 metres (10 storeys) to 39.2 metres (12 storeys)'.

The immediate built surroundings of the Leegate site are 2, 3 and 4 storey residential and commercial buildings. The three Leybridge Estate residential buildings, to the south-east of the Leegate site, are each 11-storeys high and are set back away from the Eltham Road by a minimum of 15 metres within a landscaped environment. The existing Leegate House is an 8-storey high building and is located immediately to the rear of the existing pavement on both Eltham Road and Burnt Ash Road. What effect does the developer London Square believe will be the consequences to the Ward of Lee Green, its residents and to the Lee Green Conservation Area to the construction of 17, 10 and 9-storey buildings tight to the back of the existing pavements of Eltham Road and Burnt Ash Road?

Why does the developer London Square consider that the Leegate site on the Lee Green crossroads require a 17-storey 'statement' building fronting the proposed development? Such a building could very easily blend far better into its site by being situated further back to the south-eastern side of the site leaving buildings fronting onto Eltham and Burnt Ash Roads being better able to address the lower height of the existing built surroundings immediately surrounding the Lee Green crossroads?

The Galliards 563-apartment Leegate scheme approved by Lewisham Council in November 2024 was obviously considered by that developer to be a 'viable' proposal. The new developer London Square stated in its covering letter to DC/25/140113 that changes were required to the approved scheme in order for the development to remain 'deliverable'. Consequently London Square proposed around 640 apartments (within the Public Consultation proposals in May/June 2025) and increased heights to most of the proposed buildings that make up the Leegate development but subsequently cut this to 620 apartments within the current proposed Section 73 application. What exactly does London Square consider to be a 'viable' proposed scheme?

(MG) The site is in one of the defined town centres where Lewisham's planning policies seek to optimise development because it's identified as one of the most sustainable locations to do so. Town centre developments are considered to be the best place for high density mixed-use forms of development of this nature. Leegate contextually is very different from most of its surroundings, and that's recognised in the Council's own assessment of the character of the area in devising its policies. It's acknowledged that Leegate can provide significant regeneration. In terms of the detail of the policy, there's a few comments that have been made about the maximum height is a ceiling. The answer to that is it's not actually in policy. The policy sets out 10 to 12 storeys and says that buildings shall not normally be more than that height. There's then lots of other policy around that - even if you had a building of 10 to 12 storeys, there is a requirement for a developer to undertake detailed analysis, which we undertook.

Policy requires a comprehensive Townscape assessment and analysis of the impacts of the development on views on the sensitive receptions of the conservation areas, manor house gardens and surrounding streets. Galliard Homes did that assessment and submitted a 15-storey building, which the Council approved. Precedent for buildings over 12-storeys is established by that. However, that isn't necessarily where it finishes because if you undertake the detailed assessment that we've talked about and you recognise that this is one of the best regeneration locations in this part of the borough identified as such by the Council, then it stands that there is potential for significant regeneration and significant height. We did look at and test a lot of options including buildings up to around 20 storeys and concluded that was probably too much and settled at the 17-storey approach.

It is very different from some of the existing two and three-storey development, but it is a district centre location - the Council's own tall building study calls it an area that presents different opportunities to introduce high identity forms of development, so it's not that there is an absolute policy scene here. It is that the Council is encouraging significant regeneration, and then you have to test and assess the impacts, which is what we've done.

(AW) We've adjusted the scheme that's been given consent, which was 15-storeys high. And that was tested significantly by Galliard, and it was approved by the Council. It's a sustainable site, it's urban brownfield - policy supports high density, so reducing that doesn't really make any sense given the issues we've got with housing at the moment. If you think about the design benefit of the taller building, it does improve the proportions of that building. We've worked hard at giving it a more slender appearance through the extra two storeys, but also by adjusting the balconies. So the idea of a taller building at this location is very much seen as good practice in town planning terms. It's a very large junction. It's a major node within the Lee Green district, but also from a practical point of view, that point on the side is on the northern corner with a very large open space to the north of it, so that any windows or amenity space that's going to be used by the public is actually pretty minimal. The overshadowing impact is negligible, particularly on internal residents of the new development, but also neighbouring properties. So there are benefits to it being on that northern corner and an extra two storeys when tested against the consented scheme ensures impacts on medium and long-range views would be minimal, as determined by the townscape assessors.

(MG) In policy terms, there is one town centre in Lewisham, which is Lewisham. Then you have a series of district centres, Deptford, Sydenham, Catford - Leegate is a district centre. But the comments that I made about the policy approach remains that at a district centre location, this is where you would focus high density development.

Cllr reads out further questions.

Lee Forum

Lewisham's Tall Building Addendum upon which it's development plan is built, which is based on long term maintenance, transport capacity, design and other research, argues that building above 32.8 meters to 39.2 metres in Lee Green is not sustainable. London Square are also aware of the key community concern about height when Galliards consulted on it's plans. Why therefore did London Square choose to stick a large amount of it's increased housing in one tower, increasing its height to 18 storeys, rather than spreading it out more evenly? And how does it argue that this increased height is sustainable?

Cllr - other questions:-

I was told by someone close to London Square that the London Design Review Panel had suggested the company should try to get away with 18 storeys - three storeys more than Galliard had wanted. 'Why not give it a try? You might get away with it' was the quote.

Is the proposal for (now) 17 storeys a try-on to maximise profits? And are the Lewisham planners and the residents of Lee Green being taken for a ride by a greedy developer? Especially considering the local plan recommends only 12 storeys.

Why do the builders insist on believing that it's acceptable to have a tower of flats which at 18 storeys high is significantly taller than any other building in the vicinity, totally out of keeping with the surrounding area, and significantly taller than the 12 storey height limit intention of the local plan? The Leegate Centre is a small space, originally a crossroads with a small green but now surrounded by buildings and already busy and claustrophobic. This new structure will literally tower over us as we go about our daily lives, as well as adding to our current struggles with infrastructure, in particular parking and high volume of road traffic at the Lee Green crossroads. There must be another way to achieve the apparent desired outcome of 40-45% affordable housing without shooting those residents into the sky.

Why did Lewisham planners 'encourage' (the builders word) the builders to add more storeys when there was already opposition from the local community to the plan of 15 storeys? It beggars belief that anyone would imagine that adding a further three would meet with community approval. One would hope that Lewisham Planners would not continue to ignore the objections from local people.

I certainly see that there is a need to redevelop the site and I have no objection to flats being built there, but why so many in such a small space and in buildings which do not reflect, match or compliment the surrounding structures? The redevelopment of the Leegate Centre is needed but should not come at any price, and certainly not one that spoils everyone's peaceful and pleasant enjoyment of our current surroundings and community.

Given the number and ferocity of the objections to these plans and the obvious shortcomings and severe impact on the local area of this proposed building, what are the Lee Green councillors doing about their constituents' views? I have emailed each of them with my objections and heard nothing back, not even an acknowledgement of my email.

(Cllr) I will address the last point, which is as many of you know around planning we as cllrs have a role within planning - we have to make sure we keep ourselves abreast of the information, but not to take sides to cause issues there. If you email us, we are more than happy to raise these views and these questions, and that's one of the reasons why the Council holds these sessions so that we can address them and your concerns, but please do continue to email us and we will pass those issues on.

(MG) The tall building addendum doesn't say that Lee Green is not sustainable - to the contrary. It says that there are significant opportunities to introduce high density development and says it's a growth area. It presents a contrasting urban character to the wider area and considered to be less sensitive. The policy pushes for these sorts of sites, and it's not just here but all town/ district centres, to optimise development.

What the Council/ DRP has said is to justify the proposal, you need to go through a rigorous process of assessment and reviewing the impacts of development. The design panel is a body that advises the Council and they look at it purely from a design point of view and they're effectively a consultee that the planners will need to take into account when they they're making a recommendation to Members. But the process is a complicated one, with the ambition to optimise the amount of development on the site, and this does deliver a lot of benefit in terms of the affordable housing in particular. We've been through a very rigorous process and looked at how we might deal with the scale and the massing and the juxtaposition of buildings on the site. We haven't changed the footprint of the consented scheme, and the key principles of that scheme remain, but we think we've addressed some

of the issues. For instance, on the A1 tower, we've actually reduced building heights slightly to make the building look more slender, and that's something that we've been discussing with officers during the process. The design panel haven't encouraged us, neither have officers - what they've done is asked us to look at those impacts very carefully.

In terms of the infrastructure, this is an allocated site. The Council will have assessed a degree of infrastructure requirements and impacts as part of the local plan process, and this is one of the sites in the local plan. It's in the strategic housing needs assessment for delivery of housing, and therefore, it is somewhere where the Council needs its housing to be directed. In terms of what that means, we are providing a significant quantum of affordable housing. It also has other infrastructure benefits, including the community centre, which will be made available to the community on Peppercorn Rent, and a health facility.

We have been talking to the NHS about what that might be. One of the reasons we moved the accommodation from the first floor to the ground floor was to make it much more attractive to the NHS and the wider community, and we see that as a key part of our proposals and an important part in terms of addressing the infrastructure requirements. In terms of wider infrastructure, the development has to provide its impacts via a s106 Agreement that deals with the direct impacts of development, such as employment contributions towards training, etc. That totalled in the current scheme around £1.1 million of payments to the Council. There's also a single payment, community infrastructure levy, which is essentially a per square metre tax on development.

(AW) I was at the design review panel meeting and nobody said to 'give 18-storeys 'a try', but what they did say was we should test an additional one to five storeys because they felt that it would be better to focus height in one place rather than spread it around across the site, because in longer views it would have less of an impact.

Cllr reads out further scale of development including height questions.

Blackheath Society

The balance of harm v public benefit is clearly key to justifying this proposal that breaches policy and guidance in a number of ways. Can the developer please explain in measurable terms how it believes that the undoubted harms caused by breaches of policy and guidance and damage to local character and amenity are offset by claimed public benefit by a scheme that is taller and denser than the extant planning permission?

Cllr - other questions:-

There is a clear conflict between the applicant's desire to build higher and the policy cap on building heights. What factors will be taken into account when determining which prevails and how will any factors be measured and weighed?

Why can the applicant not add extra floors to any of the other blocks rather than to the main tower? That way they would stay within planning policy.

Regarding the development of Leegate shopping centre - it has been going on far too long and decisions need to be made and stuck to. When can we expect the demolition to begin?

(MG) There is no breach of policy in principle here because for the reasons I set out earlier - there is an indicative height target, which is subject to the tests that I set out before. In terms

of the benefits, there are lots of benefits with the scheme. This includes the regeneration of the site, which has been in decay for a long time - regeneration is important. It is a high quality development, delivering new public realm, new green spaces, health service provision, new community space, and new shopping opportunities. New housing, including 261 affordable homes, which given the pressing need for housing, is significant.

Significant amount of green space and planting biodiversity and net gain. Also it will create 144 construction jobs during the process. Many of those will be directed to local people. And then once the development is complete up to 170 full time employment jobs. Spending from the development would probably generate in the region of £8.5 million pounds worth of spend in the Borough, so economically it will be significant, as well as CIL and S106 contributions.

(Cllr) It would be useful to explain the point around the height of one tower going up instead of increasing other buildings, I think it would be helpful if you could address that specifically.

(AW) Yes, we did look at a number of different arrangements of the accommodation, and the impact of putting extra floors onto other buildings and leaving others where they are is that the development tends to get bigger as a whole. And the other impact is that the courtyards within the scheme become more overshadowed, and we were very keen that the daylighting and sunlighting within those spaces remained as close to the consented scheme as possible, which we have achieved by limiting the additional height to just a few buildings across the site. The tower in the consented scheme - one of the comments that was repeated by various people was that the building looked squat and wide, so adding a height to that and changing the corners of the building has helped to reduce that, and the building does look more slender. Some people will say it is still higher, but visually the appearance is improved as a result of that we believe, and so did the DRP and also the Planners. We've deliberately kept the two buildings that flanked that tower down, in fact, as we've said, they've reduced in height slightly. We did think we could add more to those floors, but the contrast in scale is actually better for the scheme overall. That's the view of the majority of people who've assessed the scheme from our side - and the difference between 15 storeys and 17 storeys when you move away from the site is not particularly apparent.

Cllr reads out viability related questions

Blackheath Society

In the interests of transparency, will the developer publish its viability assessment for the proposal, including target profit margin, as evidence for its claim that increased height and increased number of units are needed to make the scheme viable and deliverable? Why is the Galliard scheme already approved no longer considered viable without the proposed significant and harmful changes?

Why has the applicant chosen not to make public their viability calculations and what impact on trust does the applicant think this has?

Lee Forum

London Square is providing 42% affordable housing: 112 Shared Ownership and 149 Social Rent by unit. Galliards affordable mix was 172 (29%) by unit. Public grant funding from the Mayor or London is now available for schemes with 40% or over on housing over 20% that was not available to Galliards from which Clarion Housing will be paying London Square estimated minimum £16 million. Given this increased grant funding, why did London Square

not just stick with the Galliard unit numbers and increase the percentage of social and affordable housing?

Across London we see developers avoid the requirement for viability assessments by promising high affordable housing numbers, then renegeing on those commitments once permission is granted (eg last week British Land applied via a S73 to reduce affordable housing from 35% to 10% in Canada Water after permission was granted). What guarantees are London Square giving the council and the community that they will deliver on their numbers of social and affordable housing and not come back with a further S73 application to reduce the levels?

London Square give the incentive of more housing, including more affordable and social housing, suggesting that these cannot be built without breaking adopted policy on height, without providing any evidence to back this claim. Whilst not required to, as a matter of transparency and goodwill will London Square provide a viability assessment to justify this?

Under the agreed S106 agreement, a Public Realm Management Plan is required to be submitted and approved by the Council. This will include a plan for the Public Realm that is open to everyone locally as a 'town centre square' including maintenance, repair, renewal, cleaning and decoration of any public art, hard and soft landscaping, street furniture, security equipment, drainage, signage and information, lighting and all other facilities in relation to the Public Realm. The Management Plan will be carried out by a company and paid for by Leegate's tenants. Should that management company fail to adequately and safely maintain the public realm, what legal recourse would the Council or anyone else who uses the public realm have to force them to do so to ensure the protection of the wider community?

(MG) There is a requirement in the s106 for a public realm management plan. The management of the site will be undertaken by a management company, which will be originally established by London Square, and that effectively raises funds for ongoing maintenance. It is the responsibility of the development to manage itself, and the plan will be agreed with the Council in advance of the occupation of the development. In the event that there are issues, the Council has rights under the course of the s106 to do its own work and charge it back to the owner of the site. But having said that, London Square develops lots of sites like this around London as do many other developers and I'm not aware that there are ever any ongoing issues with management maintenance because of the way that they are set up. Typically developers are good at managing these spaces.

(RR) The schemes' viability is related to the ability of London Square to build a scheme at this location - in terms of the building safety regulator elements in terms of the additional staircore, in terms of the partners that London Square are going to require in order to make this a thriving development, most notably an affordable housing partner, they feed into the mix, the tenure, the way in which the affordable housing organisation would atypically want to run apartment blocks in this instance, and that all gets fed into how the team have actually tried to respond to ultimately wanting to bring something forward that London Square can commit to and deliver at pace. Touching on some of the earlier questions in terms of timing and programme, we would expect that if we receive a favourable outcome at Committee, London Square would be looking to commence the demolition of that very soon after, and we think demolition would probably take somewhere between seven and eight months. In terms of issuing London Square's internal assessment on the viability of the scheme, there isn't an obligation for us to do that under planning policy. The scheme will deliver in excess of 35% affordable housing, and it's been well documented that in this instance, we would be

delivering over 45% affordable housing. In terms of commitment to assure people that this is London Square's intention, and the intention is not to come back and look to alter that dramatically. At a site in Woolwich, London Square are delivering 50% affordable housing. London Square has built and are now selling a scheme near Lewisham Town Centre (Axion House), which is 100% affordable. London Square also undertaking a similar scheme in Barnet through their affordable housing provider, Square Roots.

In terms of the current scheme coming forward, the process and consideration has been gone through thoroughly, and it's testament to the team and our partners over how this scheme has been prepared, how this scheme hopefully will come forward, and there not necessarily being a need to actually drive a considerably higher level of private housing, which in today's marketplace at the moment, I feel personally that LSQ is bucking the trend in wanting to provide such a high level of affordable housing on this and other schemes it's working on.

CLlr reads out Highways related questions

Blackheath Society

Whilst the push by policy makers and planners to reduce parking for new housing is welcome, provision still needs to take realistic account of local needs. There was previously significant public parking at Leegate (266 spaces), the PTAL rating is 3 (moderate level of accessibility), not 6 (excellent) as in nearby central Lewisham and Blackheath Village, and the housing mix includes many family units as well as mixed commercial and retail usage. How does the developer justify such a large and dense mixed development in a PTAL3 location on a busy junction with no able-bodied public parking provided?

Where will people park to deliver, visit or shop at Leegate if the Sainsbury's site opposite is redeveloped, with likely further loss of only other local public parking?

Given that no car parking spaces have been allocated to non-disabled residents, where are they supposed to park their cars without causing traffic problems or infringing parking restrictions?

While the London mayor's ideal of sustainable travel - ie public transport and bikes - is admirable, it's not workable in real life, and given that residents of these flats WILL have cars, where do the builders and planners see those residents parking? The surrounding streets are already packed with parked cars and most have resident parking restrictions in place. With more than 600 flats in the proposed new development, and thousands more people, there will undoubtedly be several hundred residents with cars, so this is a question that needs to be dealt with in detail now, not when the residents and their cars move in. The on-site car club proposal is a red herring. What are the Lewisham plans for parking?

What does the developer London Square believe will be the consequences of providing around 620 new apartments without a single parking space for able-bodied residents of the development or a single parking space (again for able-bodied persons) seeking to deliver post and other daily services to the new residents' apartments. Where for instance would a delivery vehicle legally park to deliver a fridge or a sofa?

(DH) Ultimately the reduced level of car-parking compared with a consented scheme is a consequence of wider changes that have been made to the scheme as a whole. The parking

spaces for the previous proposed supermarket are now no longer required with it now being more of a smaller convenience type scale.

Notwithstanding that, the proposed level of parking is consistent with and supported by Lewisham policies and the London Plan. Both of those sets of policies aspire for large scale developments such as this in accessible, sustainable locations to be car free and there are many good reasons for that, including reducing car usage, reducing traffic flows, encouraging people to live more healthy and active lifestyles by walking and cycling more, and improving local air quality. The applicant team also met with Transport for London as part of the pre-application discussions, and they were supportive of the proposal to provide disabled parking only in this amended scheme.

In regard to servicing and deliveries, the development will incorporate servicing bays - two on Leyland Road, one on Burnt Ash Road, and an existing bay on Eltham Road. There would also be two visitor car parking spaces proposed on Leyland Road, in common with the consented scheme, and whilst many of the streets in the local area are covered by resident parking restrictions, those restrictions typically only apply between certain times between 10am and midday, Monday to Friday, so there are times outside of those restrictions where shoppers visitors etc are able to visit and park if that's what they wish to do.

This type of large-scale car free mixed use development exists and operates very successfully in places all over London. Ultimately, these dwellings will be marketed by London Square as being car free so that any respective purchaser will be fully aware from the outset there won't be any general car parking available. For those people for which car ownership and parking availability is an important consideration in a property purchase, then reality is that will simply choose not to live in at this development.

Future residents that do live at the development will be ineligible to apply for residents permits, and so there is not expected to be any displacement of resident cars onto the surrounding streets for that reason.

(CIIr) I want to follow up on that in terms of saying it'll be marketed as car free, but in terms of the impact, what kind of assessments have been done around what you're saying that it won't impact - it would be helpful to understand that.

(DH) There's a detailed transport assessment that's been submitted as part of the application. So that's done a full assessment of all the transport impacts of the scheme. We've had discussions with TfL and Lewisham, both very supportive of this approach.

Cllr reads out Climate/ Pollution/ Ecology related questions

The proposal is to increase the building height to maximise sellable units. By going up, they can reduce the footprint and leave the lovely mature trees standing.

Local people need clean air, shade and reduced flood risk, which these trees provide. Also, it is impossible to make a true 'biodiversity net gain' when killing so many mature trees and their ecosystems.

How will the developers provide healthy living environments for residents and offset the carbon emission created by the amount of housing and retail planned for the site and increase of traffic etc?

Given Lewisham's own acknowledgment of the climate emergency and the vital importance of trees to protect us against the effects of global warming, what justification is there for removing so many trees on the site - especially the largest, most mature, of which all are proposed to be felled?

So will the planners stand up for communities and planet by protecting our environment against the effects of corporate profiteering?

How will the developers provide enough green spaces within the site to ensure trees and plants can flourish and support outside spaces for people of all ages to access to promote health and wellbeing?

(MG) I don't think increasing building heights to make the footprint smaller would satisfy most of the people on the call that think this scheme's too high, but in any event this is a s73 application - planning permission has been granted and this is to amend an existing planning permission, not create a new one. We felt that a lot of work had gone into the scheme and a lot of the principles of the scheme were good and valid. However we've tried to improve upon the public realm by creating more green space in the scheme, we've increased the tree provision from 178 overall to 209. Biodiversity net gain is 160% increase over the existing when the targets is actually 10%.

The strategy is to create different types of spaces, different environments private for the residents and public. So public areas have been explained and will be very valuable in particular the public square. Our energy strategy is a communal air source heat pump arrangement, which is an improvement in the context of the London Plan requirements, and is the lowest type of carbon approach under planning policy. The scheme is car free and therefore highly sustainable, provides for a significant amount of cycle spaces, and the quality of the units is in accordance with the standards that we're required to meet both in terms of the planning policy and in terms of building regulations, including well lit, well ventilated homes with efficient energy systems.

In terms of the climate emergency, this is a regeneration site. This is somewhere where housing or mixed-use development is being identified because we also have to provide housing for the people on Lewisham's housing waiting lists, so there is a balance to be had.

In terms of the existing trees and the trees that will be lost as part of the development, we're not proposing to remove any trees that were already agreed to be removed in the previous scheme. Having said that, we are in discussions with officers to see if we can retain more

trees. Whether that's possible or not, I can't say at this stage - the big issue is one of the trees leans into the site so that actually sits within the footprint of the building, but there may be other opportunities to retain trees and we are discussing that with officers.

Regarding biodiversity, we have rain gardens, green roofs, different types of planting including meadow type planting to encourage different types of ecology. For a town centre district centre, and for a regeneration scheme like this the balance is really good and we've gone beyond the Galliard approach and improved it.

(Cllr) Summarises the main discussion points raised during the meeting.

(MG) We have been in close dialogue with officers, and we have outside of that process been responding to resident's questions around the consultation and around the information. We've also met with the Traders, because that's important. We met with them last week and there is an ongoing commitment to continue with that.

Cllr closes meeting at 20:32pm