

## PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF 1-9 NEWCOMEN STREET

Representations by Team London Bridge

April 2024

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. TLB has a strong remit from businesses since 2015 to deliver the [London Bridge Plan](#). Our vision, widely endorsed across the business community, is to make London Bridge one of the most sustainable, culturally innovative and compelling places for business and tourism in the world.
2. We welcome the opportunity to inform proposals for the redevelopment of this important area in London Bridge and hope these representations are helpful ahead of further public consultation on the emerging plans. This disused site should make a much more positive contribution to the area. Overall, we find much to welcome in the proposals and the opportunity they provide to regenerate the site and support wider ambitions for London Bridge.
3. The site lies within the London Bridge Science, Education and Medical Hub character area as described in the London Bridge Plan. It is an area where we support opportunities for *“integrating and better connecting the educational and medical campuses in the district, establishing stronger partnerships, and creating a more navigable and porous environment. This will provide opportunities for interesting shared spaces, and a new market for retail uses to serve an increasing professional and educational clientele”*. We identify opportunities for using *“large land holdings in a way that is cohesive, forward-thinking and sustainable”*. Team London Bridge actively supports the SC1 Life Science district and through the London Bridge Medi-Culture programme we are bringing the renowned medical heritage to life, including running the Medi-Culture Festival and hosting a self-guided walk around the area (see <https://www.mediculture.co.uk>).
4. We have an agreed vision for the area *“to be the world’s most significant medi-culture district and celebrate its 1,000 year-long heritage of life-changing work that continues now and into the future”*. This draws on our [initial scoping report](#) prepared by Barker Langham. There is an unprecedented opportunity for an exemplar development in Newcomen Street that sets new standards for London Bridge and beyond. The development can deliver improved environmental, biodiversity, social and health outcomes for London Bridge alongside advances in innovation, science and education. This can be achieved through the design and quality of the new buildings and public realm, through the supply chains selected for taking the development proposals forward and through the wider contribution to the cultural and community life of London Bridge and beyond.
5. We made representations on the wider site allocation NSP52 for the London Bridge Health Cluster, which includes this site, through consultation on the New Southwark Plan. We emphasised the health and well being benefits of promoting green infrastructure and supporting biodiversity as well as opportunities for improved connectivity through the site and along its boundaries. The New Southwark Plan has been adopted and supports an approach which underpins the London Bridge Health Cluster subject to townscape and heritage impacts, providing improved permeability and protecting green space.

6. There is relatively little detail on the proposals in the consultation information provided online. We would welcome sight of any other work which has been undertaken to inform the approach. It will be important to develop the approach further and consider a range of options in collaboration with the local community and other stakeholders. The planning application should only come at the end of this process and having involved the main stakeholders likely to respond to what's planned.

7. Our comments can broadly be categorised under the following headings:

#### Land use

8. To be successful the proposals need to contribute to the "London Health Cluster" as identified in the Southwark Local Plan. This is to deliver the Southwark Plan London Bridge Area Vision AV.11 to "Harness the expertise and infrastructure from Kings College London, Guy's Hospital and other medical and science facilities to develop a strong, dynamic and specialised local economy that will attract new specialised services and research and promote health and wellbeing in the local environment". As yet there is insufficient information for us to know whether this ambition will be fulfilled by the proposed development.

9. There would be a marked difference in response to proposals that meet the specialised needs of the location and support the Health Cluster as opposed to proposals which provide offices and/or laboratories for general use. A purely private sector research and development facility serving a different market would also bring relatively limited value when compared to a facility fully connected to the existing health and medical research. We would welcome clarity on this issue, evidence for how the contribution to the Health Cluster will be secured and an indication of the likely occupiers. It will also help to have details on the nature and scale of the demand for space to meet the needs of life sciences in the area given the number of other proposals that are coming forward on other sites.

10. We welcome provision of affordable workspace in line with Local Plan Policy P31 as a means of providing the "much needed incubator floorspace to support the growth of small businesses and start-ups".

#### Urban design

11. It is helpful to have an early indication of the scale and height of buildings being proposed for the sites and the treatment of the facades. The plans should recognise the importance that scale of buildings plays in the townscape and respect the Conservation Area, heritage assets and the impact on the two London View Management Framework Views. The available information does not acknowledge that both 4-8 and 9 Newcomen Street are on the Local List, adopted in December 2023. Local Plan Policy P26 requires that this is taken into account by the development and the majority of both buildings are lost under the current plans. We recognise the retention of the facades of those buildings.

12. The emerging plans should be positively received by Southwark's Design Review Panel before proceeding, particularly resolving the retained and new elements. As indicated in the London Bridge area vision of the NSP, development should achieve a mix of inspiring new architecture alongside the distinctive heritage of the area.

### Active frontages

13. The intention to enhance the streetscape so that “*passers by will now be able to look into and see the incubator/ start up laboratory activity*” is welcome and the proposals should be further developed to activate the Newcomen Street frontage. This could include street facing café provision in the ground floor of the building. This is a popular space with an outdoor pavement licence for the café opposite, and we would hope that this can be extended. Team London Bridge has supplied planters and artwork to this area and we have seen a very positive response which could be amplified by the new development.

14. The plans also provide a significant opportunity to invigorate Nag’s Head Yard to the rear. This should be a more considered space and function as a publicly accessible historic yard. Team London Bridge contributed to the Improvements Toolkit for the historic inns and yards which is available [here](#) and we commend it as a guide to developing this somewhat neglected part of the site in the next iteration of the plans and promoting public access through to Borough High Street (point 16 below)

### Movement

15. The Local Plan site allocation NSP52 indicates development proposals should “*improve pedestrian movement and permeability through the site*”. Pavement widths in Newcomen Street are restricted and variable and the proposals could adopt a Healthy Streets approach to improve walking conditions. This could include improved wayfinding and expand the current pavement café arrangements.

16. There is a significant opportunity to improve east/west permeability by providing public access through Nags Head Yard which currently operates only as a service yard to the rear of the site. This could link through to Borough High Street and realise its function as one of the historic yards. It would bring transformational public benefits to the area. This approach could also create two frontages and open up new opportunities to make best use of the site.

17. The development is situated on a busy cycle path. The plans should meet the cycle parking standards expected by the New Southwark Plan as a minimum and address extra demand for additional public cycle docking stations.

18. There is limited information on servicing. Provision should be delivered in ways that avoid conflict in the public realm, including in what could be a newly opened yard. This includes maximum use of the consolidation provision with CEVA Logistics, used by GSST, and making use of cargo bikes as the norm, as has been trialled for several of GSST services including constant delivery of samples between health sites. Ecofleet is an example of cargo bikes working in the healthcare sector.

### Landscape and greening

19. The development should be designed around an ambition to achieve the highest possible Urban Greening Factor and make a strong contribution to the London Bridge Green Grid vision to bring exemplar greening for its health and wellbeing as well as biodiversity benefits. Opportunities to achieve this include:

- greening inside and on the side of new buildings. We suggest the eastern façade is a specific opportunity with visibility along the street. Green roofs should also be explored.

- addressing greening opportunities in the public realm, so that the greening in planters can be made permanent and in the ground.
- securing a microclimate conducive to public enjoyment of Newcomen Street and Nags Head Yard as places to dwell not just pass through
- retention of the existing tree in the Conservation Area outside 1 Newcomen Street and significant improvements on the limited use of street planters.

### Sustainability

20. We welcome the commitment to a “*sustainable approach*”. Only limited information is provided and it would be helpful for the sustainability plan to be developed with clear outcomes and targets. These should exceed the minimum requirements of planning policy given the purpose of the SC1 partnership. We believe the approach will best be supported by demonstrating a commitment to the circular economy and committing to some demanding environmental sustainability targets and standards. These include:

- BREEAM Outstanding
- WELL Platinum
- air quality positive
- EPC rating A
- wirescore (platinum)
- reduced ground level wind speeds and urban heat island effect
- water run off at greenfield rates

21. We believe meeting exemplary sustainability standards is an appropriate response to the circumstances now demanded by Southwark Council’s declared climate emergency and the changing expectations of future tenants.

22. The development should also form part of the district heat network whose feasibility is currently being investigated by Team London Bridge, GSST and others, and is an important part of delivering our carbon neutral [routemap](#) for the area. It can play a key role as an enabler for this wider network and the provision of clean energy. Space around the site in the yard could have potential site for one of the required energy centres for this initiative and we would welcome further discussion about this.

23. We would welcome the development coming forward with [Living Wage Building accreditation](#). KCL, like GSTT and TLB are accredited Living Wage employers already, and Southwark Council a Living Wage Place.

24. As a world class health district the development should also directly address the leadership role which can be played by this being one of the first major developments of its kind to be brought forward with the experience of managing the Covid-19 pandemic.

25. We should be pleased to discuss further how to help deliver shared ambitions for this important location.