

BANKSIDE MEETING REPORT

The first event in the eighth series took place at Bankside in Southwark, and looked at the role Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) can play in improving commercial areas, and in contributing to neighbourhood planning and localism. Presentations were made by Peter Williams, Chief Executive, whose company The Means manages the BID, and Graham Morrison of Allies and Morrison, who have designed a number of building in the area, and whose offices are now on Southwark Street above a restaurant they have also developed. The group walked round a number of streets where improvements have been made as a result of the BID, and were impressed by the transformation that has taken place over the last decade.



History of BIDs

BIDs in the UK are about good places becoming better, building on town centre management, and work closely with the local authority, responding to opportunities. The idea of BIDs was imported from North America as a means of funding town centre management after the initial support had begun to run out. It has been



taken up successfully in 112 places, 24 of which are in London. BIDs are introduced after a ballot of the businesses who are going to be charged a levy on the Business Rate, and 83% have been successful. The average turnout was 45% with two thirds voting yes.



Public realm improvements

Interestingly only 64 of the BIDs are in town centres, and 26 are industrial estates, with the rest covering mixed areas. The average turnover is £400,000 coming from around 400 businesses.

Structure of Bankside

The meeting took place in a space provided by Land Securities as part of their Section 106 agreement on the redevelopment of St Christopher's House. The rentals on this space provide the BID with the funds to employ a Corporate Social Responsibility officer, and is good example of how the BID can add value. The BID is run by a board which includes representatives of major property owners like Land Securities, as well as representatives of the Bankside Residents' Forum, which has some 250 members. Hence the BID provides a useful element of neighbourhood management.

Bankside was one of the original London pilots, and so benefited from funding from the London Development Agency to get the process going, for example through research and a visioning event to identify priorities. In Bankside some 75-80 businesses are actively involved in the programme's management, or around a fifth, which makes it easier to retain local support. There is an elected Member from Southwark on the board an annual Summit, and a number of working parties that bring businesses and the Council together.

The Bankside levy raises £5 million over five years, through a supplement of 1.4% and the aim is to match this with other funding. There is an increased focus on value for money, but the scope is quite broad, going beyond the basics of 'clean, green and safe'. Thus the BID manages collaborative work on waste management, public art and vocational training. An innovative project is the Bankside Urban Forest, a £4 million scheme to upgrade linkages under the railway arches which cut Bankside off from the rest of Southwark.

Outcomes

Bankside has benefited from a huge tide of investment as SE1 has become part of London's central business district. It also has become a major visitor attraction, with six million visitors a year, thanks both to the Thameside walkway, which now stretches down to Tower Bridge and through to Greenwich, and the Millennium Bridge. The Tate Modern may have put Bankside on the map, but it was on a rising tide.

There are some 25 development projects underway, totalling some £5 billion of investment and accounting for 4,500 construction jobs. It has been calculated from the current rateable value of the building value of c. £8 billion could



Temporary Urban Physic Garden



increase by as much as 50% over the next five years. The BID therefore plays an important role in dealing with some of the ‘pain and gain’ from development, for example communicating what work is underway.



‘Meanwhile uses’ are being introduced on some sites, and following a successful ‘urban orchard’ last year, a site has been turned into a ‘urban physic garden’. The slogan is ‘a better Bankside for a better Southwark’, and the boundaries are now spreading southwards.

Investment

Graham Morrison, co founder of the architects and urban planning firm of Allies and Morrison, described how he had gone from being a resident of Southwark for some 30 years to being a large employer. He had started with upgrading Festival Hall, and then won the job of redeveloping St Christophers House, a bleak 60s office building that cut off the river and made Southwark Street feel very depressing.



Three large office blocks with shops and restaurants below were designed to open up new linkages. The upgrading of the public realm has played a key role in attracting occupiers, and the space was taken by RBS and IPC Magazines. His firm is involved in a number of smaller developments including a striking tower, with one flat per floor that they are proposing for a site they own.

Key elements in the regeneration of the area have been:

- New connections, including the Millennium Bridge, the river walkway, and the new Southwark Station on the Jubilee Line
- Rising property values as the area has changed its image and appeal
- A flexible approach on the part of the local authority who had previously resisted almost everything including the recreation of the Globe Theatre, one of the early projects.

Discussion

The discussion dealt with both the process of regeneration and the value of BIDs, as well as how funds could be used to improve suburban town centres.

Regeneration process Though big projects like the Tate Modern get the credit, in fact the process started with much smaller improvements in an incremental way, taking advantage of low property values (for example the conversion of Kirkaldy's Testing and Experimenting Works into workspace above a museum, undertaken by the Industrial Buildings Preservation Trust), and the development of space behind as warehouses. Small firms like URBED moved in when the environment was too depressing to attract major occupiers.

There is a danger that the lack of an overall plan could mean the loss of what makes the area distinctive, but as ownership is fragmented, development can only happen incrementally. Instead of a masterplan you need a few basic rules. What matters is getting the street pattern and linkages right and ensuring that the quality is good enough. The Use Classes Order pays no attention to either quality or the level of enterprise, and hence is not very helpful in the kinds of situations where a mix of uses is called for.

TEN Group members liked the qualities of 'serendipity' and the creative feel which have resulted. The maverick planner Fred Manson took some credit, for standing up to politicians who would have gone for more simplistic and possibly unrealistic objectives (such as flattening the old Bankside power station, and putting up three storey houses instead.



Business engagement Bankside is a classic example of how to involve businesses positively in the development and improvement of their neighbourhood. As a result it has won funding to be one of the first pilots for business led neighbourhood planning. The discussion brought out a number of lessons for how to engage businesses which would apply more generally:

- Do not assume you know what concerns businesses most but ask them (which is where the visioning event and market research before the BID was set up proved invaluable).



- Businesses are not homogenous, (and different types, such as landlords or large employers need to be courted separately, for example by bringing landlords onto the Board).
- Inertia or complacency is the real enemy (and in Ilford it helped that the local paper focussed on the town centre's negative image).
- Working in partnership is key, which means continually sharing credit.
- Social networking helps, and so does providing businesses with a voice.
- One of the main incentives for improving the public realm is staff retention (and Bankside has become a much more popular place to work as a result of area improvements).
- Bankside BID has bridged the gap with residents through a Forum, which is important in relationships with the local authority.

Town centre renewal fund There was broad agreement with the principles set out in a paper Nicholas Falk had drafted. However, the Group wanted it concentrated on smaller or local centres where a turnaround was possible, and it could suffer from being over-restricted. Some new ideas emerged:

- Some of the money should be used as a Business Loan Fund for outer London business or to fund seven to ten managed business centres, such as the Chocolate Factory, in different parts of Outer London, where creative businesses might cluster together.
- It is particularly important to focus on the secondary and tertiary frontages, where in many cases there is a need to consolidate retail functions, and turn the areas over to housing (particularly where there are good public transport links).
- The funds could be used to support neighbourhood plans, and for example could help a cohousing group get off the ground. They could also be used for launching a BID, as match funding, rather as had happened in Bankside.

Future meetings and the TEN Symposium

The next meeting of TEN is the European Study Tour to **Helsinki and Stockholm** on the 21st to 23rd September. An outline programme with details of flights has been circulated. We will then meet in October in **Lambeth** at a meeting hosted by member Sue Foster. There are two possible dates; Friday 14th or Friday 21st October.

The **TEN Symposium** will be in the last couple of weeks of November. The programme was discussed and the following points have been agreed on:

- The venue will be The Building Centre
- The event will run from 2pm to 6pm followed by drinks reception
- Sponsors are being sort in order to make the event free to attend – Pat Hayes is currently working on this.

- The event title will be 'Learning from Scandinavia'
- From the long list of themes three were highlighted; Tackling Social Problems, Changing Travel Behaviour and Providing Clearer Political Leadership
- Douglas Gordon and representatives from Schmidt, Hammer and Lassen architects and/or the development arm of Ikea were added to the possible list of speakers – John East to provide contact details
- Event to be invite only and members are to supply contact details
- We should aim to do something innovative/different in the workshops from the usual talking shops. Ideas included focussing on a site and looking at how you would develop it without the restrictions authorities operate under and then look at how we remove the barriers that stop us from doing it like that. Another suggestion was to focus on a Scandinavian scheme and see how it would fit into our context or all look at one case study but with different constraints to see how the output might differ.

We will look to hold the final two meetings of the eighth series in January and March.

Appendix A - Participants and apologies

Participants

Chris Berry, Chief Planning & Regeneration Officer, LB Redbridge

John East, Divisional Director: Development Services, London Borough of Newham

Nicholas Falk, Director, URBED

Sue Foster, Executive Director of Housing, Regeneration & Environment, Lambeth Council

Karen Galey, Head of Economic Development, LB Waltham Forest

Pat Hayes, Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing, Ealing Council

David Hennings, Head of Regeneration, Catalyst

Tom Jeffrey, Director, Environment, Culture and Public Participation, Croydon Council

Mark Lucas, Head of Regeneration, Redbridge Council

Seema Manchanda, Assistant Director Planning Services, Wandsworth Borough Council

Graham Morrison, Partner, Allies and Morrison

Darren Richards, Head of Planning and Transportation, LB Sutton

Peter Williams, CEO, Better Bankside

Anne Wyatt, Project Manager, URBED

Apologies

Marc Dorfman, Assistant Director Planning & Regeneration, Haringey Council

Daniel Ratchford, Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure, LB Sutton

Stephen Tapper, Assistant Director of Place Shaping, Enfield Council

Ed Watson, Assistant Director Planning and Public Protection, Camden Council