

Placemaking vision with £5bn development pipeline

Following last issue's feature by Lee Higson of Eric Parry Architects on their Salisbury Square development, Lady Lucy French sets out the ten year masterplan for the Fleet Street Quarter



ABOVE:
Ludgate Circus BEFORE



Ludgate Circus AFTER

An unprecedented development pipeline is set to transform the skyline and buildings across the Fleet Street Quarter's 43 hectare footprint. Over the next five years over 3m sq ft of Grade A commercial space will be delivered, which will support the 25,000 additional workers set to come into this area of the City by 2028.

This next phase of reinvention will bolster the Fleet Street Quarter's economic contribution to the City of London, boosting and cementing its important role as a major hub for employment. The Fleet Street Quarter BID alongside developers, investors and key stakeholders are spearheading this movement, facilitating change in this part of London by bringing together public and private sectors.

For this once-in-a-generation opportunity to be truly seized upon, and to support an expanded workforce, the spaces in-between these extraordinary schemes need upgrading. To realise its full potential, the Fleet Street Quarter needs to provide a stronger sense of place and movement.

There are pre-existing challenges to overcome too. Like many

post-pandemic global cities, the Fleet Street Quarter needs to adjust how flows of people and spaces for reflection are incorporated into external environs. Currently, vehicular traffic dominates our streets, wayfinding could be improved and there is a distinct lack of green space. Finding solutions to these problems will be critical in drawing workers back into the city.

This November, in collaboration with Gensler, NRP and UP Projects, the Fleet Street Quarter BID unveiled a public realm and placemaking vision formulating a strategy that lays out how this can be achieved. The proposals are ambitious and bold, outlining what could be the biggest transformation this part of the City has seen since Bazalgette's Embankment 150 years ago.

Built very much in-line with the City of London's Draft City Plan 2040, the proposals match the scale and ambition of the development pipeline. Blending vision with pragmatism, this public realm strategy is the next natural step in the development of the Fleet Street Quarter.

Currently, this estimated £80m proposal remains purely a vision. The proposals are still subject to further feasibility studies, >>>



Lady Lucy French is CEO at Fleet Street Quarter

RIGHT:
Holborn Circus BEFORE



BELOW:
Holborn Circus AFTER



>>> consultation and exploration on the sources of funding with the City of London Corporation, Transport for London and stakeholders across the area.

The vision provides a 10-year masterplan to transform an urban commercial centre. 34 opportunities to upgrade public realm are identified in the vision, creating a destination of the future by seamlessly unifying the external environs across the Quarter.

The proposals aim to build a community founded on place and establish a destination of choice – for both business and leisure. It reinvigorates the Fleet Street Quarter’s urban fabric by building on its strengths; the area is already a significant hub, boasting a strategic central London location, rich history and unrivalled connectivity. This public realm vision amplifies that position, fostering greater economic resilience.

The vision sets four site wide ambitions, creating a robust framework towards achieving these aspirations. Proposals aspire to enrich the connections, nurture public realm, enhance biodiversity and drive activity. The overarching mission is to develop an inclusive, sustainable and innovative district.

Central to the vision is Fleet Street itself, a Roman thoroughfare and the beating commercial heart of the area. Fleet Street has built a foundation as one of London’s more recognisable thoroughfares and is the identifier of our district, but requires a

series of future-proofing changes.

Exemplifying the area, Fleet Street currently prioritises vehicular traffic and affords pedestrians limited time or space. Our proposals seek to reorder this relationship, with a long-term view to limiting vehicular traffic. An improved pedestrian experience would see widened pavements, tree planting and increased seating.

Fleet Street would be reimagined by prioritising pedestrians as the primary mover, encouraging dwell time with seating and softening the experience with green space. Changes would allow workers and visitors space to soak up spectacular views of St. Paul’s, whilst increased footfall could drive the retail and hospitality recovery.

Across the Fleet Street Quarter, the vision sets goals to reduce service and delivery vehicles by 75%, whilst doubling safe cycling routes. An additional 3,000 sqm of pedestrian space is targeted, to improve journeys through the area for workers and visitors.

With Farringdon and the Elizabeth Line on its doorstep, Holborn Circus is another location that is earmarked for radical change but provides a different perspective. In recent years, the junction has seen incremental improvements but there is an opportunity to unify change and create a destination in its own right.



LEFT:
Blackfriars BEFORE

BELOW:
Blackfriars AFTER



With an eye to meeting biodiversity targets, our proposals envisage a bold transformation creating, 'Holborn Forest'. Tree planting and art installations would create an urban oasis and a place to unwind in this western side of the City. Holborn Forest would diversify the out-of-office experience, helping create a desirable location for occupiers, residents and visitors.

Sustainability is at the core of the vision. Many of the developments in the pipeline target exceptional sustainability credentials – it is essential the external environment responds to this in a complementary manner. Throughout the area, the vision aspires to a 25% tree count increase and 50% increase in ground-floor planting. Together, this would reduce pollution, cut traffic noise and double the plant, insect and bird species in the Fleet Street Quarter.

The proposals go deeper than major junctions and streets. The Fleet Street Quarter is a place with a deep past and is characterised by a fascinating medieval street pattern. Ceremonial routes, gateways and thoroughfares are connected by winding lanes, public squares and quaint alleyways.

These pockets of our past are hidden gems today. Our vision

reignites this vibrant network and repurposes rich historical places. A multifaceted urban fabric of courts, churchyards and plazas presents an opportunity to promote social interaction, community engagement and inspire spatial experiences.

Gough Square is one example. The forecourt of Dr. Johnson's House, Gough Square – home of the English dictionary – is a landmark cultural site. The vision seeks to celebrate this with additional seating and greening. Gough Square would be transformed into a cultural hotspot, driving activity and strengthening the Fleet Street Quarter's cultural offering.

Playhouse Yard, Bride Lane and Carter Lane are all pockets also highlighted for change, to improve experiences for workers, visitors and residents. Our vision targets a 50% increase in footfall to historic and cultural destinations that in turn would help grow a weekend economy.

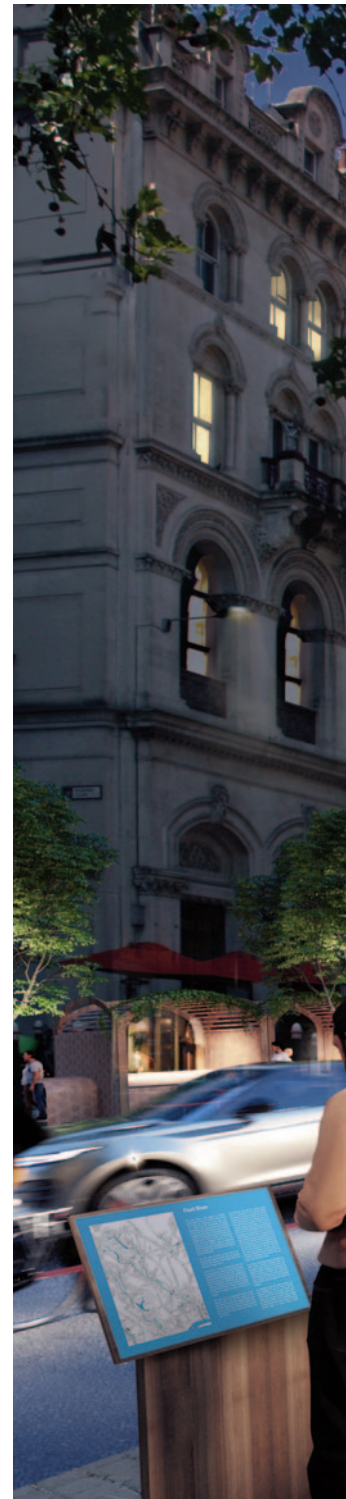
There is a wealth of history, culture and intrigue in the Fleet Street Quarter, from Sir Christopher Wren's St. Bride's Church to some of our oldest pubs, such as Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese. An enhanced public realm will showcase these cultural assets, highlighting our role as custodians of an unrivalled history and driver

>>>

RIGHT:
Fleet Street BEFORE



BELOW:
Fleet Street AFTER



>>> for the future.

Our vision seeks to put the Fleet Street Quarter back on the map as a destination for both work and play. Enhanced public realm could increase footfall, bring culture to the forefront and create an outstanding environment. If pursued, this vision could transform the Fleet Street Quarter as a destination beyond a 9 to 5 task-based destination, into a vibrant hub with a thriving

night-time economy and weekend visitors.

The Fleet Street Quarter is riding on the crest of an exciting new wave. Backed by the invaluable support of the City of London, the BID is bringing together a coalition of the willing, eager to drive change. Together we are curators of an exciting future, pushing to create an inclusive, diverse, innovative and sustainable district. ■



LEFT:
Holborn Viaduct BEFORE

BELOW:
Holborn Viaduct AFTER

