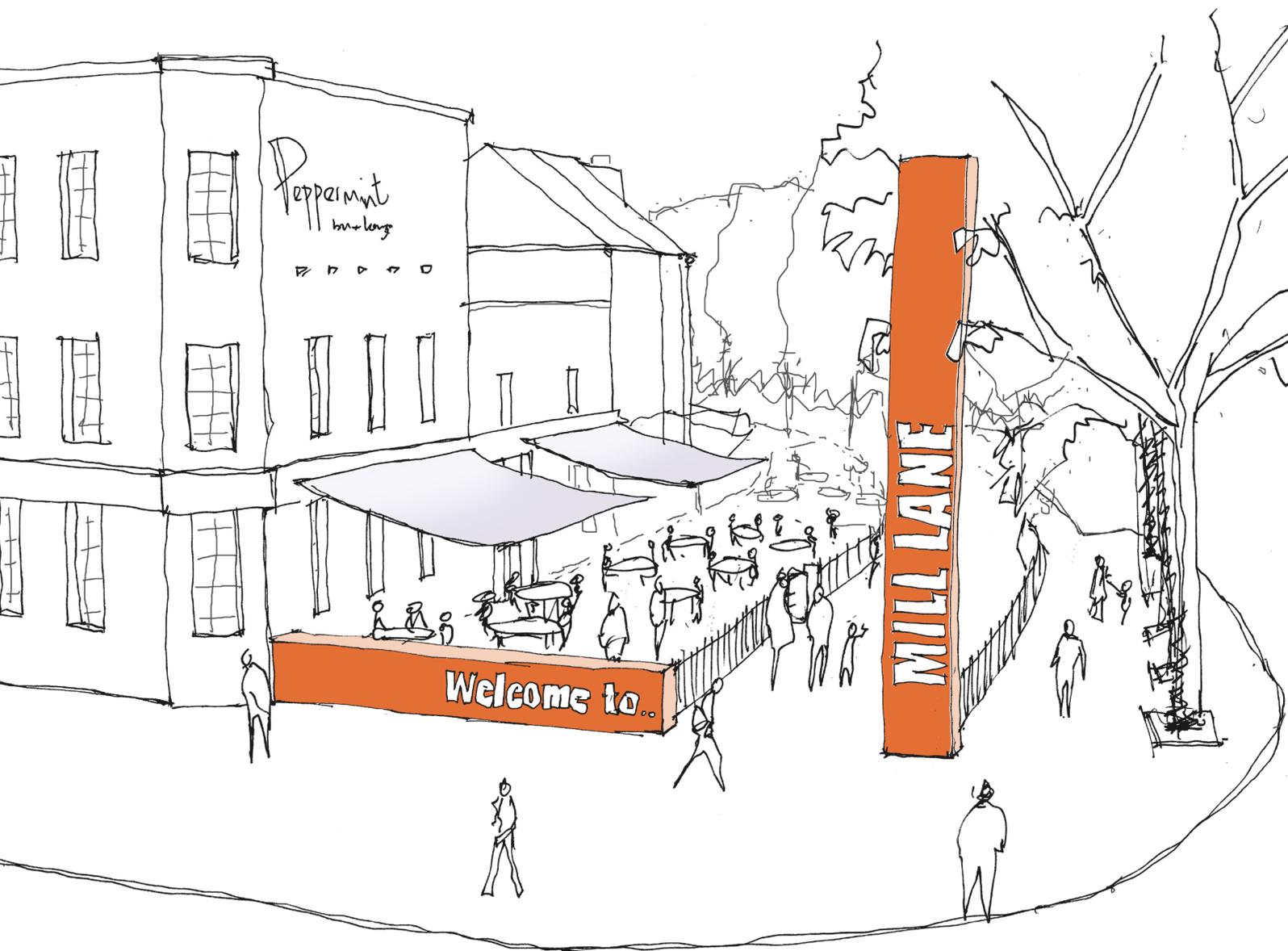


MILL LANE

CARDIFF'S DAY-INTO-NIGHT DESTINATION

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INTRODUCTION

In January 2017, Owen Davies Consulting and Element Urbanism were commissioned by local businesses, to examine the key issues facing Cardiff's Mill Lane as a food and drink destination. This report provides a summary of the key findings from the study and includes a Vision to help shape future improvement and investment. Specific ideas of how to bring about positive change, are set out in an Action Plan which is supported by a programme identifying key objectives for the next 12 months.

The study has been undertaken in consultation with many of the businesses located on Mill Lane and the key authorities responsible for the area.

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SETTING THE SCENE

Many of the world's most popular cities enjoy the character and identity giving benefits of having discrete and iconic destinations within them. These are places that capture the imagination and represent a dynamic and enjoyable visitor experience - whether it be for night-life, entertainment, shopping or culture.

In Cardiff, Mill Lane and its cluster of restaurants and bars, is a well known and much loved destination that provides a focus for the city's lively night-time economy.

The original formation of Mill Lane as self-styled 'café quarter', began 20 years ago when restaurant owner Giovanni Malacrino spotted the area's potential and, with the help of Cardiff Council, instigated the transformation of the then unremarkable street, into what it is today.

During this time, the wider area has undergone further transformation with Wyndham Arcade, St David's and the currently under construction Central Square development, radically changing the context of the street.

In addition, the business context of the night-time economy has also changed in recent years, as the traditional 9 to 5 working day has blurred into less rigid employment patterns and lifestyles.

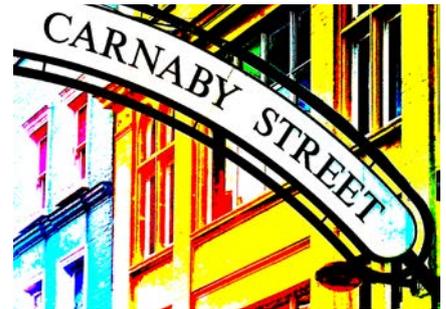
Today, although Mill Lane finds itself in the heart of a dynamic and evolving city centre, the general consensus of the local business community is that the street could do much better in responding to this change — both in providing a superlative customer experience, and in promoting Cardiff as a sophisticated and contemporary European capital city.

It is felt that many aspects of Mill Lane are not fit for purpose and that there are significant issues regarding the lack of maintenance, the use, licensing and regulation of outdoor spaces, storing pavement furniture, pedestrian movement, lighting and waste storage.

On this basis, the businesses of Mill Lane have co-funded this study to gather ideas and facilitate engagement with the local authorities to bring about change and improvement.

With the emerging 'Cardiff Night Time Economy Strategy', the ideas and initiatives instigated by Cardiff Business Improvement District (e.g. Purple Flag, Ambassadors and street cleaning) and more frequent major international events, the time is right to strategically re-examine Mill Lane.

Going forward, the intention is to engender a collaborative partnership between all stakeholders to improve safety, cut costs, improve performance and encourage investment to the benefit of all.



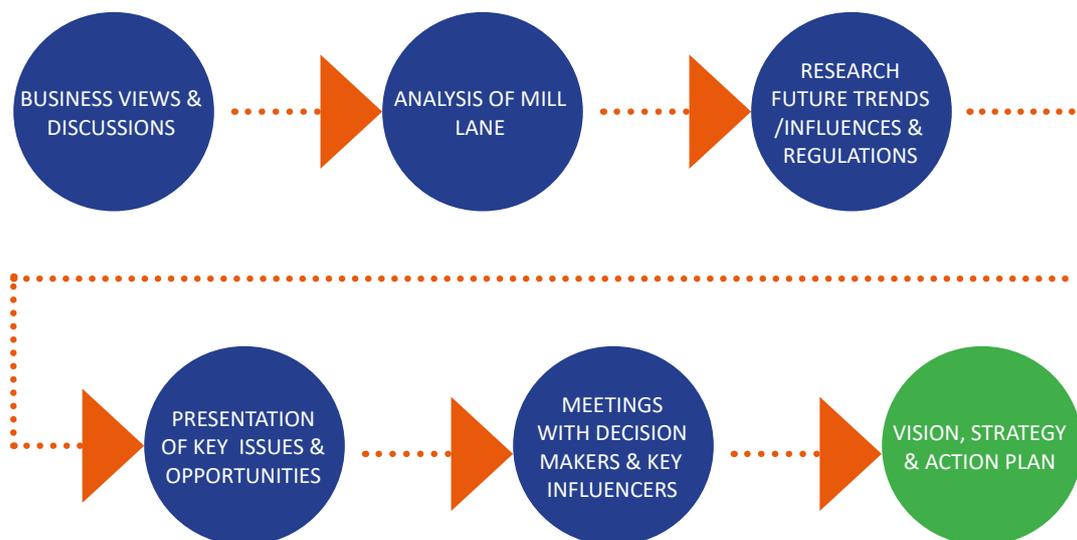
A COLLABORATIVE METHOD

The Vision and Action Plan have been developed through a series of discrete stages, as summarised in the diagram below.

This highly collaborative approach has included individual meetings with the majority of the businesses located on the Lane, including the managers of St David's, the Marriott Hotel and the owners of the Wyndham Arcade. Discussions have also taken place with key senior Council officers, the Police and the recently established Cardiff BID, who have provided a key influencing role on behalf of city centre businesses. The information gathered through this consultation has provided a clear foundation upon which the Vision and Action Plan have been shaped.

The process has also been informed through examination of key industry and social trends influencing the relevant businesses sectors and analysis of the character and arrangement of Mill Lane to better understand how the layout of the street operates and how it can be improved.

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITY



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

STRATEGIC LOCATION

- Mill Lane is widely acknowledged as the key cluster in Cardiff city centre's food, drink and entertainment economy. Its character changes throughout the day into the night and its popularity as an outdoor destination is very dependent on the weather and time of year.
- Mill Lane is a key strategic pedestrian route connecting Central Station / Central Square with St David's and The Hayes, and one of the busiest routes in the city centre.
- It's position at the centre of a growing and increasingly vibrant city centre economy means that its importance also continues to grow for city centre residents, workers and visitors. With increased footfall and contemporary customer and business expectations comes added pressures to modernise and rethink Mill Lane as a landmark destination and a key connecting route.



PRINCIPALITY
STADIUM

CENTRAL SQUARE
DEVELOPMENT

CARDIFF CENTRAL

MILL
LANE

ST DAVID'S

LICENSING

Cardiff Council statement of licensing policy 2016-2021 is perhaps the most influential document that shapes the businesses activity on Mill Lane, determining many of the activities and times of operations across the area. The policy states that there is an overriding requirement to prevent crime and disorder, protect public safety and prevent public nuisance – as well as acknowledging that “Licensed premises make a significant contribution to Cardiff’s economy. The diverse range of licensed premises appeal to visitors, tourists and local citizens...”

The Licensing Policy has several key messages that shape the way in which Mill Lane should be improved. Premises are encouraged to:

- Extend the diversity of entertainment and attract a wider range of customers, with less emphasis on high consumption of alcohol.
- Provide family-friendly facilities.
- Provide restaurants and cafes with or without alcohol.
- Provide adequate seating, as “Premises with little seating that primarily offer high volume vertical drinking are considered less desirable due to the levels of alcohol related crime and disorder associated with these type of premises”

However, many of the licensees have genuine concerns that the inconsistent and overly regulated business environment is curbing commercial activity and their ability to respond creatively and flexibly to evolving customer demands.

The premises wish to provide a consistently high quality customer experience that is able to cater to different seasonal and weather conditions, cultural and sporting events, and the growing demand for extended hours of operation, both earlier in the day and later into the night.

Specific issues include:

- The activities allowed by premises licenses and pavement permits do not always align, creating confusion for businesses.
- A lack of cohesion between licensing policy promoting premises with seating, and how businesses can operate late at night. For example, late night businesses (midnight through to 3am or 6am) must remove their tables and chairs before 11pm.
- There is a lack of transparency and consistency of enforcement regarding the use of pavement areas, which creates confusion amongst businesses.
- The visitor/customer experience is also confused because of inconsistent restrictions placed on neighbouring businesses regarding the serving of drinks outside after 11pm.
- Despite premises being well managed and significantly contributing towards crime reduction, Mill Lane remains the subject of concerns that are typically associated with the evening economy such as crime, anti-social behaviour and safety.

SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT

- The absence of a single group or organisation to act as a point of contact to represent the interests of Mill Lane businesses has led to a fragmented approach to dealing with issues and improvements for the area.

- BAR / CLUB
- FOOD / RESTAURANT
- RETAIL
- OUTSIDE SEATING AREAS



Localised improvements are required to address key issues to create space and improve appearance - including safety and security measures



Strategies are needed for operational and management improvements including bin storage and waste collection



Facilities are required to allow easier management and maintenance of the external space and allow businesses to take greater control of their environment



The delineation of semi-private space and movement routes could be rationalised to improve access and avoid conflict between pedestrians and business operations

Opportunities for the creation of strong gateways to help define Mill Lane in terms of its location and identity



The public realm should be de-cluttered to make efficient use of the available space for seating and movement



Potential for highway improvements to better integrate the Marriott Hotel into the street



PAVEMENT FURNITURE

- Permits do not normally allow business to keep tables and chairs outside after 11pm. This significantly shortens late night operations. This curfew alters the character of the outside space, removing food-led and seated drinking whilst encouraging vertical drinking.
- Inconsistent practices exist with certain businesses removing furniture altogether, others storing furniture temporarily outside or alternatively semi-permanent furniture being left on the street all night.
- Several businesses have insufficient capacity for furniture storage inside their premises without significantly reducing business operations. They have no option other than to temporarily store furniture outside whilst trading.
- The use of temporary or semi-permanent shelters is discouraged however, this restricts the creation of comfortable seating areas that can be used irrespective of the weather and time of year
- The constant movement of furniture means it must be lightweight, however, this has negative implications on its quality, appearance, robustness and its potential use as a weapon.

OUTDOOR SPACE AND STREET ENVIRONMENT

- Confused street layout and identification of what is public and private space.
- Conflicts arising from pedestrian routes cutting between premises and outside pavement seating areas.
- Highly cluttered public realm, including the position of trees, barriers and steps impacting on operations.
- Road layout and cluttered public realm create a confusing and unattractive entrance to the Marriott Hotel.
- Unappealing storage of commercial waste adjacent to seating/pedestrian areas.
- Inconsistent use of street furniture undermines identity and branding.

WASTE, CLEANING & MAINTENANCE

- Areas of damaged, unmaintained paving creating trip hazards.
- Maintenance of tree grills causing trip hazards and rubbish traps.
- Conflict between the location of bins, seating areas and ease of pedestrian movement.
- Conflict between bins and cleanliness of street and its visual appeal and identity.

TREES

- Trees generally add to the attractive human scale of the space however, there are some localised issues that impact on safe and convenient pedestrian access and movement. Management is required in some locations to increase daylight and space for businesses.

LIGHTING SIGNS AND IDENTITY

- For the expression of Mill Lane as a discrete city quarter is limited and outdated.
- There is no sense of arrival at key entry points.
- The identity of the Lane is compromised by inconsistent street furniture and clutter.
- The evening character is dominated by poor quality street lighting, with several columns not working, and the lack of infrastructure to support well maintained and high quality decorative lighting .
- Future proposals will need to be coordinated with lighting to support CCTV coverage.
- Opportunity for unified Mill Lane identity and individual business identities to be defined by integrated signage and lighting

SECURITY

- Beyond the consideration of normal day-to-day issues of law and order, the establishment of safe and secure city centres, particularly in high footfall areas and gathering spaces, are of increasing importance during times of heightened terrorist activity worldwide. Mill Lanes identity as a popular and high-profile outside destination possibly creates additional vulnerability. There is a need to consider what additional improvements can be made to create safe outside spaces, as part of its wider enhancement.

VISION

The Vision is to build on Mill Lane's existing popularity and success to create a superlative food and drink destination that enhances Cardiff's reputation as a 'liveable city'.

The enhancement of the Mill Lane visitor experience will create a focus for the city's evening economy and set standards for quality, design, cleanliness and safety.

The strengthening of its brand and identity will extend its profile beyond Cardiff, and help to promote Mill Lane as a sophisticated and modern, day-into-night venue, fitting of a European capital city.

Environmental improvements will redefine Mill Lane in its role as a characterful and convenient gateway to the city centre linking shopping, business, culture, transport and leisure.

Delivery of the Vision will require coordinated investment alongside the adoption of new practices. The following pages set out an Action Plan to provide clear direction to primary objectives:

- A stronger and more visible identity, signage and branding.
- More consistent and flexible late-night licensing and permitting.
- Improved design/layout to enhance the functional use of space with facilities for shelter, power, light and heat.
- A rationalised and more legible arrangement of private space and public movement routes.
- Increased permanent or semi-permanent enclosure of outdoor space to facilitate business operations and improve public safety.
- Cleaner and better maintained streets.
- Practical non-intrusive storage of commercial waste.
- The establishment of a business group or association to create a strong and unified 'voice' for the area.
- Agreement to a new code of practice between the businesses and the local authorities to define expectations with regard to pursuing the Vision and the operation of premises under the terms of a Premises or Street Cafe licence.





ACTION PLAN

The following Action Plan identifies both practical improvements that can be tackled immediately, as well as more ambitious ideas that will require several months to plan, design and fund. All ideas require some form of partnership working with local authorities or between businesses themselves.

These actions are not only about the physical appearance and identity of the street. Businesses are equally concerned about regulations and the ability to improve operations to respond to customer demands. The list of programmed actions will help to illuminate the interlinked nature of some ideas, as well as the sequence of activities required for their delivery.

OPERATIONS & MANAGEMENT

ACTION 1: MILL LANE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

A unified business community with single point of contact will have greater influence in discussions with the local authorities, and bring about improvements in a more joined-up and coordinated way, than can be achieved by businesses acting alone. An ambitious group of businesses' may want to attract additional public sector funding and other types of support to improve the area. This would only be possible with a new Business Association. New area-wide initiative such as a Mill Lane Street Café Permit (see Action 3) will be greatly facilitated if there is a single point of contact for the local authority to deal with. The Association would also act to coordinate and encourage more tactical initiatives such as Mill Lane events, promotions and festivals etc.

HOW?

A Business Association will take time and resources to organise, and businesses are likely to struggle to achieve this without the necessary back up and voluntary effort. The recently established Cardiff BID is a new business led organisation for the city centre with the aim of supporting businesses with improvements to their trading environment. Most Mill Lane businesses pay an annual levy to the BID for improvements and business services, and there are several aspects of the strategy that closely align with the BID's businesses objectives. A Mill Lane Business Association supervised by Cardiff BID, would provide a clear structure and momentum for the Association. In addition, Cardiff BID's 'Street Ambassadors' are a new resource available to help distribute and coordinate information among Mill Lane businesses.

WHEN?

This action could be initiated immediately, and should be achievable within approximately 2 months. Exploratory discussion with Cardiff BID have already taken place however, Mill Lane businesses will need to agree the recommendations and coordinate with Cardiff BID.

ACTION 2: CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE AND MANAGEMENT

The aim is to enable changes to take place to business operations, to allow a relaxed, seated food and drink offer in accordance with the Strategy. The voluntary code has been requested by Local Authorities (Licensing, Highways and Police) as the basis for moving forward with the Strategy.

The code is not meant to be a statutory document, and would not replace licensing or other policy. However, a business's agreement to comply with the code will be taken into consideration by the local authorities when dealing with licensed premises. The code will cover for example, how outside areas are supervised, security, the use, layout and storage of furniture, provision of covered areas, etc.

The code will act as a revised framework for the Local Authority and Police Licensing teams to follow in their dealings with businesses and to support well run premises. In a reciprocal arrangement, local authorities will be asked to agree to the Vision and Strategy for Mill Lane.

Improvements to the way operations are managed will only be possible if a unified approach is achieved across all hospitality businesses supported by the proposed new Business Association. Businesses that need to vary premises licences or Street Café Permits, to develop their day time and late-night operations, will directly benefit when they run in accordance with good practices and management of the outside spaces.

HOW?

A draft Code prepared as part of the Strategy will be discussed between the businesses and local authorities before being finalised. All licensed businesses will be encouraged to agree to the new Code. Setting up a Mill Lane Business Association is recommended as part of managing this process (see Action 1).

WHEN?

This action could be initiated immediately, and should be possible to conclude discussions within approximately 2 months.

ACTION 3: ALIGNMENT OF PREMISES LICENSES AND STREET CAFÉ PERMITS

The action is to review premise licenses and street permits to ensure they align with each other, and to allow operations to adapt to the overall Vision for Mill Lane. The aim is to permit businesses to adapt their outside environments and to extend the hours when customers can sit, eat and drink outside later at night in accordance with existing outside drinking hours. This action should also consider the appropriate use and storage of outside furniture and the use of appropriately designed and positioned parasols and lightweight removable shelters.

HOW?

The Licensing Authority, Police and Highways Authority will have regard to the Strategy and Code of Good Practice when considering applications to vary a premises licence, Temporary Events Notice or Café Licence.

Discussions with Cardiff Council have suggested the potential for an overarching Mill Lane Street Café Permit similar to the arrangement for Barrack Lane. The new arrangement will provide a clearer and more consistent approach to the definition of seating and drinking areas, their use and operation under one permit. Agreement for the use of tables and chairs after 11pm should form part of this new approach. Each business will still be required to pay for the agreed number of tables and chairs. To achieve this will require a Businesses Association as a single point of contact (see Action 1)

WHEN?

Within approximately 4 months.

ACTION 4: CLEAN, MAINTAIN AND REPAIR OF MILL LANE

The aim is to improve the standard of appearance for the whole of Mill Lane. In comparison with the enclosed seating areas managed by the businesses, much of the 'public' area on Mill Lane requires improved management to deep clean and remove the build-up of dirt, the removal of trip hazards caused by uneven tree grills, the repair of uneven and broken paving, the repair of broken street lights and the removal of old and ineffective decorative lighting. Street trees should also be surveyed for their condition and opportunities to manage their growth.

HOW?

Cardiff Council are responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of the public highway. Also, through working with Cardiff BID it may be possible to apply additional top-up street cleansing of the public areas as part of a wider city centre programme. Businesses will be responsible for the cleaning and upkeep of their outside spaces, and they would be encouraged to adopt key performance indicators as part of a Code of Conduct (see Action 2)

WHEN?

Reach agreement and schedules for targeted cleaning, maintenance and repairs within 2-3 months. Coordinate with programme for wider physical enhancements.

ACTION 5: COMMERCIAL BIN STORES

Measures are required to enclose and conveniently position the commercial bin stores currently located in the pedestrianised areas. The aim is to immediately smarten the street scene and provide clearly designated and convenient bin storage.

HOW?

In the first instance, to avoid bins migrating into the pathway of pedestrians, the existing bin storage zones should be clearly identified through a form of marking on the floor. An additional area with the potential for storing bins has been identified within underused space owned by the Marriott Hotel which could benefit businesses at the southern end of Mill Lane where there are no designated outside storage areas. Businesses could enter into an agreement with the Marriott Hotel for the use of an area of land, and depending on how this is achieved planning permission may be required.

Longer term, there is the opportunity to consider the location and enclosure of bin storage areas as part of an overarching masterplan to redesign Mill Lane (see Action 6).

WHEN?

Permanent covered bin stores should be planned as part of the wider masterplanning of Mill Lane and within the first 6-7 months.

ACTION 6: MILL LANE MASTERPLAN

The delivery of a more fit-for-purpose, safe and attractive Mill Lane, as set out in the Strategy will require several stages of detailed planning, design and discussion. The masterplan should investigate ideas and options for:

- The repositioning of outside seating areas next to all premises making them safer and more effective to manage.
- Clear and convenient pedestrian movement along Mill Lane
- The introduction of permanent or semi-permanent enclosures around seating areas to create safe and defensible spaces and the reduction of intensive management of furniture.
- Well designed and positioned retractable parasols to allow customers to sit outside during inclement weather conditions and throughout the year
- The location and management of street trees.
- Lighting that improves illumination, safety and branding.
- Street signage and branding for Mill Lane.
- Commercial bin storage and enclosures.
- Security measures for major events.

HOW?

Additional funding is necessary to commission the masterplan design, with potential sources coming from the businesses, local authorities and through applications to government regeneration and tourism programmes. Discussions and support from Cardiff BID to identify funding sources and the application processes may be possible. The study could be commissioned through the proposed Mill Lane Business Association (see Action 1) or directly through Cardiff BID. Several stages will need to be followed including the design of initial concepts, draft proposals followed by detailed and costed designs. Works could be prioritised to reflect available funds and to address the most important high impact improvements

WHEN?

Discussions with Cardiff Council to agree to a masterplanning approach within first 2 months. Production of new layout/designs within 6-7 months and implementation during Spring 2018.

ACTION 7: BRANDING & IDENTITY

The instigation of the Vision and Strategy also presents a clear opportunity to improve the identity and branding of Mill Lane to reflect its importance as a gateway and destination for the city centre. Ideally, the re-branding should consider the name, logo, colours, etc that can be reflected through the imaginative design of signage, lighting, and furniture as part of the remodelling of the area.

This branding could be extended to incorporate web based marketing and provide a setting for initiatives led by the proposed Business Association in organising area wide promotions, events and festivals.

HOW?

Additional funding will be required to develop ideas and implement improvements (see Action 6). It is possible to make gradual improvements to the branding through enhanced signage and lighting however, a more effective and comprehensive approach would be achieved through integrating branding into the remodelling of Mill Lane. Cardiff BID's plans to improve decorative lighting in the city centre includes looking at the opportunities for Mill Lane as one of several priority areas.

WHEN?

To broadly follow the same timescale as the masterplanning and re-design. Depending on funding, aim for implementation Spring 2018.

MILL LANE ACTION PLAN PROGRAMME

MONTH	1	2	3	4	5
OPERATIONS & MANAGEMENT					
MILL LANE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (MLBA)	Discussions with Mill Lane businesses. Discuss & reach agreement with Cardiff BID. Formation of MLBA.		Inaugural meeting of MLBA.	Bimonthly meeting.	
CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE & MANAGEMENT	Drafting, discuss with businesses & local authorities.		Businesses sign up to the Code.	Code monitoring & evaluation.	
VARIATION OF PREMISES LICENSES & STREET CAFÉ PERMITS			Discussions with Cardiff Council, Licensing & Police to establish proposals for overarching Street Café Permit & variation of licenses if required.	New arrangements agreed.	
PLACE & BRANDING					
CLEAN, MAINTAIN & REPAIR	Repair & maintenance of street paving/ removal of trip hazards. Deep clean of street pavement and furniture. Repair street lighting, remove damaged and ineffective decorative lighting.			Monitoring of issues. Additional cleansing of public and high footfall areas by Cardiff BID.	
COMMERCIAL BIN STORES	Demarcation of existing bin storage zones.			Reach agreement for additional bin storage located at southern end of Mill Lane.	
MASTERPLAN	Discussion with Cardiff BID re funding sources and options to apply for funding. Design and consultation for masterplan / detailed design proposals.				
BRAND & IDENTITY	Discussion with Cardiff BID re funding sources, lighting scheme and options to apply for funding. Study, design and consultation.				

6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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Bimonthly meeting.	Bimonthly meeting.	Bimonthly meeting.	Bimonthly meeting.
Code monitoring & evaluation.			
Implement and monitor new arrangements. Individual applications to vary licences as required.			

Monitoring of issues. Additional cleansing of public and high footfall areas by Cardiff BID.					
Permanent covered bin stores included in wider masterplanning.					
Implementation.					
Implementation and feed branding concepts into masterplanning exercise.					



ELEMENT
urbanism