

Riverside Ward Councillors

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PROPOSAL TO AMEND SOUTHWARK STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY 2016-2020 TO REMOVE SHAD THAMES FROM THE BANKSIDE, BOROUGH AND LONDON BRIDGE 'STRATEGIC CULTURAL AREA' ZONE AND RECLASSIFY IT AS A 'LOCAL CENTRE'

INTRODUCTION

1. Members of the Licensing Committee will be aware of major concerns regarding the recommended appropriate closing hours for licenced premises in the Shad Thames area (as set out in the current Southwark Statement of Licensing Policy).
2. For licensing purposes, Shad Thames is considered a strategic cultural area (located within the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge zone) and the policy therefore considers the area suitable for the latest and most lenient suggested closing hours.
3. Although the merits of each application are subject to rigorous consideration by the Licensing Committee, the current classification provides policy guidance on closing times for applicants and local residents which are, in the opinion of Ward Councillors, never appropriate for such a densely populated residential area.
4. This results in the Licensing Committee being asked to repeatedly consider the same objections and concerns in regard to each and every new licence application in and around Shad Thames in order to justify routine deviation from policy.
5. Local residents and Ward Councillors are therefore seeking a minor variation to exclude Shad Thames from the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge strategic cultural area (for the purposes of licensing only) and to reclassify it as a 'local centre' in its own right.
6. This simple revision to the current Statement of Licensing Policy will assist the Licensing Committee, prospective applicants and local residents by providing appropriate guidance as to the acceptable closing hours of licensed premises and address the issue in a strategic way rather than on a continuous case-by-case basis.
7. This proposal has been produced by Ward Councillors following extremely helpful and constructive dialogue between the Chair of the Licensing Committee (Cllr Hamvas), Council Officers, Ward Councillors and local residents.

BACKGROUND

Licensing Policy

8. The Southwark Statement of Licensing Policy ('the policy') recommends appropriate operating hours for each type of premises and is 'zoned' based upon four groups of local

planning area classifications: major town centres and strategic cultural areas, district town centres, local centres and small shopping parades, and residential areas.

9. The purpose of the policy is *inter alia* to provide guidance for the applicants of new licenses and to inform local residents and licensed operators how their needs will be addressed. This includes “suggested closing times” for all nine categories of licensed premises for each area classifications (paragraph 153 and table 2 of the policy).
10. In accordance with the Licensing Act 2003, the local authority is required to update its statement of licensing policy every five years, to keep the policy under continuous review and revise as appropriate between updates. The officers’ report, which was considered by the Licensing Committee on 2nd November 2015, stated (at paragraph 4):

“Each authority is also required to keep the statement of policy under review throughout each five year period and make any revisions it considers appropriate”

11. Shad Thames is included in the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge zone (‘the zone’). Although some parts of this zone are also classified as district town centres, the suggested later closing times of a strategic cultural area apply. This includes suggested Fri - Sat closing times of 0100 for restaurants and cafes; 0000 for public houses and wine bars; and 0300 for nightclubs.

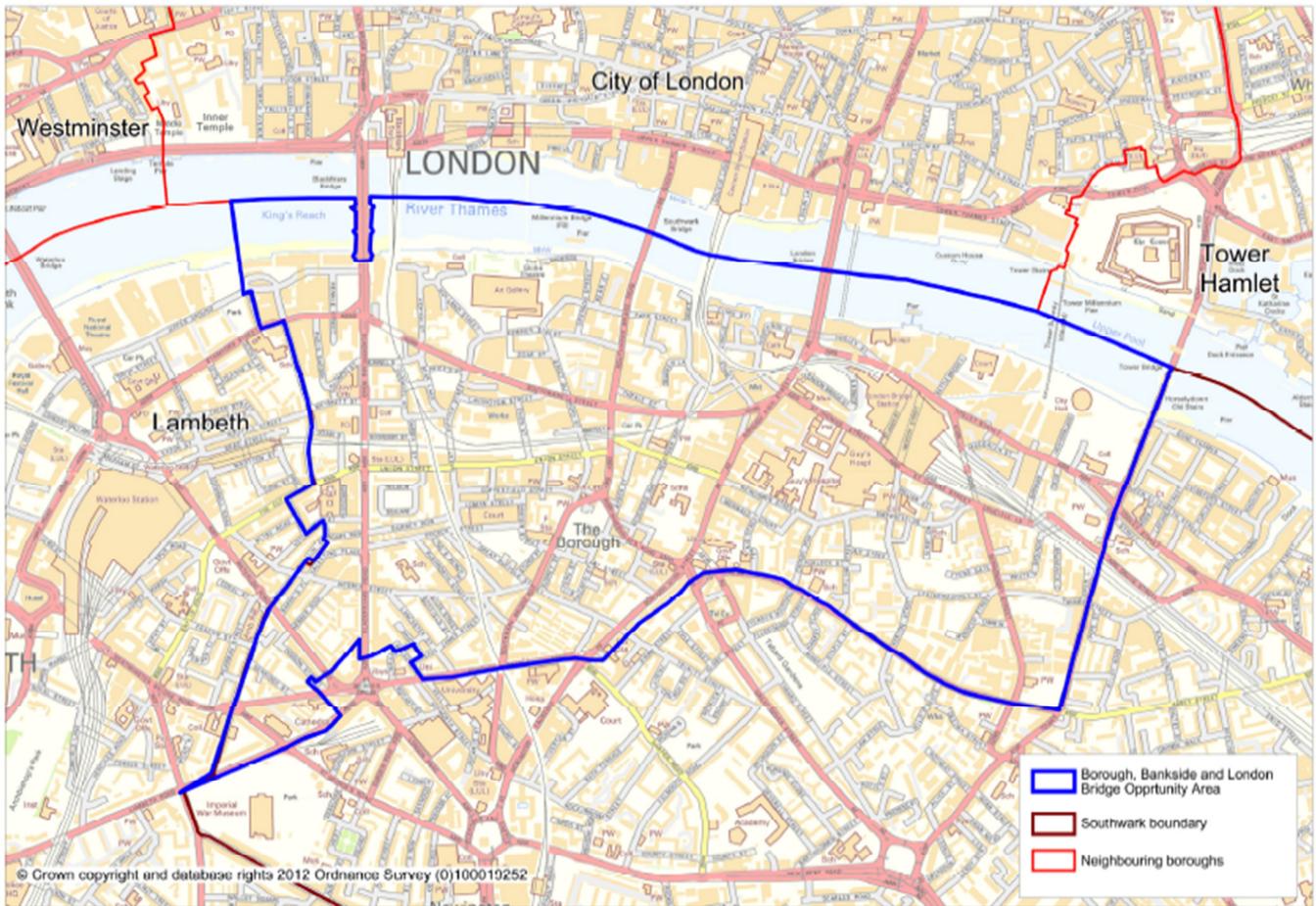
Licensing Issues in Shad Thames

12. Shad Thames has historically been considered for its suitability to be designated as a cumulative impact policy (‘CIP’) area.
13. Although there are considerable issues of noise, disturbance and low level anti-social behaviour in Shad Thames, there has not been sufficient historical evidence of serious crime and disorder to warrant a CIP designation.
14. While there has been limited enforcement action taken against particular premises in the past, it is accepted that the present issues are cumulative owing to the nature of the premises in the area which are typically small scale and often independently run.

DESIGNATION OF SHAD THAMES

15. As noted above, Shad Thames is included in the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge strategic cultural area and it is this planning area classification which has been applied in Southwark’s Statement of Licensing Policy.
16. However, it is important to note that the boundary of the strategic cultural area in this locality is not coterminous with the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge Opportunity Area. The opportunity area does not include Shad Thames (the eastern boundary of which is Tower Bridge Road – see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Bankside, Borough and London Bridge Opportunity Area



17. Furthermore, Shad Thames is one of only two areas within the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge strategic cultural area to not also have dual categorisation as a District Town Centre (the other being an area east of Bermondsey Street south of crucifix lane and west of Tower Bridge Road; although that area is included within the Opportunity Area boundary).

CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAD THAMES

18. Shad Thames has a number of unique geographical, demographical, cultural and architectural characteristics which are more comparable to a 'residential area' or 'local centre' than to a 'strategic cultural area' or 'district town centre' as defined in the statement of licensing policy.

Population Density

19. The compact and densely populated area of Shad Thames (bounded by Tower Bridge Road to the west, the River Thames to the north, St Saviour's dock to the east and Tooley Street to the south) has 2,291 registered electors in an area of 0.095km².

20. The neighbouring area from London Bridge to Tower Bridge Road (bounded by the river to the north and the railway line to the south) has less than a quarter of the population (510 registered electors) and is almost twice the size (at 0.157 km²).

Land Use

21. Shad Thames (as defined above) is predominantly residential (mostly warehouse conversions) with a limited number of small scale, mostly independent, retail or leisure uses.

22. The London Bridge area, however, is principally a commercial district with a range of large corporate office premises, high-street retail units, a major railway station and tourist attractions.

23. Although the Shad Thames and London Bridge areas are geographically adjacent, these distinct and differing land uses make clear that the two areas have wildly varying characteristics and should not be considered in the same licensing zone.

Character and Culture

24. Shad Thames does, however, share many characteristics with the areas designated as 'local centres' within the policy. The Blue, Dulwich Village and Nunhead, like Shad Thames, has a similar mix of residential and commercial uses which are typically local independent shops, cafes, restaurants and smaller offices.

25. As with the other 'local centres', Shad Thames has a distinct sense of community, cultural identity and local heritage.

26. Shad Thames is located within two conservation areas (Tower Bridge and St Saviour's Dock) and is adjacent to the World Heritage site of Tower Bridge, making it one of the most iconic and historical parts of Southwark.

Design and Architecture

27. The problems associated with licensed premises in the densely populated area of Shad Thames are exacerbated by the design and geography of the area.

28. Originally constructed as warehouses to service the docks, the narrow streets and high buildings were designed so that noise would travel upwards, enabling communication from the streets below into the warehouses above.

29. The conversion of these former warehouses to residential use, coupled with the cobbled streets and the river bounce, creates a 'canyon effect' whereby noise (even at low levels) travels easily throughout the area and echoes along the narrow streets.

Noise and Anti-Social Behaviour

30. Riverside Ward Councillors receive regular complaints about noise and low level anti-social behaviour which is directly related to alcohol and licensed premises. These issues

occur especially as customers leave restaurants or bars and wander around the historic streets or along the river late at night.

31. The late opening of licensed premises also causes direct noise nuisance from staff and waste movement (particularly the emptying of bottles into external bins) following closing.
32. The Shad Thames Residents Association (STRA) have an ongoing noise survey in the area which collects complaints from residents and which confirm that much of this noise stems directly from licensed premises.
33. Residents do accept that some limited noise nuisance is a part of living in such a wonderful area, but more appropriate suggested closing hours would lead to significantly improved amenity for local residents.

PROPOSAL

34. The Southwark Statement of Licensing Policy rightly provides guidance for applicants and residents alike as to the closing times of licensed premises which are likely to be considered acceptable in each type of local area.
35. However, in the case of Shad Thames, the local planning area classification applied in the policy does not reflect the appropriate zone for the characteristics of the area for the following reasons:
 - Shad Thames is not included in the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge Opportunity Area (whereas the rest of the zone is);
 - Shad Thames is not a designated District Town Centre (whereas, the majority of the zone has this dual categorisation);
 - Shad Thames shares many community, cultural and heritage characteristics with the areas designated as 'local centres';
 - Shad Thames has a considerably higher population density than other parts of the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge strategic cultural area zone;
 - Unlike the rest of the Bankside, Borough and London Bridge zone, Shad Thames is primarily residential and not commercial;
 - The architecture of Shad Thames creates a canyon effect, amplifying noise across the area and into residential dwellings;
 - Shad Thames experiences considerable impact from cumulative noise and low-level anti-social behaviour issues associated with licensed premises.
36. For the reasons listed above, Ward Councillors propose that the Licensing Committee apply its statutory duty to review the Southwark Statement of Licensing Policy and consider the following minor revision:

Page 38: Table 2 – Suggested closing times of licensed premises:

*In the second column (“Major town centres and strategic cultural area”) after:
“Bankside, Borough and London Bridge”, add: “(excluding Shad Thames)”*

*In the third column (“Local centres and small shopping parades”) at end, add:
“Shad Thames”*

37. This proposal would have the effect of rezoning Shad Thames as a ‘local centre’ with suggested closing times of licensed premises which are much more appropriate for the nature of this high density residential area, bringing the area’s classification (insofar as it applies to the licensing policy) in line with comparable areas elsewhere in the borough.
38. If agreed by the Licensing Committee, it is understood that this revision would be subject to wider consultation and final approval by Council Assembly. Ward Councillors are very willing to assist with both of these further stages.

CONCLUSION

39. Neither Ward Councillors nor local residents are averse to licensed premises within Shad Thames *per se*, we simply believe that it is important for applicants, residents and committee members alike that the designation is appropriate for the area.
40. Ward Councillors would like to express gratitude to the officers and Chair of the Licensing Committee for their engagement on this issue and collaborative efforts to find a suitable resolution.
41. Ward Councillors would be delighted to explore this proposal further with the full Licensing Committee at the next meeting on 26th April. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information in the meantime.

**Councillors Anood Al-Samerai, Eliza Mann and Hamish McCallum
Liberal Democrat Councillors for Riverside Ward**