

VISIONING VAUXHALL

BUSINESS WORKSHOP | 29 JULY 2015

A workshop for businesses in the Vauxhall area, organised in association with Vauxhall One BID, took place as part of the Visioning Vauxhall project on 29 July 2015. The workshop was held in Counter restaurant and was attended by a range of businesses in the local area, with over 40 representatives providing their views.

A short introductory presentation provided an update on regeneration in Vauxhall, the range of support on offer for local businesses and set out the feedback from previous consultation events. A summary of ideas put forward in response to each of the questions asked at the workshop is included below.



Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners

What do you consider the current challenges and issues for businesses in Vauxhall?

Popular answers to this question included the lack of visibility and advertising possibilities for businesses. Other concerns included the low quality environment and difficult pedestrian routes. Key concerns and challenges included:

- Communicating with commuters.
- The poor physical link through the viaduct.
- The lack of visibility for businesses.
- A lack of pedestrian crossings around the gyratory means that the area is hard to navigate and routes can take too long because of the staggered crossings and long wait at these lights.
- Businesses need better passing trade – some are concerned about changes to the gyratory reducing the number of people and vehicles passing their businesses.
- There was a feeling that there is not enough affordable office space for small businesses to grow in Vauxhall.
- The area has bad air and noise pollution.
- There are poor amenities and services to complement businesses such as a lack of a post office, bank, and ATMs.
- Routes and places to visit should be better sign-posted to encourage tourists.
- There is a need for more full-time jobs for local people.
- The shopping parades should be supported and protected as leaseholders will be vulnerable to rent increases in the area as values rise.

"How do people find us?"

What impact will VNEB developments, removal of the gyratory and transport interchange improvements have on businesses?

Generally business owners were positive about the changes taking place in Vauxhall including greater job opportunities and more people in the area. However, some specific concerns were highlighted:

- More businesses mean more competition.
- The building work and construction traffic will be unpleasant.
- There is concern among some businesses about a changing customer base.
- The quality and identity of Vauxhall must be protected.
- The sense of Vauxhall as a destination should be enhanced but there is a need for other complementary activities to keep people here for a whole day. The great pubs, bars and the street food market should be advertised.
- There are a limited number of decent adaptable old buildings for cheaper office space.
- Some were concerned that changes to the gyratory would reduce their passing trade but recognised that the environment needed improving.
- The types of uses at the ground level of new buildings is crucial to make new public spaces attractive places to spend time.
- The pedestrian spaces are going to become even busier with office workers, residents and people using the area as a transport interchange.

"Vehicle movement during construction will be very difficult"

"The only way is up"

VISIONING VAUXHALL

BUSINESS WORKSHOP | 29 JULY 2015

What opportunities will be created and how can businesses position themselves to take advantage of these?

Business owners had a good level of understanding about how the area would develop in the future. A number of opportunities were highlighted:

- The sense that Vauxhall will feel like it is part of central London is good for business.
- The perception of Vauxhall for visitors and for business is already improving.
- The public realm improvements will help to improve the environment in the area. Can we look at opportunities for public art?
- Opportunities for local businesses to get into the supply chain for construction need to be promoted and enhanced further. For example, could we enforce the use of local cafés instead of on-site canteens? Could maintenance contracts be local?
- There is new space for businesses opening up which is good, but will this be affordable? Space should be protected for local businesses.

How can amenity for employees in the local area be improved?

Many business owners said Vauxhall was a good place to work but there were a number of ideas suggested in order to improve the area for employees:

- Create somewhere to shop including banks, a post office, a WH Smith, and a pharmacy.
- There is a need for more night life that bridges the gap between work time and late night clubbing. Assets such as the Royal Oak and the Black Dog are great.
- Better public spaces with seating to spend lunch times. Some sheltered spaces in bad weather would be supported.
- Could there be a book, leaflet or app that promotes local bars and restaurants?
- Affordable lunch time restaurant options.
- A food market would have an incredibly wide audience.
- There is a need to ensure there is social and community infrastructure for both workers and residents.

What initiatives would improve the business and trading environment in the area?

A series of initiatives were suggested to help the business and trading environment:

- Shorten the length of walking routes to get to businesses by making the routes more direct and reducing the phasing of lights.
- Subsidised space for local business.
- Lower business rates!
- Starting networking events for local businesses - is there a forum?
- Create an App for Vauxhall or advertising space for local businesses.
- There should be a business hub like 'Second Home' with hot desking and hireable spaces.
- Could there be ambassadors for the area around the station area? Either provided by the BID or passionate local residents.
- There is a need for a taxi rank. Cabs don't circulate around here and there is nowhere to pick one up from.
- There should be somewhere to park a car.
- There needs to be improved relationships between local businesses and the larger stakeholders such as Transport for London and the Greater London Authority.
- The area needs to sell itself more with better marketing for 'Vauxhall 'Midtown'.
- There should be a strategy for protecting spaces for small businesses, meanwhile uses and start-ups such as in the arches and in empty shops.
- There needs to be a better sense of safety and security and consideration for vulnerable people and young people.
- There is a potential conflict between delivery vehicles and cyclists - safe cycling routes and designated delivery areas are important.
- There needs to be a wider range of business space - not just grade A office space in the new developments. What about retailers and non-office businesses?
- We need to ensure that not all of the arches become restaurants - these are important spaces for a sustainable local economy.

"Local businesses need better space to advertise"

VISIONING VAUXHALL

BUSINESS WORKSHOP | 29 JULY 2015

How would you like to see the public realm improved? What are your priorities for the transport interchange and for creating a comfortable environment?

The businesses and stakeholders suggested a number of ways to improve the public realm in the area:

- The riverside was highlighted as a priority to improve. The roads and railway act as a barrier to accessing it.
- There needs to be better bike racks across the area with CCTV. It was suggested that some people are frightened of using the racks in the arches because of theft.
- There needs to be more space and stopping places along the Cycle Super Highway. As the demographic of the area changes there will be more cyclists and they need more space and clear signage.
- There needs to be better refuse collection and this should be coordinated for all businesses.
- There should be better street cleaning at key points such as Friday and Saturday morning after the clubs kick out.
- The parks and green spaces need to be updated with new sports facilities, seating and planting.
- The whole area needs to be greener with trees planted on the west side of the viaduct.
- Streets need to be made comfortable and attractive and de-cluttered.
- Reducing the speed of the traffic and increasing the priority of pedestrians will improve the public realm.

A number of key improvements for the transport interchange were also identified. These included:

- Improving the shelter and seating areas.
- Ensuring that the interchange between modes remains easy.
- There should be analysis done of the busiest bus stops to ensure there is most space and seating around these.
- There needs to be wheelchair and buggy access to the rail, tube and bus.
- The pedestrian routes need to be more family friendly.
- There should be an entrance open 24 hours to the east of the viaduct to the railway and tube.

What are the priority moves?

The groups identified a number of priority moves:

- Improve the physical connections in the area, particularly for pedestrians. Routes under the railway are of particular importance and the general quality of the public realm.
- There must be a space or means of communicating with the large numbers of people using the transport interchange for local businesses. This space should provide an area to advertise new businesses, existing businesses and encourage people to visit destinations in the area.
- While the new development is important, the existing character, diversity and identity of Vauxhall should be protected.
- There should be more public open space that feels friendly and inviting. The square outside the station will be crucial to this.

Next steps

The ideas set out within this document represent business owners' views from the workshop. The ideas and feedback generated during the workshop will be used to inform TfL and Lambeth proposals within the Vauxhall area, including proposals for the new transport interchange and bus station and removal of the gyratory.

The ideas will also be fed into the development of the Visioning Vauxhall prospectus, a community brief for ongoing changes to the Vauxhall area, and to inform development in the future. A series of events will be taking place throughout the summer of 2015 and will be advertised on the lovevaux.com website. The key images for the prospectus will be displayed at an exhibition in autumn 2015 to inform the final prospectus.