# Peckham Square set to gain youth-focused garden as iconic arch faces removal



The heart of Peckham in South London is set for a transformative green space as part of a wider £7 million redevelopment of Peckham Square, a pivotal community and cultural hub. The ‘Hope in the Square’ design competition, organised by New London Architecture and Southwark Council, invites architects, designers, artists, and creative teams to propose innovative concepts for a new garden-like area dedicated to youth, community, and remembrance. This initiative is central to the council’s broader Southwark Stands Together programme, which aims to create vibrant, inclusive spaces while honouring local heritage.

Peckham Square, located near iconic landmarks like the Stirling Prize-winning Peckham Library designed by Will Alsop and the Peckham Pulse Leisure Centre, is undergoing significant changes. Among the most debated is the planned removal of the iconic 35-metre Peckham Arch, which has stood since 1994. The arch’s removal, confirmed in plans led by Graeme Massie Architects and Scott Whitby Studio, is intended to open up the space and foster a more accessible and engaging public realm. These architects were appointed in June 2023 to oversee the next phase of the square’s transformation, including the refurbishment of 91-93 Peckham High Street to provide a new home for the local arts charity Peckham Platform.

The forthcoming ‘Hope in the Square’ garden aims to be much more than an attractive green space. It is envisioned as a ‘dynamic and vibrant’ feature that honours Damilola Taylor, a local schoolboy tragically murdered at just ten years old, alongside the ongoing community work led by his family and the Hope Collective. The project seeks to create a lasting environment fostering reflection, positivity, and engagement for the community, particularly young people, over the next 15-20 years. According to Rosa Rogina, head of collaborate at New London Architecture, the competition offers an opportunity to make a meaningful impact by centring a vital local cause in the redesign of a public space.

The design brief for the competition emphasises the importance of responding to Peckham’s diverse cultural heritage and local context. It calls for inclusive, low-maintenance spaces featuring sculptural elements, public art, seating, planting, and lighting installations. Retaining the four existing trees and integrating with wider improvements, including the refurbishment of the Peckham Peace Wall, are crucial components of the project. Portia Mwangangye, Southwark councillor and cabinet member for leisure, parks and young people, highlighted that the revitalised square should celebrate youth creativity while serving as a welcoming social and cultural focal point.

This redevelopment forms part of a broader vision pursued since 2021, when Spheron Architects were initially appointed to redesign Peckham Square under a £6 million budget. Their plans, developed through extensive local consultation, aimed to create a public space reflecting the area’s linguistic and cultural diversity, aligned with sustainability goals including Southwark’s target for carbon neutrality by 2030. Although the current project has evolved with new teams now leading the work, these earlier efforts underscore the council’s ongoing commitment to a community-driven, inclusive approach to urban renewal.

Beyond design, the Peckham Square project is intertwined with the borough’s social objectives: addressing racial inequalities and promoting community participation through public art and welcoming environments. The involvement of organisations like the Hope Collective and Peckham Platform ensures that the square’s reinvention honours Peckham’s history while looking toward an optimistic future. The overall winner of the ‘Hope in the Square’ competition, to be announced in October 2025, will receive up to £100,000 to finalise and install the winning design in 2026, marking a new chapter in the life of this important London civic space.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/competitions/peckham-square-garden-london), [[4]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/planning-environment-and-building-control/current-and-future-development/peckham-and-nunhead-0), [[2]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2023/jun/peckham-square-new-design-teams-and-a-new-home-for-local-arts-charity)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/competitions/peckham-square-garden-london), [[5]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/peckham-arch-gone-in-graeme-massie-and-scott-whitby-revamp-plans), [[2]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2023/jun/peckham-square-new-design-teams-and-a-new-home-for-local-arts-charity)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/competitions/peckham-square-garden-london), [[4]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/planning-environment-and-building-control/current-and-future-development/peckham-and-nunhead-0), [[2]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2023/jun/peckham-square-new-design-teams-and-a-new-home-for-local-arts-charity)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/competitions/peckham-square-garden-london)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2021/mar/architects-confirmed-for-6m-council-remodel-of-peckham-s-library-square), [[6]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/spheron-unveils-its-plans-for-peckham-square-revamp), [[7]](https://spheronarchitects.co.uk/peckhamsquareredevelopment/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/competitions/peckham-square-garden-london), [[4]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/planning-environment-and-building-control/current-and-future-development/peckham-and-nunhead-0), [[2]](https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2023/jun/peckham-square-new-design-teams-and-a-new-home-for-local-arts-charity)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/competitions/peckham-square-garden-london> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2023/jun/peckham-square-new-design-teams-and-a-new-home-for-local-arts-charity> - In June 2023, Southwark Council announced the appointment of Graeme Massie Architects and Scott Whitby Studio to lead the next phase of Peckham Square's transformation. The project includes refurbishing 91-93 Peckham High Street to create a new home for the local arts charity, Peckham Platform. The council is also collaborating with The Hope Collective to develop a public artwork dedicated to Damilola Taylor, aiming to honour Peckham's past while looking positively towards the future. The initiative is part of the council's Southwark Stands Together programme, focusing on community engagement and inclusivity.
3. <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/2021/mar/architects-confirmed-for-6m-council-remodel-of-peckham-s-library-square> - In March 2021, Southwark Council confirmed the appointment of Spheron Architects to redesign Peckham Square as a vibrant public space. The project, valued at £6 million, is the first under the Southwark Stands Together initiative, which aims to address racial inequalities and promote community engagement. The redesign focuses on creating a space that reflects the diverse cultural identity of Peckham, with extensive public consultation to ensure the design meets the needs and aspirations of local residents.
4. <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/planning-environment-and-building-control/current-and-future-development/peckham-and-nunhead-0> - Southwark Council has allocated £7 million to upgrade Peckham Square, a popular destination featuring Peckham Pulse leisure centre and Peckham Library. The redevelopment includes reconfiguring the square to enhance its role as a civic and cultural hub. The project involves collaboration with local architects and the Damilola Taylor Trust to create a new public artwork that honours Peckham's past while looking positively towards the future. The initiative aims to foster community engagement and inclusivity in the revitalised space.
5. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/peckham-arch-gone-in-graeme-massie-and-scott-whitby-revamp-plans> - In February 2025, Graeme Massie Architects and Scott Whitby Studio revealed their £6 million revamp plans for Peckham Square, which include the removal of the 35-metre Peckham Arch. The proposed redesign aims to transform the square into a more vibrant and accessible public space, aligning with the council's vision for the area. The removal of the arch is part of a broader plan to reimagine the square and its surroundings, enhancing its role as a community focal point.
6. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/spheron-unveils-its-plans-for-peckham-square-revamp> - In October 2021, Spheron Architects unveiled their plans for revamping Peckham Square, focusing on creating a space that reflects the diverse cultural heritage of the area. The design includes a new building for the Peckham Platform art gallery and the removal of the existing Peckham Arch. The project aims to enhance the square's role as a civic and cultural hub, fostering community engagement and inclusivity. The initiative is part of Southwark Council's broader efforts to revitalise the area and address local needs.
7. <https://spheronarchitects.co.uk/peckhamsquareredevelopment/> - Spheron Architects' Peckham Square Redevelopment project focuses on reimagining the square to support and promote local culture and produce, with a strong emphasis on sustainability. The design process involved extensive public consultation, inspired by the area's multilingual heritage and the memory of the timber wharf. The project aligns with Southwark Council's 'Southwark Stands Together' initiative, aiming to achieve a carbon-neutral Southwark by 2030. The redevelopment includes retail, commercial, and cultural elements to create a vibrant public space that meets the needs of the local community.