



## **Borough High Street – a proposal for action**

**March 2011**

## Introduction

Borough High Street is at the heart of an area of huge investment, and, at the same time, of massive pressures. Despite this surrounding investment, however, there is no strategic focus on the environment, design or identity of the street itself and consequently it is underperforming.

## Better Bankside's Interest

Borough High Street has long been a high priority for Better Bankside; indeed in 2010 we extended our Business Improvement District boundary to include the whole of Borough High Street between the riverside and Lant Street. Our members have a direct stake in the future of the street and we want to see Borough High Street fulfil its potential as an important artery within Bankside.

## Making progress

To understand more about what is blocking progress on Borough High Street we commissioned a detailed survey based both on quantitative analysis and on consultation with those who have a stake in, and influence on, the future of the area. Many of the issues are long standing ones.

**We want to see action**, but one of the very barriers to progress is the wide range of stakeholders, organisations and individuals who have a say in what happens here. In the long-term a coordinated strategy is needed for us all, but in the meantime Better Bankside plans to take action on those things we can deliver. We hope that our efforts now will bring a real change to Borough High Street, and will inspire others to join in the shared delivery of a stronger future for the street.

## 11 ways we can make a difference

We have identified 11 ways that Better Bankside can make a difference to issues that Borough High Street faces. Together they will reinforce improvements to the look, the feel, and the identity of the area.

Full details are given below, but in brief these actions are:

**Regenerating the yards**—revitalizing an exemplar yard as a prelude to tackling others

**Greening the urban environment** – demonstrating the value of urban greening

**Phasing streetscape improvements** – designing a strategic plan for future investment including s106 monies

**Streamlining street furniture** – installing space saving litter bins and cycle parking

**Implementing environmental enforcements** – removing litter and reducing crime

**Introducing cycle freight** – taking vans off the road and improving access for retailers

**Enhancing heritage assets** – developing a Townscape Heritage Initiative

**Celebrating historic and cultural identity** – opening a pop up shop exhibition space

**Promoting a retail identity** – creating a 'Buzzing on Borough High Street' promotion

**Capitalising on the Olympics** – lobbying for 'Look and Feel' funding

**Future action** – convening, listening and communicating a wider plan for action



## Capital investments

### 1. Regenerating the yards

*Dark and uninviting, the courts and yards on both sides of Borough High Street are underutilised and forgotten places. Made more enticing this historic street pattern could create an opportunity to improve the area's accessibility and identity, and to expand its physical capacity and functional offer.*

Better Bankside will promote a revitalization of the courts and yards. Based on environmental audits of the key locations we will draw up an action plan to improve environmental quality and accessibility from Borough High Street to the King's College Guy's Campus. We will identify one yard for a greater level of inter-vention – showing the value of increasing footfall, investment and interpretation in these underused spaces. This exemplar could showcase Borough High Street in 2012 during the London Festival of Architecture, the Olympics, the Dickens bicentenary and the Diamond Jubilee.

### 2. Greening the urban environment

*Borough High Street is perceived as 'grubby' and generally uncared for, especially when compared to nearby routes such as Bermondsey Street. There is a lack of greenery and planting to provide relief from the gritty, urban environment. The northern part of Borough High Street around the junction with Southwark Street experiences particularly high levels of vehicle related air pollution.*

**Better Bankside will demonstrate how urban greening can improve the urban environment.** We will bring hanging baskets to Borough High Street and work with businesses to put containerized planting outside their premises where there is room. We will look for ways to bring more planting to the yards off Borough High Street and install a 'green screen' to a building site hoarding on Southwark Street, close to the junction with Borough High Street.

### 3. Phasing streetscape improvements

*There are few spaces to pause in Borough High Street and little relief from the congested urban environment. The conflict between pedestrians and traffic puts pedestrians and cyclists very much in second place. The footways are relatively narrow and further restricted by 'clutter' on the street.*

**We believe that a long-term urban realm improvement strategy can achieve real streetscape benefits on Borough High Street.** Bankside Urban Forest already shows the value that incremental improvements can bring to the streetscape when delivered within an overall strategy. On Borough High Street a number of sites are in the development pipeline and will release Section 106 monies over time to support a similar approach to improving the public realm. We will continue to



support TfL and Southwark Council in the roll out of Legible London to help people navigate along and across Borough High Street.

#### 4. Enhancing heritage assets

*Despite its conservation area status and the large number of listed buildings in the area, Borough High Street has an uncared for appearance and is underutilizing its heritage assets. The streetscape is not helped by the various gap sites waiting for redevelopment, the vacant, derelict and scaffolded buildings, street clutter and a lack of greenery.*

**Better Bankside will promote the enhancement of the street's heritage assets.** We will continue to engage with planning policy such as the SPD, and we will engage with partners and local stakeholders the potential to develop a Townscape Heritage Initiative to improve the quality of the heritage buildings and townscape of the street.

#### 5. Streamlining street furniture

*Borough High Street is full of poles, guardrails, boxes and other bits of street furniture that make walking unpleasant. At the same time there is severe lack of cycle parking and litterbins.*

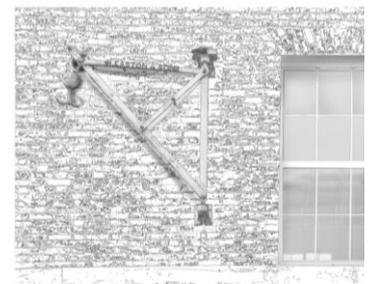
**Better Bankside will install space saving litterbins and cycle parking** to make the street cleaner, greener and safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

#### Revenue actions

#### 6. Implementing environmental enforcements

*The look and feel of Borough High Street is poor and can be threatening. It needs longer-term redesign and upgrading, but in the short to medium term the street can be improved by implementing a range of enforcement actions.*

**We will work with partners to improve both the physical and the social environment.** To improve the appearance and cleanliness we will work with retailers, bars and restaurants to reduce clutter on the street, including 'A-Boards' and dumped waste sacks, and use our cleaning service to remove graffiti, fly posters and calling cards as well as litter such as needles and broken glass. To address crime and anti-social behaviour we will work with Southwark Police and Southwark's Street Population Outreach Team to remove rough sleepers, aggressive beggars and street drinking from Borough High Street and adjoining yards, and work with local businesses to reduce levels of crime such as theft and drug and alcohol-related crime.



## 7. Introducing cycle freight

*Borough High Street remains one of the area's least accessible streets for deliveries and collections. With its 'red route' status, businesses have to rely on the few and difficult-to-access loading bays, while local freight traffic is heavy, causing congestion and high levels of emissions.*

**Better Bankside is piloting a new cycle freight service.** It is designed to help food retailers and others to make local deliveries – either by replacing an existing van-based service, or by creating a new one. It is also designed to bring in a variety of essential goods and services.

## 8. Celebrating historic and cultural identity

*Despite its name, Borough High Street does not have a strong functional identity. Its poor retail offer forces residents and the daytime population to go elsewhere for their shopping needs and office and vacant floor space leaves dead frontages that dilute its character. Hand in hand with this lack of identity is a lack of pride, yet the area's rich history is apparent from even a casual glance at a street map.*

**We will generate pride in the street by celebrating its history and activating street frontages.** We will pursue the development of a pop up shop where we can celebrate the identity of Borough High Street, and work with landowners to activate street frontages. We will encourage LBS to tighten up planning policy around the mix of uses and shop front guidance. We will explore how events such as an annual 'Borough High Street week' could celebrate its historic and cultural importance within the area to instil some pride in local businesses and provide a focus for activities.

## 9. Promoting a retail identity

*Despite the strength of Borough Market as a destination, Borough High Street does not have a strong retail identity. In the past smaller businesses have lacked marketing investment but the extension of the BID allows Better Bankside to address that with a dynamic marketing campaign.*

**Using the Buzz Card we will create a dedicated "Buzzing on Borough High Street" promotion.** Highlighting some of the independent restaurants and shops, promotions could highlight the history of the street, its importance to London as a whole and support the development of St George the Martyr as an attraction to draw visitors southwards. A trail could be developed to help in exploring the more hidden aspects of the street. Good quality signage would also aid in branding the area and guiding people to the yards. Better Bankside's plan for the Borough High Street will be displayed on the website and regular updates about developments to the street will be added, along with any roadwork information, developments and successes.



## Liaison, lobbying and facilitation

### 10. Capitalising on the Olympics

*The Olympics bring investment opportunities that Borough High Street cannot afford to miss. Coordinated action is needed now to ensure that the street benefits from programmes such as the GLA's 'Look and Feel' – a range of environmental treatments such as banners, seasonal planting and motion triggered soundscapes, designed to dress arterial routes and help visitors discover a 'hidden London' during the games.*

**Better Bankside will lobby to ensure Borough High Street is fully considered for Olympics funding.** As well as being an arterial route for visitors en route to the Olympic Park, Borough High Street's revitalized yards and inns could draw in visitors and enrich their experience of London. Additional treatments will be available for areas to purchase, which Better Bankside could potentially help to fund.

### 11. Coordinating future action

*At present there are a significant number of stakeholders seeking to promote the regeneration of Borough High Street. Their efforts are sometimes in line with each other's, and sometimes at odds. There is a desperate need for co-ordination, and for the development of an agreed strategy for the street.*

**Better Bankside will support and if appropriate facilitate a regular meeting of interested stakeholders.** Participants will share their thinking with respect to the street, and listen to the views of others. The aim is support the development of a shared strategic vision, together with a 'wish list' of projects and a timetable for implementation. Better Bankside will also – with the partners' consent – communicate the work of the group to any and all people with an interest in the future of Borough High Street, including businesses and residents.

