

Reviving Lee

through socio-economic and spatial transformations

Development Brief
Lee, London Borough of Lewisham
2018





Figure 1: Aerial view of Lee's District Centre (Source: BU1-Session 1- 11 January 2018)

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1 | Executive Summary

This Development Brief for Lee summarizes the main issues and potentials identified through the six different themes and presents a new vision supplementing the current configuration of the District of Lee. Our focus area for intervention constitutes the sites of the former Penfold Vauxhall garage and the current Sainsbury's supermarket.

This report is structured into eight chapters. The first three - the Introduction, Urban Analysis and a condensed SWOT analysis, are derived from the urban analysis stage of the study area. These considerations lead to the next two chapters which is our new Vision for Lee and the Principles and Guidelines to accomplish it.

Chapter 7 is concentrated on the focus area of intervention, the implementation process, the actors involved at different stages and the proposed design intervention for the two sites. The relation of our strategy to various other potential interventions in the area will also be explored. The final chapter will conclude with reinstating the intention of the vision and the credibility of the proposal.



Figure 2: Site of the former Penfold Vauxhall garage



Figure 3: Site of the current Sainsbury's supermarket



Figure 4: The Quaggy River



Figure 5: The Manor House Gardens

2 | Introduction

Lee, in the London Borough of Lewisham, is located strategically and has a rich cultural and spatial heritage including its historical past in the fields of arts and literature, the legacy of which is intertwined into the urban fabric of the town.

The Manor House, which is now transformed into the library, and the Manor House gardens are some of the most visited places in Lee. The Manor House gardens is a social space for the locals and multipurpose activities are hosted here throughout the year. An annual summer festival as well as weekly farmers markets are also held here. The Quaggy river flows through Lee's centre and Manor House gardens. It is under-utilised for most of its course in Lee and its exposure is only towards private property, therefore limited accessibility to the public.

The Lee Green district centre that used to be a lively hub for merchants passing through on their way to central London, has in recent times lost the charm of its past. This is mainly due to the substantial increase in traffic along and at the junction of Lee road, Burnt Ash road, Lee High road and Eltam road. It has also become highly unsafe for pedestrians and commercial activity has also been affected by it.

The proposed Leegate Shopping Centre regeneration project, plans to provide a reinvigorated district centre for Lee Green that caters for local need, provides new housing and serves as a hub for the whole community. The site has been identified in policy for additional housing and increased density. (Leegate Regeneration, St. Modwen).

With the exception of the district centre and the main streets which mostly comprise of mixed-use development, the rest of Lee is largely residential consisting of small interconnected blocks along the streets. These inner residential areas mostly have lesser activities unlike the busy main streets.



Figure 6: View of the Pedestrian Crossing near the Old Tiger's Head Pub



Figure 7: View of the proposed Leegate Shopping Centre project by St Modwen's



Figure 8: Lee Green Community Centre located in the current Leegate shopping centre area



Figure 9: Murals on the walls of the current Leegate shopping centre area

3 | Urban Analysis

The following section details the urban analysis focusing on the political, economic, cultural and spatial aspects of Lee and its surroundings.

Political

According to Lewisham Local Planning Framework Core Strategy (Lewisham Council, 2011), Lee has opportunities to accommodate appropriately designed mixed use development, ensuring its role of the district centre of Lewisham and liveable hub for local activities are enhanced and the conservation areas are preserved. The breakdown of the tenure and dwelling mix in Lewisham is facing the challenge of shortage of affordable housing compared to London average, as a result, the Council is aiming to deliver a strategic target of 50% of new housing should be affordable housing (Lewisham Council, 2011).

Economic

The commercial activities in Lee are concentrated in its centre, which is one of the district hubs in Lewisham. It serves the locals with their needs for primary commodities as well as pubs, restaurants and cafes. It also features a Sainsbury's supermarket, the only large-scale franchise in the neighbourhood. The dilapidated Leegate Centre still holds some shops and services. Several businesses in the district centre have been shut recently due to decreasing activity in the area due to the onslaught of traffic rush in the area. The proposed Leegate Shopping Centre is expected to revive the commercial activity and cater to mixed-use typologies.

Cultural

Lewisham has an ethnically diverse population and Lee represents this diversity in its wider urban context, economically, culturally and in its demographics. Lee also has many local organisations that work to merge the arts with social development. The abundant art and cultural events, fantastic art galleries make Lee an attractive place for younger crowds and outsiders. The Lee Forum, comprising of members that have lived in Lee for several years, plays an important role in the planning and development of the area.

Spatial

Many older buildings in Lee retain their historic character and the identity that the residents closely relate to. There have been efforts Lee Manor Society to promote the preservation of the conservation area. The more recent developments in Lee have not considered the existing aesthetics of the place.



Figure 11: Duke of Edinburgh pub in the district centre



Figure 12: View of the New Tigers Head Pub located in the Lee Green District Centre

4 | SWOT Analysis

Following is the SWOT analysis of the six themes based on the findings from the urban analysis stage.

a | Housing and dwelling

- S Vibrant community organised events increase social interaction between residents. The houses at the junction of Burnt Ash road and Lee high road are located within walking distance to a wider variety of venues and activities.
- W Houses in the conservation area are located further from many different venues and activities.
- O There is a high demand for affordable housing in Lee that is influenced by different groups of users, for example single users and families.
- T Residents hold different opinions towards the use of properties in the new proposal for Lee gate. Properties in the future are projected to become more expensive.

b | Urban fabric and landmarks

- S The spatial expansion and configuration of Lee has greatly contributed towards the changing image of the area from its historic past to its current fabric. Historical sites, public and social facilities and outdoor landscape in Lee contributes to the conjunction between the imagination of time and social activities in Lee.
- W The imposing commercial developments in Lee will ruin its former charm and historical legacy. There are several under-utilised parts of Lee currently regarded as unsafe and left over spaces.
- O The proposed Leegate Centre will help increase the fluidity and absorption capacity within the site.
- T The imposition of the new development that does not comply with the current urbanscape and does not blend with the existing topologies of Lee.

c | Open and Public Spaces

- S Most of the open spaces are easily accessible.
- W The lack of spaces for interaction for the youth and local scale markets makes the residents feel that their sense of identity is being dissipating. The facades of newly built building in Lee centre fail to fit into the historical characteristic of the place.
- O Lee High Road can be redeveloped to mitigate the noise and pollution whilst improving the experience of walking in the centre. The vacant space of the former Penfold Vauxhall garage has potential to be used to enhance social contacts and activities.
- T Competition is evident between the big supermarket chains and private shops in the Lee centre. There is a potential risk of flooding to properties within this area of River Quaggy frontage.

d| Leftovers and thresholds

- S The centre area is more vibrant than residential areas, with a clear dichotomy in use and building typology.
- W Majority of shops have closed down in Lee Gated Shopping Centre and people feel unsafe to walk through the area at night. There is a socioeconomic difference between residents of the housing estates and the middle class gated communities.
- O The leftover spaces are areas of opportunities, where urban liveability and flexibility can be achieved.
- T Leftover and marginal spaces have large safety risks and give people a sense of insecurity in accessing these areas.

4 | SWOT Analysis

e | Cultures and economy

- S The strong heritage support from active organisations and groups. The availability of different types of social events and cultural activities in public space.
- W The Sainsbury's supermarket has been facing a lot of competition due to its central location and consequently its state has deteriorated. Majority of cultural activities are not universal and are confined to specific groups and spaces.
- O New development plans for the centre will attract new businesses and entrepreneurs, increasing diversity and economic vitality.
- T The situation of fragmented social fabric is continuously increasing, between different income groups and ethnicities.

f | Infrastructures and Spaces of Mobility/Immobility

- S Roads are well connected and can be easily accessed by driving or walking. There are multiple choices of bus routes and railways, allowing convenient commuting to and from central London to Lee. Most of the services in Lee centre are within walking distance.
- W Parking control is strict in Lee and there are only two private parking lots which are not open for public. The cycle lane and walkway in Lee is disconnected to other parts of the area. The narrow sidewalks and the lack of adequate streetlighting makes people feel unsafe to walk at night.
- O Improving the mobility of traffic, pedestrians and cyclists in Lee centre could benefit the future developments in the area.
- T The public transport from outside to Lee often takes a long time. The bus routes are only distributed on Burnt Ash Road and Lee High Road, failing to cover rest of the areas. Pedestrians and cyclists' safety threatened by the heavy traffic flow.

5 | Vision for Lee



Reviving Lee through socio-economic and spatial transformations focusing on people's everyday life and its historic characteristics.

Based on the SWOT analysis, and through extensive community engagement, our vision is to revive Lee through socio-economic and spatial transformations focusing on people's everyday life and to historic characteristics.

The objective is to enhance its status as a district centre of Lewisham and vibrant hub of local activities by intensifying mixed land use, enhancing spatial connectivity and accessibility, accommodating adequate affordable housing and preserving historical legacy.

Since the new development plan for the Leegate Shopping Centre is on the agenda, it is an opportune time to improve the vitality and viability, attractiveness, accessibility and overall environment of the Lee Green district centre, thereby transforming the underused sites in Lee to a place where people can meet and integrate.

Although to achieve this we want to engage the local community in the process to shape their own realities. In Lefebvre's theory on "Right to the City" he states that "the citizen has a right to participate in as well as to appropriate the city: that is to say, the people should be at the heart of any decision-making process about the creation and management of the city; as well as having the common right to use and occupy the spaces of the city without restriction" (Lefebvre, 1996). The need for the management of the urban realm by the users is applicable to our approach for participation.

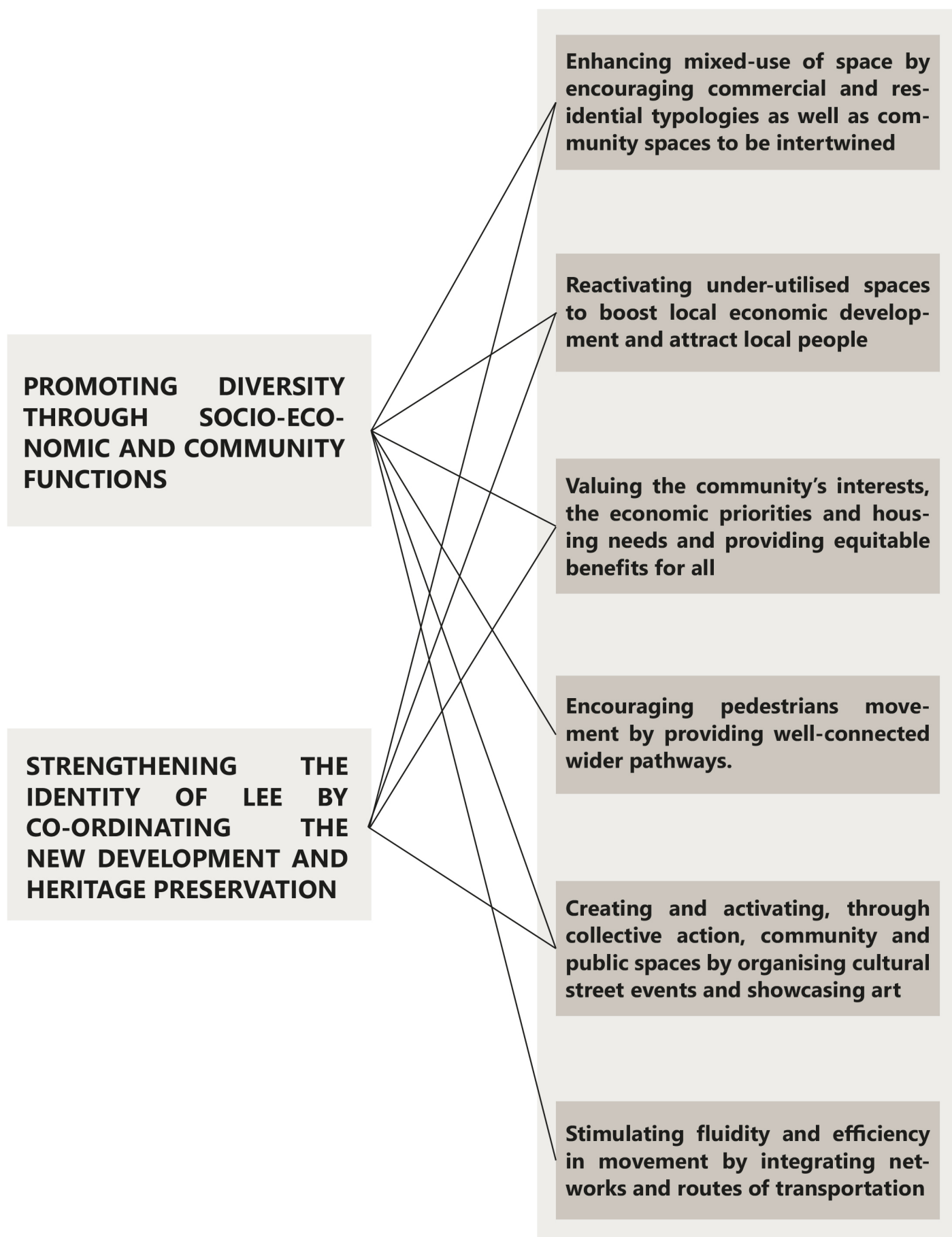
However, the economic priorities of the owners, developers and local businesses should not be disregarded. The amalgamation of physical and social components in redevelopment should favour all involved. The aim is to justly provide equitable distribution of benefits. A Community Development Agreement (CDA) would assist in providing benefits to the local community while giving other stakeholders also a right to influence the development. (Fainstein, 2010)

Lastly, in tackling the balance between the socio-economic demands in spatial transformations, as Healey expresses, '...there needs to be a "moment of opportunity", a "crack" in the power relations, a situation of contradiction and conflict, which encourages people to recognize that they need to reflect on what they are doing, that they need to work with different people, that they need to evolve different processes' (Healey, 1997). The concept of the 'room for manoeuvre', to successfully direct socio-spatial justice in the implementation of collective action (Levy, 2015) will help realise our vision for Lee.

6 | Principles and Guidelines for Intervention

Principles

Guidelines



7 | Proposed Strategy for Lee Green Centre

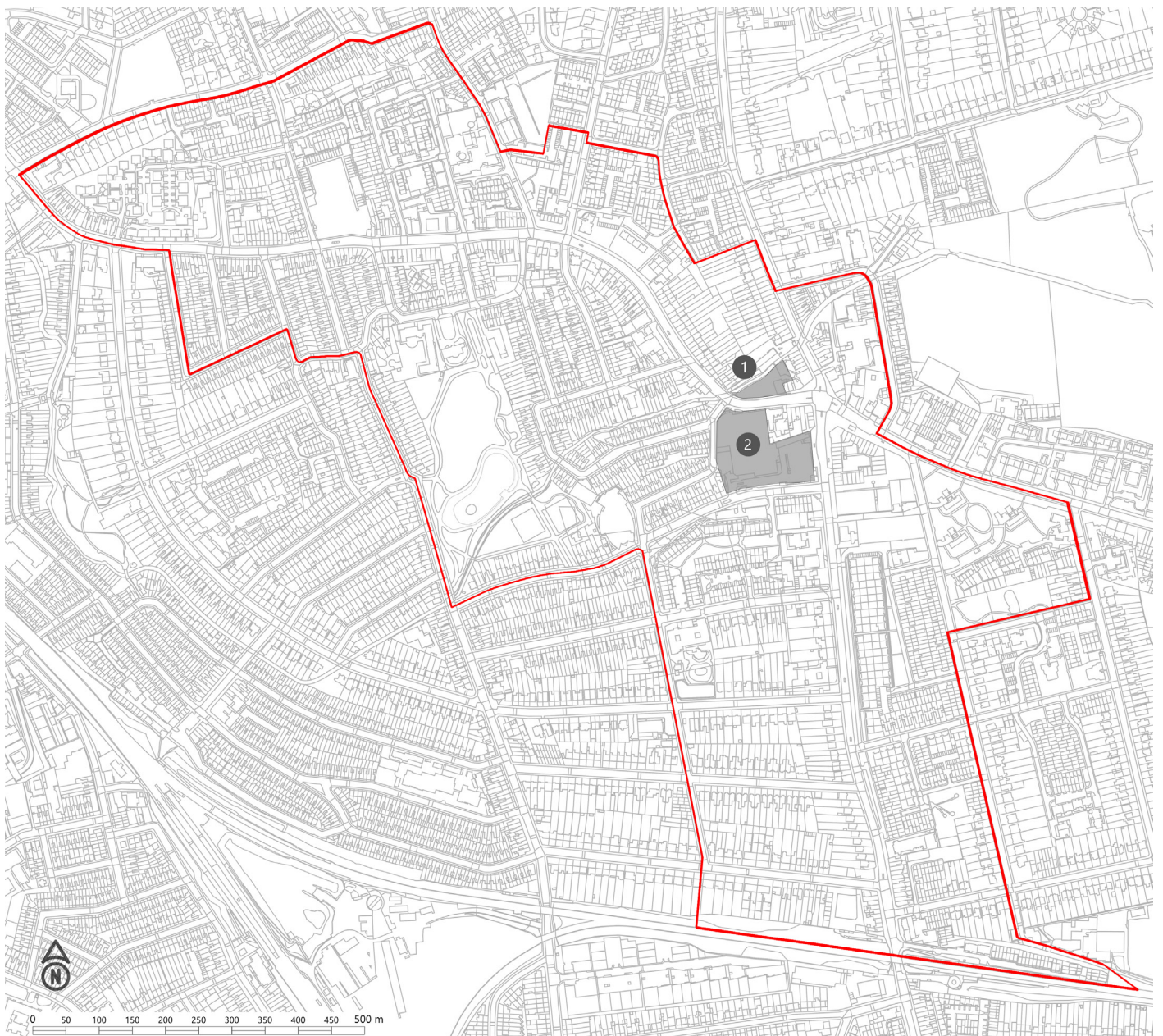
o | The Site

The proposal will intervene in the two sites as seen in map below,

- 1-the former Penfold Vauxhall Garage
- 2-the current Sainsbury's supermarket

The vacant space of the former Penfold Vauxhall garage is fenced, but has the potential to be re-used to enhance social contacts and activities by intensifying mixed use and activating the riverside of the symbolic Quaggy river which is currently hidden.

The shops along the road present inactive facades that fail to activate the public life and attract people. Sainsbury's is a one-storey supermarket and its parking lot occupied a huge block which could be a visual and physical barrier for people. This is not fit into the surroundings either.



7 | Proposed Strategy for Lee Green Centre

o | Phases and Actors

The following phases establish the application of Lefebvre’s “Right to the City” concept and recognize the room for manoeuvre among the different actors in the process.

1 IDENTIFYING KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND DEFINING THEIR PRIORITIES AND SHARES IN THE PROJECT

- Setting up a management committee of different stakeholders
- The community’s interest to be kept at the center of the discourse
- Reaching a consensus for collective action that balances social and economics demands



Other members of different groups of the community

- Plot Owners (Residents/Non-Residents)
- Renters
- Lease Holders

Community Organizations

Local Business Owners (Residents/Non-Residents)

Local Developers

2 NEGOTIATIONS

Public-Private Partnership through a Community Development Agreement (CDA)

- The CDA will be a benefit sharing agreement.
- Negotiation of allocation of spaces in the development project for the community and public open spaces that are accessible for all and controlled by the Management Committee.
- Drafting of proposal for strategies for redevelopment

Management Committee

Local Developers

Investors

Owners of the former Penfold Vauxhall Garage and Existing Sainsbury’s Supermarket



Lewisham City Council

3 CONSTRUCTION / REDEVELOPMENT

- Organizing workshops to involve locals in the decision-making for the design of the redevelopment project
- Stages of construction
 - Stage 1- Redevelopment of former Penfold Vauxhall garage
 - Stage 2- Redevelopment of current Sainsbury's supermarket (this can be further divided into 2 stages of construction because of the scale of the site)
- Creation of public open spaces and external pedestrian pathways
- Allocation of spaces on the ground floors in both sites for the community
- Monitoring of construction processes to avoid irregularities and encourage transparency

Management Committee

Experts (Architects, Urban Designers, Urban Planners)

Local Developers

Investors



Lewisham City Council

4 MANAGEMENT

- Shared management of public spaces
- Organizing events in open public spaces such as arts and cultural festivals, farmers markets, etc.

Management Committee



Lewisham City Council

Local Business Representatives

Community Organizations

Local Developers

7 | Proposed Strategy for Lee Green Centre

o | Proposed Design Intervention

Strategies

(Refer map on next page for location of strategies)

1 Mixed-Use Typology

Ground Floors- commercial & 4 floors above- residential.

The different types of commercial spaces allows for flexibility in the kind of commercial activities. While restaurants, cafes, pubs, boutiques, etc can open to the streets as well as the open spaces, retail stores and other businesses can have a single facade entrance.



Figure 13: Mixed uses (ground floor-commercial and above floors residential) of buildings along main streets

2 Community Space / Arts Cafe

Community spaces are allocated in both the sites and an arts cafe near the river for the community/public to have gatherings as well as organise arts and cultural events.

3 Development of the Quaggy Riverfront

The under-utilised space along the quaggy is proposed to be revived and can be used for leisure activities.

4 Provision of Wider Pedestrian Paths

Wider paths along the commercial streets allow for easy movement and flow of shoppers and pedestrians alike.

5 Public Open Spaces

These can be utilised as an extension of the allocated community spaces. Also, weekly farmer's markets can be held here complementing the commercial activities in the area.

6 Pedestrian Crossings

The proposed pedestrian crossings allow for easy flow between the two sites of intervention as well as the proposed Leegate Shopping Centre.

7 Proposed New Road

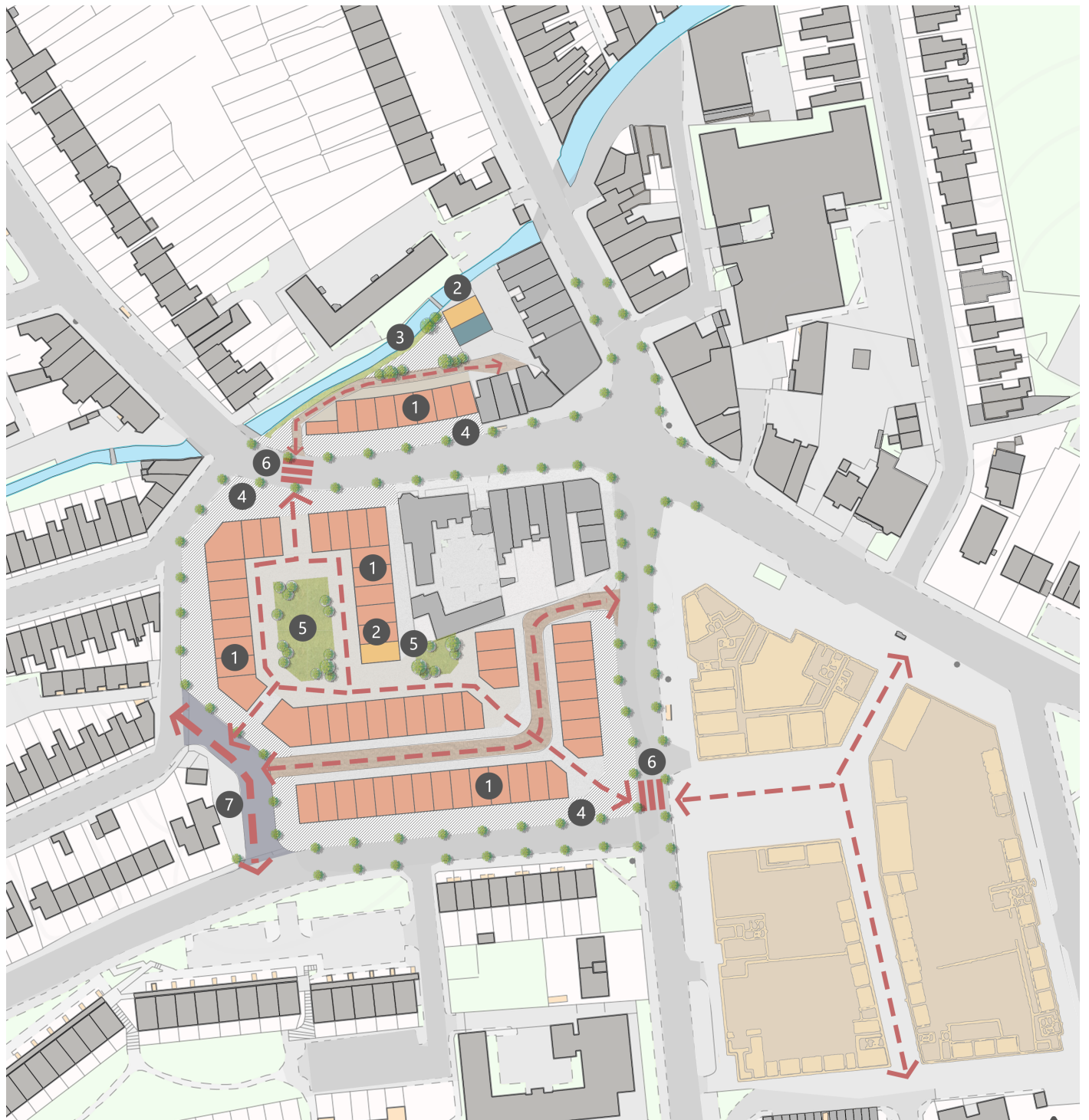
This alternative helps with mitigation of traffic on one side and provides easy accessibility from the south west of the site.









8 Parking Provision

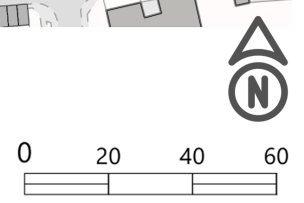
This is to be accommodated into the basement of the proposed structure and the same can be leveraged for the developer/investors profit.

7 | Proposed Strategy for Lee Green Centre

o | Proposed Design Intervention



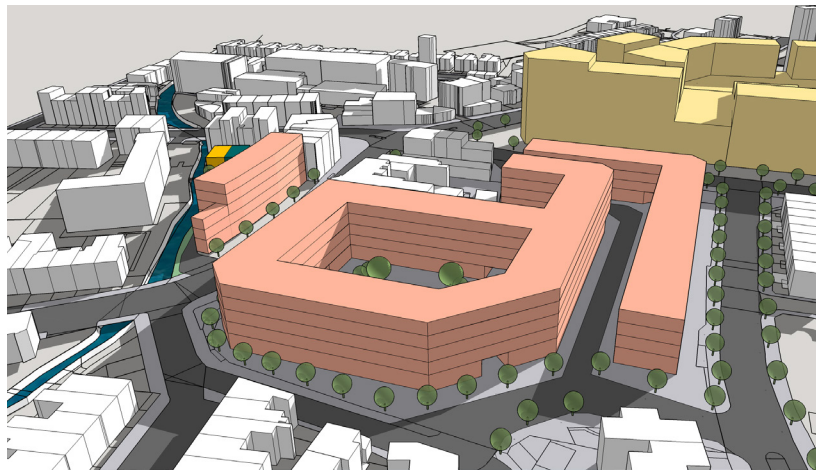
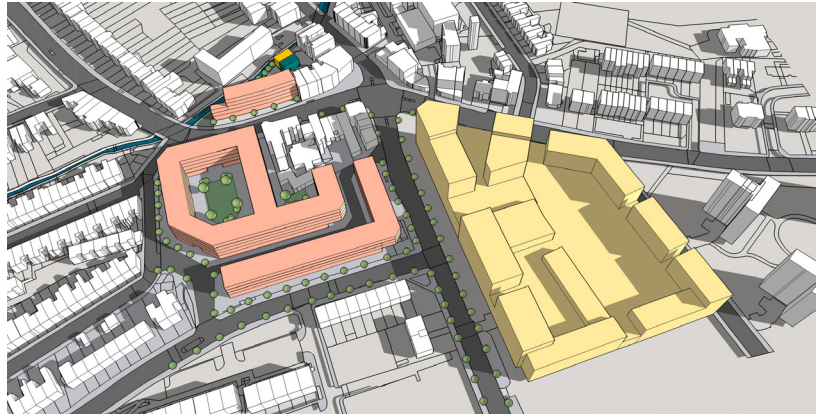
- | | |
|--|---|
|  Mixed Use |  Proposed Service lane |
|  Community Centre |  Proposed road |
|  Arts Cafe |  Paved walkways |
|  Public Open Spaces |  Leegate Shopping centre |



7 | Proposed Strategy for Lee Green Centre

o | Proposed Design Intervention

The volumes proposed in the intervention have the same homogenous proportions as the rest of Lee.



7 | Proposed Strategy for Lee Green Centre

o | Proposed Design Intervention

The map below identifies some important buildings and street views showing how the interventions fit into its surrounding and ensuring compatibility and coherence of land use.



7 | Proposed Strategy for Lee Green Centre

o | Further Interventions

- 
Redesign of the Junction
 The intersection between of Lee road, Burnt Ash road, Lee High road and Eltam road to be resolved as a priority.
 Actors: Management Committee, Leiwsham City council
- 
Alleviate Traffic Congestion
 Traffic issues to be resolved at the broader scale to promote easy mobility and flow.
 Actors: TFL, Leiwsham City council
- 
Identification and Activation of Public Spaces along the Quaggy
 Utilizing the Quaggy as a back drop to create lively community spaces.
 Actors: Quaggy Waterways Action Group, Management Committee, Leiwsham City council
- 
Creation of a Link between Allotment Plots and the Farmers Markets
 Boosting local farming business and creating a network to promote small scale production.
 Actors: City & Country Farmer's Markets (CCFM), Leiwsham City council, Community Organisations



8 | Conclusion

The status of Lee as a lively hub for locals has been weakened by economic decline, social segregation, spatial dis-connectivity and long-term underused spaces. By understanding its current context and the analysing SWOT from six themes, we developed our vision as reviving Lee through socio-economic and spatial transformations focusing on people's everyday life and its historic characteristics. This is underpinned by a solid theoretical base of Lefebvre's "Right to the City", which inspires us to extend the definition to right to housing, to open space and to accessibility. We also try to integrate diversity into our strategies and ensure the inclusivity, resilience of the sites of intervention with social cohesion.

Enhancing the functionality and the mixed use is at the heart of our proposal. The main strategy is to refocus the potential of the district centre by providing improved open spaces, mixed-used buildings and taking advantages of underused spaces. Moreover, considering the demographic diversity, affordable housing will be increased to satisfy local needs and subsidy the housing provision for Lewisham.

To revive the public life, the strong community base in Lee can play a pivotal role in organising cultural street events and showcasing art. Activities can be accommodated by the riverside where a new community centre, art cafe and waterfront open space has been proposed.

To encourage pedestrian movement, the connectivity between the area of intervention and the new development of Leegate shopping centre are improved by increasing the number of entrances and alternative routes. The commercial use on the ground floor also secures the coherence and legibility of the district centre.

The urban development strategy are established on existing potentialities with the aim to enact transformations that benefits the people who live within the community. As urban designers we aim for this proposal to upgrade the image of Lee and create a positive narrative of people's everyday life.

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