

Response to the emerging Old Bermondsey neighbourhood plan

A submission by Team London Bridge

May 2020

1. Team London Bridge (TLB) is the Business Improvement District (BID) representing approximately 400 businesses in the area between London Bridge to the west, Tower Bridge to the east, and south towards Bermondsey. Our area of operation borders the northern boundary of the Old Bermondsey Neighbourhood Area. TLB has a strong remit from businesses since 2015 to deliver the [London Bridge Plan](#). Our mission is to ensure London Bridge excels as a leading place for global commerce and continues to develop as a pioneering local centre for enterprise, culture and entertainment.
2. We welcome this opportunity to inform the emerging Old Bermondsey neighbourhood plan ahead of formal consultation over a draft plan. There are a significant number of policies being proposed and we look forward to seeing more of the evidence base that supports them. We also recognise that the plan will need to adapt to the changing circumstances consequent on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Our comments address the main issues as they are presented in the informal draft plan.

Character and heritage

4. We welcome the attention paid to recognising and protecting the special character and heritage of the neighbourhood area. This makes a significant social and economic as well as cultural contribution to both London Bridge and Bermondsey. The approach would be helped by identifying different character areas across the neighbourhood area.
5. The neighbourhood plan can also recognise and support the potential of new development bringing added value and creating new spaces or assets which enhance local character, including by creating new 'placemarks'. White Cube and the Fashion and Textile Museum are contemporary buildings which stand out positively and add interest and vitality to Bermondsey Street.
6. We welcome measures which promote the unique heritage and history of the area. We understand that a neighbourhood plan cannot require additions to be made to the Local List but it can separately identify buildings of heritage significance. We also hope that the neighbourhood plan can extend the concept of [placemarks](#) which we have developed for the London Bridge area, working with [BermondseyStreet.London](#). We would also welcome further discussion about the boundary of the Bermondsey Street Conservation Area while recognising it is outside the scope of a neighbourhood plan to amend its boundary.
7. We appreciate the sensitivity around the height of new development both in and adjacent to the neighbourhood area. We believe this is best addressed through an assessment of impact on local character rather than height controls, in recognition of the fact that the impact of new development is influenced by its design as well as its height.

Housing and development

8. We welcome the objective for new homes to be zero carbon and for more transparency around offset payments. We are working with businesses and partners towards helping Southwark achieve its zero carbon objectives by 2030.

Local services

9. We believe there are further opportunities for the neighbourhood plan to take forward the Social Regeneration Charter developed collaboratively by Southwark Council. This will help secure greater alignment between the community, developers and the local authority and provides a helpful framework for future community infrastructure levy spending priorities

Environment and open spaces

10. We welcome the importance attached to biodiversity, greening, trees and water in the informal draft neighbourhood plan. In London Bridge we are aiming for a step change in the quality of the local environment through new development and this approach needs to work across the wider area, especially in relation to water (noting that the neighbourhood area includes a critical drainage area), biodiversity and access to green space.

11. We support measures to address deficiencies in green space in the neighbourhood area and ask that this also addresses the needs of the business community given the proximity to London Bridge, which enjoys less green space for a large working and visitor population. This population is anticipated significantly to increase during the period of the neighbourhood plan. The plan could develop and extend the Green Grid approach of the London Bridge Plan.

Transport

12. We welcome the objectives to achieve a significant shift towards walking, cycling and public transport and support the user hierarchy.

13. We believe there are significant opportunities to go beyond measures that address conflict between different users and to improve improving cycling connectivity through the neighbourhood area. As part of this the plan provides an opportunity for taking forward aspects of the 2019 Sustrans report for BermondseyStreet.London including two way cycling on this key route. We also support dedicated cycle lanes where there is space whilst recognising the significant scope for clearly demarcated cycle access in other locations, including contraflow one way streets. A majority of these measures lie outside the direct scope of the neighbourhood plan.

14. We welcome the attention paid to servicing needs in the plan. In our experience future servicing is unlikely to be met through use of off road servicing bays and we would encourage an approach which supports the use of a consolidation centre linked to more frequent delivery by smaller vehicles. The Dartford based hub created by Guy's and St Thomas' is an example. The plan can also prioritise the use of cargo bike deliveries, more in line with the transport priorities, having less impact on local traffic, and enabling traffic reduction schemes in the area, such as filtered permeability or timed traffic closures.

Local economy

15. We welcome a plan objective encouraging a stronger, locally based economy that complements the role played by London Bridge. This includes the policies proposed for affordable workspace, meanwhile uses, start-ups and independent shops, as well as cultural space (currently only included within meanwhile spaces).

16. We would encourage an approach to railway arches throughout the neighbourhood area that formally recognises the role of the Low Line concept. This approach is promoted in London Bridge, and across the borough in the New Southwark Plan. It identifies the Low Line as both an economic and public realm opportunity and it has significant potential to support the kind of local, affordable and independent economic activity encouraged by the neighbourhood plan.

17. We would welcome stronger recognition of the contribution to be played by parts of the neighbourhood area to London's night time economy. The plan is for a central London location, with 24 hour public transport access, where some night-time activity can take place, so long as it is well managed and sensibly located. The loss of night-time activity across central London is well recognised and a night-time Tsar has been put in place to rectify this. It is also vulnerable to the uncertain impact of Covid-19. The plan should be more supportive of the role of the night time economy while recognising the need to manage impacts on residential amenity.