On Friday 6th November, Southwark Council announced that the team behind the innovative project Pop Brixton will be transforming Peckham Town Centre Car Park into Peckham Levels, a new creative community for local artists and entrepreneurs.

The project shares Pop Brixton’s ambition to support local, independent talent but is taking an entirely new approach to reflect Peckham’s unique identity. The winning proposal has been designed to offer over 20,000 sq ft of artist’s studios, workshops and shared creative workspace.
Site History

The site was occupied in the late 1800s by a plant nursery. London’s rapid expansion during the industrial revolution led to the increased urbanisation of Peckham, and in particular the development of Moncrieff Street.

In 1983 the multi-storey car park was built as part of a Sainsbury’s superstore. Its construction involved the demolition of part of the terrace along Moncrieff Street.

The supermarket, which occupied part of the ground floor, closed and was converted into Peckham Plex cinema. The car park became a council-run public car park, but is largely under-utilised. In recent years its upper floors have hosted popular seasonal cultural and arts programmes.

Peckham’s History

For most of its history, Peckham has existed as a small rural settlement within Surrey. The settlement expanded as transport links between Peckham and London were improved. Grand Surrey Canal and the extension of the tram line in 1869 from Camberwell along Peckham High Street were introduced before the completion of Vauxhall Bridge in 1906, Southwark Bridge in 1921 and Waterloo Bridge in 1945.

These improvements led to Peckham becoming a hotspot for affluent Londoners who wished to remain within the proximity of London but wanted to escape city life. The village quickly transformed from a small satellite town into a suburb and officially became part of London in 1889.
OUR VISION

Levels 03 & 04: Artists & Makers

- Workshops
A large ground floor area dedicated to more heavy workshop facilities, such as wood working and metal workshop. With easy access, storage and proximity to the street, this space is perfect for artists and makers who work with larger and heavier materials.

- Co-Working
A hub for enterprise and innovation, these spaces will provide hot desking and affordable work space for small businesses and individuals in an exciting and dynamic environment.

- Parking

Levels 01 & 02: Digital Media & Print

- Shared Studios
Convenient spaces located throughout the building, especially for writers and artists. A creative environment that may include poet readings and collaboration.

- Co-Working
A studio for enterprise and innovation. These spaces will provide hot desking and affordable work space for small businesses in a vibrant and dynamic environment.

- Recording Studios

- Laser Cutting + 3D Printing
Access to these high end industrial services is becoming increasingly more important in the realm of art and design, but is equally expensive. By offering public use of these services, young creative people may foster their ideas in an economically sustainable way.

- Print Press

- Artists Studios
Individual studio space arranged around the perimeter of building, where the translucent front wall will provide light into the core of the building.

- Gallery
A public gallery/exhibition space for the tenants and local artists to showcase their work.

- Event Space
A large multifunctional space used for a wide variety of events such as exhibitions, performances, craft fairs, community gatherings etc.

Levels -01 & -0: Work & Deliver

- Workshops
- Co-Working
- Shared Work Space
- Performances Space
- Food & Beverages

- Parking

- Storage
TRANSFORMATION

Existing interior

Proposed interior
Our vision

Pimlico Town Center Car Park has a robust, industrial nature allied with an almost post-modern, decorative brick and concrete exterior. Internally, the spaces are characterised by its raw structure, and long horizontal strip openings to the exterior. We like all of this, and our aspiration is to work with this interior to create raw industrial spaces that function well and are appropriate for the uses we propose. One might call it an anti-school aesthetic. For a space to foster creativity, it must be able to act as a blank canvas and allow its users to feel free to experiment without worrying about damaging or altering the space of the room. Tough buildings allow this to happen, and the car parks is a perfect vessel.

Our approach will be to create a ‘toolkit’ of components that can transform the building from windowswept multistorey car park into a thriving creative hub. These will range from a variety of partitions and screens to subdivide space where necessary (from a block of plasterboard partitions to a curtain), glazing and polycarbonate screens to the exterior, to bold graphics and signage combined with appropriate lighting strategies. Buildings cap will be created within buildings; streets and squares will be defined, treating the interior as exterior.

Peckham Town Center Car Park has a robust, industrial nature allied with an almost post-modern, decorative brick and concrete exterior. Internal investment in materials should be minimal, bearing in mind the impact on the environment. Hence we will look to create systems capable of future re-use.

Our proposal will celebrate the material qualities of the car park’s existing concrete structure. A light-touch, low-tech approach and material palettes will express the meanwhile nature of the project, as a complimentary yet contrasting addition to the existing fabric. Performance elements such as curtains, screens and movable partitions will lend a responsive, almost theatrical atmosphere to the car park’s rejuvenated floors.

These images illustrate references to other relevant local arts workshops and buildings that have been successfully re-purposed from their original industrial uses.

Reference projects

Palais de Tokyo, Paris — Lacaton & Vassal
An existing building was stripped back to expose its structure and converted into a multi-use, utilitarian venue using minimal intervention and a palette of robust and industrial materials to create a utilitarian appearance.

Librairie Avant-Garde, Nanjing, China
A disused carpark converted into a bookshop and library, using the existing vehicle routes as pedestrian circulation through the building.

Cass School of Architecture, Aldgate — ARU
A former textile warehouse was converted into the new campus building for the Cass, which is part of London Metropolitan University. New ‘domestic’ staircases were inserted, creating informal routes between levels. A central ‘boulevard’ acts as pedestrian circulation through the building.

Kunsthall, Rotterdam — OMA
This is a new cultural centre (in a new building). It is based around a ramped floor, leading people into the building, in places creating a natural auditorium, and creating dynamism and movement. The relevance for the conversion of a car park is apparent.

Kunstrack, Rotterdam — OMA
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Pullens Yard, London
Victorian live/work units in Kennington with shared yards owned by Southwark and fully occupied by artists and makers. Twice yearly it holds an Open Studios event where the community get to share their work with the public.

House of Memory, Milan — Baukuh
A new building containing cultural facilities and an archive is connected by a large concrete spiral staircase, painted bright yellow. The stair is as both a functional and an aesthetic element, and offers a possible technique to rehabilitate pedestrian access ramps in the car park.

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Carl Turner Architects (CTA) was formed in 2006, and has established a reputation for high impact, considered architecture. A key concept and driver for the practice is the idea of ‘thinking through making’ and physically testing and developing ideas through the process of construction. To facilitate this, the practice often acts as contractor to deliver its built work. This is allied with a strong ideas led approach.

CTA projects are informed through public consultation and they now work in partnership with Southwark Council on the re-planning of Peckham Library Square through a series of co-design workshops with local residents and stakeholders. The practice is also working with Southwark and a major arts organisation on the design of a circa 100,000 sq ft drama and performing arts academy in Peckham.

Collaboration is key to what CTA do. The practice has worked with The Architecture Foundation and British Council to design and make an installation for MuDE, an open competition and have designed, constructed and will manage the project for three years in partnership with Lambeth Council. This project has been made possible through active engagement with the local community.

Awards

The practice has won numerous awards for its work, including a RIBA Award and the RIBA Mountains Medal in 2012 for Slip House, which was also shortlisted for the RIBA Stephen Lawrence Prize.

The making of Slip House was featured on Channel 4’s Grand Designs. The practice was highly commended in the 2012 Architect of the Year Awards in the Small Projects category and was the only UK practice to be highly commended in the 2013 AR House Awards. CTA went on to win the 2013 ARY Award for the Best One Off House Architects.

PREVIOUS COLLABORATION

Pop Brixton

Pop Brixton is Pop Community Ltd’s flagship project, transforming a disused area of space, earmarked for development, into a community asset providing a home for 60 independent businesses and social enterprises, and creating a new destination for the local community.

Pop Brixton uses up-cycled shipping containers to house the next generation of local food and drinks entrepreneurs, retail outlets, workshops for local businesses and artists, and a community event space. Pop offers subsidised space for start-ups and small businesses, with 10 units available at 20-50% of market rate, whilst every tenant donates a proportion of their sales to the benefit of Lambeth residents.

At the heart of Pop Brixton, and Pop Community Ltd. as a whole, there is a sharp focus on community and social purpose. Pop Brixton has become an important platform for local businesses, and a source of employment and opportunity for a large number of local residents.

Since its launch in May 2015, Pop Brixton has created over 70 Full Time jobs, delivered over 60 apprentices and trainee positions and hosted training events for over 1,050 participants.

With a strong focus on localisation, over 75% of the businesses operating at Pop Brixton are from Lambeth, with over 75% of jobs and training opportunities provided to Lambeth residents.

Tenants have been selected based on strict selection criteria considering:

- Strength of their business plan
- Locality to the Brixton area
- Community ethos
- Training and give-back commitment

As a result of this community focus, Pop Brixton’s projected impact is significant. Over the course of the project, it is expected to deliver:

- Premises and support for over 100 businesses
- 70% of which are start-ups or early-stage ventures
- More than 200 new jobs
- More than 3,000 training opportunities

THE COLLECTIVE

The Collective is a property company with a different perspective, developing and operating a wide variety of projects across London. Our focus is on providing better places for young people to live and work in London.

With our CoLiving concept, we are pioneering a new way of living, designed around the changing lifestyles of young renters in London, offering shared living communities that provide community, flexibility and convenience.

We also develop and operate Co-working spaces for start-ups, entrepreneurs and freelancers. Our aim is to create the perfect ecosystem for the next generation of innovators to transform their ideas into reality, offering the spaces, support and community they need.

In addition, we have instigated The Collective Growth Fund, backing entrepreneurs who are committed to building smart city technology to disrupt the property, retail, design, social and food & beverage sectors.

Through our charitable fund, The Collective Foundation, we provide proactive support to outstanding students, aspiring entrepreneurs and industry leaders, from work experience and apprenticeship programmes, through to subsidised living and working spaces. The Collective Foundation is a launch pad for turning dreams into reality.

Using our insight into community building, the power of physical places, and the importance of creating positive change, we also work on unique community-led property projects. Our partnership with Carl Turner Architects has led to the delivery of Pop Brixton, one of London’s most exciting new regeneration projects. Our joint venture, Pop Community Ltd., now aims to build on the success of Pop Brixton with further projects throughout London.

THE TEAM

Carl Turner Architects

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Ochre Barn, Norfolk

Stealth Barn, Norfolk
EXISTING CONDITION

Uses & appearance

Current condition

The car park is an expressive, robust concrete structure with brick infill, dating back to 1981. A range of diagonal patterns and curved details forms the car park’s unique facade, whilst a regular grid of columns and beams sets up long, rhythmic views through the deep plan of the building. The split level floors and vehicle ramps create a range of spatial experiences when moving through the building.

Existing uses

Peckham multi storey car park has become a well-known summer destination for both visitors and locals alike. It is perhaps best known for the roof top venue (Frank’s Campari Bar) offering spectacular views looking north towards the City, but has also become an established arts venue curated by Bold Tendencies.

The first visit is especially memorable, wandering up through what seems to be a redundant (if not a little scary) car park, past strange and intriguing objects, or maybe a book fair, to be confronted with an open rooftop suddenly teeming with people, the sky and a huge panorama of the City.

Our proposal will have to work with this sequence, and seek to enhance the experience. Thus, access arrangements, noise and other issues will be considered in our strategy for the lower levels. Peckham Plex will also remain at lower levels and form part of the overall building offer.

Neighbouring destinations

There is an established ensemble of arts institutions across South East London, which includes the academic hotbeds of Goldsmiths and Camberwell, the internationally acclaimed South London Gallery and the multi-functional Bussey Building. The car park is well situated to link into this network of creative endeavour.

Furthermore, the immediate surroundings of Rye Lane and Peckham High Street are home to a number of creative and cultural venues and organisations.

1 Peckhamplex Cinema
2 Bold Tendencies
3 Frank’s Cafe
4 Hannah Barry Gallery
5 Buxey Building/CLF Art Cafe
6 Copeland Park
7 The Sunday Painter
8 The Sassoon Gallery
9 Peckham Platform
Key objectives

Peckham Levels intends on offering much needed creative workspace as well as providing benefits to the wider community. With the aim of integrating its members with local people, community groups and schools, the scheme includes a series of community initiatives offering free events space, training, education and employment opportunities:

• All members will be independent artists and businesses, drawn primarily from the local area.

• Members will be selected based not only on their artistic or entrepreneurial merit, but also on their commitment to contributing positively to the community around them.

• The multi-purpose event space will be available for free use by local community groups for at least 25% of the time.

• 600 jobs will be created throughout the course of the project.

• 10% of the profits will be used to create a community fund, for reinvestment into local businesses, community groups and projects.

• All tenants will participate in the Peckham Levels community investment scheme, dedicating at least 1 hour a week of volunteer time to giving back to the community.

• Subsidised rents are available on 10-20% of artist studios

Our plan

The project answers the high demand for artistic space and addresses the need of Peckham’s celebrated creative community. Creative workspace is in high demand throughout the city, a recent study by the Greater London Authority found that as waiting lists grow around the capital, nearly a third of the current provision of studio spaces are at risk of closure in the next 5 years.

Our innovative proposal will be spread over the 6 levels with:

• Over 20,000 sq ft of artist’s studios, maker workshops and shared workspace for young creative businesses, comprising 47% of the entire project (levels 1, 2, 3 and 4)

• Over 20,000 sq ft (46%) will provide gallery, performance and multipurpose events space (Levels 5 and 6)

In addition, there will be some retail space (1,900 sq ft and 4%) where the artistic community can promote and sell their work and food and beverage units for independent traders from the local area (1,000 sq ft and 3%).

The celebrated arts organisation Bold Tendencies and the famous rooftop bar Frank’s Café will continue to operate from the upper floors of the car park while the popular Peckham Plex cinema will remain on the lower levels.

Proposed uses

Workshop space
9,723 sq ft of shared workshop space across 13 units including:
- Digital print press, workshops, photo editing suite, recording studio
  - 156 – 4,690 sq ft
  - £247 - £5,963 pcm
  - £15 - £25+ per sq ft

Studio Spaces
- 8,910 sq ft, split into 64 individual studio spaces
  - 126 – 375 sq ft per studio, all with natural light
  - £20 – £995+ pcm
  - £5 - £25+ per sq ft - majority below the local market average of £22 per sq ft

All Studios are available at a 20-50% discount on market rent in exchange for a larger commitment to community investment scheme by the tenant

Co-Work
- 10,500 sq ft, split across 3 co-work spaces
  - Total of 283 desks (40 sq ft per person)
  - 146 desks charged at £195 per desk
  - 15 provided free to member hosts

Meeting/Training Room Hire
- 2,637 sq ft space split across 10 rooms
  - 156 – 377 sq ft
  - £39 – £94 per half day

Rehearsal Room Hire
- 2,250 sq ft of rehearsal studio space across 9 studios
  - 86 – 527 sq ft
  - £8 - £46 per hour

Food & Events Space
- 1 community café
- 2 bars
- 1 restaurant
- 5 street food/retail kiosks (weekend only)
- 1 gallery
- 3 event spaces
Programme

Future events

1st follow up consultation: 18th February @ 18.30-20.30
2nd follow up consultation: 20th February @ 10.00-12.00
Creative focus group: 3rd March @ 18.30-20.30
Enterprise focus group: 17th March @ 18.30-20.30
Community focus group: 31st March @ 18.30-20.30

Find out more

www.peckhamlevels.org  |  www.ct-architects.co.uk  |  www.thecollective.co.uk  |  www.popbrixton.org