



**PRESS ENQUIRIES**  
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## **LOW LINE ARCHES: ADAPTIVE REUSE OF RAILWAY ARCHES, SOUTHWARK, LONDON**

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Southwark architecture studio TDO has completed its design scheme for two designated railway arches in Ewer Street and Redcross Way, along Bankside's Low Line, a network of creative and cultural nodes that follows the Victorian railway viaducts running through Bankside, London Bridge and Bermondsey.

The retrofit project, which was commissioned by Better Bankside, brings redundant railway arches back into use, creating a community space and a sustainability hub featuring secure cycle parking, a last mile consolidation centre (supporting a cycle courier service) and an operations base for cleaning and waste recycling service. A third potential project is designed to create suitable workspaces for local micro-enterprises otherwise priced out of local commercial lets. It demonstrates a low-cost and efficient design approach to repurpose vacant railway arches in other urban locations.

The architects have created discrete spaces-within-spaces by placing prefabricated galvanised steel Nissen sheds in the volumes under the two arches. The adapted spaces are now able to accommodate workspaces, meeting rooms, catering or washrooms, or be left as voids to host a variety of uses, including performing and visual arts.

The Low Line is a partnership between Better Bankside, Team London Bridge, Blue Bermondsey, Southwark Council and The Arch Company – who are reimagining the uses of the railway viaduct in partnership with other local stakeholders. The Low Line will ensure that investment in the arches and adjacent sites contributes positively to the neighbourhoods and communities it spans. The initiative is supported with £1 million funding from the Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund to diversify the occupier mix in the arches, creating new jobs and connecting local communities, and to contribute to a greener, resilient city.

TDO was appointed by Better Bankside and the other Low Line partners in March 2020 to develop and implement creative solutions for the adaptive reuse of empty railway arches as test bed sites for a range of uses. As spaces are used in new ways, the ambition is for these practical design solutions to retain and celebrate the historic character of the arches, enhancing existing uses and taking advantage of the significant thermal mass of the arches, while providing a benchmark for the regeneration of other arches in the future.

TDO responded to the brief with a design concept which explores the powerful sense of 'remaining space' under the Victorian viaducts. Prefabricated galvanised steel Nissen sheds have been installed in the two Bankside arches, as an alternative to filling the envelope of the arch with a fit-out.

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Utilising pre-existing technology and a single material unifies the arches and allows for adaptation to different requirements. The sheds are demountable and transferable, cost-efficient and recyclable. Nissen sheds were borne out of demand for accommodation during World War I, and have also been used for industry and agriculture, attesting to their flexibility and economy.

The sheds arrived as components and were assembled in the arches, with as much off-site manufacture as possible beforehand, reducing programme time and disruption to occupants and neighbours. They sit on precast concrete footings designed to be relocatable. Galvanised steel has also been used for secondary elements such as entry doors, glazing surrounds and exposed services, harmonising the spaces.

The geometry of the sheds reflects the form of the arches, creating dynamic curving voids between them, which can be used for lighting, services distribution, ventilation and circulation. The contrast between the rough Victorian brick and corrugated galvanised metal is striking. The project has also involved exposing and cleaning as much of the original brickwork in the arches as possible.

TDO was appointed following an invited competitive pitch process. The practice had experience in this specific sector of design, having transformed a Network Rail arch in 2012 to create its own studio in Bankside. The practice's 2014 Bold Tendencies rooftop gallery pavilion, which experimented with prefabricated corrugated steel structures, was important in demonstrating the viability of the concept.

The Ewer Street arch is now in use by Better Bankside, and Redcross Way offers flexible space for event hire.

Tom Lewith, Founding Director, TDO, said:

"The unique qualities of railway viaducts and the generous volumes of the arches underneath have fascinated us since the early days of TDO when we converted a vacant arch in Southwark into our studio. Thousands of railway arches are vacant across the country and present a significant retrofit opportunity. The project has allowed us and the Low Line partners to explore our shared interests in social and environmental sustainability, and the power of face-finished materials and simple forms."

Donald Hyslop, Chair of Better Bankside and the Low Line Steering Group, said:

"Today, more than ever, we need imaginative and practical design in our cities and communities. The Low Line has the potential to provide flexible and safe places where people will be able to socialise and develop much-needed new innovative businesses."

Craig McWilliam, CEO, The Arch Company, said:

"I would like to congratulate TDO on its innovative approach to repurposing these two arches. Bankside is home to many small businesses and the creation of new secure cycle parking and a last mile consolidation centre will be a welcome addition for those businesses and their employees. The arches themselves are home to many fantastic small businesses and our investment in the area, as part of our Project 1000 initiative, is helping to create new spaces, boost enterprise and support job creation."

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**Visuals and drawings download link:**

<https://tinyurl.com/ckx39e2w>

### Notes to editors

Locations:	Ewer Street London SE1 0NL Redcross Way London SE1 9HP
Gross internal area:	Ewer Street: 487m <sup>2</sup> Redcross Way: 181m <sup>2</sup>
Completion:	Ewer Street: December 2021 Redcross Way: April 2022
Architect:	TDO
Client:	Low Line partners: Better Bankside, Team London Bridge, Blue Bermondsey, Southwark Council, The Arch Company
Contractor:	ITC
Structural engineer:	Lyons O'Neill (stages 0-3); ITC (from stage 4)
Services engineer:	PinnacleESP
Quantity surveyor:	AMR Consult
Project management:	AMR Consult
Visuals:	© Ed Reeve and © Ed Bishop

**TDO** is a creative architecture studio founded by Doug Hodgson and Tom Lewith in 2012 with fellow Bartlett graduate Owen Jones. The practice's first built project, Forest Pond House (2012), a timber-framed meditation space and children's den cantilevered over a garden pond, is emblematic of TDO's approach: it is characterised by simple forms, intersecting geometries and exposed materials.

Significant built works include: Old Church Street, an infill townhouse in Chelsea (2015); Fab House, low-cost modular terrace housing in North Shields, for Places for People and Urban Splash (2018); and the headquarters for The Modern House, Southwark (2018). The next project to complete is Great Suffolk Yard, the redevelopment of industrial warehouse buildings in Southwark into a thriving new workspace, due to complete summer 2022. TDO is also working on MMC developments across London. The practice is also currently working with sustainable development specialists Human Nature, establishing an MMC strategy for the redevelopment of the former Phoenix Industrial Estate in Lewes, East Sussex. The practice featured in The Architecture Foundation's New Architects 3 (2016) and more recently in the Architects' Journal's 40 under 40 - a showcase of architecture's brightest up-and-coming talent (2020).

[www.tdoarchitecture.com](http://www.tdoarchitecture.com)

**The Low Line** will mobilise the beneficial potential the railway viaduct offers - as a route connecting communities and places and as an important component of the public realm, providing a framework around which people, culture and business can thrive.

The first new sections of the Low Line opened at Union Yard Arches and Flat Iron Square and complement established Low Line hubs located at Borough Market, Maltby Street Market and Spa Terminus. The benefits of extending the growth and success of these areas into other parts of north Southwark are clear - including enhanced public spaces, access and connectivity, as well as improved economic prosperity through repurposing underused or empty arches.

The Low Line was coined by a Southwark resident and the concept has developed through a group of initial partners including Better Bankside, Blue Bermondsey, Borough Market, Team London Bridge, The Arch Company and Southwark Council, who are steering the initial scoping, planning and communication of the project.

[lowline.london](http://lowline.london)



**Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund** is the Mayor of London's biggest regeneration fund and is delivered through the London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP). Launched in June 2017, it provides £70m of capital funding from sources including the Local Growth Fund and European Social Fund, as well as expert regeneration advice, design support and knowledge sharing opportunities.

**[london.gov.uk](http://london.gov.uk)**

**The London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP)** is the local enterprise partnership for London. The LEAP brings entrepreneurs and business together with the Mayoralty and London Councils to identify strategic actions to support and lead economic growth and job creation in the capital.

**[lep.london](http://lep.london)**