

# Peckham Character Area Workshop

**Location: Peckham Levels + Online (via Zoom)**

**Date: 24 Oct 2023**

**Time: 7pm – 9pm**

**Attendance: 24 attendees (17 in-person, 7 online)**

**(Please see Appendix 3 for Equalities Monitoring information)**

## **1. Introduction – What do we mean by area character? [Presentation slides attached]**

*Stephen Lovejoy, Urban Designer, Southwark Council*

An introduction to area character.

- The 2019 National Design Guide emphasises the importance of good design in planning. The guide sets out 10 characteristics that contribute to the quality of a place – context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan.
- Good design should respond to a strong understanding of the unique characteristics of a place. This should be understood at a detailed, neighbourhood scale.
- This understanding should be informed by both data and by the experiences and views of the people who live, work and visit the area.
- We have been creating an up-to-date area character study in Peckham. The area covered are the Peckham + Rye Lane wards. This also corresponds with the Peckham Vision Area in the Southwark Plan 2022.
- We will be launching a consultation on the different character areas in Peckham. Before we start the consultation, we have used the existing information for Peckham to identify draft character areas. This includes physical, social, economic and experiential information, including the responses from recent consultations in Peckham.
- We have identified 15 potential character areas – 3 town-centre character areas, 1 industrial/creative character area and 11 residential-led character areas.

## 2. Introductory exercise – A great place is...

For the introductory exercise all attendees were invited to finish the sentence “a great place is...” Responses included the following topics:

- A place where you can see the sky
- Safe and inclusive (including for young people)
- A space where people are encouraged to mix
- Has its own particular character, that is different and full of life
- Green, well lit and feels safe
- Welcomes everyone, feels like home and is fun
- Managed and run by the people who use it most
- A balanced place, with quiet and lively sides
- Interesting and well connected
- Varied and flexible, changes during the course of the year and changes over time
- Has community centres that bring people together
- For the community and has diversity

## 3. Workshop 1: Draft Character Areas in Peckham

In groups of 4 – 6, attendees were asked to choose one of the draft character areas. They were asked how they would describe the area. They were asked to highlight important, buildings, places and spaces. They were asked what they thought the edges of that character area was. The following responses were received for the following character areas:

**(Please see Appendix 1 for the annotated character sheets and maps)**

### Group 1 - Peckham High Street + Rye Lane North

- Rye Lane North should have 3 subsections:
  - o South (small independent retailers)
  - o Central (cultural/night time uses)
  - o North (larger stores & small)
- The northern part of the Rye Lane North character area should be included in the Peckham High Street, as very connected in terms of how people see and use the spaces.
- Residential area behind Peckham High Street seen as separate from the commercial area
- Middle part is Rye Lane and the area that runs east to west across, which is distinct and where residential is not so embedded
- North part characterised by concentration of bigger shops and chain stores
- South part characterised by smaller shops and independent traders

- Middle part characterised by 'cultural' uses
- Important buildings, places and spaces (Peckham High Street): Peckham Arch, 98-104 Peckham High Street, Corner of Peckham High Street/Mission Place
- Important buildings, places and spaces (Rye Lane North): Former Jones & Higgins Department Store, 43-49 Rye Lane (HSBC), Rye Lane Chapel, Rye Lane market, 72-76 Rye Lane (McDonalds), Peckham levels, 117-125 Rye Lane, Peckham Rye station, 133 Rye Lane, 135-137 Rye Lane (Khans' Bargains), former Tower Cinema Arch, Nags Head pub.

### Group 2 – Peckham High Street

- It is an important community hub around Peckham Square - important public space with the library, leisure centre, Mountview and public toilets
- It is an important transport hub with lots of bus stops, the bus station. Can become very congested.
- There are spaces for leisure, such as Peckham Library, as well as spaces for retail.
- The regeneration of Surrey Canal has created green space in the area.
- The scale and congestion on the roads forms a barrier for pedestrians. The access from the Peckham Arch to the north of Rye Lane is okay, but elsewhere it is difficult to get across.
- The junction between Peckham Hill Street and Peckham High Street is a problem.
- There is a lot of graffiti in the area - it's a nuisance, makes the place look dirty.
- Clayton Road is wide and therefore feels less safe for pedestrians.
- Massive retail space for the ethnic community and for affordability
- The cycle route from the Surrey Canal and along the north of Rye Lane does not work well. The cycle lane is not clearly marked, which causes a conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.
- Mountview provides free and accessible toilets, which is an important facility in the area.
- Important buildings, places and spaces: Peckham square, Peckham Pulse leisure centre, Peckham library, Mountview, Aylesham Shopping Centre.

### Group 3 – Peckham High Street

- Feels different to Rye Lane
- Forms a strong east to west connection through Peckham town centre
- Contains the sports centre and civic uses of Peckham Square (library, theatre/education, formal public space)
- It is vibrant and has many people.
- It is green.
- It has heritage, including African heritage and cultural presence.

- There are many independent places.
- The area is changing and becoming exclusive and expensive.
- There is limited informally oriented or affordable space.
- The area is catching for people who pass by.
- Forms entry point to Rye Lane, although access is difficult - complicated mix of cycle, bus, car and pedestrian movements
- The connectivity in the area is poor.
- It is not pedestrian friendly. The area is dominated by cars.
- Traffic management is poor. The area is congested and polluted.
- Unsafe for the elderly, those with disabilities and children as pavements are too narrow and there is a lack of seating and street furniture.
- People may not think of it as a high street. Suffers from being referred to as and treated secondary to Rye Lane
- Includes the bus station, but quickly ends with the start of Queen's Road
- The clock tower is an important landmark - a high profile, historic monument that should be retained
- Important buildings, places and spaces: Peckham square, Peckham Pulse leisure centre, Peckham library, Clock tower, Aylesham Shopping Centre & Hanover Park.

#### Group 4 – Rye Lane South

- Changes are “towards gentrification” - question is how long will the local businesses last?
- Banh Banh is a notable success, starting as a pop up in Peckham Levels and progressing to a shop-based business in this section
- There is a very similar area around the green.
- The former lido is an important but under-valued part of the history of the area.
- The area changes at the co-op.
- Different housing typologies (estates, cottages, terraces)
- Edges comprise and defined by housing of the Victorian, 50s and 60s
- There is a contrast between the 1960s/70s cottage typology social housing and the Victorian housing in the area.
- Area feels safe to walk at nighttime
- The alleyways around the school are positive
- Important as a transport node
- Notable impacts of buses, its vehicles and passenger queues often dominating the street scene

- The cycle infrastructure and traffic is a significant part of the character in the area, both north/ south along Rye Lane, but also east/ west through to Troy Town
- Has green areas that have different functions/ activities. The centre is in effect a green traffic island that as a result does not get used much by locals and visitors. Part of the common is used for sunbathing, but most of the Common is in need of public realm improvements – particularly better lighting and safety. This is especially true on the site of the former lido – this area had been a popular space but now feels abandoned and neglected.
- Lots of nighttime activity (restaurants, bars, cafés, pub)
- A number of churches and congregations
- Important buildings, places and spaces: Troy Town Estate, Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, Angel Oak pub, former Lido.

#### Group 5 – Rye Lane North

- It is the heart / centre of Peckham.
- It is vibrant, diverse, busy, creative and social.
- It can be challenging with the different groups.
- All of the character area currently has a fairly domestic / people-sized scale.
- There are many historic buildings.
- An important part of the character of the area is the bright colours of the shops. Shops are often very open fronted in the daytime.
- It can be interesting and vibrant, but also messy and intimidating with security shutters, rubbish on the street and poor lighting.
- The area feels very different at night-time.
- The area around the railway arches has remnants of old unique character around the railway arches. This area is noisy at night. It is fun, but how does it blend into residential?
- Peckham Rye station is well used despite its appearance from Rye Lane. The bus stops connecting south are not well connected or obvious. It gets very congested.
- More should be made of the old Tower Cinema arch.
- The south of Rye Lane does not all connect well, between the residential, commercial areas and the shopping street. This area always struggles financially.
- Rye Lane's character is changing.
- Notable that pavements are wider in the south compared to the north, which affects its character and activities

- The southern entrance to Rye Lane needs clarification as to whether it is for vehicles or pedestrians. There is confusion about where the road divides to Copeland Road. It is not clear what the route for vehicles through the area is.
- Important buildings, places and spaces: Peckham Rye Station, former Tower Cinema Arch, Heston Arms, Rye Lane/Copeland Road junction.

#### 4. Workshop 2: Engaging on character

In groups of 4 – 6, attendees were asked to think of all the things that contribute to the unique character of an area. They were asked to place these in order of the level of impact each thing had on the character of the area. The following things were listed (given in order of impact).

**(Please see Appendix 2 for the annotated lists of contributions)**

##### Group 1

Independent traders, height of buildings, human scale, green space, style of architecture (e.g. Art Deco), diversity, vibrancy (languages, colours of buildings, street scene etc.), how you move through an area (transport etc.), heritage buildings, sense of a living museum.

##### Group 2

Local landmarks (e.g. clock tower), independent and affordable spaces that reflect the diversity of the area, ethnically diverse retail spaces, greenery and free public/community spaces (e.g. public squares, libraries), regeneration agenda (and the extent to which this reflects the community), sport facilities and centres, spaces for toddlers, transport infrastructure (e.g. train/bus stations), cost of spaces, cultural venues (e.g. cinemas), diverse food.

##### Group 3

Places of worship, facilities, cultural diversity, good space to walk, clean streets, mid-rise building heights, well-maintained trees and green spaces, range of business, affordable housing, sounds + smells, street art, architecturally interesting buildings, interesting shops, good movement of traffic, lack of litter, blue plaques, heritage, quality of place (e.g. well designed), art & culture, community centres, sense of community, wide pavements, good signage, pocket parks.

##### Group 4

People, historic landmarks (e.g. historic department stores), historical figures (e.g. Mary (Eleanor?) Coade), green space, transport, bike lanes, walking, housing provision, affordability, pubs & cafes, services, churches, schools/education provision, medical provision, generous public space, area history (e.g. the traces of the canal), community spaces, amenity.

##### Group 5

A feeling of a place, the flow of people and movement, history and character, sense of community, whether an area looks cared for, pride in the area, how it works, the different

groups and people, the individuals and their ability to talk and communicate along the street, how the area flows and links together, who the place is for/geared towards, the building style, architecture and how they relate to each other, creativity, diversity, individuality, noise, smell, weather (micro-climate), whether it serves the needs of its people, rubbish & graffiti (can detract from character), unique street furniture.

## 5. Next Steps

- The presentation slides, workshop outputs and discussion summary will be uploaded to the [Peckham area character study page of Southwark website](#).
- The feedback on the draft character areas will be taken on board and used to update the areas and the study.
- Once we have updated the draft character areas we will start public engagement on the character areas. This will run from November 2023 to February/March 2024. This will include a combination of in-person events and a consultation website.

## 6. Questions & Observations

**Q** How does the Character Area Study timeline compare to the Aylesham pre-application / application timeline? How will this impact the planning process for the Aylesham shopping centre redevelopment?

*A The Character Area Study is intended to supplement rather than replace the planning process. The information and findings of the study will be shared with the Developers as well as the planning officers overseeing the Aylesham scheme to inform their decision making process. The consultation draft will also be made publicly accessible when available and will gain planning weight through consultation.*

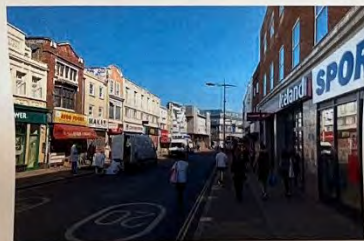


Appendix 1:

Workshop 1 Outputs

## CHARACTER AREA 2: RYE LANE NORTH

(Please feel free to suggest an alternative character area name: \_\_\_\_\_ )



What words would you use to describe the character of this area?

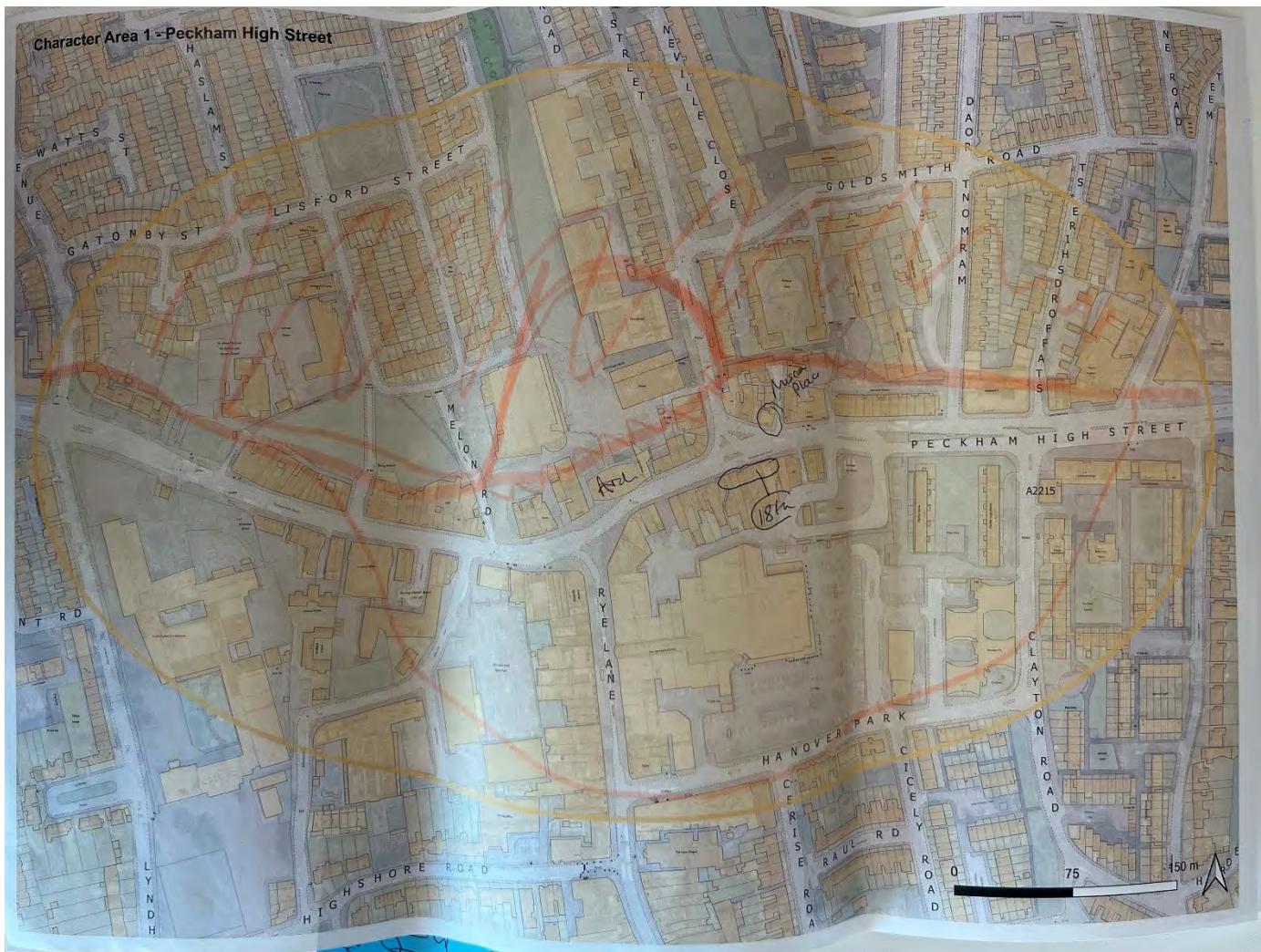
Rye Lane North should have  
3 subsections → south / central / North  
North should include the commercial  
part of the High St catchment area.

PJO

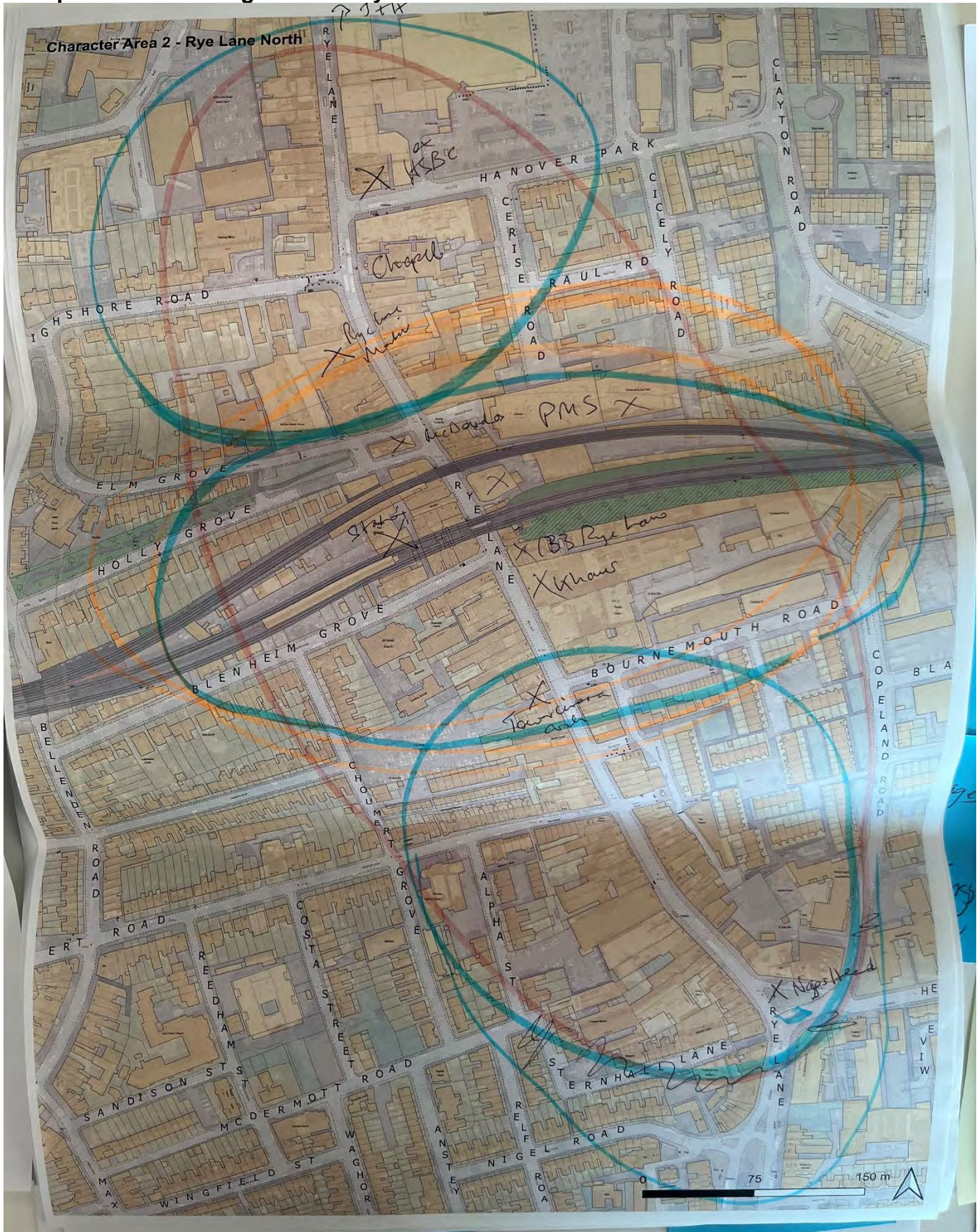
Draw an outline for this area on the attached map and identify any buildings, spaces or places that you think are important to the character of this area.

Group 1 – Peckham High Street / Rye Lane North contd.

South → Small independent retailers  
Central → Cultural / Night time  
North → larger stores & small



Group 1 – Peckham High Street / Rye Lane North contd.



# CHARACTER AREA 1: PECKHAM HIGH STREET

(Please feel free to suggest an alternative character area name: \_\_\_\_\_)



What words would you use to describe the character of this area?

PECKHAM LIBRARY - SPACE @ FOR LEISURE // COMMUNITY HUB AROUND PECKHAM SQUARE  
SPACES FOR RETAIL  
LOTS OF CURBAPARTI TRANSPORT HUB REGENERATION OF SURREY CANAL (GREEN SPACE)  
CONGESTED ROADS  
CONGESTED ROADS  
SCALE OF THE ROAD → DIFFICULTY CONNECTED

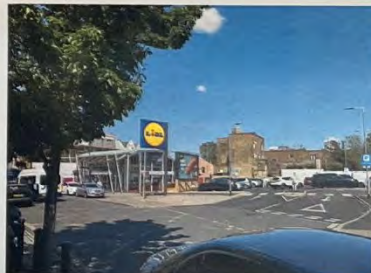
Draw an outline for this area on the attached map and identify any buildings, spaces or places that you think are important to the character of this area.

Group 2 – Peckham High Street contd.



# CHARACTER AREA 1: PECKHAM HIGH STREET

(Please feel free to suggest an alternative character area name: \_\_\_\_\_)



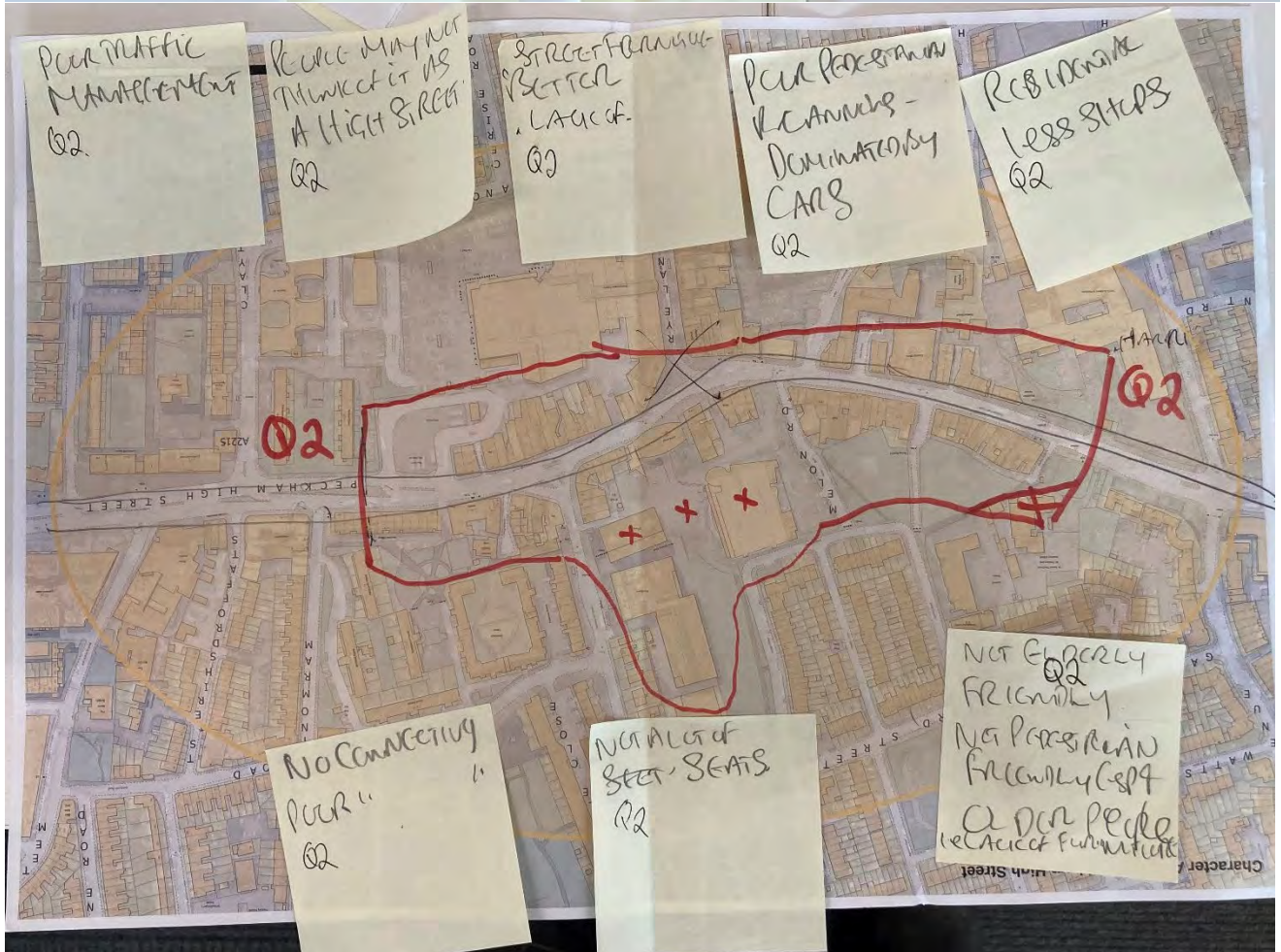
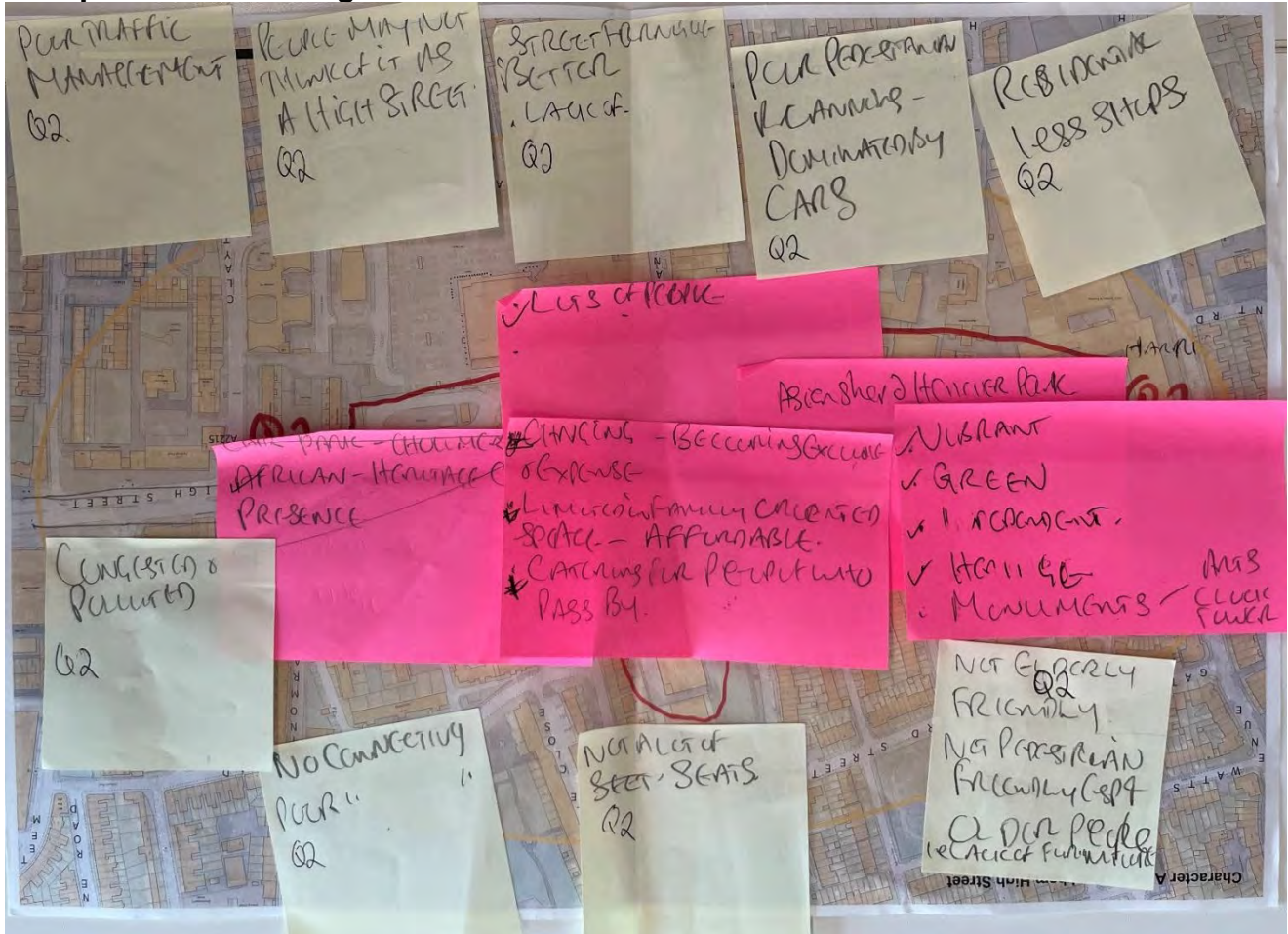
Q1 What words would you use to describe the character of this area?

~~See Yellow Post it Notes~~  
See Pink Post it Notes

Q2 Draw an outline for this area on the attached map and identify any buildings, spaces or places that you think are important to the character of this area.

See Yellow Post it Notes

Group 3 – Peckham High Street contd.





# CHARACTER AREA 3: RYE LANE SOUTH

(Please feel free to suggest an alternative character area name: \_\_\_\_\_)



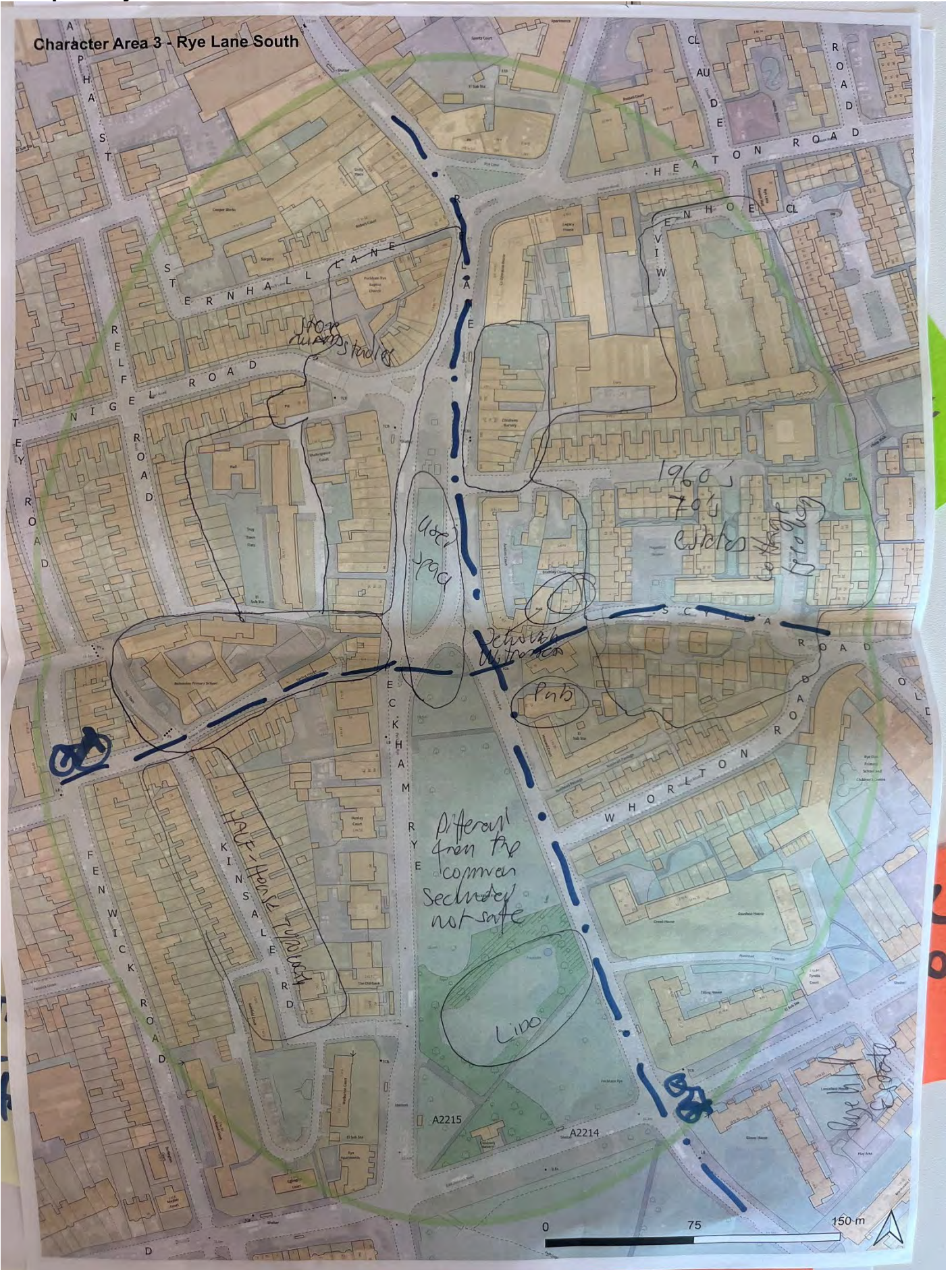
What words would you use to describe the character of this area?

"TOWARDS GENTRIFICATION"  
similar area around the Green  
- changes out the COP  
- like the alley ways around the school  
- Troymum Estate

Social Housing & Victorian House  
Electronic Party at the 400  
lanes feel relatively safe  
well lit

Draw an outline for this area on the attached map and identify any buildings, spaces or places that you think are important to the character of this area.

Group 4 – Rye Lane South contd.



## Group 5 – Rye Lane North

### CHARACTER AREA 2: RYE LANE NORTH



Please feel free to suggest an alternative character name:

Heart /Centre of Peckham?

Tufan Unal

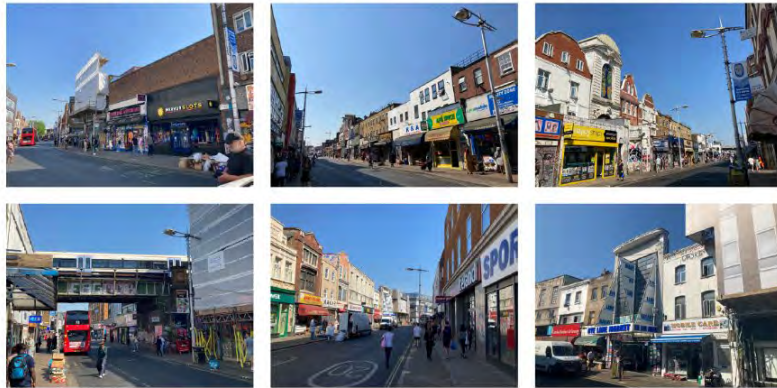
What words would you use to describe the character of the area?

Vibrant  
Diverse  
Busy

Tufan Unal

diverse, vibrant, can be challenging with the different groups.

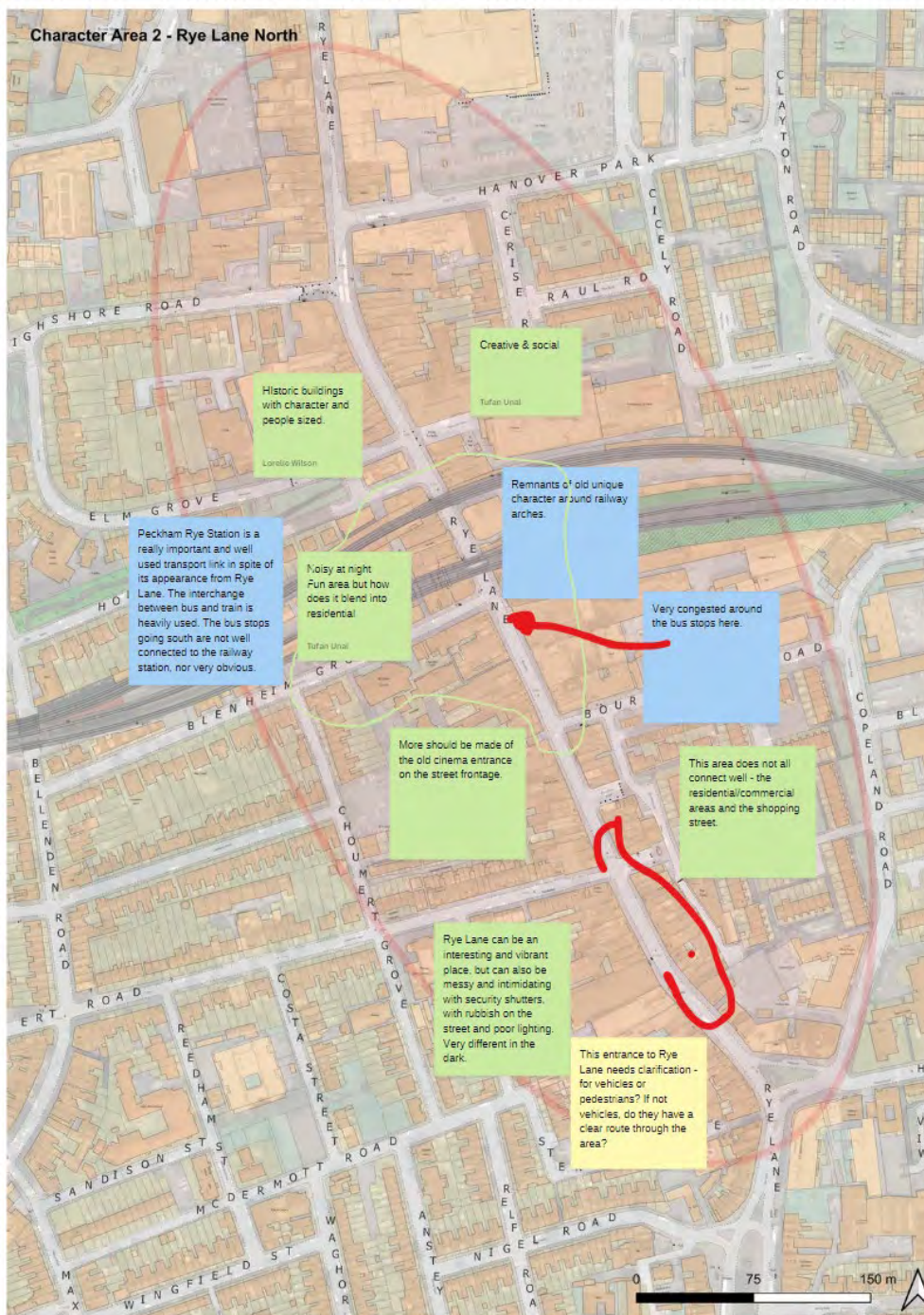
Lorelie Wilson



# Group 5 – Rye Lane North contd.

All of this character area, from north to south, is currently fairly domestic in scale.

An important part of the character of the area is the bright colours of shops and often very open fronted shops, in the daytime.



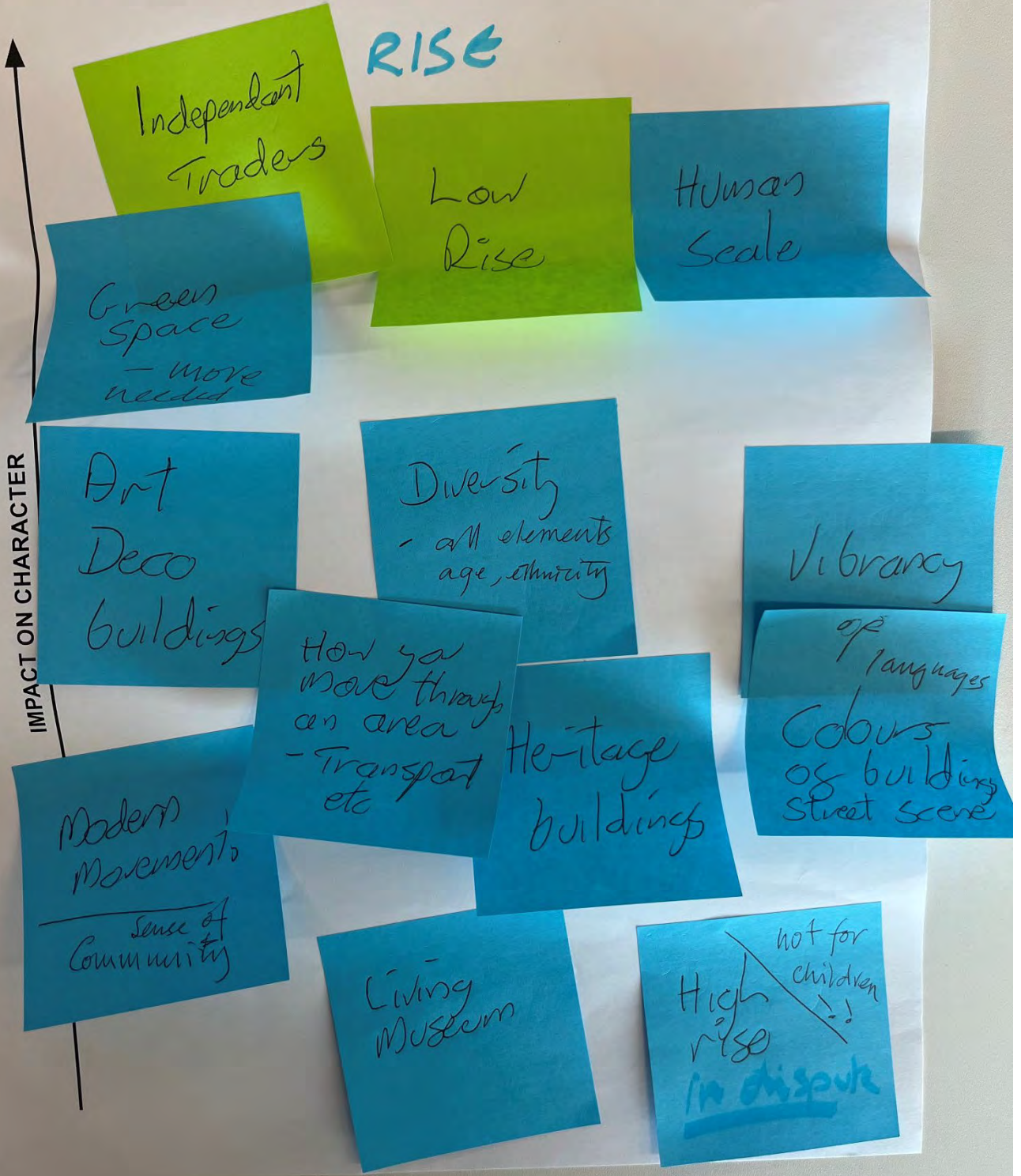
This area of Rye Lane always struggles financially.  
Lorelle Wilson

This could be the entrance to Rye Lane, though it is connected to Rye Lane South area, some confusion about where the road divides to Copeland Road.  
Lorelle Wilson

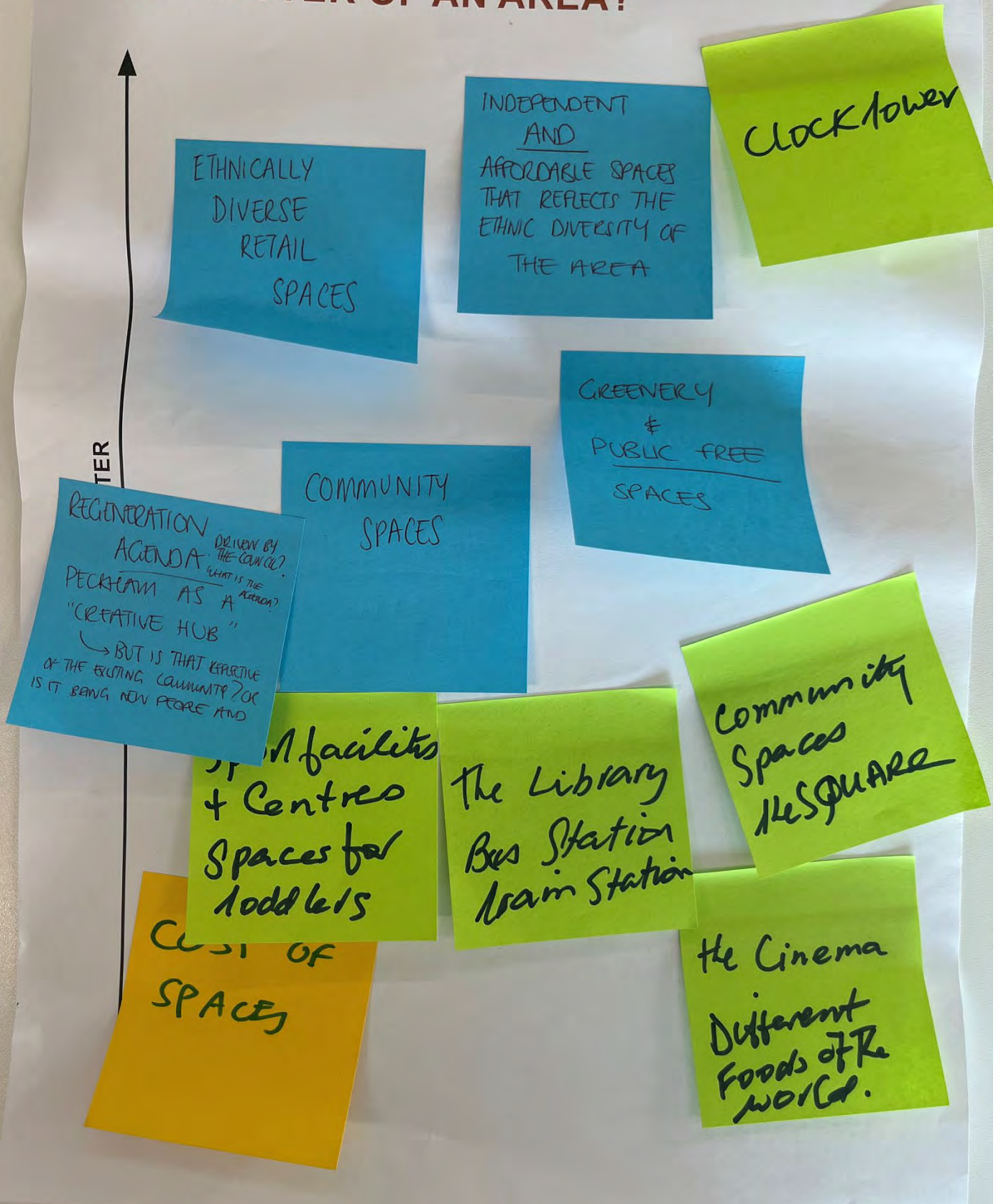
Appendix 2:

Workshop 2 Outputs

# WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF AN AREA?



# WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF AN AREA?







# WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF AN AREA?

IMPACT  
CHARACTER

PEOPLE

HISTORIC DEPARTMENT STORES

MARY GATE

GREEN SPACE

TRANSPORT

BIKE LANES

WALKING

HOUSING PROVISION

AFFORDABILITY

PUBS & CAFES

SERVICES

CHURCH SCHOOL

MEDICAL PROVISION

CANAL & HIST.

COMMUNITY SPACES

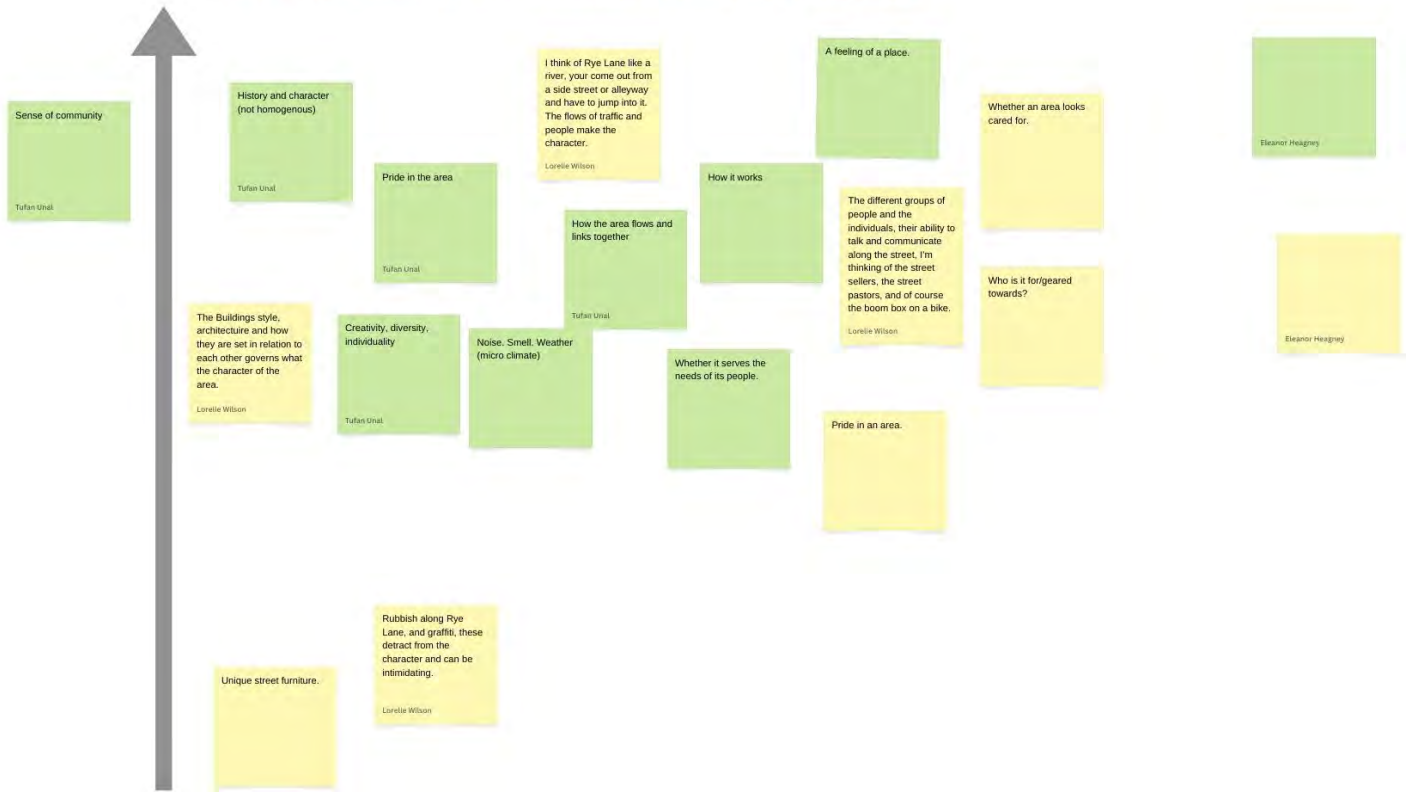
AMENITY

GENEROUS PUBLIC SPACE

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

# Group 5

## WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF AN AREA?

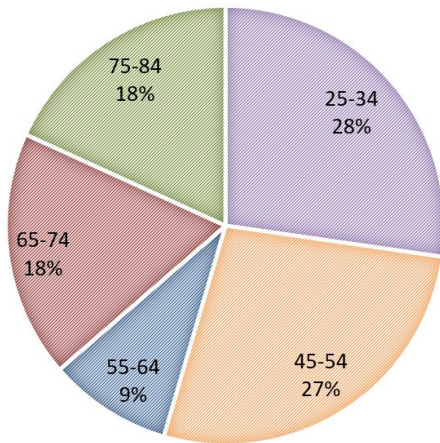


# Appendix 3:

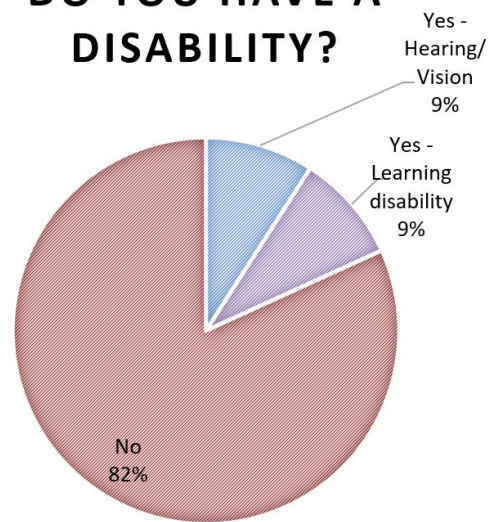
## Equality Monitoring Information

Equality Monitoring Forms completed: 11 (45% of attendees)

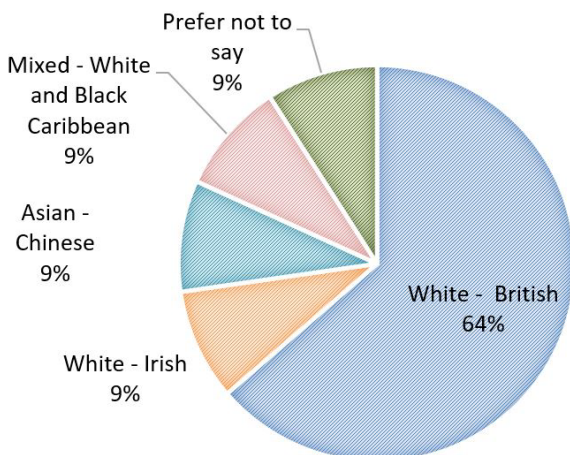
### AGE



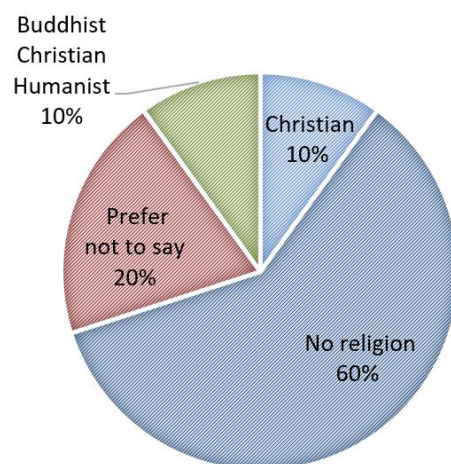
### DO YOU HAVE A DISABILITY?



### ETHNIC BACKGROUND

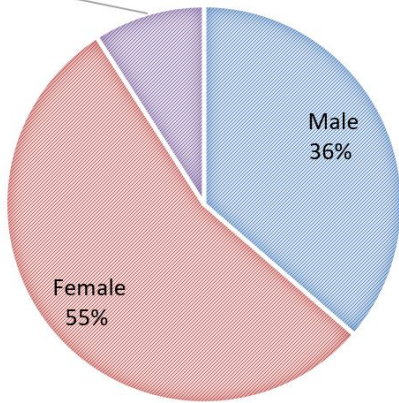


### RELIGION OR BELIEF

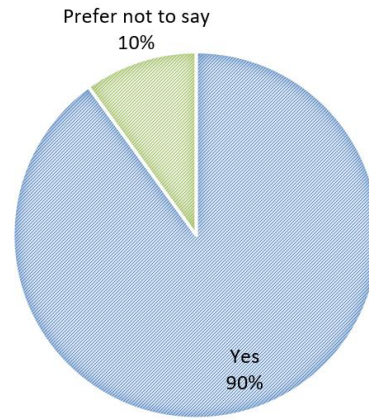


## SEX RECORDED AT BIRTH

Prefer not to say  
9%



## IS YOUR GENDER IDENTITY THE SAME AS THE SEX YOU WERE RECORDED AT BIRTH?



## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

