

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF LEATHER WAREHOUSE AND BERMONDSEY YARD

A submission by Team London Bridge
November 2018

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 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. TLB has welcomed the opportunity to inform development of the proposals for the Leather warehouse and along Bermondsey Street. We made representations on the site through consultation on the New Southwark Plan (NSP) and in [responding to the St Thomas Street East Framework](#). We have considered the current proposals in the context of new and emerging development plan policy in both the New Southwark Plan and London Plan and consistency with our London Bridge Plan.
3. The site is highly significant, especially for its impact on Bermondsey Street, the historic and visual importance of the former Leather warehouse and its influence on a main arrival point into the area from Bermondsey Street tunnel on to the junction with Snowfields/St Thomas Street and Crucifix Lane. This is a junction where we recently commissioned some [design options](#) to complement the St Thomas Street East developments, and we are currently monitoring the traffic. It will also dramatically change the area's permeability for pedestrians and alter pedestrian flows. The proposals relate to part of one (NSP53) of a small number of major development sites identified for London Bridge in the emerging Southwark Plan. The relationship of the development proposed to other development sites along St Thomas Street is critical. To this end we welcome the development of the St Thomas Street East Framework.

Shared approach

4. The draft St Thomas St East Framework should play an important role in integrating the otherwise separate major developments planned for the area. The latest plans for the Leather warehouse and Bermondsey Yard do not fully meet the expectations of this Framework. We have also identified a number of areas where the Framework itself needs to be strengthened. We have fed in on detailed proposals for Capital House and Vinegar Yard which relate closely to the scheme.
5. In responding to the St Thomas Street East Framework we developed a set of urban design principles which we believe should drive the proposals for this collection of sites. It will be important for a planning application to be accompanied by evidence showing how they have been addressed. The principles are set out below and expanded on in our [response](#):

- *Bookends and arrival points*

- *Pedestrian connection hierarchies*
- *Active frontages*
- *Key elevations*
- *Responding to the Low Line*
- *Creating a Boulevard on St Thomas Street*
- *A variety of defined spaces: alleys, yards and open space*
- *Servicing*

Design approach

6. The exhibition materials lack a strong design narrative to explain the design approach that results in the scheme proposed. We welcome the response to the challenge of combining retaining the warehouse with a contemporary building and ask that this be a particular focus of attention for Southwark's Design Review Panel.

7. The site also includes an important anchor point to the whole Framework area at the junction of Crucifix Lane, St Thomas St Boulevard, Bermondsey Street and Snowsfields. It will also establish initial impressions of Bermondsey Street for many visitors. These roles demand stronger recognition in the plans, which currently appear to provide greater design focus on other elevations (such as the west entrance to White Lion Yard). We do recognise that there has been improvement here by making the corner entrance at this junction an active frontage.

8. The intention to draw on the character of Bermondsey Street in the detail of design is welcome. We are less clear how this translates into the use of "bow windows" which have relatively few local precedents. The extant building applies a design detail more in keeping with the area, which is also successfully used as an active frontage for the Bermondsey Yard café.

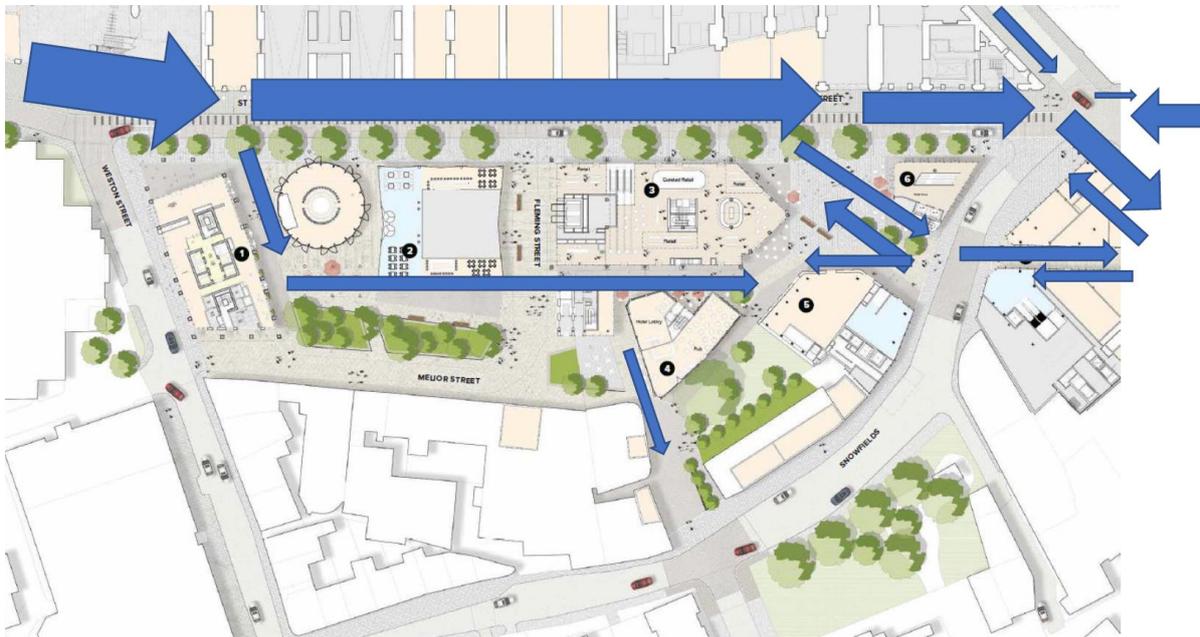
9. Overall, we are looking for an inspiring contemporary approach which both responds to and respects the character of the area.

White Lion Yard and pedestrian flows

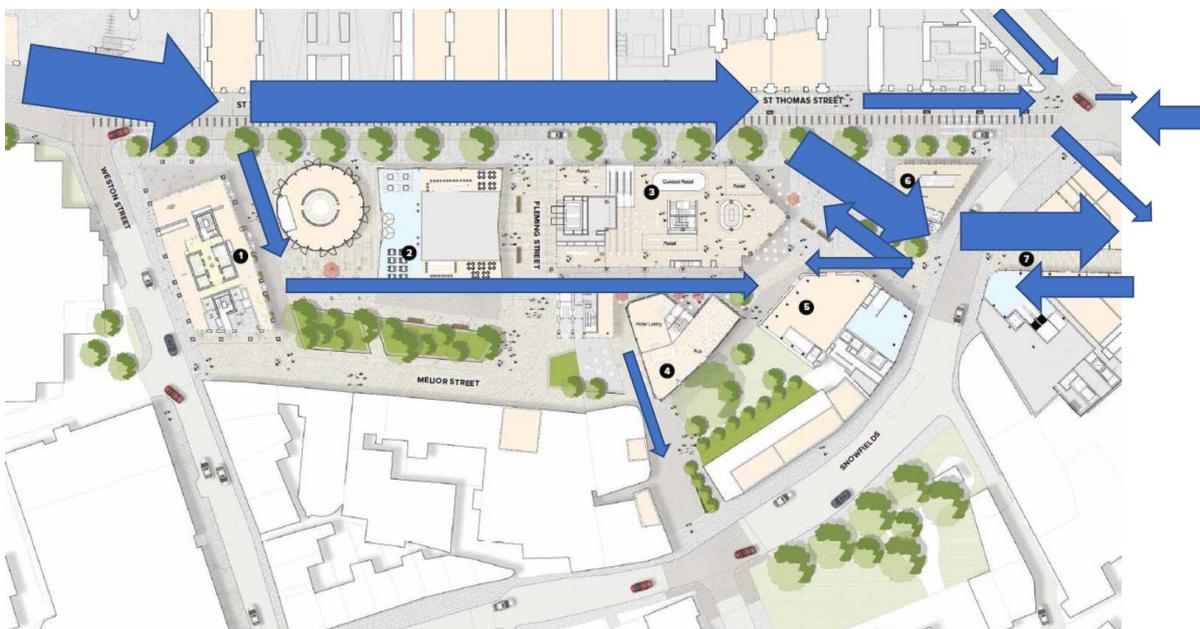
10. The creation of White Lion Yard as a new route between Bermondsey Street to London Bridge station via Vinegar Yard will have a major impact on pedestrian flows through the whole Framework area. It will be important that this does not become the only frequently used route or White Lion Yard risks becoming very congested. There will also be significant pressure on the informal crossing at Snowsfields which may require more than the introduction of a raised table as proposed (which may be problematic so close to a signal crossing). We are concerned that the most likely route linking White Lion Yard to St Thomas St across the new public square in the Vinegar Yard development is barely acknowledged in the exhibition material's summary of key pedestrian desire lines.

11. We believe around 75% of commuter pedestrians moving between Bermondsey Street and London Bridge Station should be using St Thomas Street, and 25% using the parallel route, including the Vinegar Yard and White Lion Yard to achieve the best balance. This is illustrated for the morning peak below. This does not account for people entering the

new buildings, nor heading south along Weston Street and Melior Place, nor people milling about in shops/restaurants. Numbers are based on our own footfall counts at the east end of St Thomas Street:



12. This will not be achieved under the current proposals with large numbers following the shortest route across the new square and through White Lion Yard. In the evening an even higher number will come through the yards to shop, eat and socialise. We expect the proposed design to result in the movement illustrated below:



13. Addressing this issue will require changes to both the Vinegar Yard and the Leather warehouse and Bermondsey Yard schemes. This should be supported by a new movement analysis of the whole Framework area which shows where specific movement patterns will go at different hours and takes account of the main building entrances and the impact of 10,000 new employees and students. A small realignment of White Lion Yard could reduce

the desire line, making it more of a shopping and stopping route than a thoroughfare in the pedestrian hierarchy. This could also enhance views of the Leather warehouse looking west through White Lion Yard. A small adjustment to the frontage on Bermondsey St which sets it back by at least 0.5m will also help by providing enhanced footfall capacity for what is already a cramped space. A study of this site should complement the work already delivered through our commission of design options for this junction, and also the current study on the balance of uses of Bermondsey Street, commissioned by Bermondsey Street.London.

14. There have been important changes to the alignment of the route between Fenning Street and Vinegar Yard since publication of the St Thomas Street East Framework, which although on neighbouring land, will effect this development. We are unclear how well this route links to the Threadneedle site, and the vista appears to be towards a wall by the servicing yard, which will be a barrier to pedestrian flow along this crucial secondary (and retail) route. We would suggest further work with the neighbouring developments, linking this route more positively from one yard to a more formal open space at Melior St Garden.

Building uses

15. We welcome the scheme's emphasis on retail at the ground level, with a number of relatively small floor plates. This space needs to meet the requirements of independents and complement the Bermondsey Street offer. Given the extent of retail provision across the Framework area it would be helpful to see further evidence of the overall demand for such space to ensure there is an appropriate balance of provision and to underpin the commercial success of the new developments. The plans indicate a retail strategy is being prepared and this should be both consulted on and included with any planning application. Taken as a whole the Framework proposals will bring approximately 10,000 new people to the area with needs to be served outside working hours, at lunch time and at weekends. The site serves a 7-day space and this needs to be recognised in the range of retail and cultural provision, including the availability of an affordable offer during the office lunch hour. The retail strategy can also influence pedestrian flows by encouraging browsing along key routes to slow movement and influence route choices.

16. It will be important for the former Leather warehouse to be in a distinctive use and to complement the new public square and music venue being proposed on the adjacent site. The warehouse makes a unique contribution to the whole Framework area which needs to be secured in the plans for its future.

Environment and greening

17. We welcome the objective to include a significant scale of greening on the roof of the Bermondsey Street building, though we note this does not seem integrated with the rest of the scheme which has no greenery. Indeed, trees have been removed from the site on Snowfields. We propose that the landscape design team play an active role in ensuring this greenery is integrated as part of the wider scheme, particularly into Snowfields and Vinegar Yard. Following discussion at the exhibition, it appears there is scope to continue the greenery to support the transition between the warehouse building and its upper levels. Moreover, we would like to ensure that the green roofs provide biodiversity and water capture, and are not merely ornamental.

18. We welcome the commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent and ask that this be clearly stated in any planning application. It is also welcome to have other targets for the environment and wildlife although these suffer from the lack of clear baselines and as presented they are unlikely to be particularly stretching. There are further opportunities to use green infrastructure to improve the microclimate and enhance biodiversity; mitigate wind effects; reduce carbon; and provide for energy generation and storage. We welcome a positive approach to harnessing solar energy. We would welcome better joined up work on environmental resilience and ambition across the development framework.

Servicing

19. There is a lack of clarity on how the buildings will be serviced. We should also welcome further details on the approach proposed for consolidated servicing and delivery. This **must** be consistent with the wider Framework and support a shared approach which uses the same vehicles across the whole Framework area. The proposed 50% reduction in the number of deliveries is welcome but its baseline is unclear and it is modest in its ambition.

20. We look forward to continuing to work with the landowners and prospective developers of the main sites along and around St Thomas Street to help deliver shared ambitions for this critical part of the London Bridge area.