

LONDON
REVIEW PANEL

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Urban Forest Manager
Better Bankside
London
SE1 0FD

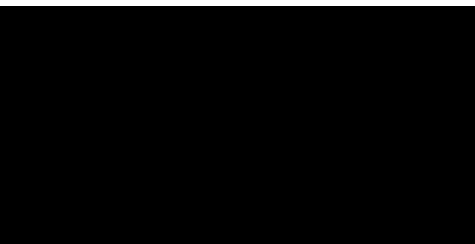
November 2020

Dear ██████████,

London Review Panel: Crossing the Line, Southwark

Please find enclosed the London Review Panel report following the design review of Crossing the Line, Southwark on 10th November 2020. I would like to thank you for your participation in the review and offer ongoing Mayor's Design Advocate support as the scheme's design develops.

Yours sincerely,



Mayor's Design Advocate

cc.

All meeting attendees

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills

Philip Graham, Executive Director of Good Growth, GLA

Patrick Dubeck, Head of Regeneration, GLA

LONDON REVIEW PANEL

Report of London Review Panel meeting Crossing the Line, Southwark

Thursday 10th November 2020
Review held remotely

London Review Panel

[REDACTED]	MDA
[REDACTED]	MDA (Chair)
[REDACTED]	MDA

Attendees

[REDACTED]	Better Bankside
[REDACTED]	Better Bankside
[REDACTED]	Blue Bermondsey
[REDACTED]	Team London Bridge
[REDACTED]	Southwark Council

[REDACTED]	PDP London
[REDACTED]	PDP London
[REDACTED]	Greengage
[REDACTED]	Greengage
[REDACTED]	Macfarlane + Associates
[REDACTED]	Macfarlane + Associates
[REDACTED]	Studio 4215
[REDACTED]	TDO Architecture
[REDACTED]	TDO Architecture
[REDACTED]	Urban Movement

[REDACTED]	GLA Regeneration (Panel Manager)
[REDACTED]	GLA Regeneration

Report copied to

Jules Pipe	Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
Philip Graham	GLA
Patrick Dubeck	GLA

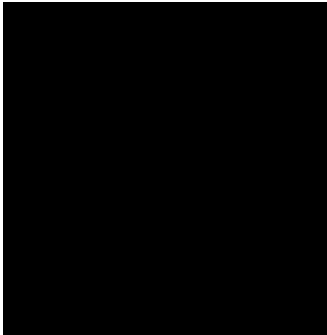
Confidentiality

Please note that while schemes not yet in the public domain, for example at a pre-application stage, will be treated as confidential, as a public organisation the GLA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and in the case of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

Project location

The Low Line (Bankside to Bermondsey Rail Viaduct), LB Southwark, London

Presenting team



Better Bankside
Greengage
Macfarlane + Associates
PDP London
Studio 4215
TDO Architecture
TDO Architecture
Urban Movement

Client Team introduction

Better Bankside presented on behalf of the client team and summarised the project brief and history. This project has been in development for several years and involves numerous neighbourhoods that adjoin the viaduct. The aim of this project is to breathe new life into the arches and spaces in and around the viaduct. An environmental strategy is proposed to underpin the social and economic core objectives. At a local level the viaduct characterises the neighbourhoods that sit alongside it, but it also acts as a barrier between them. This barrier is both physical in the restricted movement across the viaduct, psychological in the sense of identity between the neighbourhoods, and economic. In recent years more community uses have arrived that support the economic activity and the project aims to build upon this with a greater diversity of uses. The team have developed four key pillars to shape and direct the project;

1. Green Corridor: the viaduct as a green corridor which aims to support people, wildlife and communities
2. Accessibility: there will be improvements in the accessibility within and across the viaduct
3. Local Economy: the project will promote economic activity within the arches
4. Environmental Resilience: the project will increase the environmental resilience along the Low Line

The project received Good Growth Fund support in round 1 to develop a study mapping out the potential of the project along the viaduct, including a horizon scanning of forthcoming developments. The client team has established a governance structure and the team have held marketing and community engagement activities to inform the development of the proposals. Three strands of work are being presented today;

1. Mixed Occupier Testbeds
2. Low Line Commons / Urban Greening
3. Movement Strategy

Design Team presentation

TDO Architecture presented their work on mixed occupier test beds which looked at new occupants and the adaptive reuse of four arches in three locations. These new uses would include an active travel hub, an accessible cultural space and a community skills centre. The team aspire for this project to be an exemplar in adaptive reuse, drawing on the history of the arches and introducing affordable and reusable structures within the arches that celebrate the spaces beneath the viaduct. The project will achieve this by inserting adaptable structures within the arches to provide self-contained adaptive rooms. Functions can then be contained within these rooms with the arches defining the edges. Galvanised metal has been selected as an adaptive material for these rooms and this has the potential to provide a common material language across the other Low Line interventions. The proposals will aim to be respectful of the arches, using the existing openings, working with the found nature of the arches and pulling away from the edges. Two of the three sites have been tendered and anticipate starting on site soon.

PDP presented their work on the Low Line Commons. This study covered the areas from Southwark to Bermondsey and the 5-minute hinterland around these areas. The team presented a series of small, incremental initiatives that expect to cumulatively add up to a significant impact. These proposals aim to address the broader issues around healthy placeshaping in the public realm. The project envisions transforming the viaduct from a barrier to be a green seam that connects people, nature and places. The Low Line Commons aspires to be a shared natural and cultural resource which integrates nature, supports active lifestyles and enables diverse activities. The baseline analysis mapped nature and ecology and highlighted the existing awkward spaces that need to plug in the gaps in the network. The study highlighted four key character areas that are a rich mosaic of the various communities, each with its own specific issues. The interventions proposed range in scale to suit the small, medium and larger spaces within the study area. Pocket parks, wildlife habitats, sustainable urban drainage, planting and street trees, permeable paving were all proposed. Other strategies being developed include lighting to highlight the areas character, wayfinding, seating and meanwhile and pop use activities. The team have produced a toolkit that can be monitored to measure the impact of the interventions in achieving the project objectives. The project looks to understand the baseline, develop the vision, and implement this vision.

Urban Movement presented their work on movement strategies. This included a summary of the routes and crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. The team highlighted the areas of action needed to address the many movement conflicts. A review of the public access depending on the time of day or week was undertaken to propose more legible routes across and along the viaduct. Street typologies were studied and reveal many streets were contested spaces, with overlapping uses and poorly designed streetscapes. This includes the criss-crossing streets that traverse the viaduct, which while not active were key connections. The public realm is poor, with crossover issues, access issues and with failures in the landscape such as barriers and inappropriate kerbs. The project aims to provide a hierarchy of routes to support activity and access. Areas would be highlighted for interventions such as a wayfinding projects to lead users along the Low Line and to repair the fractured walking and cycling network.

London Review Panel's Views

Summary

The panel believe this has the potential to be a great initiative. They were impressed with the ambition of the project shown by consultant and client teams. The project is constructed from many individual pieces and can be difficult to understand without a clear statement of the joint objectives for the client and design teams to refer to. The presentation captured a complex project that has the ingredients to become a transformative project for the wider area. The panel advise that this can only achieve its potential when the full range of expertise are assembled and agreed on the key principles for a shared vision.

The MDAs look to design in the service of the social, environmental and economic potential it can help unlock. Through this lens, the following feedback looks to assist the team in lifting the project from the ordinary to the extraordinary. The panel recommend a more integrated thinking between the teams to better project a powerful, unified approach so that the many incremental and site-specific projects can combine to make this a success.

The following feedback has been structured on the themes of project vision, mixed occupier testbeds, movement strategies, Low Line Common & urban greening and future phases. This feedback references across the various consultant workstreams and all feedback should be considered as relevant to all members of the team.

Project Vision

- The project team is large and complex, and the panel would like the team to more clearly agree and state their joint vision and hierarchy of strategies employed to achieve this.
- The panel encourage the team articulate the values that transcend the various teams individual focus. Current clarity over roles and how the various projects support a broader objective is not always clear. The viaduct should be the unifier and the various interventions should map onto a joint framework to highlight how each forms a piece of the intended whole.
- The panel would suggest the team reference how the project can deliver on the Good Growth principles and for the diverse city of Londoners in this key area which offers such a fantastic opportunity both locally and city wide.
- The panel advise that the project 'toolkit' presented could act as a powerful unifier for the various teams and their interventions rather than each consultant having a different set of tools.
- The panel believe that the proposals shown in the various sketches and precedents seem like many small things isolated from each other. Though the panel agree these could be interesting design opportunities, they recommend the team develop a common thread that can be implemented across the various interventions. This

could be achieved through a common material palette or project specific approach to planting or movement strategies.

- The panel encourage the team define what their mission statement is and the real values of this project in addressing the existing tensions highlighted across the viaduct's communities.

Mixed Occupier Testbeds

Engagement

- The panel encourage the team to further embed a culture of collaboration across the diverse client and design teams and utilise co-design as a method of design with the community.
- The panel advise the team to develop their understanding and engagement with the local industries to garner their feedback on the proposals.
- The panel note that now is a great moment to go to the sites and explore the area as a team to test their detailed ideas and assumptions. It would help the team understand even better what's there, the people and the physicality of along the viaduct in context.

The Mix of Users

- The panel understand the team's aspiration to improve the viaduct's mix of users from its current condition. The panel advise that the viaduct is a productive resource for London with many existing occupiers in manufacturing and logistics.
- The panel recommend the team avoid intended or unintended displacement of industry and replacing it with gardens and cafes as suggested in some of the presentation material. The panel encourage the team to acknowledge what already exists there and its value to the local area and London's wider economy.
- The panel agree that the aspirations for this project should include catering to and supporting the existing business and communities by supporting them with complimentary additional uses.
- The panel advise the team to avoid 'ironing out the creases' in the existing uses where they are deemed messy or disruptive. The panel question whether the proposals will move the manufacturing, logistics and other industries out to the margins of London as has been seen elsewhere in the city. The viaduct and its industrial productive uses provide an important tapestry for London's logistics and manufacturing sector. They are under huge pressures to move out due to rising values and the panel encourage the team to accommodate their needs within their proposals.
- The panel would like to see in the presentations more understanding of the working culture of these places, rather than a focus on leisure uses. As was discussed with

the team, there is a risk of moving out productive uses for a monoculture of food and beverage offers, only for these to stand empty due to competition or social changes such as the impacts of Covid-19. Scoresby Street was highlighted as an example where this had happened to the detriment of activity and vitality of the street.

Adaptive Reuse of the Arches

- The panel agree that the proposals for reanimating the arches were architecturally elegant. The panel would encourage the team consider a more diverse range of uses. These could be tested to ensure viable and sustainable activities that support and expand on the existing mix of uses with the viaduct.
- The self-contained spaces under the arches are an interesting piece of work that could be developed to inform other elements in the wider project. For instance, using the galvanised metal as a unifying material not just within the arches, but on interventions in the landscape such as new crossings. This could help stitch together the sense of a cohesive whole across the various elements of the proposals.

Movement Strategy

Conflicting and Overlapping Movement

- The panel recognise that many of the lanes, yards and streets are contested areas, with white vans, deliveries and car repair mixing with cyclists, pedestrians and other uses.
- The panel encourage the team to continue to develop their toolkit of interventions that resolve these conflicts without designing out the existing communities and users.
- The panel suggest the team review their analysis of the existing conditions of some of the spaces to determine whether the 'chaos' described is ongoing businesses providing much needed productive elements to the inner city.
- The panel advise the team to consider carefully the implications for existing users of the area when introducing new traffic controls or landscaping intervention. For example, street tree planting may cause issues for the industrial vehicle movements that operate in the area.
- The panel agree that the photos make clear that there are places where there are no or inadequate pavements and this compound the connectivity issues in the area. A lack of space due to the narrow street widths means that innovative strategies to space sharing and ownership should be explored. For example, traffic free zones, shared surfaces, raised tables and lower kerbs could be investigated to help unlock the opportunities of the area and reset the right of way for users of the space.

Neighbouring Communities

- The presentation describes the viaduct as a collar that chokes, with areas of deprivation shown on maps illustrating the disparities and tensions in the project's

communities. The panel agree that while the team have shown how movement along the Low Line is addressed, there could be more development on the north-south crossing of the viaduct to assist in stitching together the communities either side. The panel believe that by improving these cross movements there is a high chance of improving social integration across the viaduct.

Cycling Network

- The panel agree that the existing cycling network around the viaduct is hard to navigate and proposals to improve the legibility and safety of this network is much welcomed.

Wayfinding

- The panel commend the project wayfinding ambitions and would encourage the team to continue to develop and implement strategies that resolve the key issues around legibility of routes in and around the viaduct.

Low Line Commons and Urban Greening

The Viaduct as a piece of Green Infrastructure

- The panel acknowledge the small interventions proposed but question whether the team are making a bold enough move to transform the viaduct into a cohesive piece of the city's green infrastructure. By exploring what the viaduct means as a single piece of green infrastructure, it can inform and unlock the various smaller proposals that plug into it with more clarity of vision and purpose.
- The panel encourage the team to develop a catalogue of actionable interventions to address and overcome the constraints of the viaduct.
- The panel recommend further clarity is required for the strategy and priorities for the Low Line and its use as a public common ground. The team should clearly high where the priority spaces and interventions are located, and which interventions will connect or support these.
- The panel suggest that within the tool kits developed for the Low Line public realm interventions there should be a study of the constraints and the possibilities along the viaduct. This should emphasise what the boldest moves could be rather than focus on technology or smaller interventions.
- The panel understand that the proposals retain and include mostly dry, sealed and mineral based ground surfaces and the team should review opportunities to provide a more varied ground material in places that can accommodate it.
- The panel recommend the team develop a sustainable urban drainage system which could include unsealing the ground, providing rills, water gardens and more wild planting along the length of the viaduct.
- The panel understand the significant constraints the live railway imposes on the interventions directly on the viaduct but would encourage the team to look for

alternative adjacent spaces where needed to provide additional planting, habitat creation and drainage systems.

- The panel believe the planting strategy focuses on amenity spaces. The panel recommend the team explore opportunities where wilder (and less maintenance heavy) planting could fill the awkward inaccessible spaces. In areas that are more appropriate for people to dwell, more amenity urban greening would be more appropriate.

Maintenance

- The panel advise an efficient maintenance strategy will be key to the ongoing success of the project. Simple solutions that address and maximise the low budget, such as unsealing the ground by removing paving to allow spontaneous planting that require less water, less maintenance and less cost. Areas of community planting should evolve with the community and the elements of the existing mess and spontaneity are part of the area's identity and of great value.
- The panel suggest the proposals be developed with low cost of upkeep in mind to protect against future funding being unavailable.

Future Phases

- The panel understand that the current capital funding is to provide for the initial studies and interventions to be built. The panel would recommend the team consider the long-term management and maintenance of various projects along the Low Line. The panel advise the team to consider which organisations will take responsibility and provide the necessary funding in the future.
- The panel encourage the team develop a long-term framework to allow for proposals to come forward that contribute to the vision for the Low Line beyond this projects programme and funding. A strong set of design guidance captured in a Low Line wide set of toolkits would provide a robust framework for the scheme to grow beyond this initial series of projects. This can inform the planning pipeline of private projects as well as steer any future funding opportunities.
- The panel suggest that the Low Line needs a long-term vision that is publicly accessible, whether on a website or through ongoing stakeholder and community participation and events.
- The panel advise a community based collaborative vision be established to keep the project alive and allow the next few small projects to grow off it.

Next Steps

The Panel would welcome the opportunity to further comment on this exciting and aspirational scheme.