

Lavender Hill – what could improve the central section?

Some guiding principles

Lavender Hill's retail future is built around niche & mostly independent retail (the bike shops, the design shops, the music retailers...) – arguably some of this is the overflow from Northcote Road.

Bigger growth is likely in food and drink, where it already has a 'critical mass' and benefits from good affordability with a decent neighbourhood (&beyond) customer base. It's a wealthy area, with high visibility & good access – but appearance matters – an area where Lavender Hill currently punches below its weight..

Its immediate 'competitors' for specialist retail are St John's Hill & Northcote Road, and for restaurants are Battersea Rise and Clapham Old Town.

Parameters

Evolution not revolution – this needs to be deliverable - but we can draw from elsewhere. Proposals also need to be realistic on budget!

Make the most of what we have – historic features like BAC and the Church of the Ascension, the wide pavements that can be used for outdoor seating, and the high pedestrian flow at the Clapham Junction end are all big assets.



1 The one sided central section – “somewhat bleak”...

The issue: A rather bleak central section with missed potential – wide pavements that seem to be Borough-owned, but they're featureless and feel heavily exposed to passing traffic; outdoor restaurant tables (Khan's. etc) are mostly 'for show' only.

Without trees, the street has the sort of 'passing traffic visibility' that retail units traditionally sought out, but the current use is mostly more of the 'Café / restaurant' type that prefers a degree of seclusion from the traffic. With the odd exception, this means the street lacks life and looks and feels empty.

Some of the most generous pavement widths in the area

...but little used as they feel so exposed to heavy traffic?

...& some of the few remaining trees are being lost



What could help? The simplest approach may be best. St John's Hill has very similar traffic levels, but far more **trees**. It's often described as 'leafy' – you'd never hear this attached to Lavender Hill!

Trees hide some of the traffic impact, improve the pedestrian (and residential) environment, and encourage pavement use. The only recent planting has been on the north side of Lavender Hill – but many 'former' tree sites confirm potential locations.



Trees on St Johns Hill are thriving in a similar environment to Lavender Hill

Otherwise 'unpromising' retail units find use as cafes and small restaurants, well suited to the neighbourhood

2a The view from BAC: “Nothing to see here”



The issue: BAC is one of the highlights of the road – everyone ends up here at least once. It should be a flagship part of Lavender Hill, and the street needs to make the most of it. There’s even a viewing terrace next door!

But aside from the (somewhat neglected) sandstone paving in front of the building, its surroundings completely fail to do it justice: dreary buildings, empty spaces on all sides, and a feeling that no-one has looked after it for years.

The site to the east is the worst: a big, mucky looking empty space. This large space, right next to one of the borough’s main listed landmark buildings (which attracts custom from across London), could be a real opportunity, but instead it actively detracts from Lavender Hill. And to anyone approaching from the busier Clapham Junction end of the street, this says “you can definitely turn back now”.



2b The view from BAC: what might help?



The building's here to stay – but any kind of greenery could help (here, an example from a formerly very similar site across the border – note that this adds colour without creating 'loitering' spaces)



The pavement may belong to the block, and may have something underneath it – but a surface mounted feature could give some colour and some privacy to the ground floor flats



Greenwood Theatre SE1 – example of how a blank wall and empty, underused pavement can be converted to add colour and life to the street scene



What could help? This offers huge potential, at a low cost: there's plenty of space, and anything at all would be an improvement. Above all, some colour and life is needed here – to reduce the feeling of wasted and uncared-for space.

Ideally a pocket park or some more street-level greenery would help – potentially surface mounted to avoid digging anything up. It would give some shelter to the ground floor flats, which directly face the paved area.

The same could be done in the big space opposite BAC, at a lesser scale.

Further quick fixes: get rid of the redundant bollards, paint the railings, take advantage of the width to add some trees.



Including some lavender is a priority!

3 Wandsworth's worst park?



Very visible space with potential

Blank spaces & defensive building

The issue: The large open space at the junction of Lavender Hill and Latchmere Road is hugely visible. But it's a sad waste of space, that's mainly used for flytipping.



Prone to flytips

What might help? This could be converted fairly cheaply to a pocket park – the 'edible bus stop' is a good example of a similarly dead space being cheered up and turned into a feature.



Open up a walkway through the green area?



Plant something colourful at the back of the green area



4 The boring sections



No visual interest at all here...

What could help? Some localised streetscape work could go a long way – to give a sense of space and interest to the emptier areas.

Raised features would be less likely to become litter traps, and limit the need for excavation.

The issue: Some of the central section is so dull, it's hard to see anyone getting inspired to launch a shop / restaurant / anything there.



In Bonnongton Square some small-scale works have brightened up some street corners in a low-maintenance way

5 Messy crossings on trivial side streets



What might help?
Pedestrian priority – on the really minor roads, the footpath could be made fully continuous and level (even more so than on the current raised entrances on some of the streets).



The issue: Many 'dead end' side streets that were clumsily chopped by redevelopment, and that now have with little or no traffic. They have messy and uneven pedestrian crossings that create an unwelcoming pedestrian realm.

