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Search on for king of new Elephant & Castle

20 August 1999 | By Samantha Lyster

Today marks the deadline for submission of ideas to beautify – or demolish – the Elephant & Castle shopping centre in south-east London. The biggest names in residential and commercial development will be putting forward plans for redevelopment of the centre – voted the capital's ugliest eyesore by Londoners last month.

In June, Southwark Council asked 12 consortia to suggest an outline brief for the 69ha (170 acre) site. However, following various amalgamations and withdrawals, this number has now been reduced.

The Berkeley Group dropped its own subsidiary, St George, in favour of Land Securities.

Tony Pidgeley, Berkeley's MD, said that his plans included demolishing the 10,300 sq m (111,000 sq ft) centre.

Ian Henderson, chief executive of LandSec, commented: 'We are looking at this as a mixed-use development in conjunction with Berkeley, who are leading specialists in their field.' Consortia led by London & Amsterdam and Countryside Properties have also merged.

Robin Hoyles, MD of Countryside Strategic Projects, said that the two developers were working with the South London Family Housing Association and Workspace.

Hoyles said of the shopping centre: 'It will be assimilated into something bigger which will probably also be retail. We are certainly looking at a substantially larger retail element.' Martin Daniels, a director of HBG Management, created from the merger of Higgs & Hill and Kyle Stewart, would not reveal whether HBG had merged with any consortia. However, he disclosed: 'Our general thinking is that Elephant & Castle will have to be predominantly new-build to make it work. But it is too early in the day to come to a conclusive decision. But it does seem to require complete urban regeneration.' Two other consortia led by WS Atkins and Miller Ventures, part of the Miller Group, have also amalgamated and will work with property investor Dawnay Day and architect CZWG.

The Sure consortium, which is still intact, is to put in plans from Development Securities, MAB, Manhattan Loft, Urban Catalyst, Mace, Knight Frank and Urban Initiatives.

Ken Dytor of Urban Catalyst said: 'What Southwark is looking at is ideas about the integration of shopping and residential. They want to create a new urban lifestyle.' He predicted only 30% of the scheme would accommodate retail.

Stanhope, with the Richard Rogers Partnership as architect, is believed to have dropped out. The company itself refused to comment.

Also keen to put forward its ideas is the centre's owner, UK Land.

Chris Woodhouse, a UK Land director, observed: 'The shopping centre has not got critical mass, and we recognise that there is scope for a much larger centre with various transport links.' Certainly the council wants Elephant Links – as it has named the development – to be a car-free scheme, in contrast to the 200 parking places in the 35-year-old shopping centre.

Woodhouse added: 'I would rather stay in and have a share of the action, but if anyone made an attractive offer, we would sell.' He valued the scheme – with main tenants Tesco, Iceland and Peacocks – at £25m. Zone A rents are low at £25-£35, but are counterbalanced by high service charges of £64.50-£75/sq m (£6-£7/sq ft).