

# South Bank Center Masterplan, London

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## Abstract

In 1999, Space Syntax Limited was appointed by the South Bank Centre to advise on the masterplan being developed for the area by Rick Mather Architects.

Today, the South Bank attracts over 6 million visitors a year. During 2000, the BA London Eye and Tate Modern have established the area as a major destination for Londoners and visitors. The construction of new pedestrian bridges, linking Charing Cross to the South Bank will further improve access to the area. However, the principal problem that the masterplan has addressed is the way in which the current spatial layout of the area serves to separate different user 'constituencies' - commuters, artsgoers, tourists, local residents and workers - onto different routes at different times of the day.

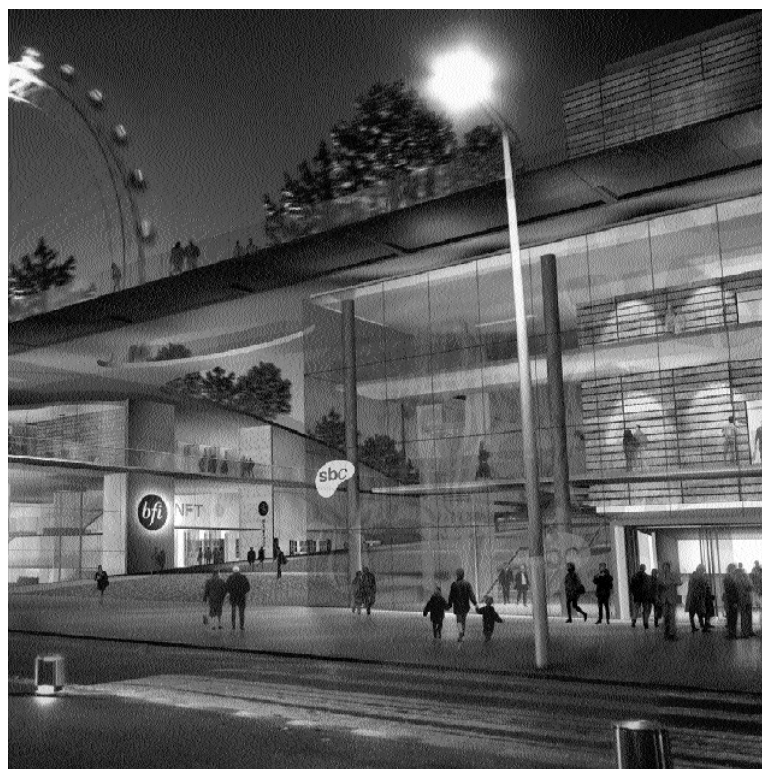
This separation is quite unlike the mix of different users found in traditional urban areas and town centres. The result is that much of the space of the South Bank is unused for much of the time and, when it is busy, its use is 'mono-functional'. Underused spaces are then colonised by anti-social uses which further deter through movement by local residents and workers as well as by tourists and commuters. The result is a spiral of decline in which there are relatively few locations in which commercial, retail or catering uses are viable. This means that the critical 'multiplier' functions that take advantage of passing trade in traditional urban areas have never succeeded in becoming established in the South Bank area.

Based on this diagnosis, Space Syntax made a series of recommendations that needed to be resolved if the downward spiral was to be reversed.

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The recommendations included:

1. reintegration of the South Bank area with Waterloo International Station
2. creation of east-west integration within the Hungerford/Waterloo Bridge/riverwalk triangle
3. establishment of a well-balanced mix of different user constituencies
4. provision of new attractors in integrated locations, to take advantage of passing flows.

The Rick Mather Architects masterplan for the South Bank Centre has embraced the recommendations made by Space Syntax and proposes a number of key strategies to achieve an intelligible and integrated pedestrian route structure.

The two core features of the masterplan are:

5. a simplified pedestrian route network providing direct connections between main attractors
6. new and refurbished facilities throughout the area fronting seamlessly onto the pedestrian network.

The fundamental move in the masterplan, so far as public space is concerned, is the recreation of Belvedere Road as a pedestrian 'main street'. This is supported by the creation of two new public squares: Festival Square on Belvedere Road and River Link Square between Belvedere Road and the River. The two squares are located on main 'desire lines', providing places for orientation and stopping. Festival Square offers strategic views to key attractors throughout the area, as well as a means of access to the Royal Festival Hall, and has the potential to be a popular urban space and meeting point, bringing together different user constituencies.

River Link Square, being slightly less integrated, provides a marginal separation between arts and other users in the area.

At the larger scale the Space Syntax analysis has indicated that there is considerable scope for creating an 'arts, retail, dining out' mixed economy in the South Bank area. However, in order to achieve this, the analysis has also shown that a physical masterplan for the wider North Lambeth area needs to be developed, agreed and adopted. This masterplan should involve all the major development opportunities in the area - including the redesign of Waterloo International Station - as well as existing key facilities such as the retailing area around the Cut and Lower Marsh further south.

Work in developing this masterplan is under way.