Smithfield Square

A new Public Square and a Gift to London

6 Strategies and a Manifesto for the next 150 years

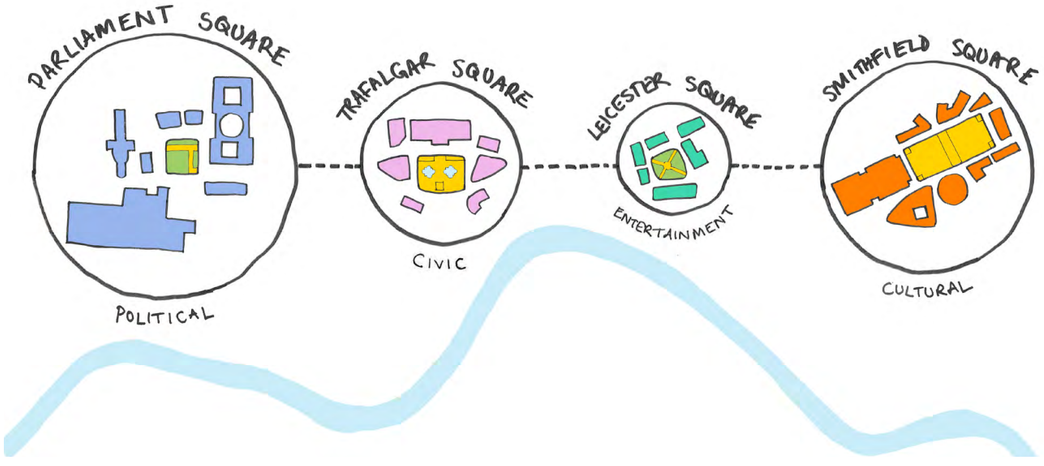
"All buildings are predictions.
All predictions are wrong."
How Buildings Learn, Stewart Brand

Smithfield Market has long since been a much loved part of London. Nearly 15 years ago, Terry Farrell and Partners, with our work for English Heritage, were **instrumental** helping in a Public Enquiry to save the General and Poultry Market from demolition and proposed viable scenarios to keep the old market buildings **alive in the 21st Century**.

We argued for an amnesty of the existing historic building, in imagining the future of London. We proposed a range of diverse uses - from the Museum of London to a concert hall, and from new schools and colleges to urban markets.

Smithfield has played a vital role within the City of London as a **social hub** and **meeting place** for centuries prior to the current market use. Since the construction of the existing Victorian structure, Smithfield has **adapted** to ever-changing uses over a century and a half, allowing people to exchange goods and as a result the building has grown and expanded in response. So what happens 150 years later, when trade of meat is no longer viable in inner city; what replaces trade but keeps the space a **public place**, which it has been for over 800 years? How do we stop one of the last public places in the City of London from acquiring a front door and a lock?

We now have the unique opportunity to let it be, free from trying to adapt its old bones to a prediction, and let it be what it is best at - a **shelter** for people for people to meet. We propose to give the old, distinguished building a **10-point manifesto** for the next century. Pointers to how best to adapt and re-purpose. An amnesty for the existing and a freedom to adapt over the **next 150 years**.



a new Square for London

. 10 Points Manifesto .

1. Smithfield as a Canvas for culture & creativity
A restored market building with public open ground floor free to accomodate a varied programme of creative uses.

2. Smithfield as a Public forum.
A new public square for London - the 'Creative Square'

3. Smithfield as an Arena of transformation
Its unique location along the 'Culture Mile', superb connectivity and proximity to major cultural buildings gives Smithfield the unique chance to be the place where everything is connected & transformed.

4. Smithfield as a laboratory of invention
A unique space of creativity bringing new modes of production & creation together

5. Smithfield as an Open Space
The new Smithfield Square - activity, biodiversity - a place to play & relax

6. Smithfield as a free Space
from "Smooth field" ourside the City wall to a space of freedom of expression, civic & creative

7. Smithfield as History & Continuity
A public space from Roman time to now, a place of exchange, freedom & connectivity

8. Smithfield as Community.
A place as its community - past, present and future

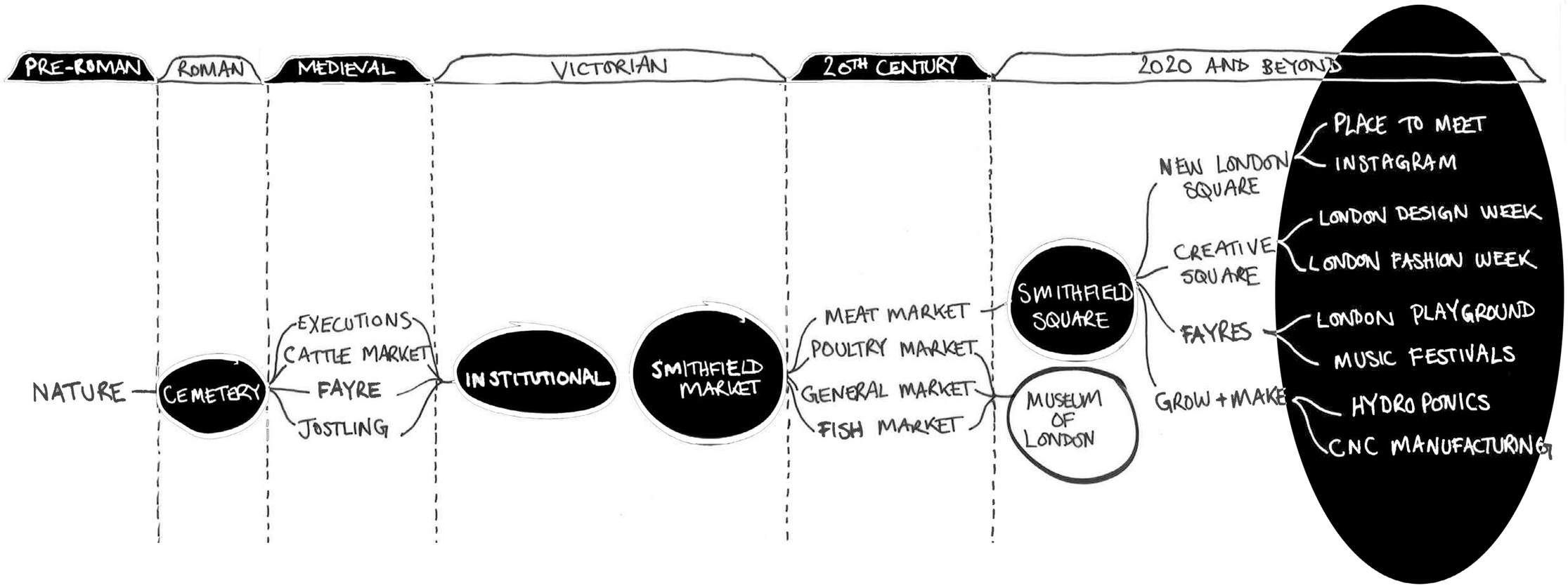
9. Smithfield as Translation
A place where old infrastructure enables and creates new uses and interactions - from industrial to post-industrial -

10. Smithfield as Communication
Where various communities come together - from local to citywide & visitors

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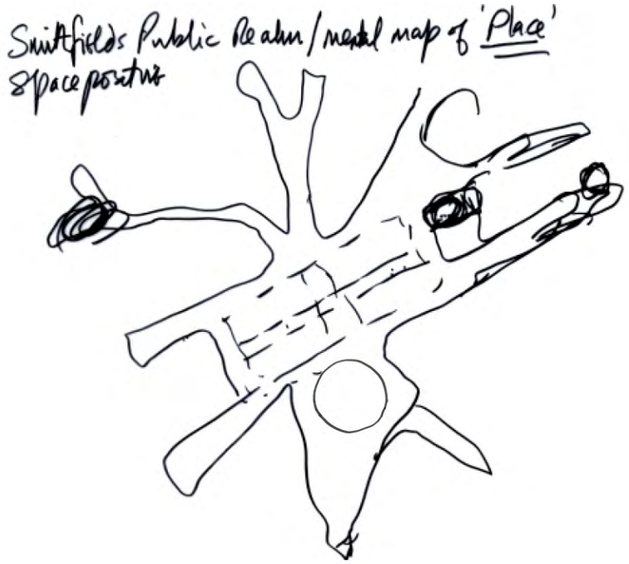
The Smithfield Continuum

From Origins to Future



Over time the simple shelter for human interaction, for which the original building was designed, has **lost** its connectivity to the railway and accrued various **additions** – from cold store and loading bays to car park. We now have the unique opportunity to restore the original building and its infrastructure to the **simplicity** and **elegance** of its original intent – to create a public space of human interaction and **connect** the place to the old and new transport networks.

What we propose is neither a fix nor a solution but a **sustainable long-term project**, facilitated by 6 strategies. Akin to a Cathedral or Cemetery, a Market is central to a community. Central to what makes the City of London an enduring success is its flexibility and adaptability - from the Norman conquest, the Great Fire, and the Blitz, to the **challenges** and **opportunities** globalization brings.



6 Strategies

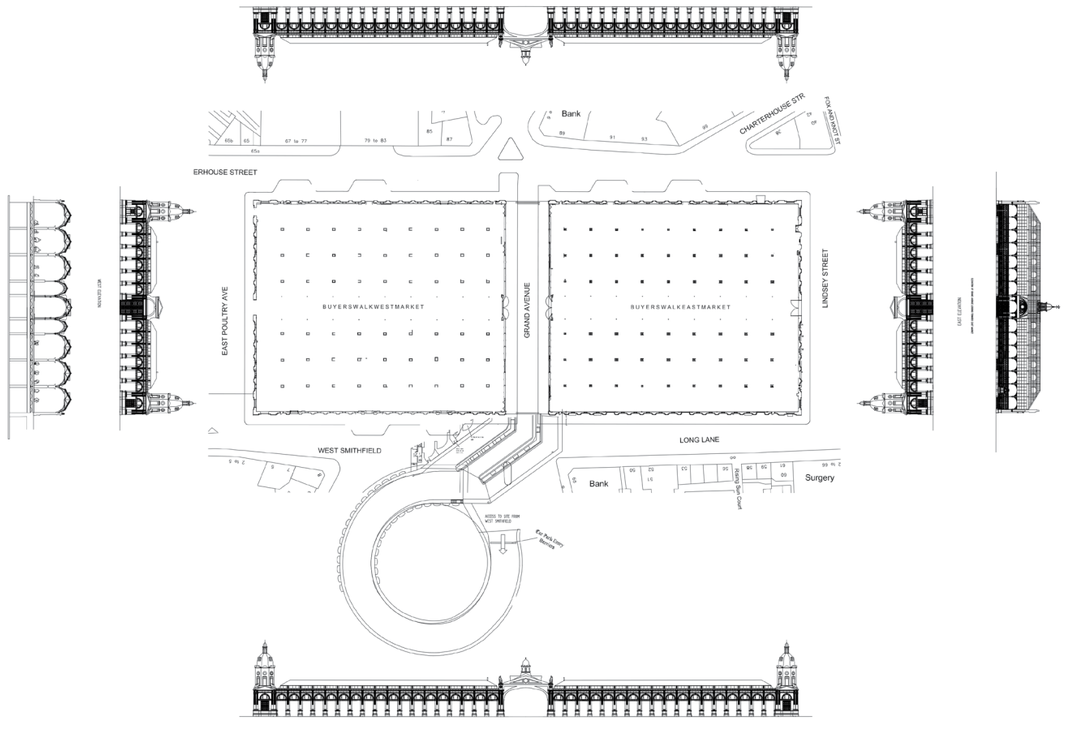
1. Celebrating History & Origin
2. A New Square for London
3. Urban Connectivity
4. Adaptive Re-use
5. Smithfield Community
6. Advocacy & Governance

1. Celebrating History & Origin

The Market Square

The current market building is an **ornate Victorian structure** which institutionalized the sale of meat at Smithfield. It was a pragmatic response to the outrage at the time; the foul conditions livestock was traded in the City.

By institutionalizing the sale of meat, the site has remained a **public space** for traders, buyers, market porters and the industry that has served London's butchers and restaurants for centuries. As a **central** London market, Smithfield was inherently **well connected** – bringing together various goods networks – from rail to local cart distribution. For nearly one hundred fifty years, Smithfield became a **hub** of trade, a vast, ever changing, daily spectacle of commerce and **social interaction** that generated its own **economy** and **subculture**.



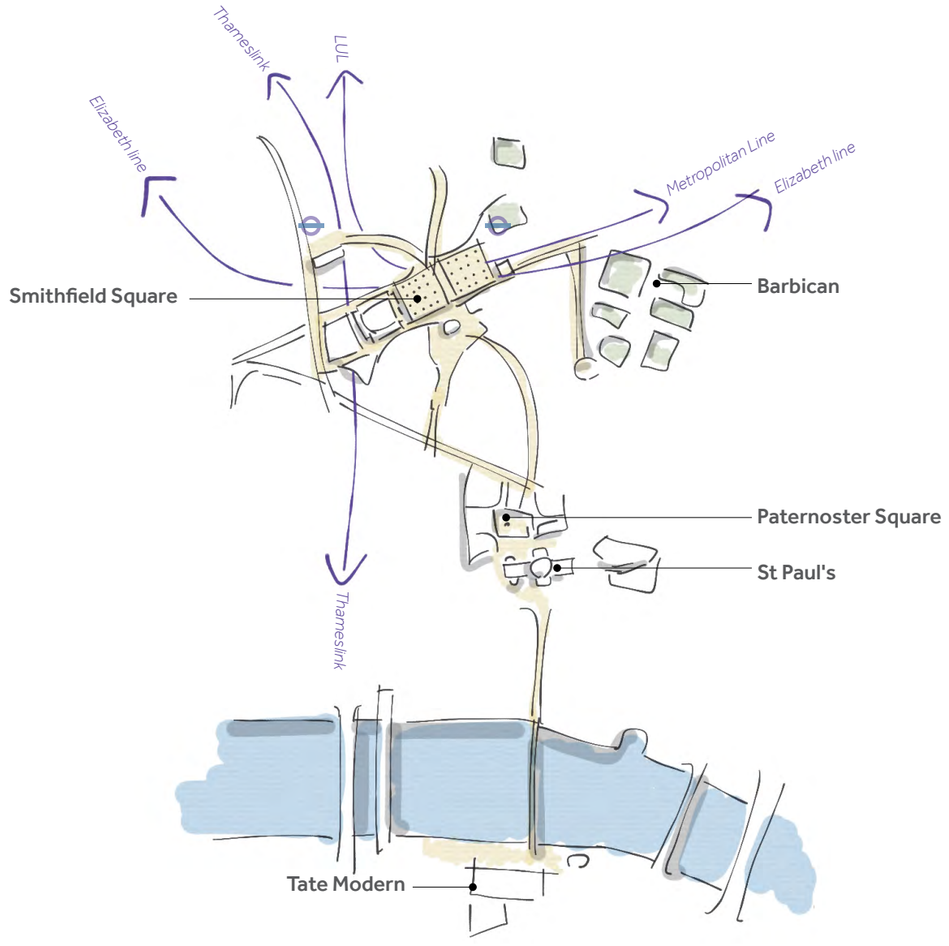
restoring the building to its essence

2. A New Square for London

History & Continuity

The existing building must remain a **public space**, a **forum** for the City of London and its new museum, the missing public space at the heart of Smithfield. There are three great public squares in London: **Parliament** - political, **Trafalgar** - civic, **Leicester** - entertainment. It is time for the fourth: **Smithfield** - the City's public forum and Cultural Square uniquely located within the **Culture Mile**.

This will be achieved through **removing additions** to the original building structure and **opening up** the facade to provide a **programmable** ground floor public space which is **linked** to the new transport networks. The new Cultural Square will connect to the basement level via two ramps - a new accessible ramp carved out along the centre of the space, and the rotunda. The basement level will be cleared to create a flexible space to **make** and **grow**; a place where creative industries - the growers and the makers can take residence and trade their services and goods. This will be supported by direct access to the new Elizabeth line, with potential to connect to the Thameslink rail.



putting Smithfield on the mental map

3. Urban Connectivity

Linking Spaces

The original meat market building was a feat of technology and engineering – it facilitated deliveries of meat and goods both from across the country and internationally, it processed the goods to supply London. Over time, this connectivity has been **lost**, superseded by current modes of transport and its importance has become **marginal** and **insular**.

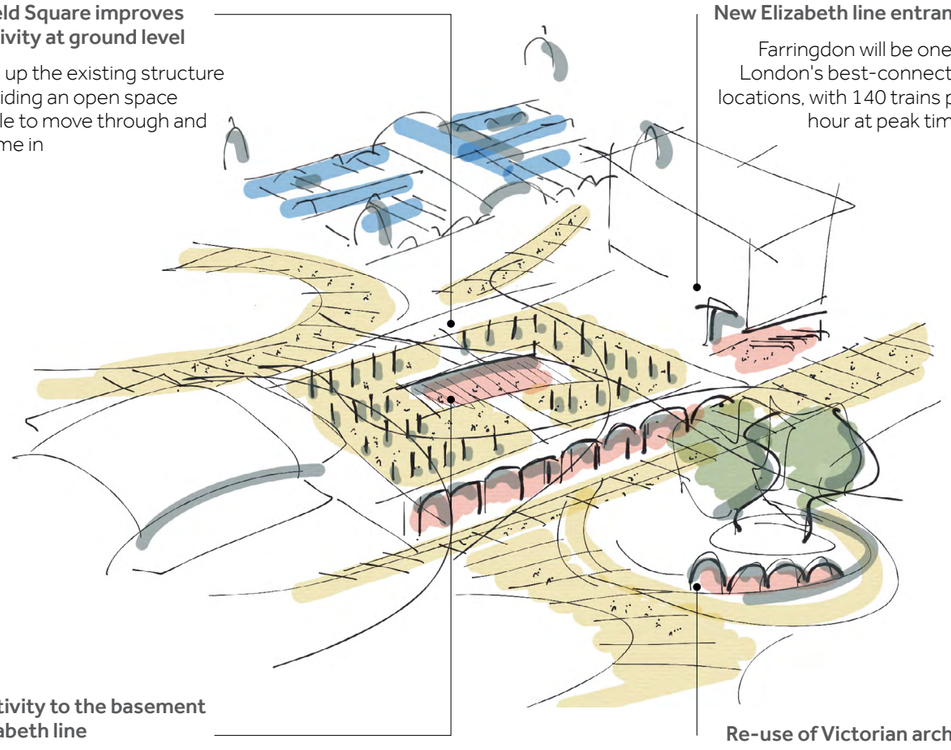
With the arrival of the **Elizabeth line** to site and the existing **Underground** and **Thameslink lines**, the site will become one of the most well-connected places in London. An opportunity exists to further improve connectivity by re-opening the old railway sidings to permit the delivery and distribution of goods to and form site. The network of goods distribution has been replaced with the **movement of people**. With the new **Museum of London**, the **Culture Mile**, the **Barbican**, the new **London Concert Hall** and the wider destinations of **St Paul's** and the **Tate Modern**, the site has a unique opportunity to become a **natural meeting point**, bringing people together – the **Creative** and **Cultural hub** of the City .

Smithfield Square improves connectivity at ground level

Opening up the existing structure and providing an open space for people to move through and spend time in

New Elizabeth line entrance

Farringdon will be one of London's best-connected locations, with 140 trains per hour at peak times



Connectivity to the basement and Elizabeth line

A movement strategy which distributes the flow of people at the square as an arrival point

Re-use of Victorian arches

Celebrating the rich heritage of the site through sensitive restoration of existing features

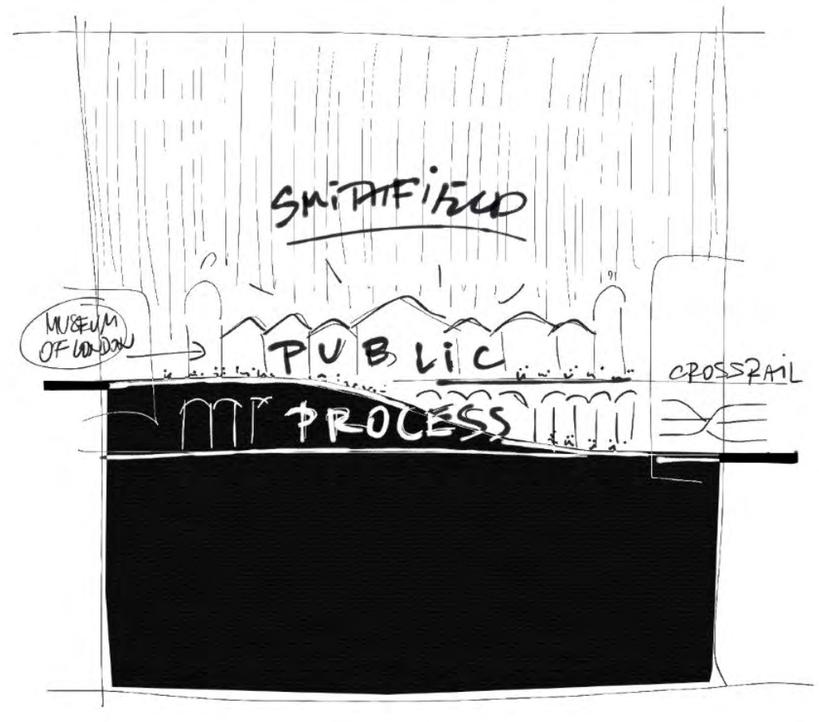
4. Adaptive Re-use

A Sustainable Approach

What if we **restore** the original building and its infrastructure back to the heroic feat of ingenuity and engineering it was when first built? The notion of **adaptive re-use** means that we enable the building to adapt to its next stage of use while using the tools of the 21st century to be **sustainable** and **holistic**, a green lung to the City of London.

We resist at this stage to try and predict the future use of the building – this will follow after a process of **local** and **city-wide consultation** and **discussion**. We also resist the temptation to impose a specific use, institutionalize the building again or put a front door with a lock and opening times.

Instead, we propose a re-imagining of the building as a **public forum** for the Culture Mile with associated **curated events** and **temporary uses**. The majestic clear basement connected again can take a variety of programme and occupation – and ultimately be a result of consultation and vigorous economic analysis. Through plugging in to the transport network and Museum of London, the Smithfield Square will always be an **active place**.



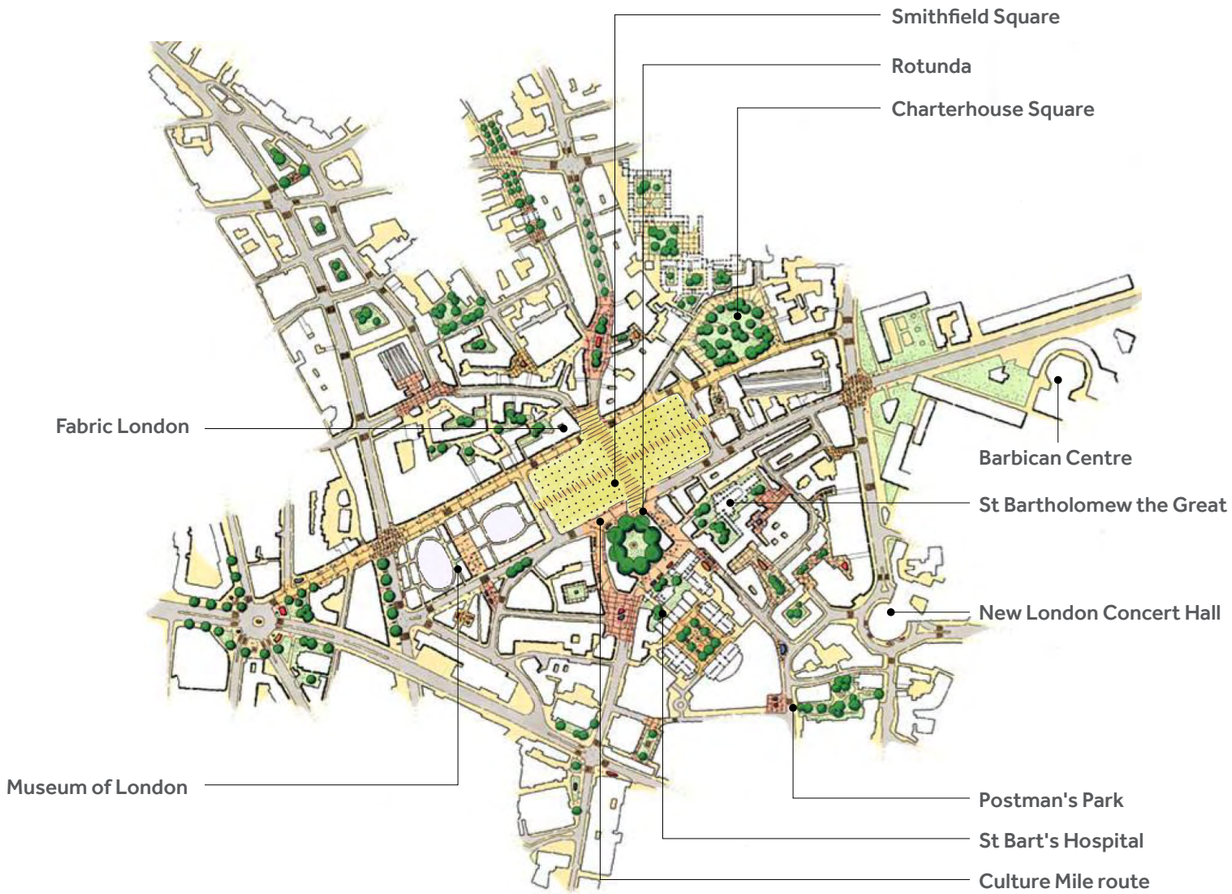
a place that is always active

5. Smithfield Community

Social Impact & Urban Transformation

The history of Smithfield, both present and future, is the shared history of the communities that have **shaped** and **influenced** the 'smooth-field' over time. The challenge is keeping the current community of traders, buyers and supporting trades, engaged in the dialogue about the future of the market, opening it up and **welcoming** the **diversity** of London and it's visitors while keeping its **rich history alive**.

We propose to create a varied and curated series of events, interventions and public art to celebrate the history - an **inclusive programme** that will include the wider community, in establishing a new, London **Creative** and **Cultural** square.



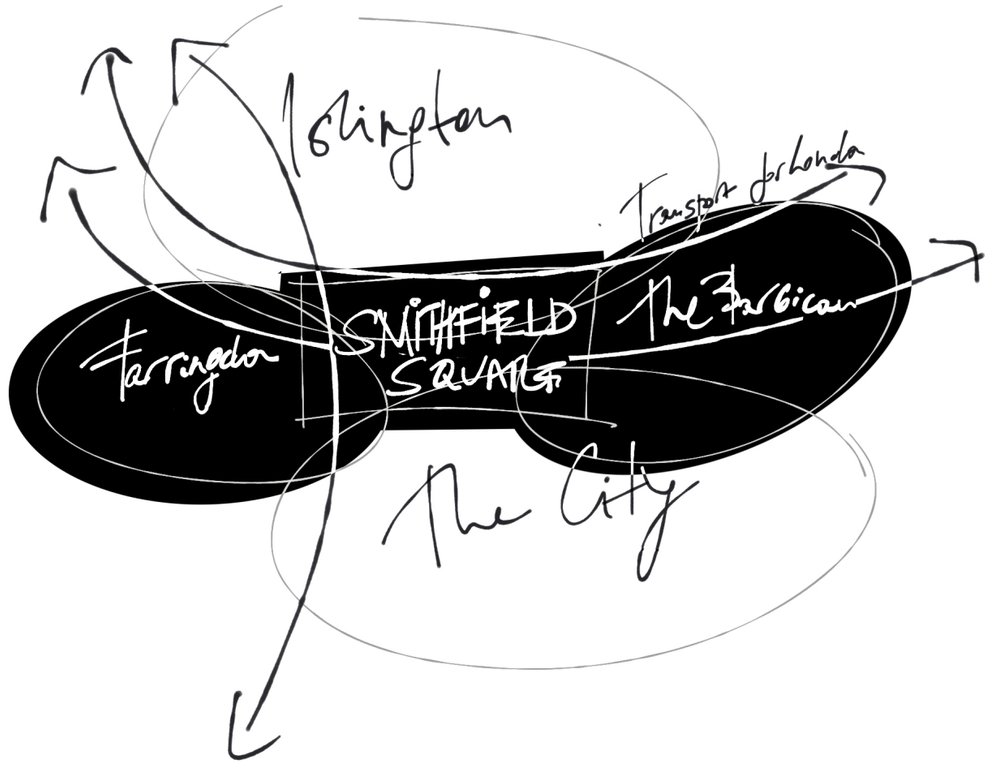
everything is connected

6. Advocacy & Governance

A Protected Civic Status

Building on our **long involvement** and **comprehensive understanding** of the site, we propose that advocacy for change and crucially, **long-term governance**, will be key to the next chapter for Smithfield.

We propose that a multi-disciplinary entity is established – **The Corporation of Smithfield** - with an elected board of **trustees** - The Custodians of Smithfield, coming from different walks of life; from local residents, artists, politicians, architects, historians and the like to take control as a charity to steer the future, curation and success of the Smithfield Square for the next 150 years. This will give a unique chance of bringing the various **stakeholders** of Smithfield together, to encourage public and community participation and ensuring the long term status of a New - Cultural - Square for London.



bringing the stakeholders together

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Smithfield Square



a public Forum for London