

Lee Green Assembly Leegate Working Group response to St Modwen's revised proposals for the Leegate redevelopment

This response comprises the views of the Working Group discussed at our meeting of June 2, 2014 and takes into account the report of the Lewisham Design Review Panel of April 7, 2014. St Modwen's revised proposals were put to us at a meeting on April 11, 2014.

We note that you are now promoting your public consultation, and the exhibition that will take place in Leegate on 20-21 June 2014, before we have had time, as previously agreed, to meet again. We sincerely hope those consultations will not pre-empt any further discussions we might have.

We welcome St Modwen's revisions to its initial proposals including the decision to demolish all existing buildings, to include a substantial housing element and to put (residents') parking underground. We question however why, for two years, the company had assured us all three were unaffordable or impractical. Total demolition allows a more comprehensive approach to redevelopment, although the scale of the proposed supermarket - at 40,000 sq ft - remains an issue *as it impinges on all else*.

We remain unimpressed by the revised scheme's failure to include **meaningful high quality public space**. Good public areas are required in such developments by Lewisham's Local Development Framework, CABE's guidelines for shopping centre developments and the Mayor's London Plan. The revised proposals include a public street running east/west near Carston Close and an enclosed walkway near the north-west corner of the site.

We believe the **Carston Close** street, on the extreme southern edge of the site, is too far removed from the retail core to be considered as providing access or 'permeability' to the shopping centre. In addition it is not on land owned by St Modwen, being in a mix of council and private ownership, so it cannot be considered a "contribution" from St Modwen to the development.

The **enclosed walkway** is not by definition open public space and is criticised by the Design Panel as being "cramped and ungenerous." The Design Panel states that the walkway's (they call it a "cranked mall") "connectivity connections seem a little unclear." In plain English, the walkway does not lead to or from anywhere of any relevance to pedestrians or shoppers. In addition, the proposed cafe would be even more isolated and not centrally located.

We remain critical of the lack of any provision of **community facilities** in the revised plans, an issue that is also picked up by the Design Panel. While noting that St Modwen has voiced support for community facilities, those discussions have never taken place. We envisage a more imaginative approach than is currently provided by Lee Green Community Centre (although appreciating St Modwen's support for the existing centre, it has struggled in difficult circumstances). We are currently exploring a possible

community resource involving a social entrepreneur and cafe to widen its appeal and viability.

We note the Design Panel's comments on the negative impact considerable supermarket **parking** at first floor level would have on the flats to be built above the parking level. We back the Design Panel's suggestion of putting supermarket parking below ground, as is the case with the nearby Sainsbury's supermarket.

We are of the view that **further improvements** are needed by St Modwen to deliver a high-class scheme on this important corner site, which is the retail and social centre of Lee Green as well as being one of the historic cores of the village of Lee. We note that the Design Panel report refers to "the emerging concepts" in the plans it saw while it also makes several references to "further work" needing to be done.

We also note the Design Panel's comments that the approach toward the public realm and amenity is "unacceptable" and that "a true sense of place has yet to feature within the proposals." As noted earlier, these are views that the Working Party has been pressing from the outset.

We are grateful to Lewisham's planning department for the robust approach it has taken to ensuring its own **planning framework** is respected. The Working Party has drawn support for many of its arguments from the requirements of the planning framework document. We urge St Modwen to rise to the challenge of this important project.

Regards
Jim Mallory,
On behalf of the Leegate working group

Lee Green 9 June 2014