

COVENT GARDEN PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK

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NOTE: This document is intended for double-sided printing / 'two-page-up' viewing.

0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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The Covent Garden Public Realm Framework has been developed as a 'blue print' to help inform and direct future schemes and changes to the public realm as they come forward in a considered and holistic way.

The Framework and vision are supported by a baseline analysis and an outline character study (see Appendix 1), providing considered reflections on the areas heritage, character and spatial characteristics that are central to the development any public realm scheme.

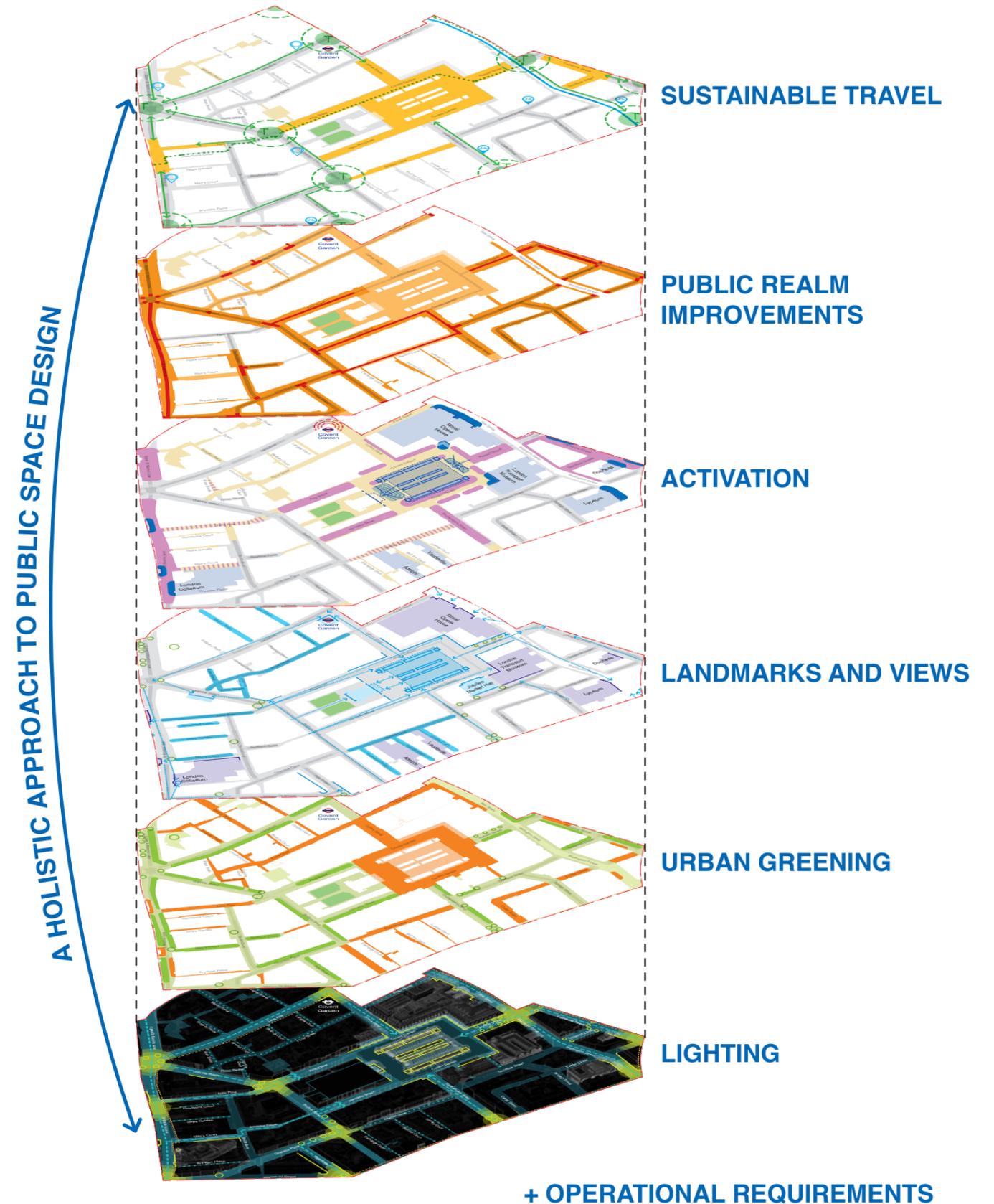
The vision is made up of a series of framework layers which establishes key design approaches to reinforce the existing character areas. This includes a mapping of proposed projects. The most transformational projects are illustrated as a series of worked examples which act as best practice demonstrations. These show the potential to make positive interventions which support the vision objectives.

Foreword

The Covent Garden Public Realm Framework has been developed as a 'blueprint' to help inform and direct future schemes and changes to the public realm as they come forward in a considered and holistic way. Through the development of this document, we have set a vision, and parameters for future projects, which the council and stakeholders can work towards collectively.

The Covent Garden Public Realm Framework is not an indicator that WCC will provide the measures laid out in the document. Beyond this document, specific projects will be subject to individual detailed design processes as and when appropriate. This document forms a starting point to set out Council expectations around streetscape and place to consider.

The public realm framework is not a statutory document - it is intended to provide supplementary information and thinking in the area over a 10 year period and will be reviewed and updated every two years alongside stakeholders and partners. This document should be read in conjunction with the current version of the WCC Public Realm Strategy document.



1. INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

This design guidance document is intended to develop a shared vision and framework to shape the continuing transformation of Covent Garden and its surrounding area over the next decades. Reflecting on and responding to the findings of the emergency measures deployed to support business recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Covent Garden is considered to be the catalyst for the modern conservation moment in London when its imminent destruction was threatened in the 1970s. This radical history of trailblazing sets the tone for how the area can inform the next stage of London's transformation, towards a more people-friendly city. The emergency business recovery response across London allowed creative thinking for activating the public realm to be implemented and tested rapidly. The pandemic prefigures the rapid changes in our urban environment that will be required for a changing climate, as well as new demands on our city to balance work, living space and leisure.

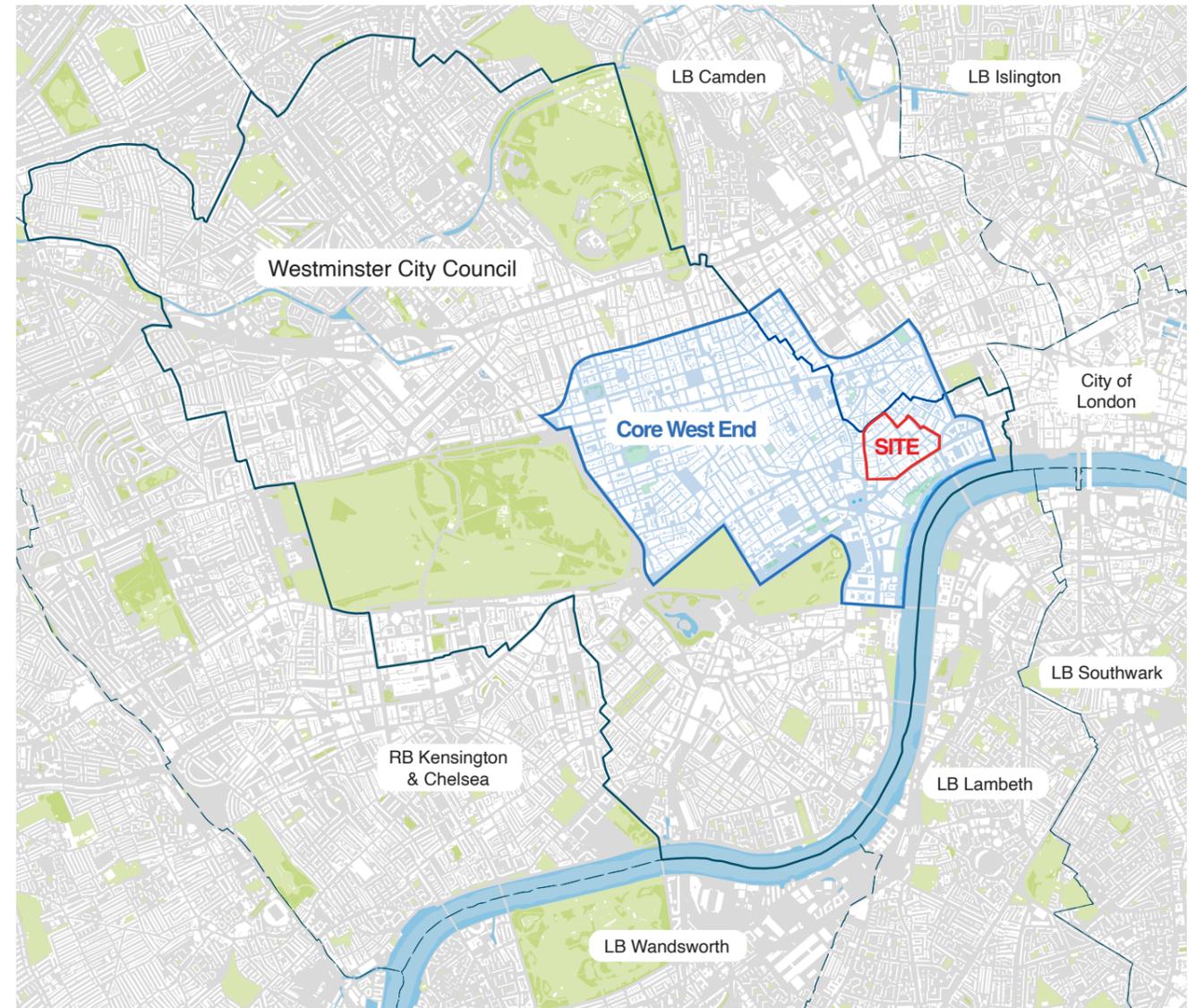
Covent Garden's public realm needs to operate as a coherent, attractive environment, which reflects the area's character. This design guidance aims to support that approach, balancing legible routes with characterful local clusters. The public realm needs to manage the demands of the area's status as a global destination and its everyday role as a part of the city. The work by WCC and the Northbank BID will improve the connectivity between Covent Garden, the Thames and Strand Aldwych, further increasing footfall. This framework is an opportunity to re-evaluate the public realm and its environmental role – improving air quality, introducing urban greening, encouraging active and public transport and supporting zero-carbon objectives.

This framework focusses on permanent works to the public realm of Covent Garden beyond the withdrawal of temporary schemes on 30 September 2021. As more businesses begin to re-open and a return to 'normality' is on the horizon, it is important to re-establish a business as usual approach to alfresco dining. This looks to retain those aspects which have proven to be successful, while understanding the cumulative impact on the public realm of other uses re-opening, including theatre, retail and public performance, as well as office workers returning, and local families going back to school and work. Alfresco locations must be understood alongside wider ambitions for the activation and improvement of the public realm.

The study required a detailed evidence base to be established, through the creation of character area assessments and key stakeholder engagement. Consideration was given to data and consultation responses gathered over the last year, to understand the conflicts between uses in the area that may impact on air quality, noise, servicing and emergency access. Covid-19 related restrictions relating to restaurants have eased, allowing covers to be fully provided internally. The scope and location of alfresco dining has been critiqued and reviewed against its impacts on other uses of the public realm.

This framework document responds to the anticipated Neighbourhood Traffic Management Plan (NTM) – and future opportunities to build upon it. The NTM proposals provide a framework to start building a strategy for the public realm in Covent Garden that is sympathetic to its heritage, whilst setting design quality standards, to ensure an exemplary and experience for both businesses and visitors. This document attempts to synthesise the cultural, political and technical opportunities and constraints into a clear vision for Covent Garden. The vision is a statement of intent for future improvements and interventions in this rich cityscape.

The Public Realm Framework for Covent Garden should be read in conjunction with the current version of the Westminster Public Realm Strategy document which may be revised from time to time to align with the City Councils policies and pledges. Design principles and requirements detailed in the Westminster Public Realm Strategy document take precedent over the Covent Garden guidance.



1. CONTEXT AND POLICY

The West End forms one of London's International Centres, with multiple strategies in place to support its activities and growth.

The West End is identified in both the Westminster City Plan and the London Plan as an internationally important centre for the cultural, leisure, and evening economies.

The future detailed development of the proposals within this design framework should refer to the contemporary policy documents. Opposite are some of the current policy documents that should inform the development of the detailed designs. The relevant documents will continue to evolve over the lifespan of this framework. Future design teams should consult with the Council and stakeholders to agree on the relevant policies which the design of the public realm needs to respond to.

The politics of public space design and management continues to develop with an increasing demand for innovation and inclusion, to tackle key challenges including climate change and inequality. Best practice processes also call for meaningful public consultation and encourage the engagement of communities and stakeholders through a codesign process – to manage conflicts and achieve a sense of collective ownership of the public realm.

The Covent Garden Area Trust (CGAT) has previously produced guidance on the historic environment and its management. Capital and Counties (CAPCO) are preparing their own management charter setting out best practice. It is important these management plans are continually reviewed as future proposals are delivered, to ensure they reflect developing policies on matters such as management of public space, servicing and waste storage.

Westminster City Council has recently been partnering with the two Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the area to bring forward public realm improvements. To the west of the study area, with particular interest in St Martin's Lane, is the Heart of London Business Alliance BID. To the south of the study area, including along the Strand and Catherine Street, is the Northbank BID. Alongside key landowners such as CAPCO and Shaftesbury, the framework anticipates multiple delivery partners working alongside the Council.

WCC policy documents that support public realm investment and management



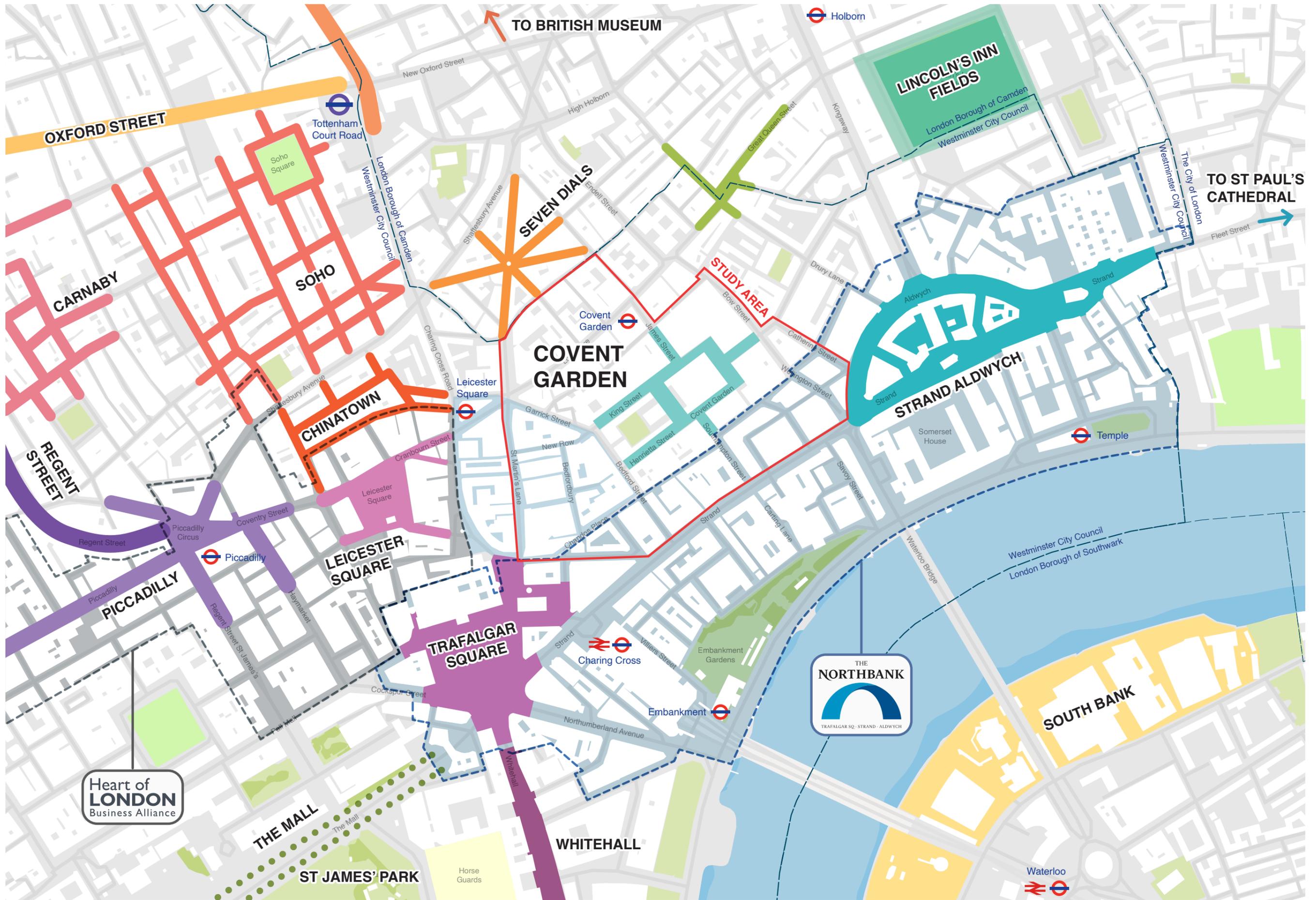
GLA policy documents that should be continually referred to in developing proposals



Supporting studies and guidance that should help to shape the study context and proposals



Historic guidance documents which may still offer useful sources of information and references to the development of Covent Garden



2. VISION



2. VISION

Covent Garden is a diverse place and the boundary of this study incorporates a range of individual 'clusters' that each have their own identity. This vision looks to reflect this and to support improved connectivity of the area into the broader West End.

SUPPORTING THE WEST END

Covent Garden and the West End have never existed in a fixed state. They have remained a cultural and social destination for the last 400 years through constant adaptation and reinvention. The very success of the area as a cultural power house of the UK has been down to it rapidly responding to – and shaping – emerging cultural and social behaviour.

The built fabric and public spaces of Covent Garden are a palimpsest, representing centuries of growth, rebuilding and changing cultural, economic and transport trends. Therefore the vision and framework set out in this document seeks to steer the next 10-20 years of Covent Garden's development. As previous social and technological change has shown, it is very hard for fixed plans to adapt to rapid change so flexibility in the framework is key.

This vision is seen as a framework for managing change, setting out the initial priorities for establishing a Covent Garden that is people focussed, anticipating a shift towards increasing pedestrianisation and traffic calming in the West End.

Some of the proposals set out within the framework may be possible in the short-term, building on the outcomes of the proposed 2021 Neighbourhood Traffic Management Plan (NTM) to find additional footway space or timed pedestrianisation of streets.

Other proposals are long-term ambitions that will require detailed consultation, traffic monitoring and modelling to understand their impacts. Some of these might prove to be reliant on long-term reductions in traffic demand or changes in delivery modes to be supportable as practical proposals.

Agreeing viable delivery routes for these proposals will be critical. This framework is intended to support fundraising and identifying delivery partners for these improvements. The inclusion of future projects does not mean that the Council has committed to funding these proposals.

REINFORCING LOCAL CHARACTER

The clusters identified in this vision have been developed through the baseline character area assessment (see Appendix 1). Each cluster has been recognised as having an individual local character that should be reinforced through future public realm projects.

The framework layers in the following chapter are intended to act as guiding principles for creating a holistic approach to the future public realm. Design teams developing detailed proposals are encouraged to work with local stakeholders and community groups, implementing a co-design process to identify the key characteristics that should define each area.

STITCHING THE WEST END TOGETHER

Creating a series of legible routes that connects the key West End destinations is a key aspect of the vision.

These future routes should be developed to support inclusive movement, prioritise pedestrians and form a safe and attractive street environment 24 hours a day.



Above: Al fresco on Southampton Street, and against the south colonnade - August 2020



Above: An active street-life culture supports Covent Garden as a key West End destination



Above: Temporary measures have helped to reinforce the 'Opera Quarter' area as a cluster in its own right



Above: St Martin's Lane is a bustling mix of theatres, hospitality venues and residential flats above

2.1 VISION - CLUSTERS

Covent Garden has some key city scale spaces, and a network of active streets that support movement across the West End.

A HEART OF COVENT GARDEN

Established from the 1980s as a key visitor destination in the West End the 'Heart of Covent Garden' covers the main Piazza and its approaches. The Piazza is one of London's key public spaces, representing a rare example of a planned European style square which still retains the ambition it had when built in the 1600s. The quality of the Piazza's open hard paved spaces is an important attribute and should be treated with care – balancing business recovery with truly public space and the operations of the cultural venues that surround it.

The collection of listed buildings around the Piazza contribute to the character, and activation of the space as well as providing prominent landmarks. Careful consideration should be given to their thresholds and visual presence.

There are opportunities to build on the success of the Piazza through the transformation of Henrietta and King Street as extensions of this public space. Additionally longer-term projects could see Russell Street and Southampton Street transformed as key connections to Strand Aldwych and Strand respectively.

B STRENGTHENED CLUSTERS

B.1 'THE LANES'

'The Lanes' is a proposed categorisation of St Martin's Lane along with the neighbouring alleys and courts to form a larger cluster. This better represents St Martin's Lane as the centre of a broader cluster, with side streets that each have their own character, but contributing to a greater sense of a whole.

Public realm improvements to St Martin's Lane could support this cluster, improving walking connections through to Leicester Square and Covent Garden to support a popular more legible route. Public realm improvements could also contribute to more places to pause, enjoy al fresco or gather around theatres, decreasing the sense of this space being a street to simply pass through.

B.2 'OPERA QUARTER'

The 'Opera Quarter' is a cluster based around Catherine Street and Wellington Street, where there is a local cluster of theatres and hospitality venues alongside the Royal Opera House. The businesses in this cluster have benefited from the recent emergency business recovery measures to reduce carriageways to free up space for al fresco uses and to support theatre crowd control.

This area is also becoming a key route through from Covent Garden through to the major new public space that has been created at Strand Aldwych.

C CITY-SCALE CONNECTIONS

C.1 LONG ACRE / PICCADILLY TO LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS

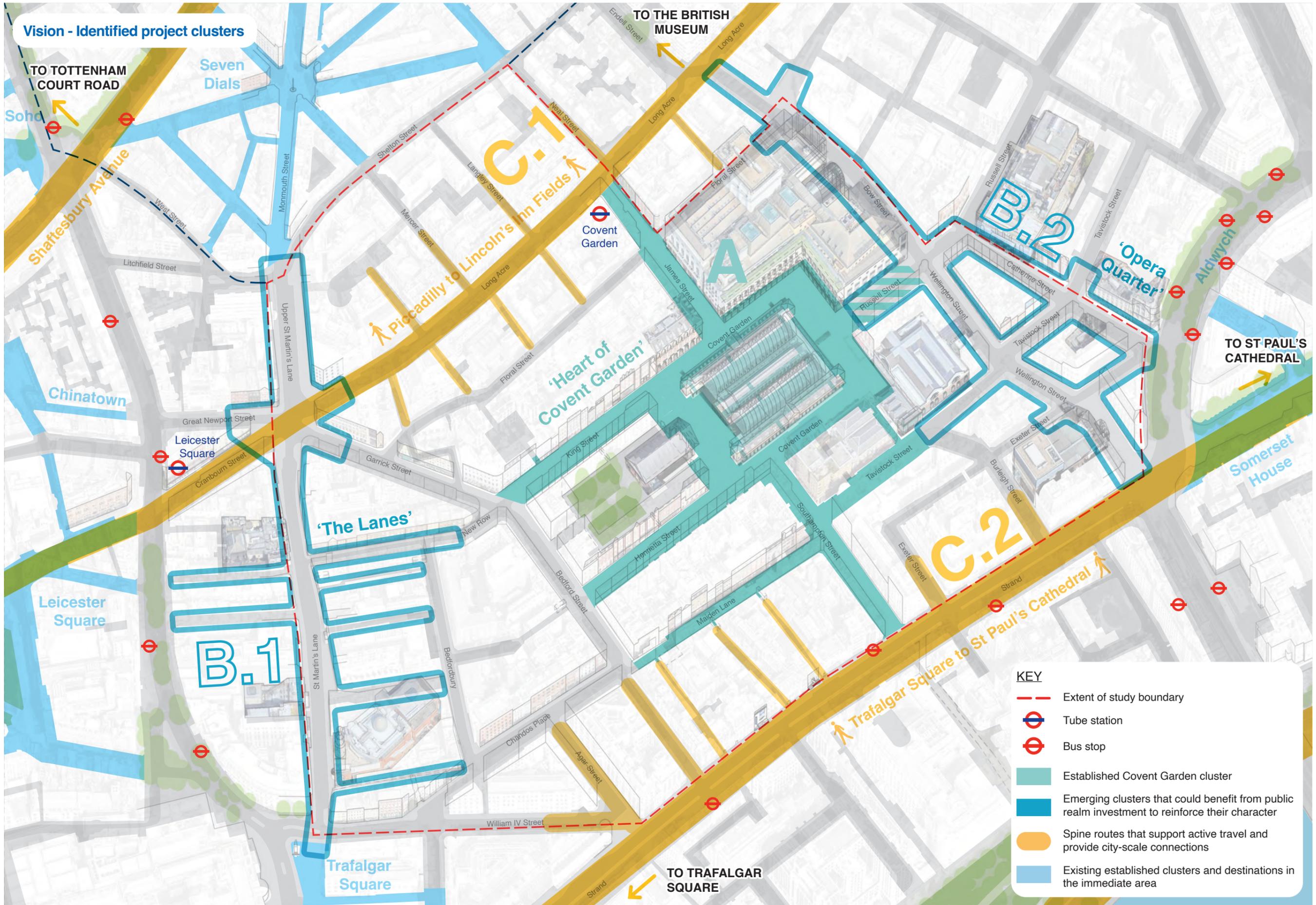
Long Acre is a key connecting street, forming part of a long walking route from Green Park and Piccadilly to the west, all the way through to Lincoln's Inn Fields in the East. Long Acre has benefited from relatively recent improvements, and is now a retail-led cluster at ground level. The main street space is supported by the lanes off it and is well connected into the high-end retail along Floral Street.

Future improvements to this cluster should support the street's attractiveness as a retail destination. The impact of the NTM should be monitored and any reduction in traffic or parking demands monitored. If there is an opportunity to rework the highways, the potential for further pedestrian crossings and new street tree planting should be investigated.

C.2 STRAND / TRAFALGAR SQUARE TO ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Strand forms a connection between Trafalgar Square in the west through to St Paul's Cathedral in the east, connecting a series of internationally significant attractions and employment clusters. The recent transformation of the Strand Aldwych gyratory to find a new public space is the first step in transforming the environment of 'Strand West'.

Any future redesign of 'Strand West' should look to improve the walking and cycling environment to support sustainable transport modes. Public realm improvements should carefully consider the thresholds of the many alleys that connect into Covent Garden. Improvements to lighting and surveillance – both passive and CCTV – could help to make these spaces feel safer.



2.2 VISION - STRATEGIC LINKS

Covent Garden and its constituent clusters do not operate in isolation – they are a key part of the wider West End cultural ‘eco-system’ that should be supported through a strong network of walking routes.

1. Seven Dials to Covent Garden

These two areas in their character have a lot in common, and generally it is hard to draw a line that separates them. Whilst the strongest walking connection is via James Street and Neal Street – as this ties into Covent Garden tube station – other more granular routes through the alleys and courts should be supported, with sensitive lighting and signage interventions to increase their attractiveness.

Improvements to this route should be co-ordinated with LB Camden to ensure a coherent approach is adopted and delivered.

2. Strand Aldwych to Covent Garden

Connecting one of London’s newest public spaces at Strand Aldwych, to one of London’s oldest at Covent Garden Piazza. This route should build on the existing strong walking connection from Strand/Waterloo bridge to Bow Street.

A connection via Catherine Street ties into the new crossing location on Aldwych, providing access to the bus hub and via India Place to the new public space. This route should benefit from extensive highways and public realm improvements to provide wide, well lit and signed connections.

3. Embankment to Covent Garden

The Victoria Embankment is becoming an increasingly popular walking route alongside the segregated cycle route. The Victoria Embankment Garden is a rich established park space that is often overlooked. A link currently exists between Covent Garden piazza and these spaces via Southampton Street and Carting Lane.

This route from the Thames to the Market Buildings should be supported and the direct views preserved to aid legibility. Alternative step-free routes via Strand should also be signed.

4. Charing Cross to Covent Garden

A key objective of TfL in recent years has been to support the up-take of walking for short journeys involving highly congested lines or stations. Covent Garden and Leicester Square are two stations of concern, with established signed walking routes from surrounding stations, including Charing Cross.

Charing Cross Station to Covent Garden is a short walk (~10mins) and would benefit from improving the street environments of Agar Street, Chandos Place and Bedford Street.

5. Trafalgar Square to Covent Garden

This route also suffers from poor public realm along its length. The most direct route, via William IV street, Chandos Place and Bedford Street, requires investment to tackle narrow footways, and the congestion of parking and servicing traffic.

Transforming these streets would help support linking two of London’s most significant public spaces. An alternative route through Bedfordbury via St Martin’s Lane is possible and would benefit from investment in lighting, signage and increased street activation during the day.

6. Chinatown and Leicester Square to Covent Garden

This route currently attracts a lot of footfall, but struggles with narrow footways along Garrick Street. Investment in improving this route and additional wayfinding interventions at ‘St Martin’s Cross’ could significantly improve the pedestrian experience.

An alternative route should also be supported via New Row and St Martin’s Court or Cecil Court. This relies on improvements to the crossing of Charing Cross Road, as there is currently no safe crossing point aligned with this route.

The route along Long Acre should also be seen as a strategic link into Covent Garden, linking to the tube station and the retail and hospitality cluster in this northern part of Covent Garden.

D TRANSFORMING BEDFORD STREET

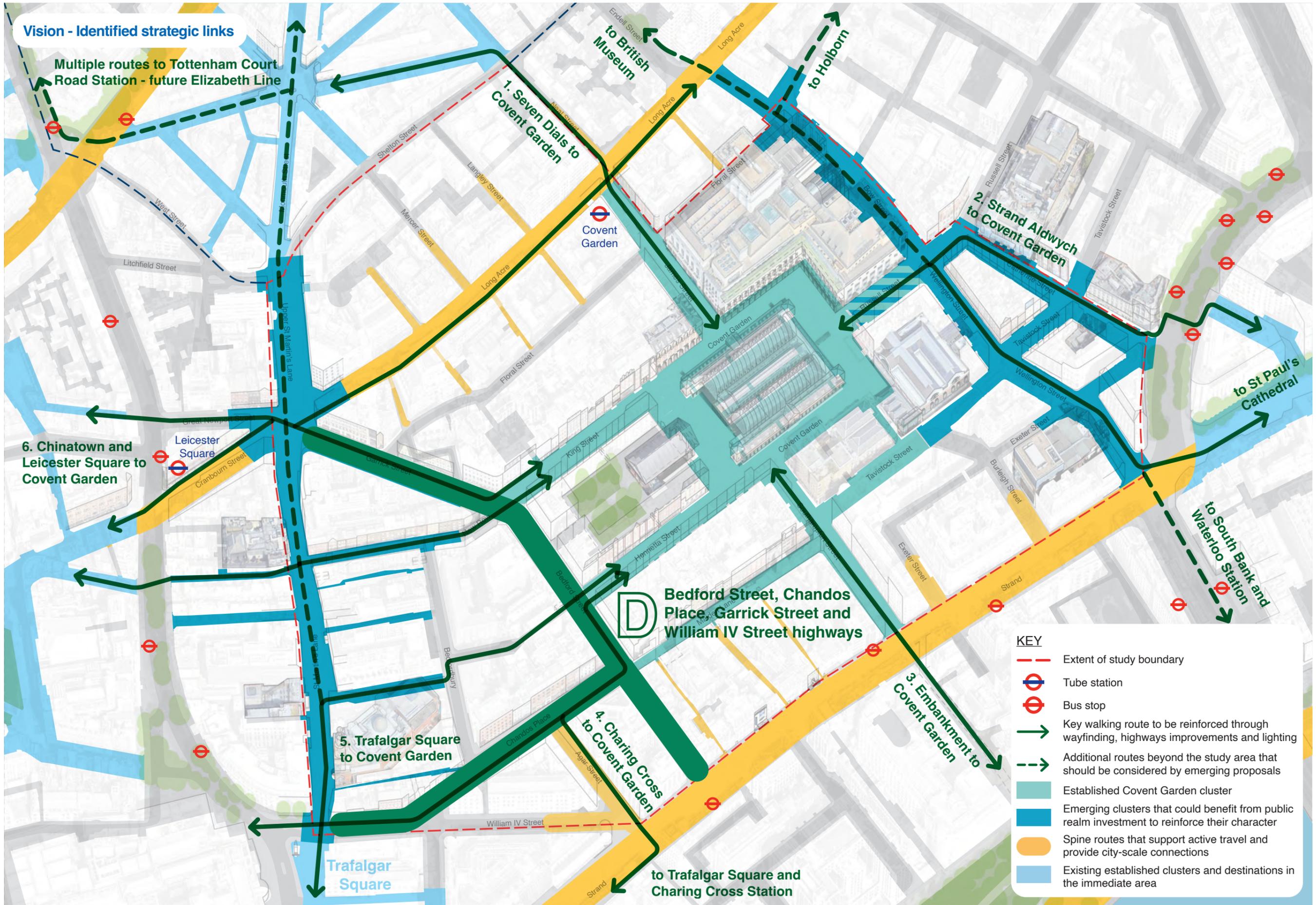
Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street and William IV Street highways investigation

The cumulative challenges to the network of routes linking Covent Garden into the West End shows that there is a rationale for a long-term highways project to collectively explore many of these issues.

An investigation into the potential to rationalise and improve the traffic movements, parking provision and loading times along Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street and William IV Street could offer opportunities to improve connections to the west of Covent Garden.

These streets act as a manifold of routes and pose some of the most challenging environments by day and night for pedestrians.

This study could follow on from the short-term implementation of the NTM, allowing a study in the medium-term to identify how this impacts traffic operations. It is likely, due to the role these streets serve in supporting the servicing of Covent Garden, the theatres and the Charing Cross Police Station, that significant changes to the public realm will be reliant upon substantial decreases in traffic flows or modal changes.



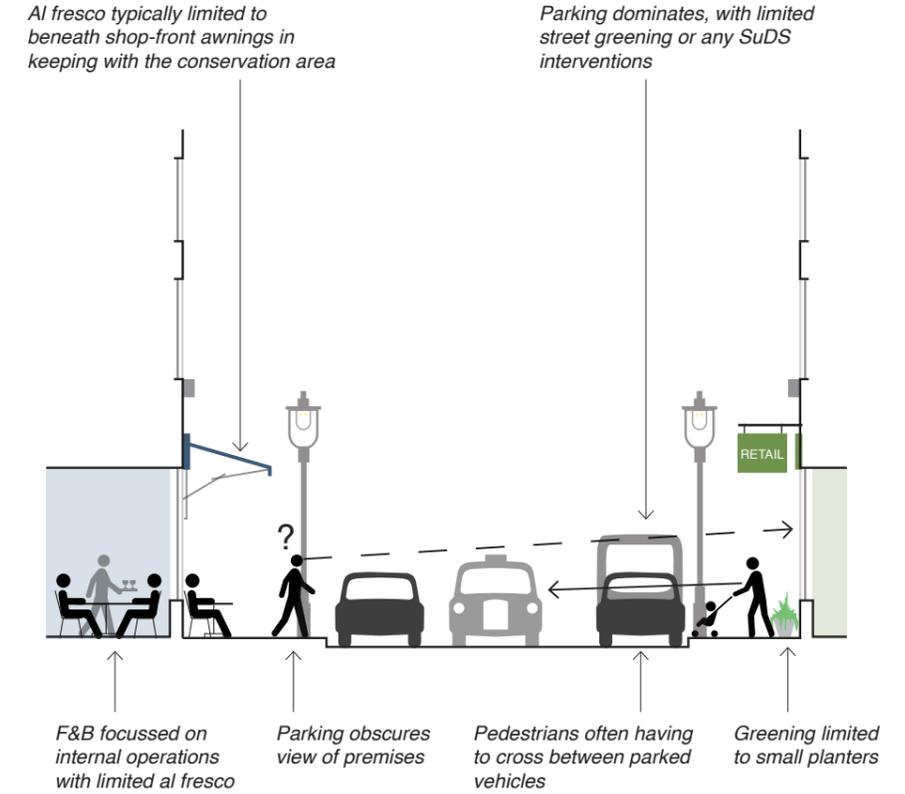
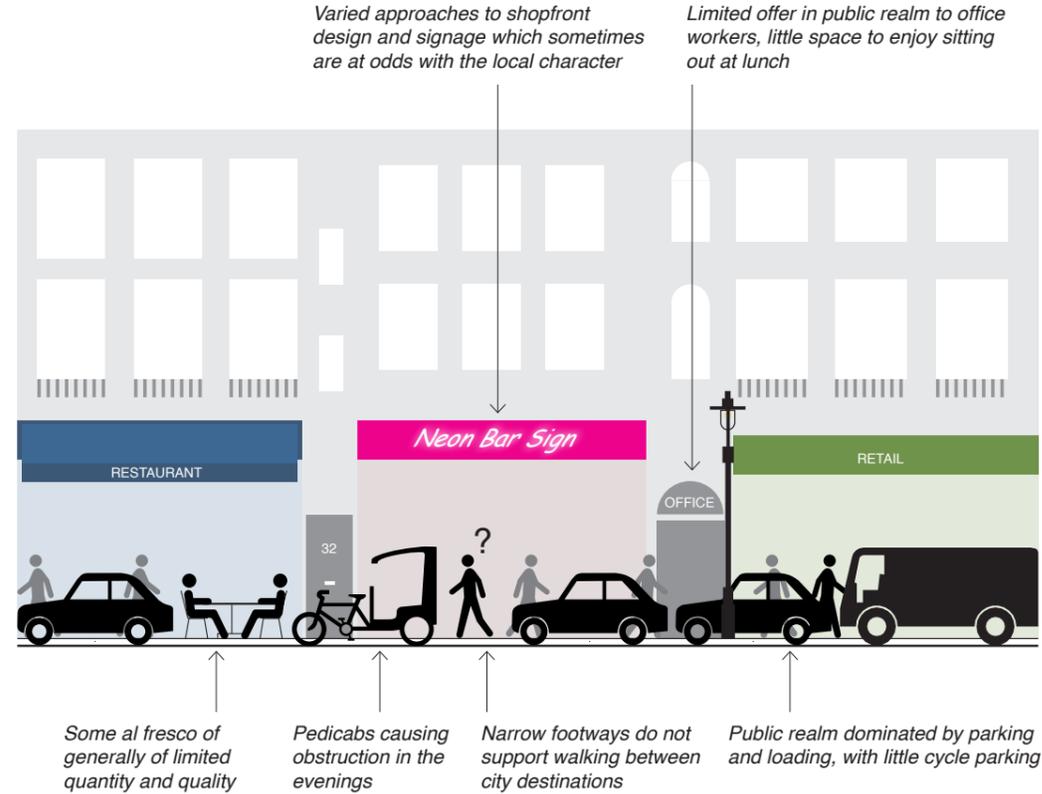
2.3 VISION - CHANGE

Covent Garden is a constantly changing environment – a rich palimpsest. How can future change capture positive benefits of the business recovery?

PRE-COVID / UNRESTRICTED HIGHWAY ACCESS

Before the emergency business recovery plans were implemented, streetscapes were often dominated by the requirements of access, parking and loading at the cost of placemaking. Whilst some highways transformations had been undertaken in areas such as King Street and Long Acre, these improvements were limited.

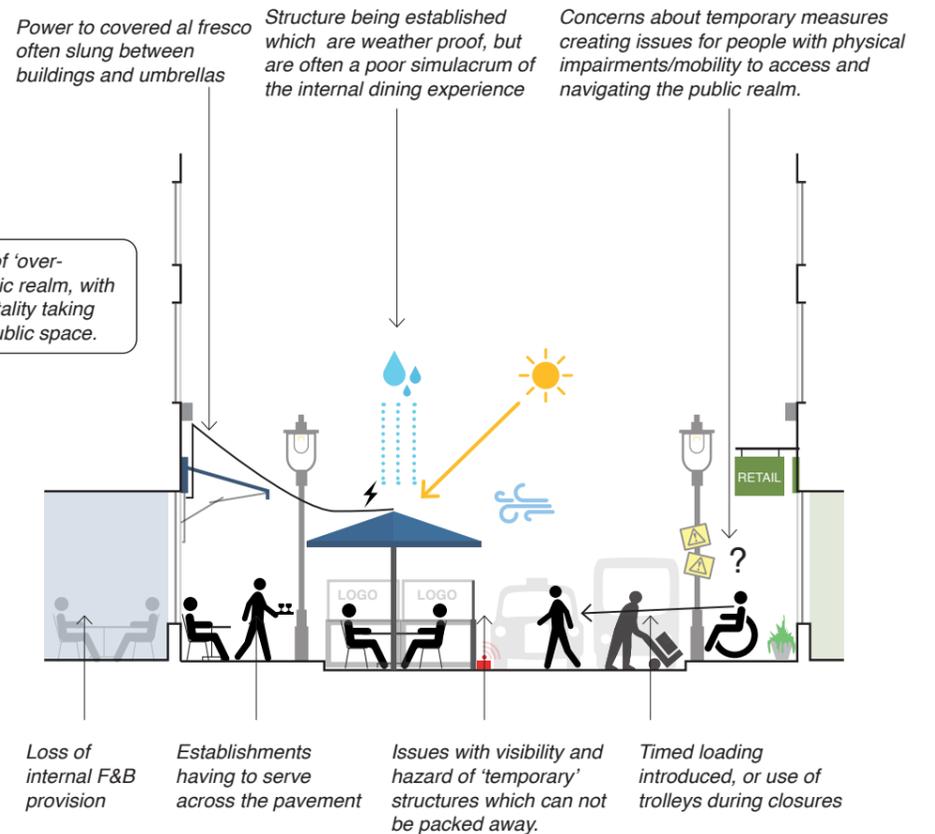
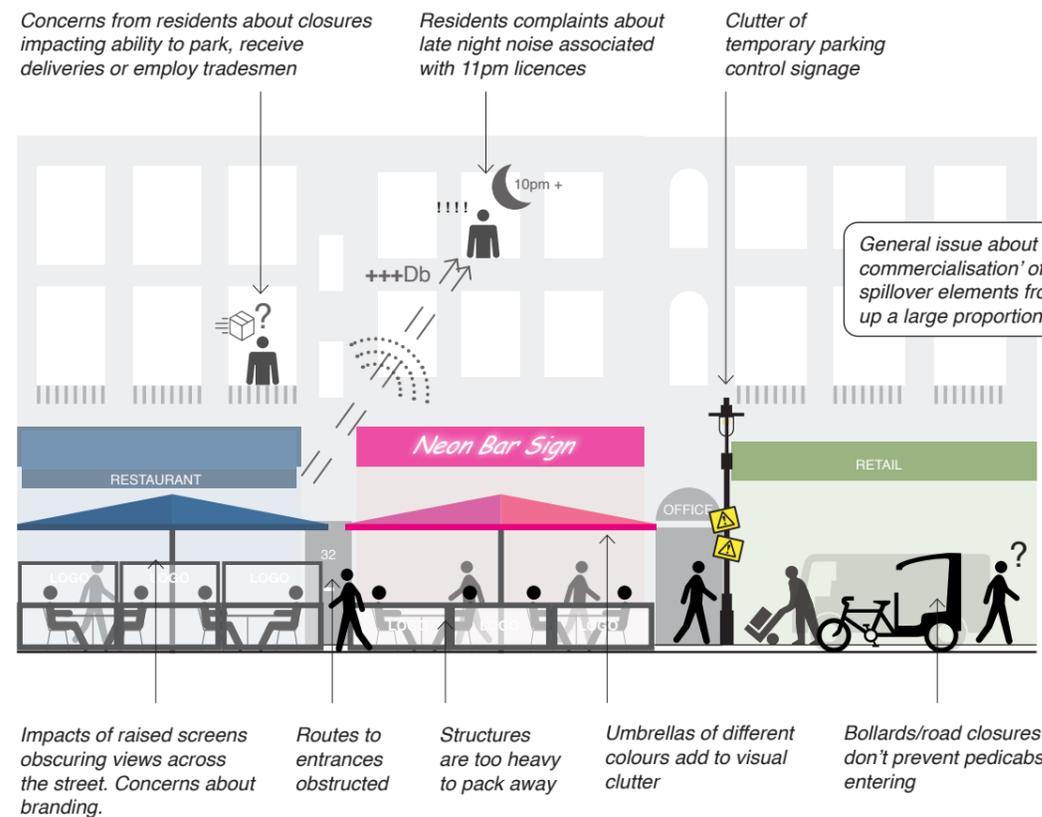
Across the majority of Covent Garden the tight street network was predominantly the territory of the car or van, with limited footway widths and minimal al fresco offer.



COVID / EMERGENCY TIMED ROAD CLOSURES

Building on developing highways work to implement a future Neighbourhood Traffic Management Plan, temporary measures were installed from July 2020 to support emergency business recovery. This prioritised widening footways to support social distancing and creating space for al fresco dining. Many streets in central Covent Garden also had their hours of access limited to provide timed pedestrianisation.

This came with a range of benefits and disadvantages, including impacts on residents and businesses through limiting hours of access for deliveries, with the potential for worsened kerbside storage of refuse. This approach was also heavily skewed towards providing additional al fresco to support the loss of internal covers due to limits on internal hospitality. The installation in some areas of al fresco has also tended towards creating an internalised environment to provide a comfortable environment for year round dining outside.

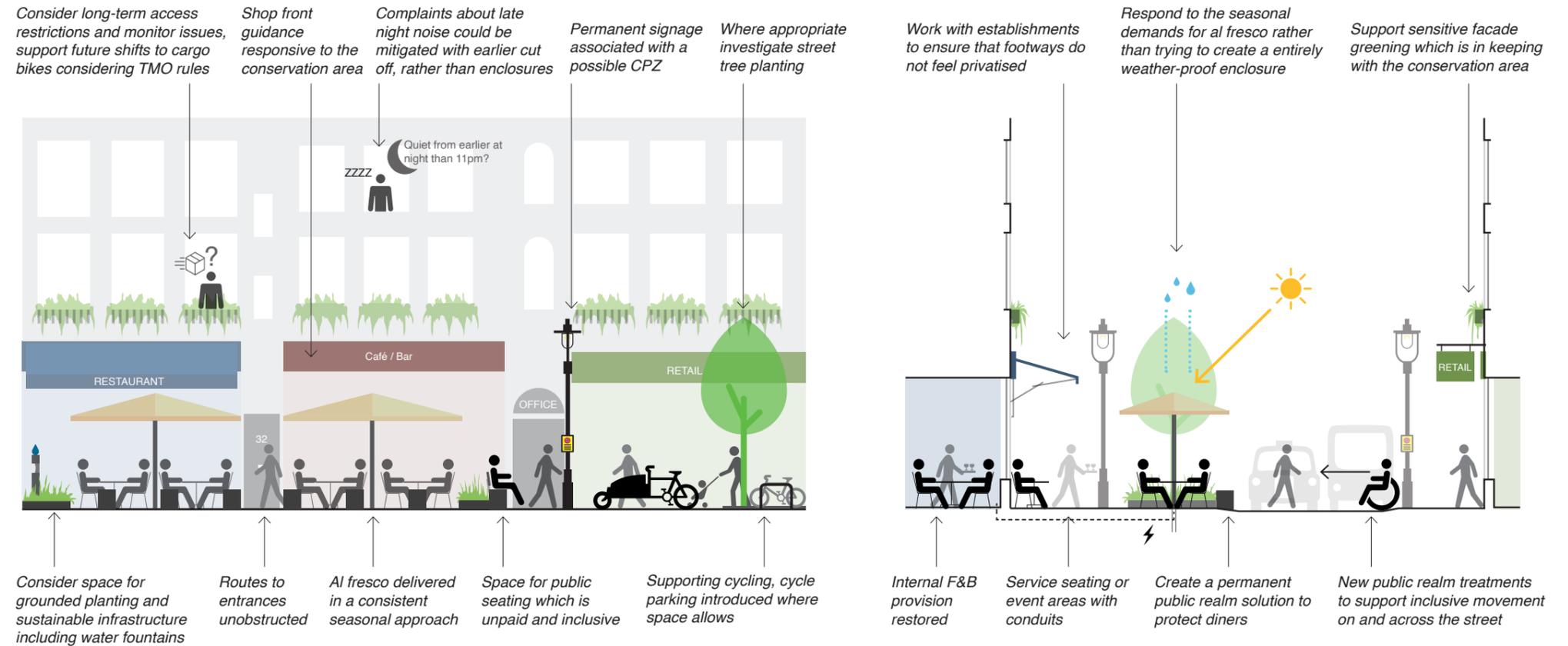


POST-COVID / NEIGHBOURHOOD TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN+

The emergency response to support businesses in the Covent Garden area demonstrated some benefits of increased pedestrianisation and footway buildouts. These spaces require considered and sensitive long-term public space management to minimise anti-social behaviour, parking infringements and refuse issues from arising.

Many of the temporary installations were removed on 30 September 2021, however some streets (Henrietta Street, King Street, Maiden Lane and part of Southampton Street) will continue under the NTM proposals for timed road closures.

Learning from the temporary measures is important in creating a long term vision for the area. How can a vision for a future streetscape consider the impact on local residents, whilst balancing the increased long-term demand for al fresco, with the right for all to be able to access/enjoy/linger in the public realm without needing to purchase something from commercial activities? Whilst demand for al fresco might be demonstrable the need to increase the public realm quality and support active and inclusive travel should also be respected. This is the key challenge and a proposed strategy and layers to consider is set out in the following framework and project descriptions.



Above: The emergency business recovery showed that with care al fresco can be introduced.



Above: New surface treatments with minimal road markings on Earlham Street



Above: Integration of street greening and cycle infrastructure at Kings Cross

3. FRAMEWORK



3. FRAMEWORK

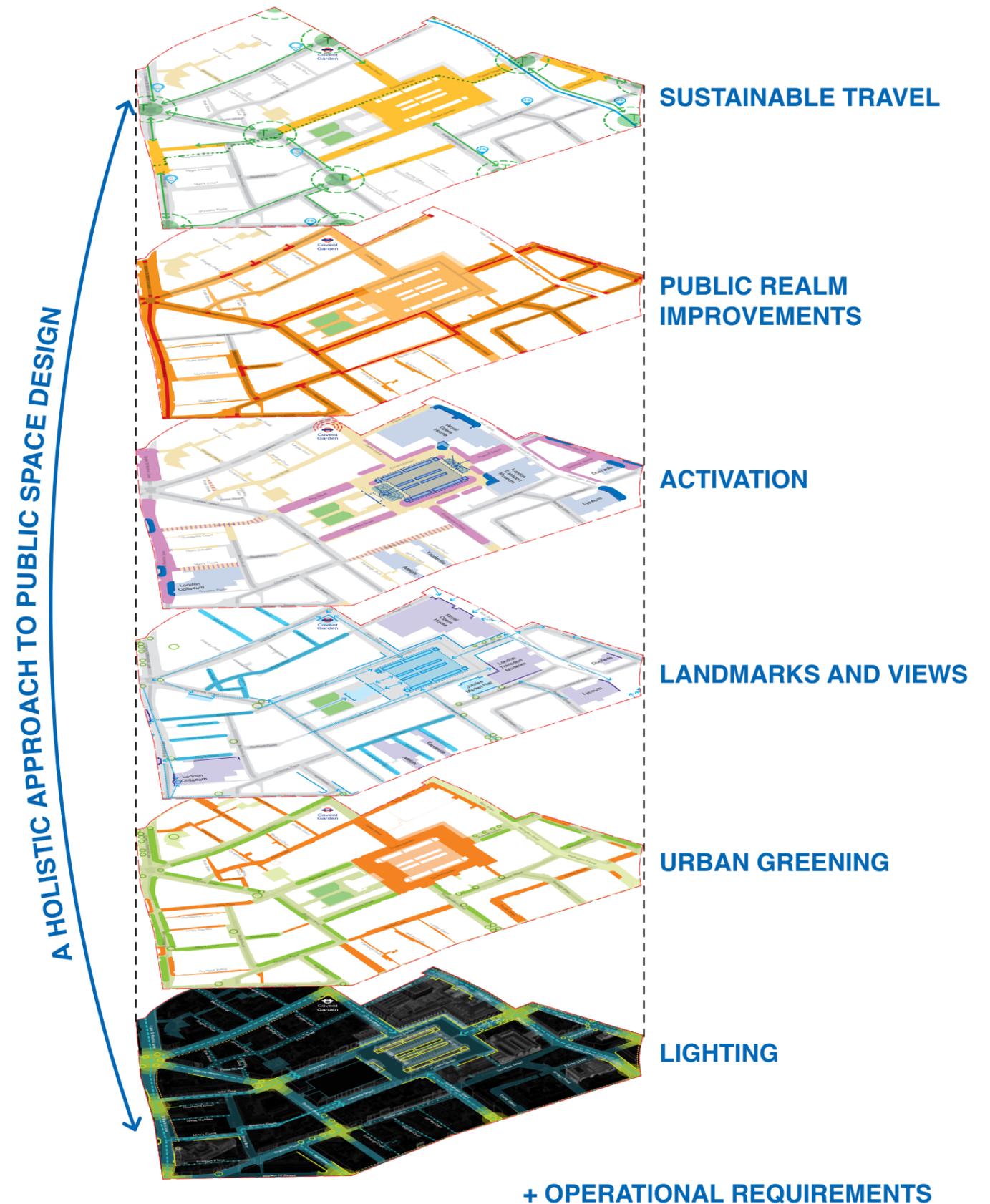
The task of creating a Covent Garden for the 21st Century should be approached holistically to balance sometimes conflicting demands on public space

Guiding the continuing development of Covent Garden's public spaces will require successfully managing difference and complexity. A holistic approach is proposed to manage the complex demands of this dense mixed-use piece of the West End. The technical operations of theatres, the need to minimise disruption to residents, the challenges of climate resilience, and the aim to support business recovery, require intelligent solutions to synthesise these within the limited public space.

Studies to investigate the potential to rationalise and reduce the extent or operational hours of the carriageway is one way to win back public space. However, this often comes at the impact of access to premises or residential properties. As part of a holistic approach to designing future public spaces, it is proposed that use of space released from the carriageway should be balanced. Proposals should avoid all areas released from the carriageway being licenced for private hospitality uses. Instead opportunities for broader public gains should be investigated including opportunities for street greening, public seating or measures to increase active travel such as cycle parking or water fountains.

Emerging design proposals should show how they have investigated the benefits and minimised the impacts of the key themes on the diagram opposite. These layers are explored in detail in the following pages.

As part of a holistic approach future public realm schemes should also consider the management and maintenance of both the street spaces and the surrounding buildings. The operation of the area and its servicing, freight and deliveries should be incorporated as an additional layer into the development of proposals, responding to what will be complex and changing requirements, that need thorough and detailed studies.



3.1 FRAMEWORK - SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Covent Garden has some key city scale spaces, and a network of active streets that support movement across the West End.

SUPPORTING WALKING AND CYCLING

Covent Garden is a key cultural destination in the West End as well as an established retail and hospitality area. Supporting the uptake of walking and cycling by visitors, residents and workers should be seen as a key challenge. Shifting to active travel modes can help to reduce private vehicle use and remove congestion from busy public transport routes. Active travel should be planned to become the first choice for many when travelling within the study area.

Increasing the legibility and quality of the key routes across the area are recommended and the framework layer opposite illustrates a network of routes. Additionally it also suggests public realm interventions at key gateways and key nodes where routes combine or cross. These spaces should offer visitors the opportunity to orientate themselves and identify their destinations.

Improved crossing and footways along these routes will be key to making these attractive routes. The proposed projects section of this framework suggests the potential for the transformation of the highways along many of these routes that will require detailed design and extensive consultation to deliver.

Cycling should also be supported across the area, with the proposed NTM and future traffic reductions in the area a key opportunity to improve attractiveness of cycling in the area. A key aspect that needs investment in is the provision of well placed cycle parking close to key destinations to support visitors arriving by bicycle. New TfL cycle hire stations should also be considered, this will be most appropriate where significant areas of new pavement are created by redesigning the carriageway and away from congested footway areas.

Future demand shifts should be monitored, with suitable space provided alongside cycle parking for the growth of hire bikes and e-scooters.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICING

Consolidated and co-ordinated servicing as managed by stakeholders can help to contribute towards a more pleasant street environment, reducing journeys and decreasing the demand for loading spaces.

INCLUSIVE TRAVEL

To support the attractiveness of the area it is key that future proposals tackle the need to adapt the public realm to in order to support inclusive travel.

Public transport in the area is limited to the fringes of the study area – with the bus network not entering its boundary, and no step free access at Covent Garden Station. Taxis provide a high degree of flexibility and support inclusive travel into the area. Access within the study area for taxis, especially around the perimeter of the ‘Heart of Covent Garden’ should be supported. These taxis offer the opportunity for users to be dropped off and the taxi to go onto another job, rather than requiring a parking space.

The Russell Street taxi rank is a significant arrival point for many and any relocation of this rank should ensure that it is retained close by and that it is easy to locate and use. Any relocation should carefully consider the appropriateness of any locations for accessibility to key venues, but also to avoid transplanting issues around late-night taxi ranks in close proximity to residences.

Blue badge parking should still be provided across the area to support independent mobility, but locations should be carefully considered in consultation with accessible travel groups.

Future cycle parking should be designed to include locations for non-standard cycles to be parked, with consideration given to avoiding blocking footways. Non-standard cycles including, adapted cycles, tricycles or larger cycles can support inclusive transport, and locations should be identified where there is space, in line with the London Cycling Design Standards.

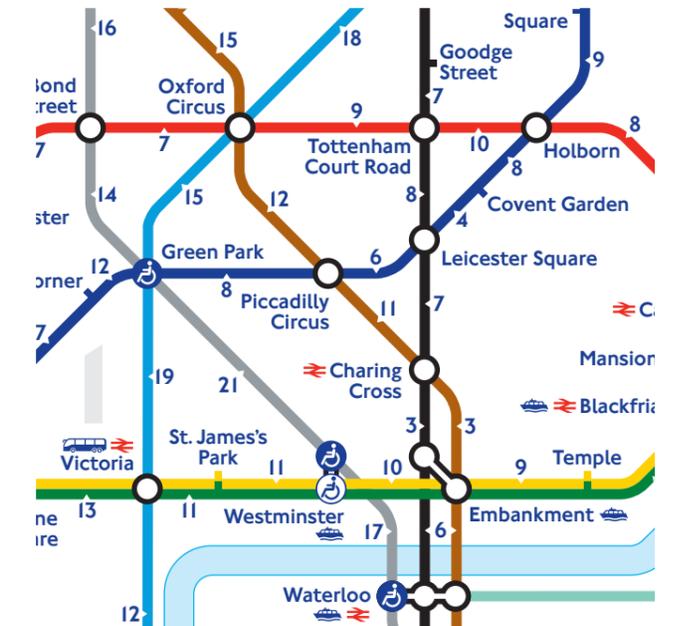
Covent Garden as a palimpsest, features many historic paving features – with some which are seemingly historic, but recent as is the case in the Piazza – including kerb lines that relate to former highway arrangements. These features should be reviewed to consider the need to modify and adapt them sensitively to respond to providing inclusive access. Areas of historical cobbles and setts will require detailed design approaches which should be developed in consultation with conservation officers, heritage bodies and members of accessibility groups.



Above: Cycle parking, as part of a street furniture zone, can help to reduce opportunistic and obstructive parking

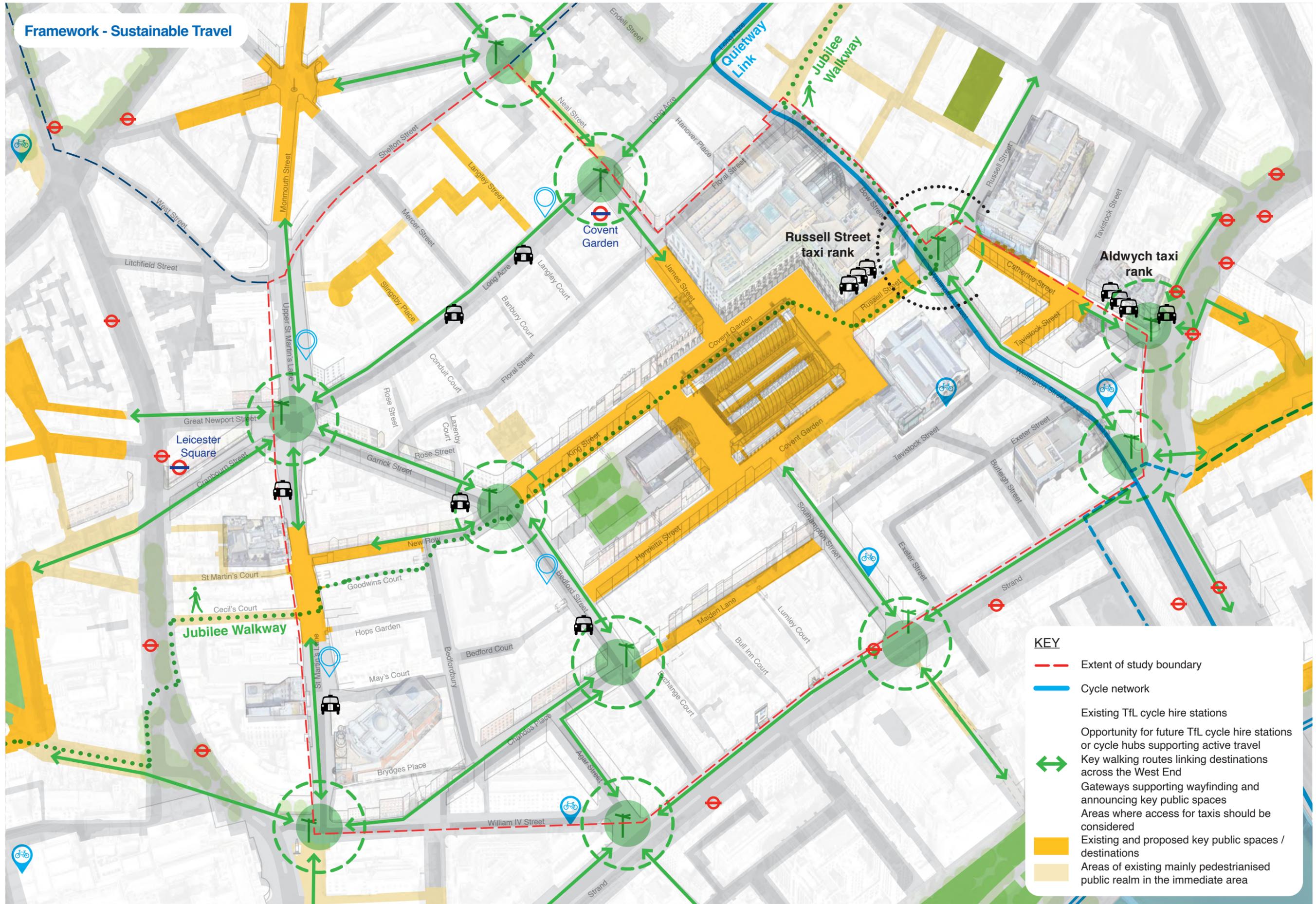


Above: Taxi access to the edges of key public spaces helps support inclusive travel provision



Above: The TfL walking tube map highlights how short these journeys can be by foot

Framework - Sustainable Travel



KEY

- - - Extent of study boundary
- Cycle network
- Existing TfL cycle hire stations
- Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
- ↔ Key walking routes linking destinations across the West End
- Gateways supporting wayfinding and announcing key public spaces
- Areas where access for taxis should be considered
- Existing and proposed key public spaces / destinations
- Areas of existing mainly pedestrianised public realm in the immediate area

3.2 FRAMEWORK - PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

Covent Garden continues to transform and its public realm should be central to supporting the enjoyment of this destination.

The current public realm within Covent Garden is a product of decades of development, repair and the rapid adjustments. In 2020 the emergency business recovery schemes delivered as a response to the specific challenges of COVID-19 create a new condition from which to build off.

Streets such as Long Acre, King Street and Wellington Street have seen recent projects that have raised the quality of the materials and pedestrian environment. However, as observed in the baseline study (see Appendix 1) there are still large areas of asphalt paved footways in the area. These detract from the historic character of the area and should be targeted for replacement in line with the adopted material palettes for the area.

Rapid adaptation of the highway layouts to support business recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic was achieved through emergency powers. Most of these interventions ceased on 30 September 2021. They have demonstrated where there might be potential for future permanent footway widening or timed road closures, to gain public space from the current carriageway. Consultation in August 2020 showed broadly positive support for timed closures in the NTM area of Covent Garden.

The framework layer opposite is based upon an optimistic vision for the area. This will only be deliverable in the long-term, as highway proposals will need to iteratively build upon the NTM, with interventions phased and impacts monitored.

As noted in the project opportunities alongside, there are some elements of projects which could be delivered ahead of longer-term pedestrianisation. These may include the realignment of kerblines to widen footways in advance of future carriageway resurfacing. These interim works should be designed as permanent works and paved accordingly. Reintroducing highway barriers – or bolt-down kerbs and back fill – will not be considered an appropriate interim solution.

Emerging public realm projects should look to:

- Provide **High quality materials** and finishes which are in keeping with the palette of materials for Covent Garden and the WCC Public Realm SPD.
- Explore opportunities for **innovative solutions or materials** that do not require high levels of maintenance and could reduce embodied carbon.
- Provide **fully accessible designs** which support an inclusive public realm developed in consultation with experts and accessible movement groups.
- Explore opportunities for **multifunctional public realm elements** (e.g. combining HVM with landscaping, seating with signage, etc.) to make the most of limited space and create positive synergies.
- Have **co-ordinated street furniture zones** that maintain clear footways.
- Integrate public seating where space permits, **providing rest points** along key routes, while avoiding designs that attract anti-social behaviour.
- Prioritise **safe crossings** for pedestrians along key routes and desire lines.
- Public realm proposals will be required to incorporate appropriate **counter terrorism measures** advised by the Met Police and/or WCC. Schemes should achieve an appropriate balance between addressing threats and maintaining public realm quality.
- A holistic approach to public realm design is required to **incorporate security measures** in the public realm both in terms of design and function.
- Find opportunities for public infrastructure such as **water fountains** and **public WCs** including 'Changing places'.
- Consider **meaningful street greening** proposals which minimise harm to historic street environments.
- Incorporate **wayfinding** and locations for Legible London family signage at key decision points.
- Develop designs which **minimise opportunities for anti-social behaviour** through careful consideration of street furniture, including locations, materials and finishes.
- Consider the need to **clearly sign highways** which lead to 'dead-end' pedestrian areas, minimising traffic and turning movements.
- Integrate sustainable urban infrastructure including **recycling bins** and refuse storage.

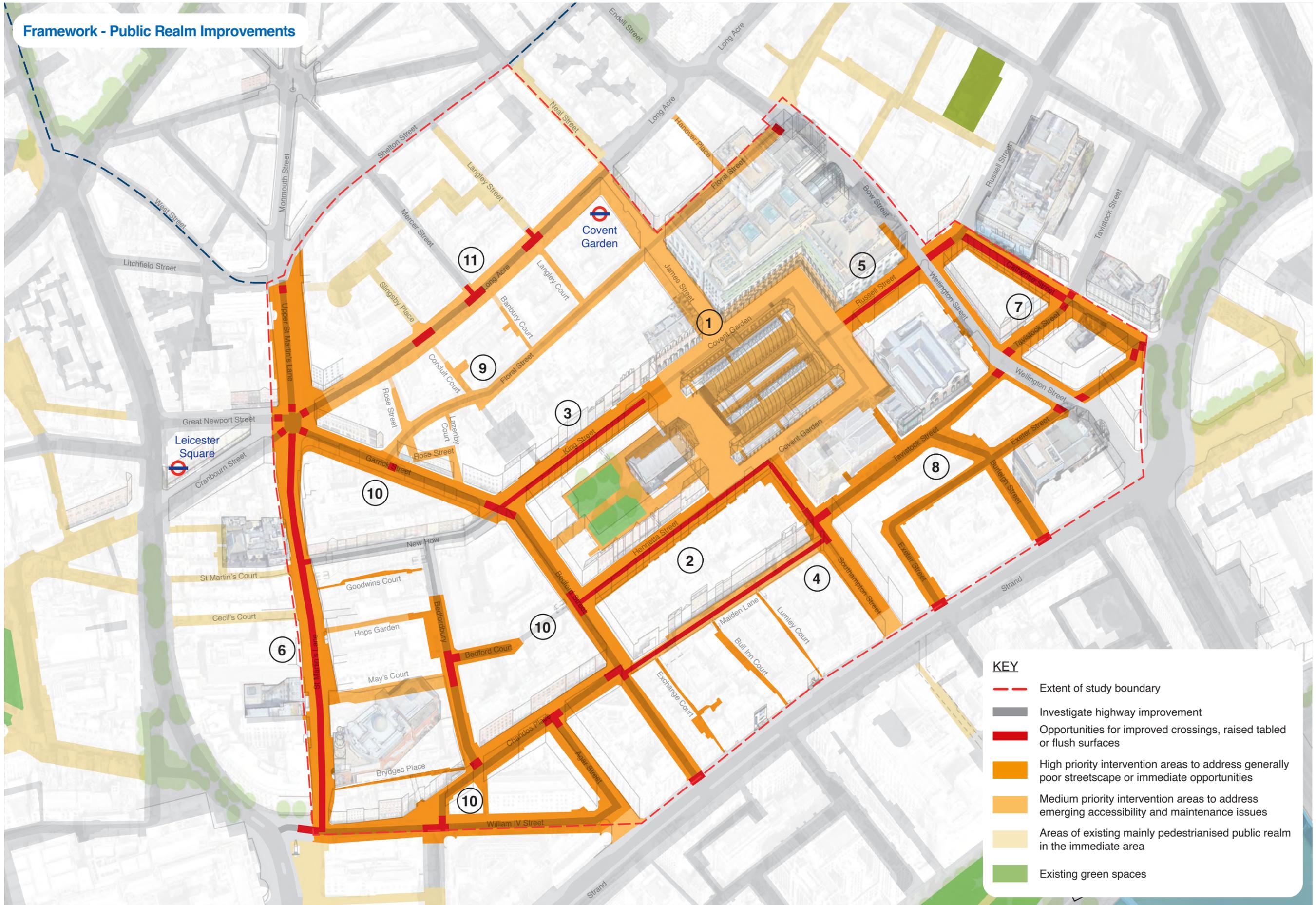
KEY PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Improvements to the accessibility of surfaces and removal of street clutter in the Piazza and James Street to aid movement (**Short-term**)
2. Transformation of Henrietta Street to build on results of the NTM and provide broad benefits including permanent footway widening (**Short-term**)
3. Amendments to King Street to move towards footway buildouts or a flush surface finish similar to the Piazza (**Medium-term**)
4. Improvements to Maiden Lane and Southampton Street to respond to NTM results and to prioritise footway widening and improved surface treatments (**Medium-term**)
5. Introduction of widened southern footway to support al fresco on Russell Street (**Short-Term**). Followed by investigation into pedestrianisation as a key entry point to the Piazza from the east (**Long-term**) pending detailed consultation and a holistic study of highways, parking and loading in the East Covent Garden area.
6. Potential to transform St Martin's Lane with lessons learnt from the business recovery scheme's footway buildouts (**Medium-term**)
7. Opportunity within the 'Opera Quarter' to reintroduce footway buildouts with permanent kerb realignment (**Short-term**). Followed by investigations into timed closures to part of Catherine Street (**Medium-term**) and dependent on traffic monitoring following the NTM, detailed traffic modelling and consultation.
8. Public realm improvements to Tavistock Street/ Exeter Street/Burleigh Street (**Medium-term**)
9. Public realm improvements to Floral Street to provide a more inclusive public realm, tackling obstructions and surfaces that have a negative impact on accessibility (**Short-term**)
10. Transformation of Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street and William IV Street to support active travel and street greening (**Long-term**) and dependent on traffic monitoring following the NTM, detailed traffic modelling and consultation.
11. Improved Long Acre crossings (**Medium-term**)



Above: Looking to precedents of high quality public realm in the West End such as Bond Street

Framework - Public Realm Improvements



KEY

- - - Extent of study boundary
- Investigate highway improvement
- Opportunities for improved crossings, raised tabled or flush surfaces
- High priority intervention areas to address generally poor streetscape or immediate opportunities
- Medium priority intervention areas to address emerging accessibility and maintenance issues
- Areas of existing mainly pedestrianised public realm in the immediate area
- Existing green spaces

3.3 FRAMEWORK - ACTIVATION

The activation of the public realm is one of the aspects that makes the West End a vibrant and attractive destination.

The character of Covent Garden is supported through the activation of the key public spaces, with street performance, al fresco and cultural events supporting it as a destination. However, the location and management of this activation requires consideration to other public space users, residents and surrounding businesses, to ensure disruption and conflicts are minimised.

This framework layer proposes some high level locations, where locating activities such as al fresco dining could be investigated. The areas shown are broad and are not intended as permitted pitch locations. Detailed design and consultation of al fresco pitches will be required to ensure that they are supported by the Council and stakeholders including the local community. Applications for licences and any necessary planning permissions will still need to be sought once detailed proposals have been developed.

Al fresco or similar street activation will not be deemed appropriate where they:

- Impact on access and operation of theatres and other cultural venues.
- Impact on access to residences or businesses.
- Contribute towards increased pedestrian congestion through narrowing available footways.
- Obstruct key views or negatively impacts the setting of listed buildings.
- Cumulatively with surrounding activity contribute towards the loss of public amenity or lead to anti-social behaviour.
- Affect residential amenity.

The look and feel of al fresco should be developed to be sensitive and to help mitigate its impacts on the conservation area and heritage settings.

The narrower streets in the area pose greater challenges for locating al fresco, with less space for pedestrians, increased concerns about noise and the need to ensure all furniture, barriers or shelters are removed to allow servicing to take place during permitted hours.

All street activation should be subject to monitoring and enforcement to manage disputes and disruption.



Above: A balance should be found between public space, movement, street performance and al fresco



Above: Maintaining a clear space outside theatres can help accommodate queuing and spill-out, though consideration is needed to maintain accessible footways



Above: In narrow streets such as New Row particular consideration is required to avoid obstructions



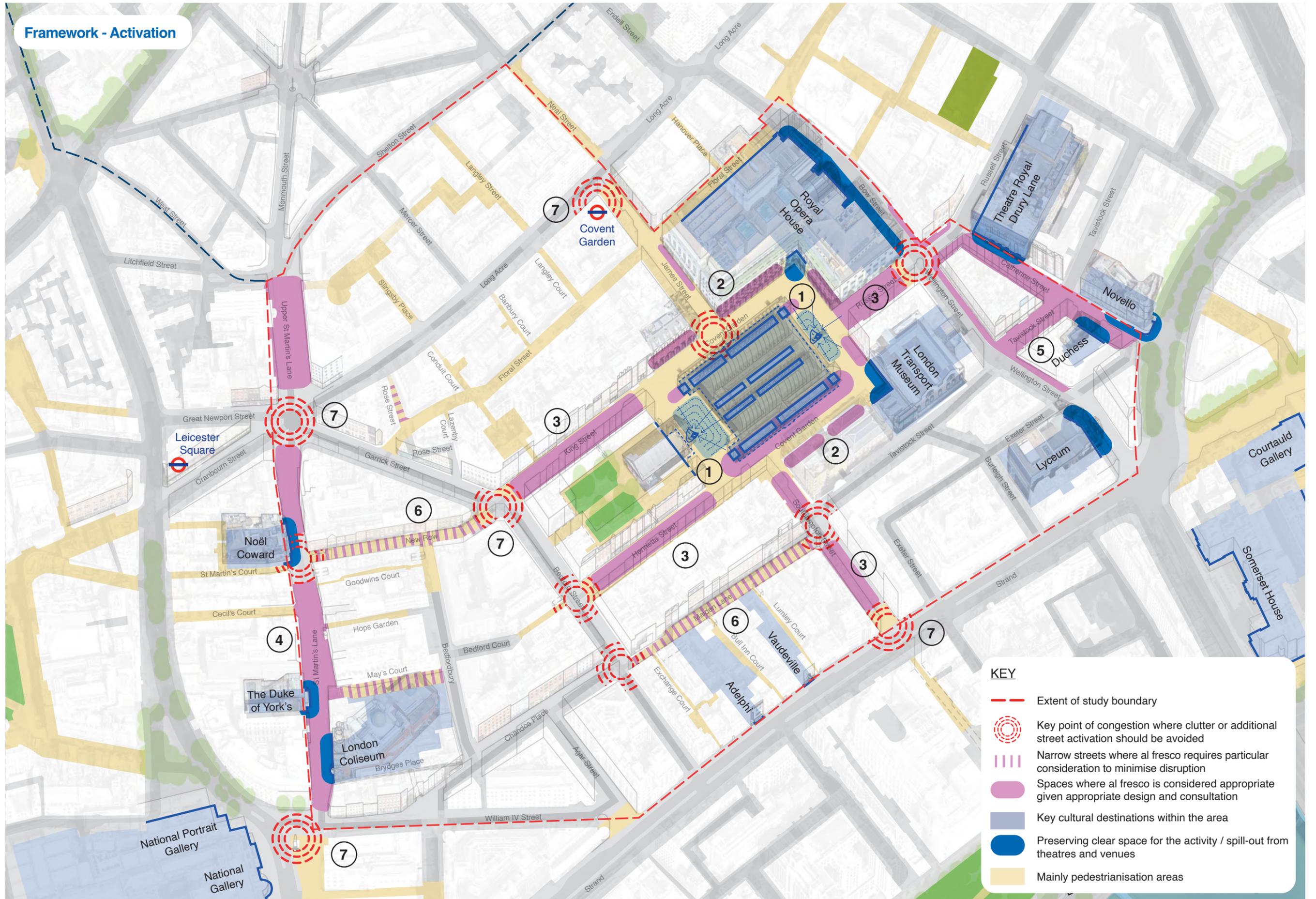
Above: Temporary art installations can also add to the broader cultural appeal of the area but should be carefully balanced with their impact on heritage assets.

Activation can take place in other ways and above ground with interventions that could include temporary lighting or art installations. Some of the areas around St Martin's Lane could benefit from these interventions whilst routes which connect across it are reinforced in the coming years. Any installations would need to be carefully considered and managed to be in keeping with heritage context, and would be subject to statutory approvals processes.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Find a balance between preserving the open public space of the Piazza, space for street performance and al fresco.
2. Support the activation of the arcades around the Piazza, as these spaces that are inherently more weatherproof and set back from the main public spaces.
3. Street spaces adjacent to the Piazza where al fresco should be balanced with wider public realm improvements.
4. Some areas of al fresco along St Martin's Lane may be supported if they maintain adequate footway widths, operational space for theatres, other uses along the street, and residential amenity.
5. The 'Opera Quarter' is home to many hospitality businesses and some al fresco, carefully located, could contribute towards the activation of this cluster.
6. Narrow streets are more challenging for successfully incorporating al fresco and require more sensitive, appropriate designs and consultation to minimise potential disruption.
7. Areas of high footfall should be kept clear of al fresco or other activation to support movement.

Framework - Activation



KEY

- - - Extent of study boundary
- ⊗ Key point of congestion where clutter or additional street activation should be avoided
- ▨ Narrow streets where al fresco requires particular consideration to minimise disruption
- ▨ Spaces where al fresco is considered appropriate given appropriate design and consultation
- ▨ Key cultural destinations within the area
- ▨ Preserving clear space for the activity / spill-out from theatres and venues
- ▨ Mainly pedestrianisation areas

3.4 FRAMEWORK - LANDMARKS AND VIEWS

Covent Garden has a unique character with a rich mix of set-piece buildings, grand urban spaces, intimate narrow lanes and alleys

The character of Covent Garden is supported by its rich built fabric, and forms a key aspect of the place-making approach in this framework. Most of the study area sits within conservation areas, and many of the streets gain their character from the density of listed buildings in the area. This heritage character provides a rich setting for the cultural, hospitality and retail activity in the area.

This framework layer identifies some key views that are considered instrumental in the understanding of the area. Whilst this is not seen as a definitive mapping, it is intended to highlight the approach that should be taken to preserving views to key landmarks and along key routes.

In the Piazza, the centrality of the Grade 2* Listed Market Buildings and the Grade 1 St Paul's Church should be preserved, with views to each maintained and improved on as landmarks which aid orientation. The key cultural attractors of the Royal Opera House, London Transport Museum and theatres should be seen as key landmarks to be emphasised, as these also play a key role in helping orientate visitors.

Along the key walking routes, a series of sightlines between 'Gateways' and key public spaces should be introduced or maintained, so pedestrians can easily navigate between points of attraction. New wayfinding interventions should work alongside existing landmarks, establishing a more experiential way of navigating through the West End that goes beyond simple map reading.

The character of the narrow alleys and courts is as important to Covent Garden as the grand set-piece buildings. These spaces are challenging as they can also attract anti-social behaviour. Views into and along these alleys should be maintained and improved, supporting passive surveillance and to enjoy their individual historic characters.

Across all proposals consideration should be given to the relationship of the public realm to the buildings that surround the street spaces. Designs should reflect the nature and character of the area and will need to demonstrate that harm has been avoided to the significant architectural heritage.



Above: Structures like the tower of the Coliseum are key landmarks that support orientation



Above: Views to and through the Grade 2* listed Market Buildings should support the understanding of it as a permeable structure



Above: Positioning of al fresco on King Street maintains long views to the Royal Opera House

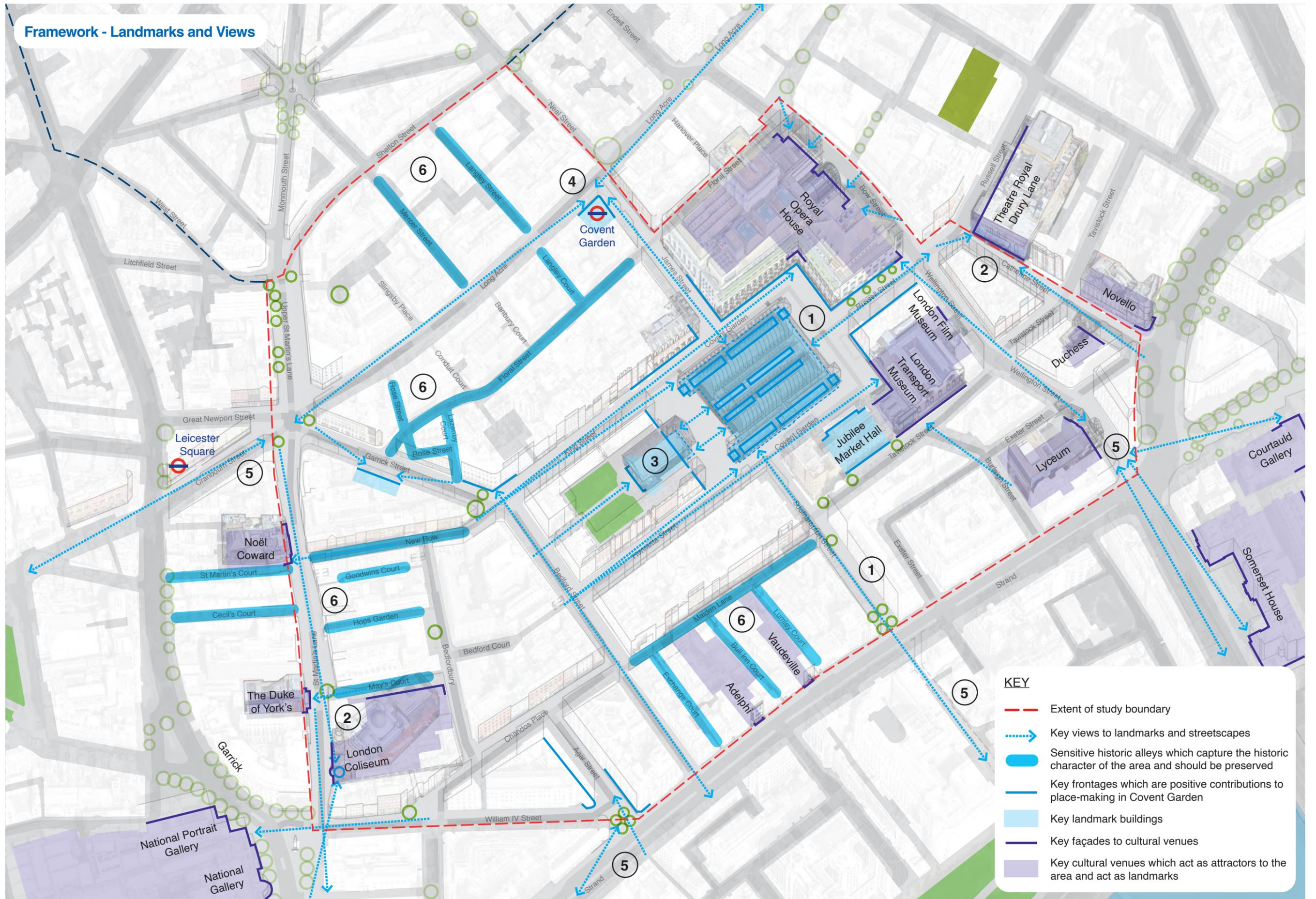


Above: The 'Covent Garden' character of the narrow streets in the area should be maintained

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Maintain views to the Market Buildings as a central landmark for the area.
2. Preserve long views to theatres and landmark cultural venues to support wayfinding and orientation.
3. Support views to key historic frontages and buildings that help to terminate street views and approaches.
4. Keep long views to transport hubs clear to support the use of public transport.
5. Consider sightlines along key walking routes to provide visual connections between key spaces and 'Gateways' to support the legibility of routes.
6. Maintain views within the historic alleys and courts of the area through avoiding visual clutter, tree planting. Good sightlines into these spaces are also key to help minimise anti-social behaviour and increase pedestrian safety.

Framework - Landmarks and Views



KEY

- - - Extent of study boundary
- - - - - Key views to landmarks and streetscapes
- ▬ Sensitive historic alleys which capture the historic character of the area and should be preserved
- ▬ Key frontages which are positive contributions to place-making in Covent Garden
- ▬ Key landmark buildings
- ▬ Key façades to cultural venues
- ▬ Key cultural venues which act as attractors to the area and act as landmarks

3.5 FRAMEWORK - URBAN GREENING

Urban greening in Covent Garden should balance its support of climate resilience with the conservation area setting

The study area currently features very few trees, the legacy of narrow streets and basements has made tree planting or introducing areas of planting in the limited footways particularly tricky. Accommodating high levels of pedestrian traffic and the views of historic streetscapes have taken priority and seen some trees removed in recent years.

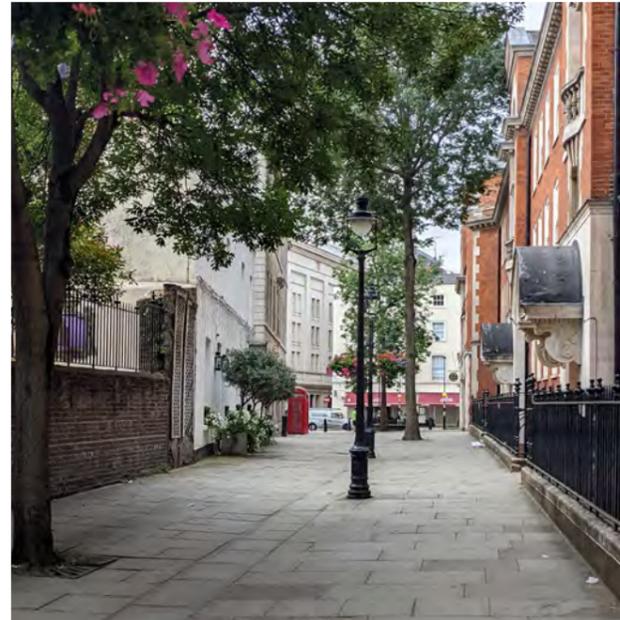
Recent policy changes to respond to the climate emergency, the need to tackle air quality and create a climate resilient city, support increased urban greening. The benefits that this could provide include increased shading – tackling issues of urban overheating – sustainable urban drainage into planting volumes and increasing habitat and biodiversity potential.

The framework layer for urban greening opposite is proposed as an overlay to the potential to transform the highways environment, which may win back space for wider footways, or to incorporate parking/loading bays that include tree pits or planters along their length. Placing trees further away from façades is more likely to avoid basements and allows more space for the trees to grow whilst maintaining a clear footway.

Meaningful planting will be supported. This is defined as having significant rooting volumes to allow species to grow to maturity. The use of raised planters or pots is discouraged apart from short-term installations, where management commitments are secured, as these tend to require high-levels of maintenance and irrigation. All street greening proposals should come forward with long-term maintenance plans. Local community groups should also be encouraged to co-design and manage planting to build a sense of participation in the creation and upkeep of the public realm.

The proposals opposite should not be seen as definitive locations where planting is technically possible. They are intended to highlight locations where feasibility studies could be prioritised. There are many barriers to meaningful planting including underground services, basements, and the need to maintain sightlines for highway safety and to heritage assets – detailed design work should look to mitigate these.

Selection of tree species and locations for planting should be consulted on with the Council's tree officers, highways officers and street cleaning team.



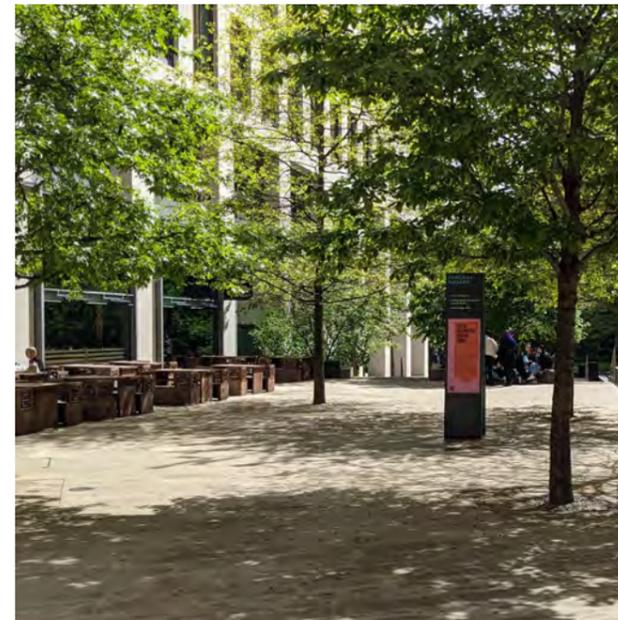
Above: Adjacent pedestrianised streets such as Broad Court are a good example of tree planting



Above: Mature trees on Charing Cross Road play a key place-making role at the edge of the study area



Above: Sensitive greening of façades with window boxes is supported on narrow streets and courts

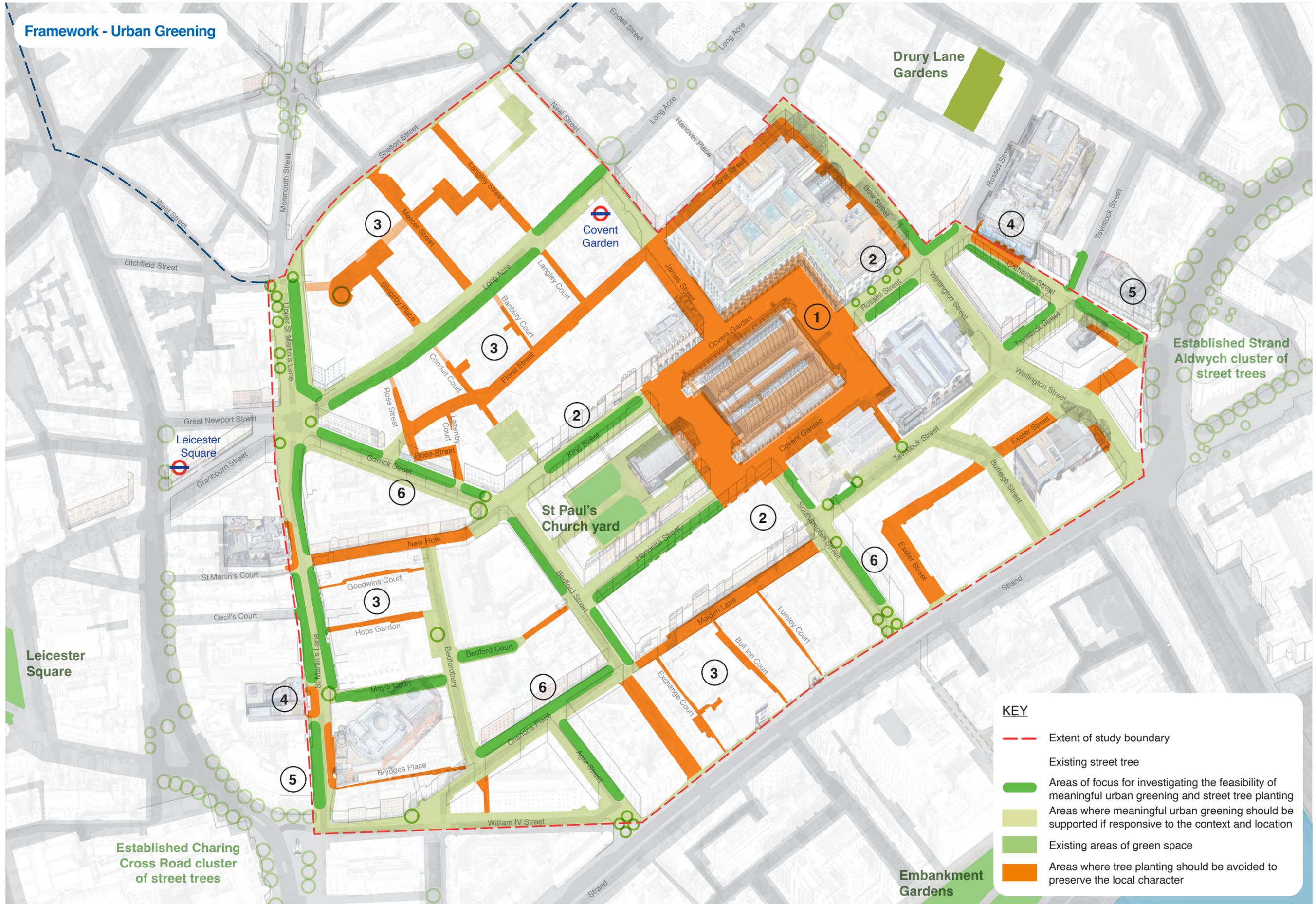


Above: Tree planting in Pancras Square provides shade to seating and al fresco during the summer

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. Maintain the central Piazza as a hard paved 'mineral' space in keeping with the European great squares that inspired it.
2. Support sensitive and meaningful street tree locations within the streets which surround the piazza if key views are protected.
3. Retain the character of the narrow alleys and courts through avoiding tree planting – sensitive façade planting (window boxes etc.) could be investigated to provide some greening in these areas.
4. Avoid tree planting immediately outside theatres and cultural venues to maintain clear footways to respond to crowd behaviour.
5. Form connections to surrounding established areas of trees to establish visual continuity along key routes.
6. Use street tree planting along key walking routes – where footway width permits – to increase the attractiveness of these routes and provide critical urban shading during summer months.

Framework - Urban Greening



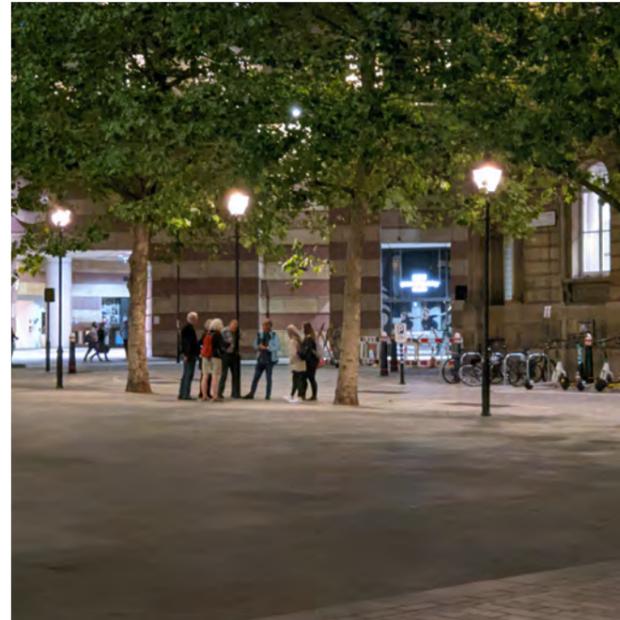
3.6 FRAMEWORK - LIGHTING

Creating an attractive and safe environment during hours of darkness is key to supporting the West End's evening economy.

The site visits and baseline analysis undertaken at the start of this study (Appendix 1) showed that there is a severe contrast between the well lit and the poorly lit areas of Covent Garden. Critical issues of poor lighting exist along key walking routes leading to poor levels of pedestrian comfort. Historic gas lamps still exist in some areas – with many in a poor state of maintenance – providing very low light levels. Glare is also a key issue at present, with illuminated façades, digital advertising boards and vehicle headlights substantially brighter than the surroundings.

Establishing a high quality lighting strategy is key for the area and should encourage the development of standard lux levels across the area. Best practice principles should be developed including:

- Establishing a baseline light level that provides a safe environment whilst respecting the heritage character of the area.
- Considering the colour temperature of lighting to capture the warm quality of gas lighting, particularly within the Covent Garden lighting character area.
- Retaining and refurbishing historic fittings to sensitively incorporate new LED imitation mantles.
- Providing continuous higher lighting levels along the key walking routes to improve their legibility and respond to the level of footfall.
- Illuminated façades should be lit so as to avoid creating glare, and preferably only be supported in areas of high footfall.
- In narrow alleys and courts lighting needs to be carefully considered to reduce street clutter, preferably facade mounted. The heritage character of these streets needs to be balanced with the need to design out anti-social behaviour when deciding on light levels.
- 'Gateways' providing an opportunity for sensitive lighting interventions to highlight entrances and routes to the clusters. This could also include some illumination of street trees where this does not impact on biodiversity.
- Areas of darkness also need to be considered, including reducing light spill into residential properties and sensitive habitats.



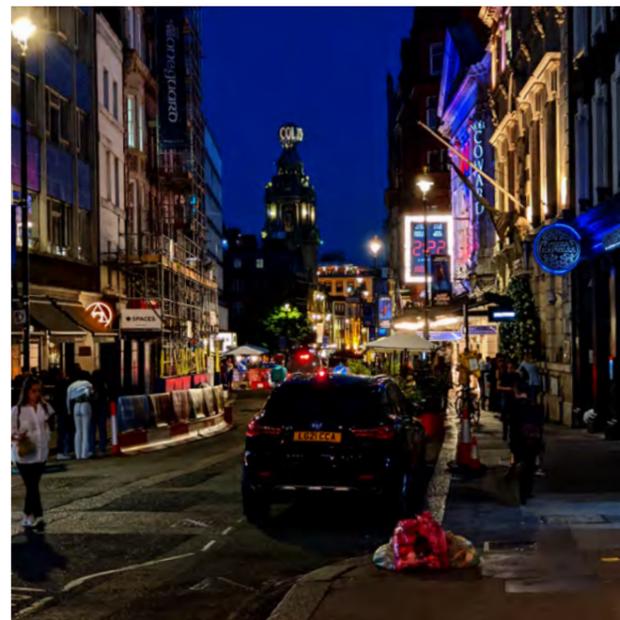
Above: Sensitivity in creating varied levels of light across the public realm in the City of London



Above: Facade illumination should carefully consider the surrounding light levels to minimise glare



Above: Facade mounted fittings offer the opportunity to minimise street clutter in narrow streets



Above: Select theatrical elements of Covent Garden's evening economy should be embraced and enjoyed as existing landmarks

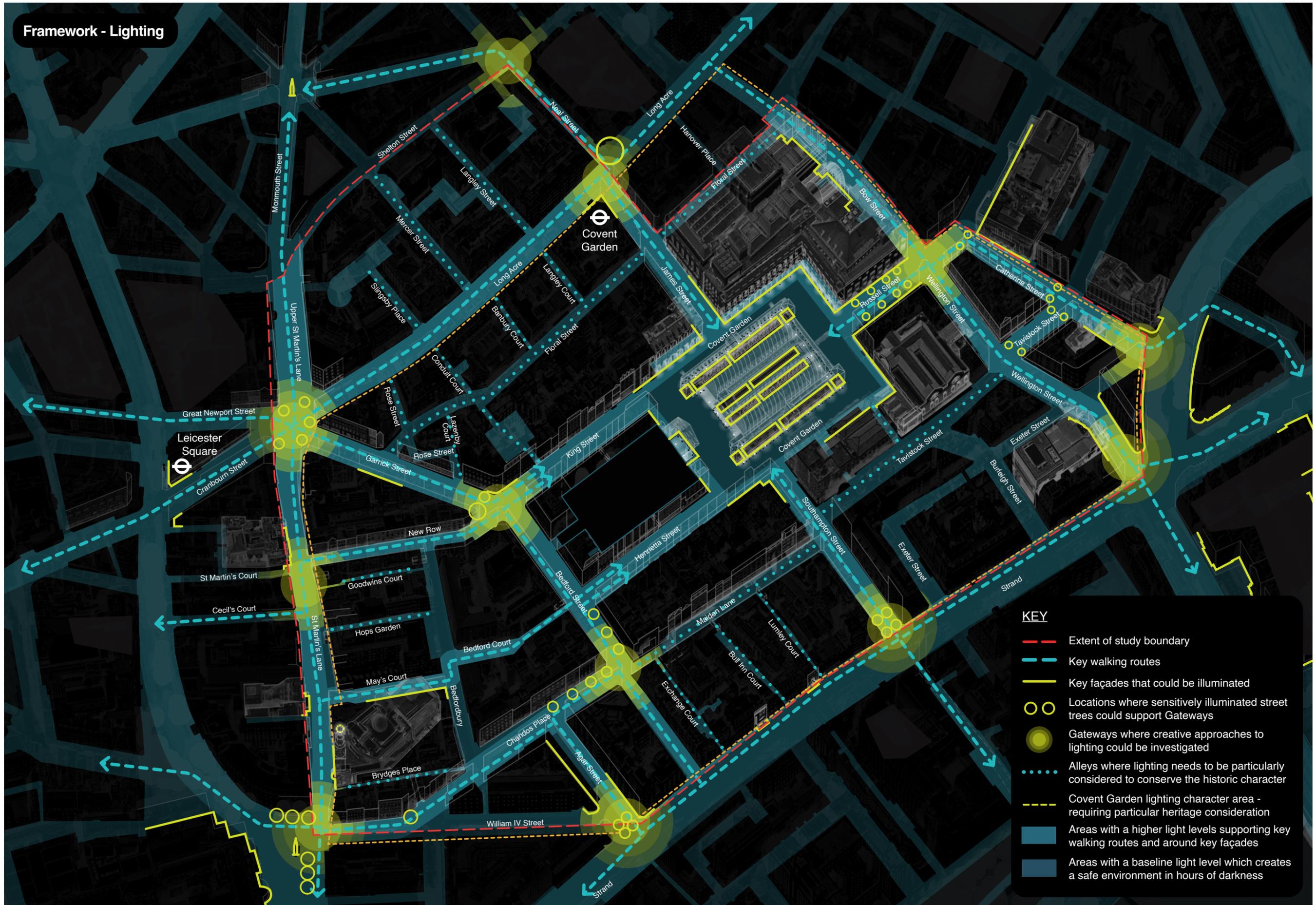


Above: Temporary lighting installations can add interest to side streets and courts, supporting links between Covent Gardens clusters



Above: Care needs to be given to new lighting, especially in heritage contexts such as the 'Heart of Covent Garden' to avoid undermining the character.

Framework - Lighting



- KEY**
- - - Extent of study boundary
 - - - Key walking routes
 - Key façades that could be illuminated
 - ○ Locations where sensitively illuminated street trees could support Gateways
 - Gateways where creative approaches to lighting could be investigated
 - ⋯ Alleys where lighting needs to be particularly considered to conserve the historic character
 - - - Covent Garden lighting character area - requiring particular heritage consideration
 - Areas with a higher light levels supporting key walking routes and around key façades
 - Areas with a baseline light level which creates a safe environment in hours of darkness

4. PROJECTS



4. PROJECTS

Identifying a range of public realm projects to support the clusters and active travel

PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

This chapter explores in more depth four projects that could support positive change in the Covent Garden area.

The initial thinking around these – including a high level vision – is illustrated to set the level of shared ambition for these projects. For each project the rationale has been illustrated with diagrams exploring the current opportunities and constraints, a proposed movement strategy, potential highways investigations, and a vision of how the new public space might be arranged.

The projects that are focussed on in this chapter are:

- A** - ‘Heart of Covent Garden’
- B.1** - ‘The Lanes’
- B.2** - ‘Opera Quarter’
- C.1** - ‘Long Acre’
- D** - Transforming Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street and William IV Street

The reinvention of Strand West (C.2) sits broadly outside the study area and should be shaped through the emerging Northbank design team’s detailed proposals.



Above: The Northbank BID is progressing designs for the transformation of Strand West and these should be referenced in future projects within Covent Garden

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

As the following proposals are intended to set the shared ambition for the projects, each project will require the appointment of a design team to develop detailed proposals.

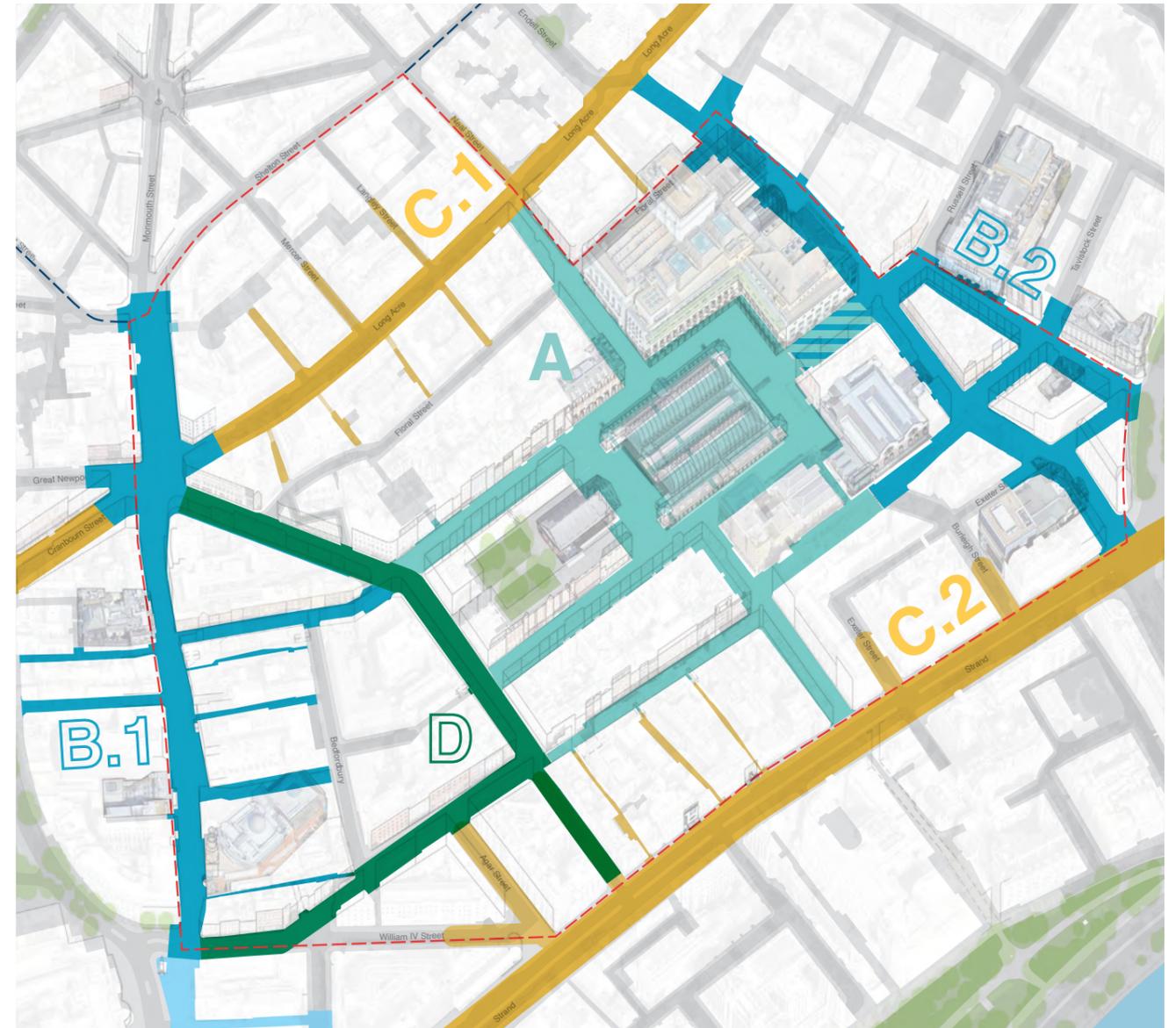
The development of these projects should continue to include regular stakeholder consultation, and are encouraged to explore the opportunity for meaningful co-design with the local community. Detailed consultation will be required to demonstrate that there is broad support for the implementation of proposals.

The timescales for bringing forward projects should also be continually reviewed between Westminster City Council, land owners and stakeholders. It is essential to recognise the need to iteratively develop highways proposals, with time allowed for the monitoring of the impact of the Neighbourhood Traffic Management Plan and any further additions to it.

The detailed designs of projects should consider the need to move to using low-embodied carbon materials in the public realm. Every effort should be made to ensure material choices are made based on their low embodied carbon and whole life carbon. Balancing maintenance and sustainability, whilst maintaining a design quality which would be expected in Covent Garden. Materials within the public highway will need to be long lasting and durable and consider ongoing maintenance implications. All detailed designs and specifications should be developed in close consultation with WCC Highways, and refer to the current version of the Westminster Public Realm Strategy document.

All detailed designs should be progressed in consultation with experts and accessible movement groups.

All public realm improvement proposals will be required to incorporate appropriate counter terrorism measures advised by the Metropolitan Police and / or the council. An appropriate balance between addressing threats and maintaining public realm quality should be achieved. A holistic approach to public realm design is required to ensure security measures are incorporated in the public realm both in terms of design and function.



KEY TO MAIN PROJECTS

- A** ‘Heart of Covent Garden’
- B.1** ‘The Lanes’
- B.2** ‘Opera Quarter’
- C.1** ‘Long Acre’
- C.2** ‘Strand West’
- D** Transforming Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street and William IV Street

4.1 'HEART OF COVENT GARDEN'

Established from the 1980s as a key visitor destination in the West End the 'Heart of Covent Garden' covers the main Piazza and its approaches. The Piazza is one of London's key public spaces, representing a rare example of a planned European style square which still retains the ambition it had when built in the 1600s. The quality of the Piazza's open hard paved spaces is a key attribute and should be treated with care – balancing business recovery with truly public space.

The collection of listed buildings around the Piazza contribute to the character and activation of the space as well as providing key landmarks. Careful consideration should be given to their thresholds and visual presence.

There are opportunities to build on the success of the Piazza through the transformation of Henrietta and King Street as extensions of this public space. Additionally longer-term projects could see Russell Street and Southampton Street transformed as key connections to Strand Aldwych and Strand respectively.

Some key issues to consider:

- Covent Garden Piazza is one of London's key public spaces and should be enjoyed primarily as an open space. With considered areas of al fresco, seasonal events and cultural programming supporting the vibrancy of the open piazza rather than dominating it.
- How can the benefits of the current al fresco arrangements be incorporated into a business-as-usual approach. Whilst balancing the sensitivity of the area's heritage with remaining business recovery policies.
- Supporting activation of theatres and cultural venues, including servicing and queue management.
- Once the NTM ETO has ended, if the traffic changes are retained the public realm and highways should be redesigned to fit the arrangements and reflect the high profile of the area with high-quality materials and finishes.
- Enhance public realm environment to support active transport in the area, with particular attention to short-term improvements to improve inclusive movement. Particular improvements should be made to the cobbled areas of public highway, which in places are in a poor condition and prevent some users crossing the piazza or streets.
- Critical need to maintain blue-badge parking arrangements and close proximity of taxi ranks to major venues and destinations.
- Review provision of resident and visitor parking in the area.
- Support wayfinding interventions that improve movement between the Piazza and the surrounding destinations and public transport hubs.
- Residents needs, and amenity to support the long-term mixed-use character of Covent Garden.



Above: A balance should be found between public space, movement street performance and al fresco



Above: Cafe Le Nemour in Paris, occupying the arcade provides better weather protection



Above: Continue to support Covent Garden as a key public space that attracts diverse socio-economic groups and visitors of all ages



Above: The only apparent public seating in the 'Heart of Covent Garden', many people end up perching on bollards or the kerb edge, demonstrating demand

SEPTEMBER 2021 ARRANGEMENT

Some key observations of the current arrangements are:

1. There is a legacy of multiple bollards and HVM measures in the piazza that contribute to local pinch-points for pedestrians.
2. The arrangement of al fresco in response to business recovery has impacted movement around the piazza - particularly in the south-east corner.
3. The timed closure at the southern end of Southampton Street is not part of the NTM.
4. Maiden Lane public realm finishes are tired, requiring maintenance, and could be updated to reflect potential retention of al fresco.
5. Henrietta Street public realm feels tired, and could be updated to reflect the look and feel of King Street if the NTM is successful.
6. Al fresco on the northern side of King Street could be supported with permanent footway build-outs.
7. Consideration needs to be given to the ongoing operations of surrounding cultural venues including the Royal Opera House and sensitivities around the placement of its broadcast vehicle.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Direction of traffic
-  Key cultural venues which act as attractors to the area and act as landmarks
-  Current temporary road closure location
-  Streets benefiting from current timed road closures
-  Areas of al fresco activity in summer 2021
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



MOVEMENT STRATEGY

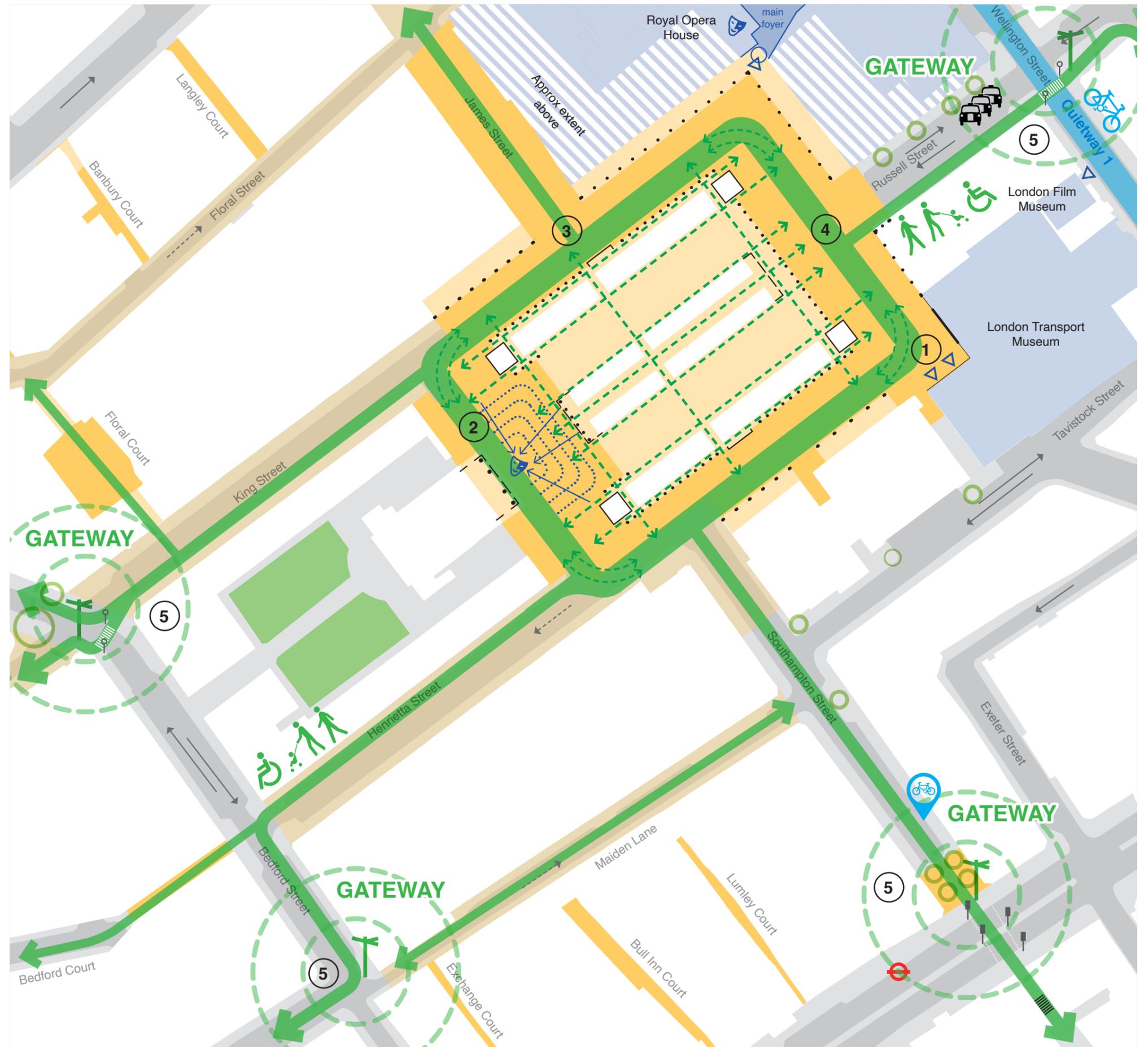
There is an ambition to create an attractive walkable West End which supports sustainable connections between destinations.

Some key observations are:

1. Removing a critical pinch-point has been created for pedestrian movement at the southeast corner of the piazza.
2. Ensuring that clear space is retained to support both the high footfall and the street performance space in the west piazza.
3. Clearing al fresco from the north colonnade area has supported better pedestrian flows.
4. Access and clear space around the east range of the market should be supported as a key public space.
5. Support the creation of a series of Gateways at the key nodes to provide clear wayfinding and support legible walking routes.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Cycle network
-  Existing TfL cycle hire stations
-  Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
-  Specific routes to consider in and around market
-  Key movement in the area and walking routes linking destinations across the West End
-  Gateways supporting wayfinding and announcing the key public spaces across the area
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



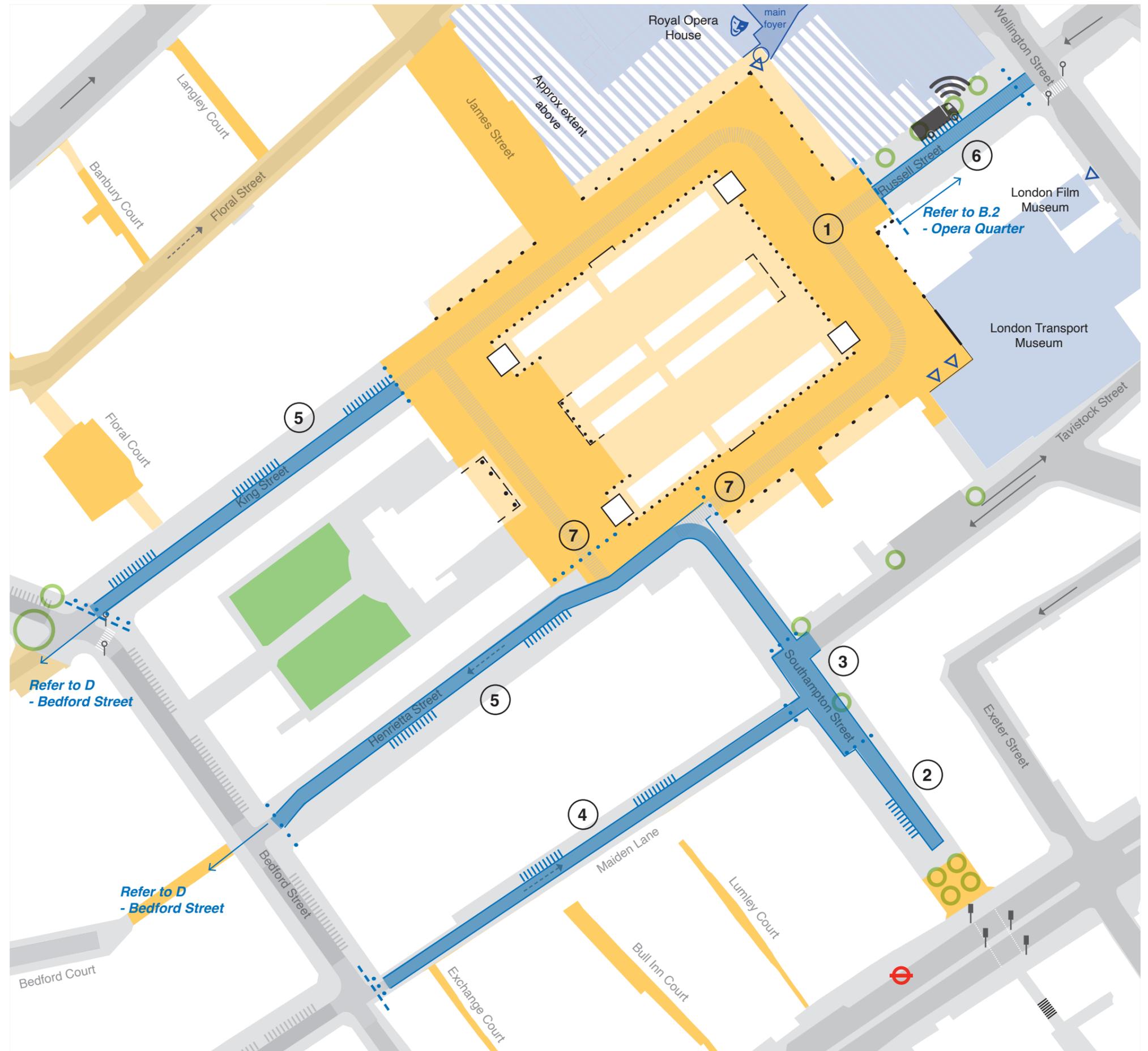
PROPOSED HIGHWAYS INVESTIGATIONS

The deployment of temporary highways measures to support business recovery has demonstrated the potential for long term transformation of the highways layouts in Covent Garden, including:

1. Short-term review of piazza servicing to rationalise bollard and HVM locations.
2. Short-term consideration to introducing a timed closure to the southern end of Southampton Street to support temporary al fresco locations.
3. Medium-term improvements to Southampton Street to strengthen the connection between the Piazza and Strand.
4. Minor redesign of Maiden Lane to reflect timed loading bays and potential permanent al fresco.
5. Medium-term redesign of Henrietta Street and King Street reflecting timed closures, prioritising pedestrians and potential permanent al fresco.
6. Consider in the long-term relocation of Russell Street taxi rank and parking to support pedestrianisation of Covent Garden. Co-ordination with the Royal Opera House to allow space for their broadcast vehicle locations is necessary.
7. Following monitoring of the NTM proposals, the bollards in the southwestern of the piazza may not be necessary - pending security risk assessment.

KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- ← Direction of traffic
- ⋯ Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
- ||||| Indicative timed loading or parking pad
- Indicative raised table or 'flush' surface
- Indicative kerb lines
- ||||| Timed servicing route through piazza
- Partially pedestrianised areas
- Pedestrianised areas



HERITAGE CONTEXT

Covent Garden has a strong built character, featuring many listed buildings, including the Inigo Jones' Grade 1 listed St Paul's Church and Charles Fowler's neo-classical Grade 2* listed Central Market buildings.

The whole of the 'Heart of Covent Garden' cluster is part of the Covent Garden Conservation Area, with a small area of Southampton Street falling within the Strand Conservation Area. Proposals should respond to this context and the guidelines set out in the Conservation Area Directories, and refer to the CGAT guidance on the historic environment - 'Caring for Covent Garden - Conservation & Management Guide'.

In developing a business-as-usual approach to al fresco in Covent Garden, proposals must be suitable for its context, and not detract from the enjoyment of the areas key civic spaces. Some measures were temporarily accepted to support businesses during the pandemic, but these require critical analysis to understand if they are suitable for longer-term retention.



KEY

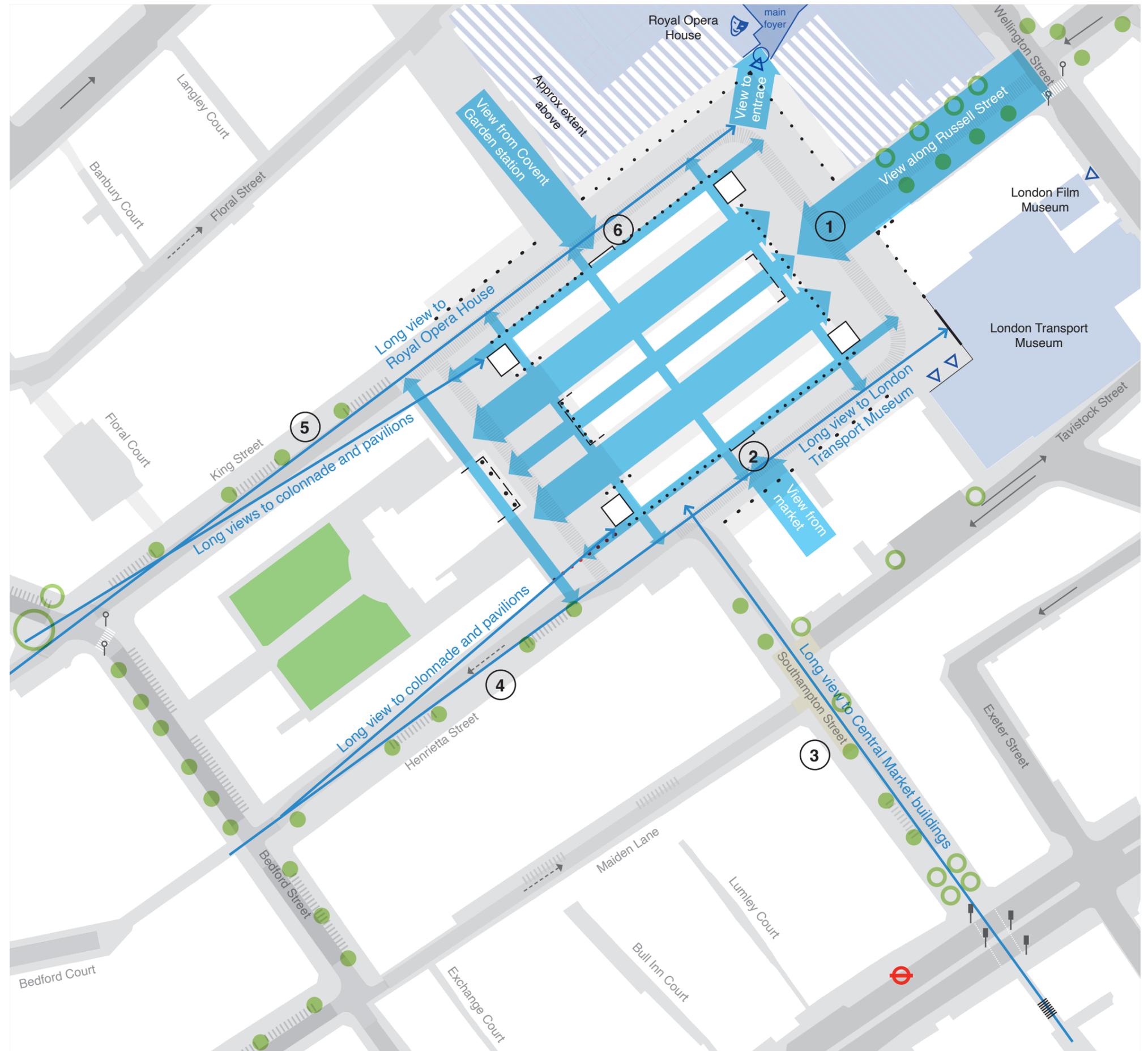
- Covent Garden Conservation Area boundary
- Grade 1 listed buildings or structures
- Grade 2* listed buildings or structures
- Grade 2 listed buildings or structures

NOTE: This is not a definitive illustration of the listed buildings present, future design teams should carry out their own assessment of the listed buildings.

KEY VIEWS

The current al fresco arrangements and their associated umbrellas and screens can impact on views of the area. Introducing permanent al fresco or tree planting should carefully consider the impacts on views in Covent Garden. Some key observations are:

1. Views into and through the east range into the depth of the market should be preserved, supporting the approach from Russell Street.
2. Al fresco locations and their structures should preserve key views to the market buildings central and corner pavilions.
3. Locating al fresco and trees on the western side of Southampton Street can help to preserve long views to the Central Market from Strand and Carting Lane.
4. Locating al fresco and trees on the southern side of Henrietta Street can help to preserve long views to the Central Market and London Transport Museum.
5. Locating al fresco and trees on the northern side of King Street can help to preserve long views to the Central Market and Royal Opera House.
6. Clearing al fresco from the north colonnade area has allowed the architecture on this side of the market to be better appreciated.



KEY

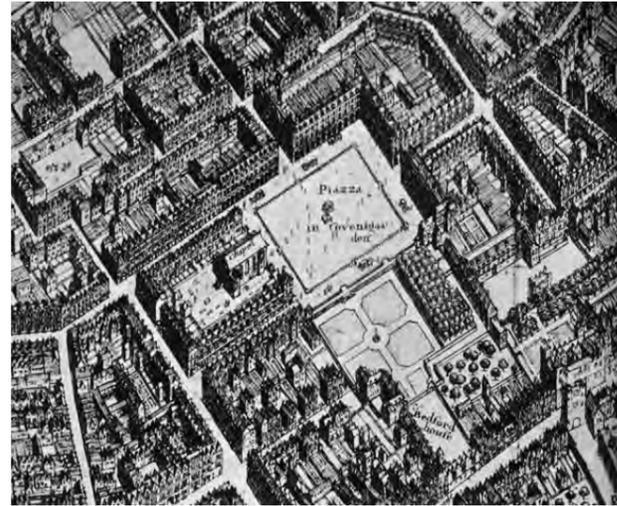
- - - Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- Indicative street tree locations
- ➔ Focussed long views that support wayfinding
- Key views to and through the Central Market buildings

PUBLIC REALM CONSIDERATIONS

The ambition of this framework is to inform a holistic approach to the creation of a holistic public realm that reflects a diverse range of activities and users:

1. Support the activation of the arcades around the piazza in conjunction with improvements to the accessibility of surrounding pedestrian surfaces.
2. Reinforce the eastern piazza as an open public space, supported by long-term opportunities to pedestrianise part of Russell Street. This space offers the opportunities for seasonal events that add to the character and year-round attractiveness of Covent Garden.
3. Find a balance between al fresco demand, movement and views of the market building.
4. Reinforce the western piazza as a key event space in the West End, retaining street performance and seasonal public events.
5. Within the Piazza area al fresco extents could be trialled beyond the illustrated locations and will be assessed on its own merit, by licensing and planning. Further al fresco trials might also be informed by seasonal fluctuations in demand.
6. Manage the conflicts between demand for al fresco and theatre access on Maiden Lane
7. Support the transformation of Henrietta Street and King Street to be 'Great City Streets' that feature suitable tree planting, active street uses, public seating, cycle parking and an environment that supports a flourishing long-term community.
8. Considered approach to HVM that explores integration with street furniture.
9. Improve visibility of access points into the existing green space of St Paul's Church yard, whilst supporting it as a tranquil calm space.
10. Support the creation of a gateway to Covent Garden which supports al fresco, cycling infrastructure and street greening.
11. Long-term opportunities to improve pedestrian environment of Tavistock Street.

The development of the public spaces in the 'heart of Covent Garden' should create a welcoming and accessible space for everyone, including age inclusive design. Design teams should look for opportunities for incidental play within the public realm.



Above: The piazza was initially conceived as a hard paved model piazza in the European style, retaining this sense of openness should be balanced against its contemporary activation.



Above: Al fresco in the west piazza as a companion to street theatre and open air events

This drawing indicates a preferred arrangement when considering movement, spatial arrangement and views to the market building. It is an indication of where we think al fresco dining could be considered in an ideal business as usual scenario.

It also is solely focused on the piazza and the adjoining streets which benefited from the Covid-19 al fresco response and continued al fresco provision. (red dashed line).

Any al fresco provision outside this area or not within the indicative purple spaces can still be considered for al fresco dining and will be assessed on its own merit, by licensing and planning.

All alfresco whether inside or outside the recommended areas will need to go through the usual application processes.

N.B. This drawing indicates a preferred alfresco arrangement when considering movement and key spatial limitations in the public realm. It is an indication of where we think alfresco dining could be considered in an ideal business as usual scenario.

Any alfresco provision outside this area or not within the indicative purple spaces can still be considered for alfresco dining and will be assessed on its own merit, by licensing and planning.

All alfresco whether inside or outside the recommended areas will need to go through the usual application processes.

The Piazza area is recognised as an area where trialling alfresco locations is particularly important to assess their impact, with potential for seasonal approaches responding to varying demand.

KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- Indicative street tree locations
- ⋯ Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
- - - Alfresco locations considered in this diagram
- Indicative areas to be considered for alfresco dining
- Indicative areas to be considered for seasonal alfresco dining – WCC will take flexible & seasonal approach to applications which extend beyond areas indicated in this plan
- Preserving clear space for the activity / spill-out from theatres and venues
- 🚲 Existing TfL cycle hire stations
- 📍 Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
- Areas of improved public realm finishes
- Areas of improved public realm finishes
- Pedestrianised areas



4.2 'THE LANES'

'The Lanes' is a proposed categorisation of St Martin's Lane along with the neighbouring alleys and courts to form a larger cluster. This better represents St Martin's Lane as the centre of a broader cluster, with side streets that each have their own character, but contributing to a greater sense of a whole.

Public realm improvements to St Martin's Lane could support this cluster, improving walking connections through to Leicester Square and Covent Garden to increase footfall. Public realm improvements could also contribute to more places to pause, enjoy al fresco or gather around theatres, decreasing the sense of this space being a street to simply pass through.

Some key issues to consider:

- Can St Martin's Lane be transformed to create a destination in its own right, supporting the theatres and hospitality businesses along its length and its adjacent alleys and courts.
- How can the benefits of the current al fresco arrangements be incorporated into a business-as-usual approach
- Supporting activation of theatres and cultural venues, including servicing and queue management.
- Enhance public realm environment to support active transport in the area, with particular attention to short-term improvements to improve inclusive movement.
- Critical need to maintain blue-badge parking arrangements and close proximity of taxi ranks to major venues and destinations.
- Review provision of resident and visitor parking in the area.
- Support wayfinding interventions that improve movement between St Martin's Lane and the surrounding destinations and public transport hubs.
- Lighting interventions should create a safe environment and help to reduce anti-social behaviour in side streets.
- Residents needs, and amenity to support the long-term mixed-use character of Covent Garden.



Above: Emergency business recovery measures have supported the areas hospitality and demonstrated the principle of carriageway narrowing



Above: Supporting improvements and passive surveillance of side streets

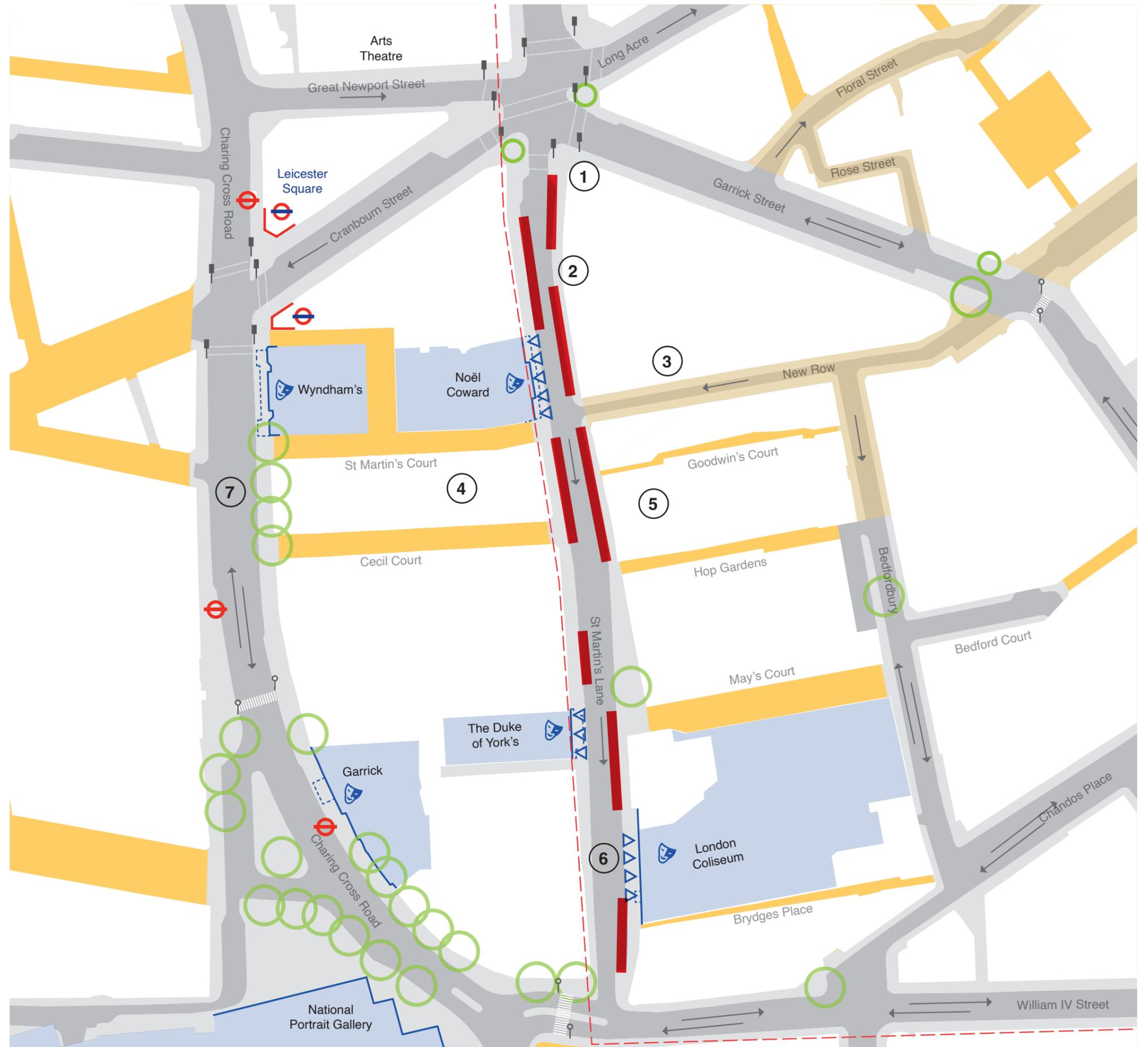
SEPTEMBER 2021 ARRANGEMENT

Some key observations of the current arrangements are:

1. 'St Martin's Cross' is a busy intersection of routes into the West End but could benefit from place making projects to create a greater identity and support wayfinding.
2. How can the benefits of the current al fresco arrangements be incorporated into a business-as-usual approach.
3. New Row is a vibrant street with timed closures, supporting a strong walking route through from King Street/Covent Garden
4. St Martin's Court and Cecil Court have a strong identity which could contribute towards the identity of St Martins Lane as a greater place.
5. Narrow alleys such as the historic Goodwin's Court and Hop Gardens, whilst architecturally interesting can attract anti-social behaviour.
6. Temporary measures have also helped to support activation of theatres and cultural venues, including servicing and queue management.
7. Proposals by HOLBA for the redesign of Charing Cross Road and St Martin's Lane could be transformational for the area.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Direction of traffic
-  Key cultural venues which act as attractors to the area and act as landmarks
-  Areas of al fresco activity in summer 2021
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



MOVEMENT STRATEGY

There is an ambition to create an attractive walkable West End which supports sustainable connections between destinations. Key interventions to support this could include:

1. Improve the walking route which links Leicester Square and Covent Garden to make it more attractive and inclusive.
2. Find a space at the centre of St Martin's Lane which can provide a focus of the public realm, free from 24hr loading or parking to prioritise the pedestrian experience.
3. Improve legibility and safety of secondary connections, supported by high quality public realm, clear sightlines and street lighting.
4. Improve east-west crossings of St Martin's Lane
5. Install infrastructure to support visitors arriving by all forms of cycles, responding to both current demand and safeguarding space for forecast growth in cycling.
6. Support the creation of a series of Gateways at the key nodes to provide clear wayfinding and support legible walking routes.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Cycle network
-  Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
-  Potential for key public space in future scheme
-  Key movement in the area and walking routes linking destinations across the West End
-  Gateways supporting wayfinding and announcing the key public spaces across the area
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



PROPOSED HIGHWAYS INVESTIGATIONS

Temporary highways measures to support business recovery has demonstrated the potential for long-term transformation of St Martin's Lane, including:

1. Review the impact on parking and servicing that the temporary business recovery measures have had to understand the scope for permanent footway widening.
2. Explore opportunities for high quality carriageway treatments to highlight St Martin's Lane as a pedestrian friendly cultural quarter. Proposals should consider the need for 24hr access, including to hotels.
3. Redesign the central section of St Martin's Lane to prioritise clear and legible pedestrian movements along key desire lines.
4. Ensure adequate provision of large timed loading bays alongside theatres to support their operations including scenery trucks.
5. Ensure proposals are integrated with plans for Charing Cross Road.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Direction of traffic
-  Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
-  Indicative timed loading or parking pad
-  Indicative raised table or 'flush' surface
-  Indicative areas to explore pedestrian priority crossings and/or special paving
-  Indicative kerb lines
-  Pedestrian desire lines to be considered
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



PUBLIC REALM

Future design teams are recommended to carry out a review of appropriate precedents for street improvements of this scale in Westminster and Central London. Lessons can be learnt from the ambition of schemes such as the transformation of Seven Dials or Marylebone High Street to introduce high-quality finishes and areas of urban greening.

Particular attention should be given to reviewing any proposals for flush building-to-building paving which incorporates carriageways. Consultation with accessible transport groups is key to understanding the impacts these types of surfaces can have on the inclusive movement and pedestrian safety.

The illustrative views on this page explore some very high-level ambitions for transforming the street and do represent an agreed material, physical or operational arrangement. Future design teams should consider similar visuals as a tool for communicating proposals during consultation events.

PUBLIC REALM AMBITIONS:

- Create a high quality streetscape that creates an attractive and inclusive destination.
- Use timed restrictions on loading bays or streets to create additional areas of footway during peak pedestrian demands - i.e. weekday evenings and weekends.
- Introduce additional planting to support climate resilience whilst safeguarding key views
- Support considered reintroduction of al fresco dining.
- Consider safety implications of crowding outside theatre venues and al fresco locations - provision of sensitively incorporated HVM.
- Create a welcoming and accessible space for everyone, including age inclusive design.
- Design teams should look for opportunities for incidental play within the public realm.
- Detailed proposals should also provide public seating that is user friendly, considering inclusive design by incorporating back rests, arm rests and spaces for wheelchairs or mobility scooters alongside.



Above: Public realm improvements to Marylebone High Street including extensive SuDS



Above: Monmouth Street benefited from increased footway widths, cycling infrastructure and loading pads that acts can contribute towards the footway



PUBLIC REALM CONSIDERATIONS

The ambition of this framework is to inform a holistic approach to the creation of a holistic public realm that reflects a diverse range of activities and users:

1. Support the transformation of St Martin's Lane to be a key cultural destination in the West End that features suitable tree planting, active street uses, public seating and cycle parking.
2. Reinforce the connection to the side streets, to incorporate them as part of this destination.
3. Find a balance between al fresco demand, movement, the operation of the theatres and residential amenity.
4. Support the integration of cycling infrastructure, to encourage sustainable transport modes.
5. Manage the likely requirement for 24hr access for deliveries, taxis, and residents through high quality highways design.
6. Support clear footways outside theatres to allow for the natural queuing and spill-out of activity.
7. Considered approach to HVM that explores integration with street furniture.

KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- Indicative street tree locations
- Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
- Indicative areas to be considered for al fresco dining
- Preserving clear space for the activity / spill-out from theatres and venues
- 🚲 Existing TfL cycle hire stations
- 📍 Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
- Areas of improved public realm finishes
- Areas of improved public realm finishes
- Pedestrianised areas



N.B. This drawing indicates a preferred al fresco arrangement when considering movement and key spatial limitations in the public realm. It is an indication of where we think al fresco dining could be considered in an ideal business as usual scenario. Any al fresco provision outside this area or not within the indicative purple spaces can still be considered for al fresco dining and will be assessed on its own merit, by licensing and planning. All al fresco whether inside or outside the recommended areas will need to go through the usual application processes.

4.3 'OPERA QUARTER'

The 'Opera Quarter' is a cluster based around Catherine Street and Wellington Street, where there is a local cluster of theatres and hospitality venues alongside the Royal Opera House. This cluster has benefited from the recent emergency business recovery measures to reduce carriageways to free up space for al fresco uses and to support theatre crowds.

This area is also becoming a key route from Covent Garden through to the major new public space that has been created at Strand Aldwych.

Some key issues to consider:

- How the 'Opera Quarter' be transformed to create a destination in its own right, supporting the theatres and hospitality businesses in the area.
- How can the benefits of the current al fresco arrangements be incorporated into a business-as-usual approach which also considers the area's residents too.
- Supporting activation of theatres and cultural venues, including servicing and queue management.
- Enhance public realm environment to support active transport in the area, with particular attention to short-term improvements to improve inclusive movement.
- Critical need to maintain blue-badge parking arrangements and close proximity of taxi ranks to major venues and destinations.
- Review provision of resident and visitor parking in the area.
- Support wayfinding interventions that improve movement between the Piazza, 'Opera Quarter' and the surrounding destinations and public transport hubs around Strand Aldwych.
- Lighting interventions should create a safe environment and aim to decrease anti-social behaviour.
- Residents needs, and amenity to support the long-term mixed-use character of Covent Garden.



Above: Poor quality footways and a clutter of temporary measures could be replaced with a permanent high quality public realm project.



Above: Catherine Street is home to many hospitality businesses that have embraced al fresco

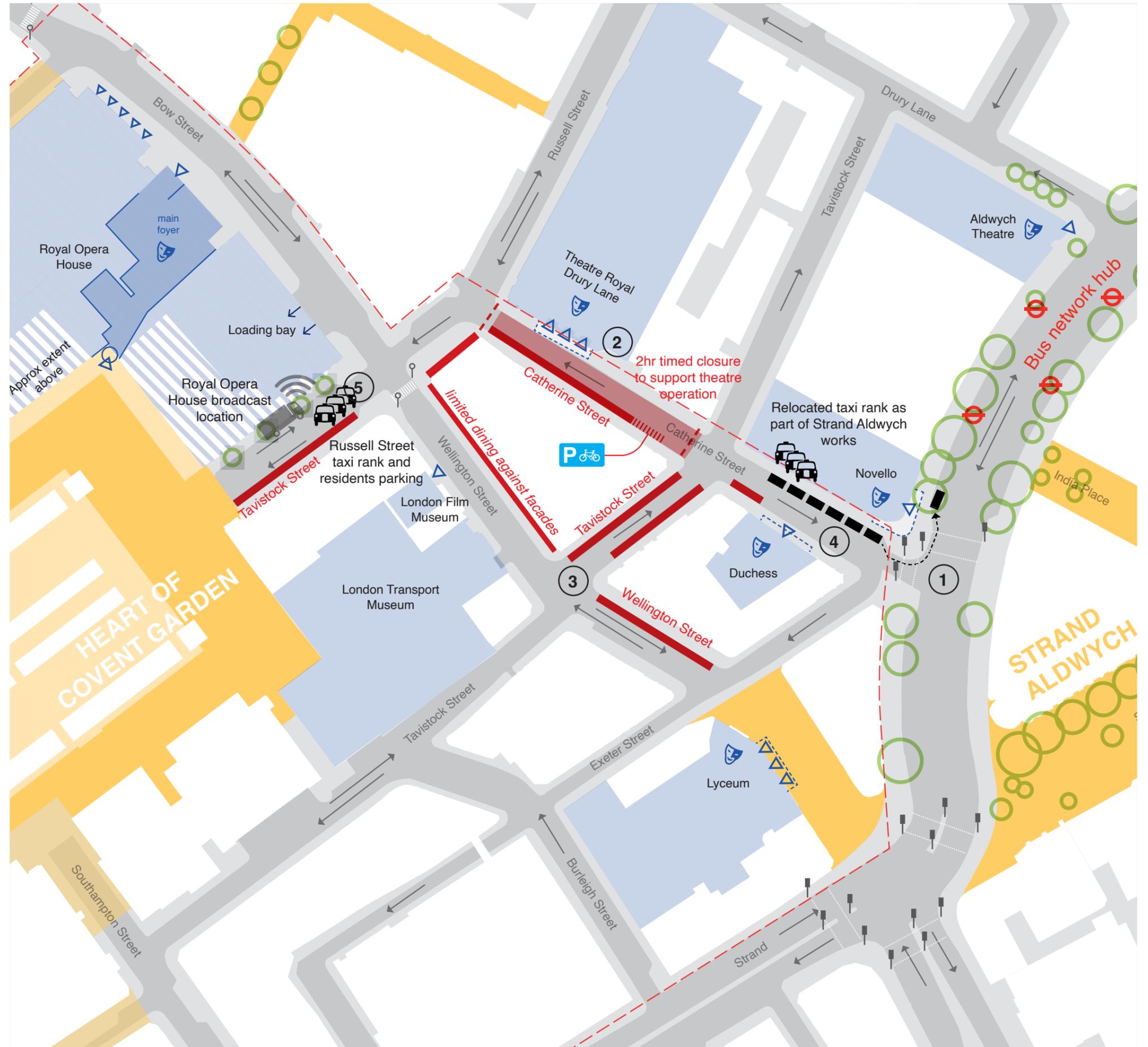
SEPTEMBER 2021 ARRANGEMENT

Some key observations of the current arrangements are:

1. The recent completion of the Strand Aldwych highways scheme and the emerging public spaces extends the West End eastwards. Catherine street will become a key space linking the emerging Strand Aldwych into Covent Garden.
2. A short timed closure of the north end of Catherine Street has been introduced to respond to COVID-19 safety measures for the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.
3. How can the benefits of the current al fresco arrangements be incorporated into a business-as-usual approach.
4. Temporary measures have also helped to support activation of theatres and cultural venues, including servicing and queue management.
5. Russell Street is currently dominated by taxis and residents' parking - could this space contribute towards and entrance to Covent Garden, and support a link through to Catherine Street.
6. Emerging plans for the Wellington Hotel development - to be reviewed as projects develop in this area.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Direction of traffic
-  Key cultural venues which act as attractors to the area and act as landmarks
-  Current temporary road closure location
-  Streets benefiting from current timed road closures
-  Areas of al fresco activity in summer 2021
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



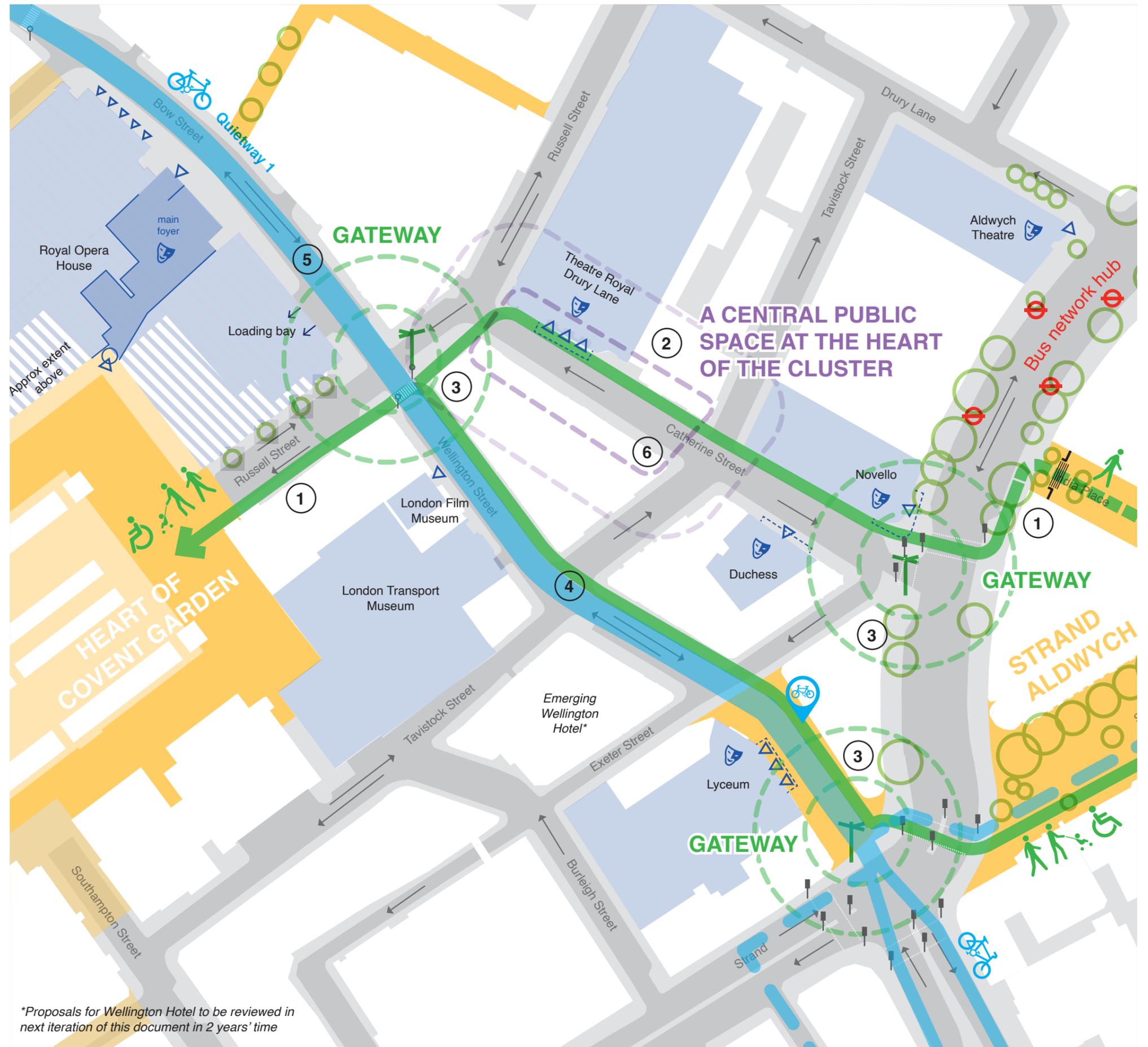
MOVEMENT STRATEGY

There is an ambition to create an attractive walkable West End which supports sustainable connections between destinations. Key interventions to support this could include:

1. Creating an attractive inclusive walking route which links Strand Aldwych and Covent Garden.
2. Find a space at the north of Catherine Street which can provide a focus of the public realm, during timed closures this space could prioritise the pedestrian experience. Timed servicing windows should be provided to support business operations outside the peak hours of pedestrian activity.
3. Support the creation of a series of Gateways at the key nodes to provide clear wayfinding and support legible walking routes.
4. Redesign junctions to prioritise clear and legible pedestrian movements along key desire lines.
5. Maintain Quietway, improving safety measures at junctions for cyclists, whilst ensuring that there are clear and safe pedestrian crossing points with clear visibility.
6. Install infrastructure to support visitors arriving by all forms of cycles, responding to both current demand and safeguarding space for forecast growth in cycling.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Cycle network
-  Existing TfL cycle hire stations
-  Potential for key public space in future scheme
-  Key movement in the area and walking routes linking destinations across the West End
-  Gateways supporting wayfinding and announcing the key public spaces across the area
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



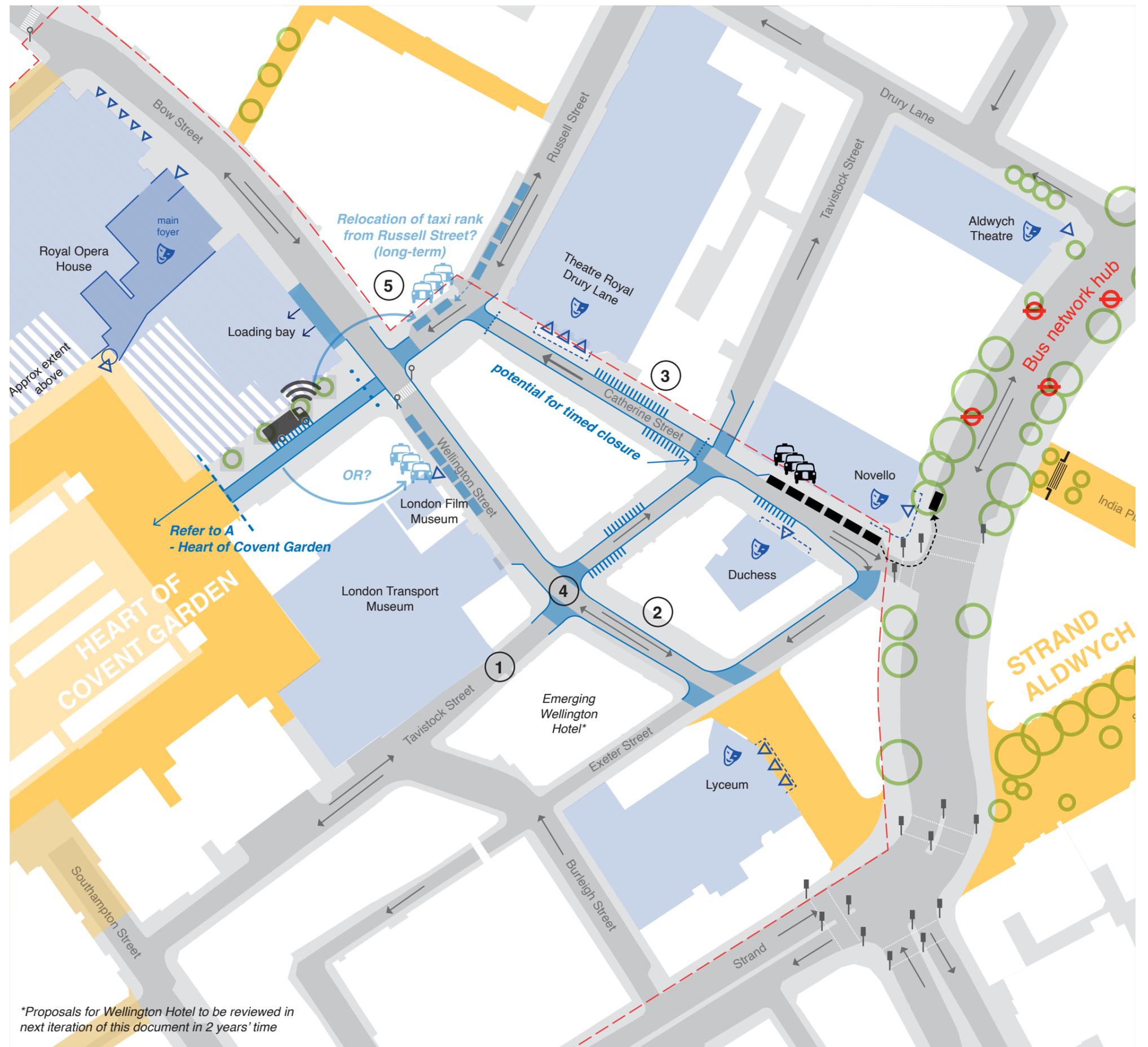
PROPOSED HIGHWAYS INVESTIGATIONS

The deployment of temporary highways measures to support business recovery has demonstrated the potential for long term transformation of the highways layouts in 'Opera Quarter' building on the work of the NTM, including:

1. Comprehensive highways study across the cluster area to review proposals as a whole, rather than in isolation, including traffic direction, highway widths, parking/loading and scenery truck routes. This might also consider relocating residential parking to streets which play more of a servicing role, such as Burleigh Street.
2. Review street sections to provide additional footway to support walking or potential al fresco.
3. Investigate potential to introduce timed closures on part of Catherine Street - subject to a traffic study.
4. Investigate the suitability of 'Copenhagen' style junctions along key walking routes to highlight pedestrian priority across side roads.
5. Consider relocation of Russell Street taxi rank and parking to support pedestrianisation of Covent Garden. This requires detailed consultation and mitigation to minimise the impact, on taxi operations, residential parking spaces and accessible travel.

KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- ← Direction of traffic
- Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
- ||||| Indicative timed loading or parking pad
- Indicative raised table or 'flush' surface
- Indicative kerb lines
- ▬▬▬ Indicative locations for relocating the taxi rank
- Partially pedestrianised areas
- Pedestrianised areas



PUBLIC REALM

Future design teams are recommended to carry out a review of appropriate precedents for street improvements of this scale in Westminster and Central London. Lessons can be learnt from the ambition of schemes such as the transformation of Glasshouse Street or Exmouth Market to introduce high-quality finishes and support al fresco dining.

Particular attention should be given to reviewing any proposals for flush building-to-building paving which incorporates carriageways. Consultation with accessible transport groups is key to understanding the impacts these types of surfaces can have on the inclusive movement and pedestrian safety.

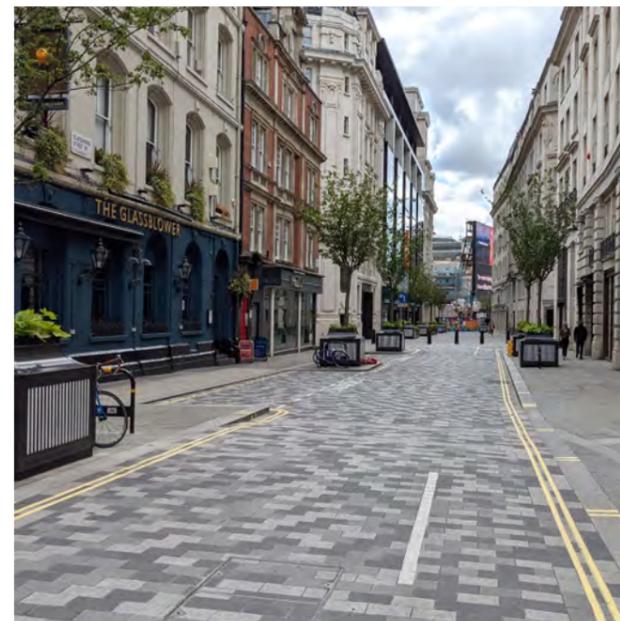
The illustrative views on this page explore some very high-level ambitions for transforming the street and do represent an agreed material, physical or operational arrangement. Future design teams should consider similar visuals as a tool for communicating proposals during consultation events.

PUBLIC REALM AMBITIONS:

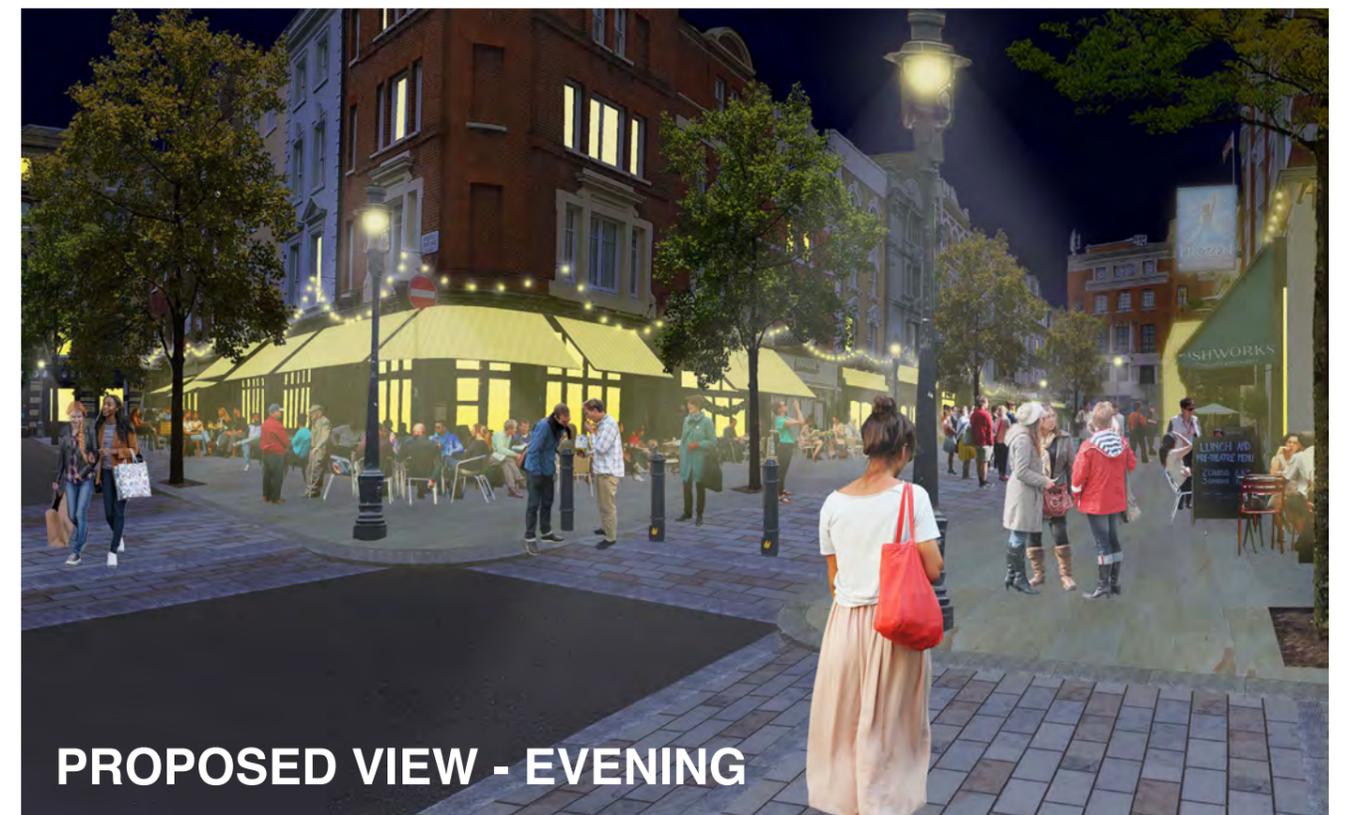
- Create a high quality streetscape that creates an attractive and inclusive destination.
- Use timed restrictions on loading bays or streets to create additional areas of footway during peak pedestrian demands - i.e. weekday evenings and weekends.
- Introduce additional planting to support climate resilience whilst safeguarding key views
- Support considered reintroduction of al fresco dining.
- Consider safety implications of crowding outside theatre venues and al fresco locations - provision of sensitively incorporated HVM.
- Create a welcoming and accessible space for everyone, including age inclusive design.
- Design teams should look for opportunities for incidental play within the public realm.
- Detailed proposals should also provide public seating that is user friendly, considering inclusivity by incorporating back rests, arm rests and spaces for wheelchairs or mobility scooters alongside.



Above: Precedent - Exmouth Market, al fresco against façades supported by a timed closure



Above: Precedent - Glasshouse Street public realm improvements



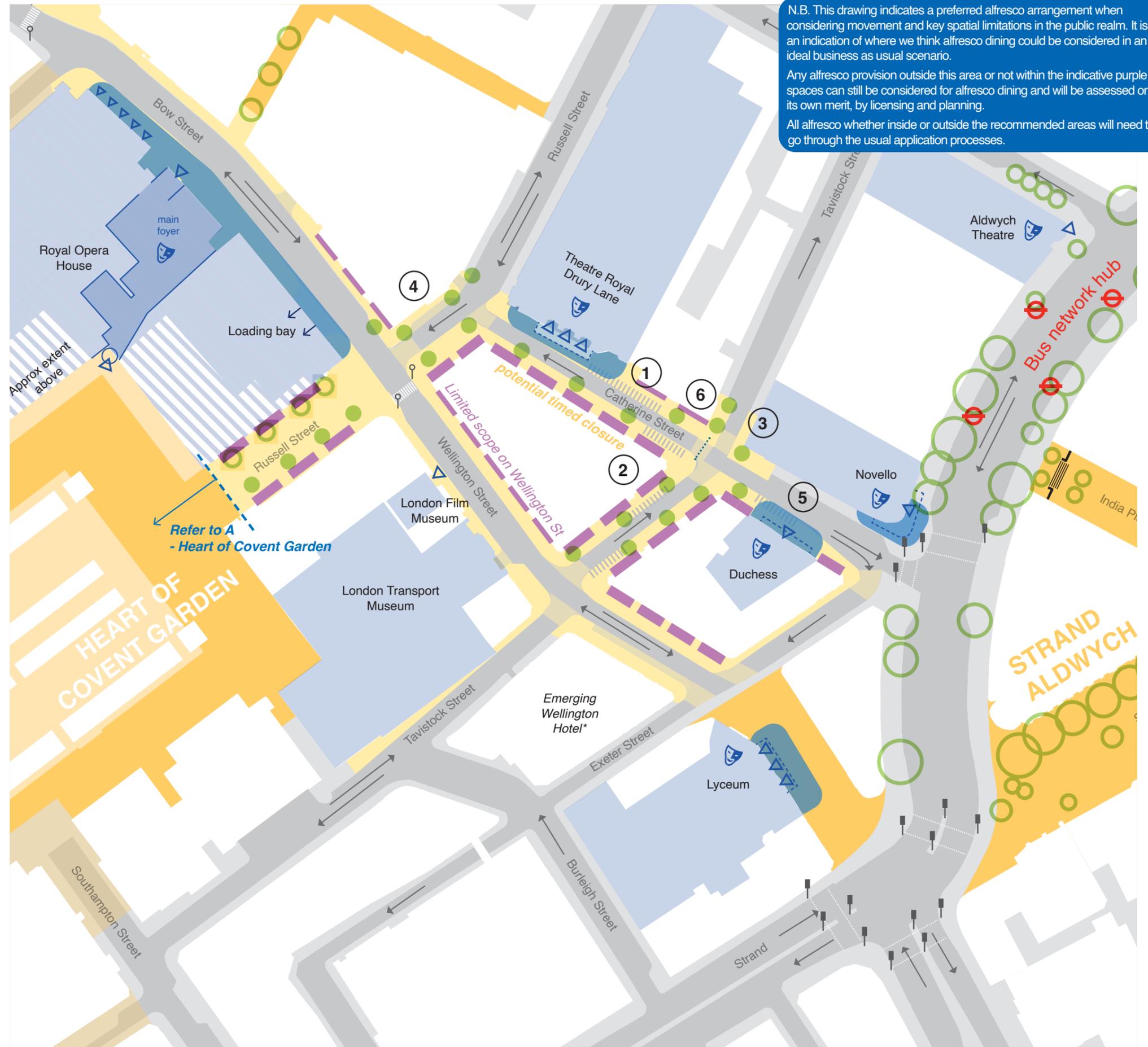
PUBLIC REALM CONSIDERATIONS

The ambition of this framework is to inform a holistic approach to the creation of a holistic public realm that reflects a diverse range of activities and users:

1. Support the transformation of Catherine Street to be a key cultural destination in the West End that features suitable tree planting, active street uses, public seating and cycle parking.
2. Find a balance between al fresco demand, movement, the operation of the theatres and residential amenity.
3. Introduce additional planting to support climate resilience whilst safeguarding key views
4. Support the integration of cycling infrastructure, to encourage sustainable transport modes.
5. Support clear footways outside theatres to allow for the natural queuing and spill-out of activity.
6. Considered approach to HVM that explores integration with street furniture.

KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- Indicative street tree locations
- Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
- Indicative areas to be considered for al fresco dining
- Preserving clear space for the activity / spill-out from theatres and venues
- Existing TfL cycle hire stations
- Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
- Areas of improved public realm finishes
- Partially pedestrianised areas
- Pedestrianised areas



N.B. This drawing indicates a preferred alfresco arrangement when considering movement and key spatial limitations in the public realm. It is an indication of where we think alfresco dining could be considered in an ideal business as usual scenario.
 Any alfresco provision outside this area or not within the indicative purple spaces can still be considered for alfresco dining and will be assessed on its own merit, by licensing and planning.
 All alfresco whether inside or outside the recommended areas will need to go through the usual application processes.

4.4 LONG ACRE

Long Acre has been continually reinvented over recent decades and its post-covid recovery is likely to see this accelerated. Engagement with stakeholders has shown that the commercial leases are moving from predominantly retail to a broader mix of uses, including hospitality and experience led activities.

Long Acre's highways were remodelled in 2008, improving the pedestrian experience, and supporting this as a commercial destination. One aspect that is broadly missing from Long Acre is urban greening, and future proposals should consider where suitable tree planting could reinforce the experience of the street.

Significant investment in opening up the urban blocks has been undertaken by landowners, creating a finer grain of streets and public spaces arranged off of Long Acre. Public realm investments and street level activity which sensitively supports drawing footfall through into these yards and side street should be supported, as long as clear routes are maintained for broader movement and emergency vehicle access (where necessary).

Following on from the short-term implementation of the NTM, there could be an opportunity to monitor the impact on Upper St Martin's Lane and see if the highways could be rationalised, to support place making improvements including urban greening and al fresco uses. This could help to form a stronger connection between Seven Dials and Covent Garden.

A similar monitoring of the parking demand on Long Acre could also take place, identifying when capacity for further footway widening becomes available. This could in the long term support a transition from retail to a more mixed 'high-street' environment, with additional footway capacity supporting areas of public seating and al fresco.

In developing designs all proposals should consider residents needs, and amenity to support the long-term mixed-use character of Covent Garden.



Above: Precedent, public realm improvements on Marylebone High Street including urban greening



SEPTEMBER 2021



Above: Langley Street has recently had timed closures introduced which supports pedestrianisation



Above: Raised tables support clear crossing locations, linking the courts either side of Long Acre



Above: Some crossing locations are hindered by parking such as that from Mercer Street to Banbury Court

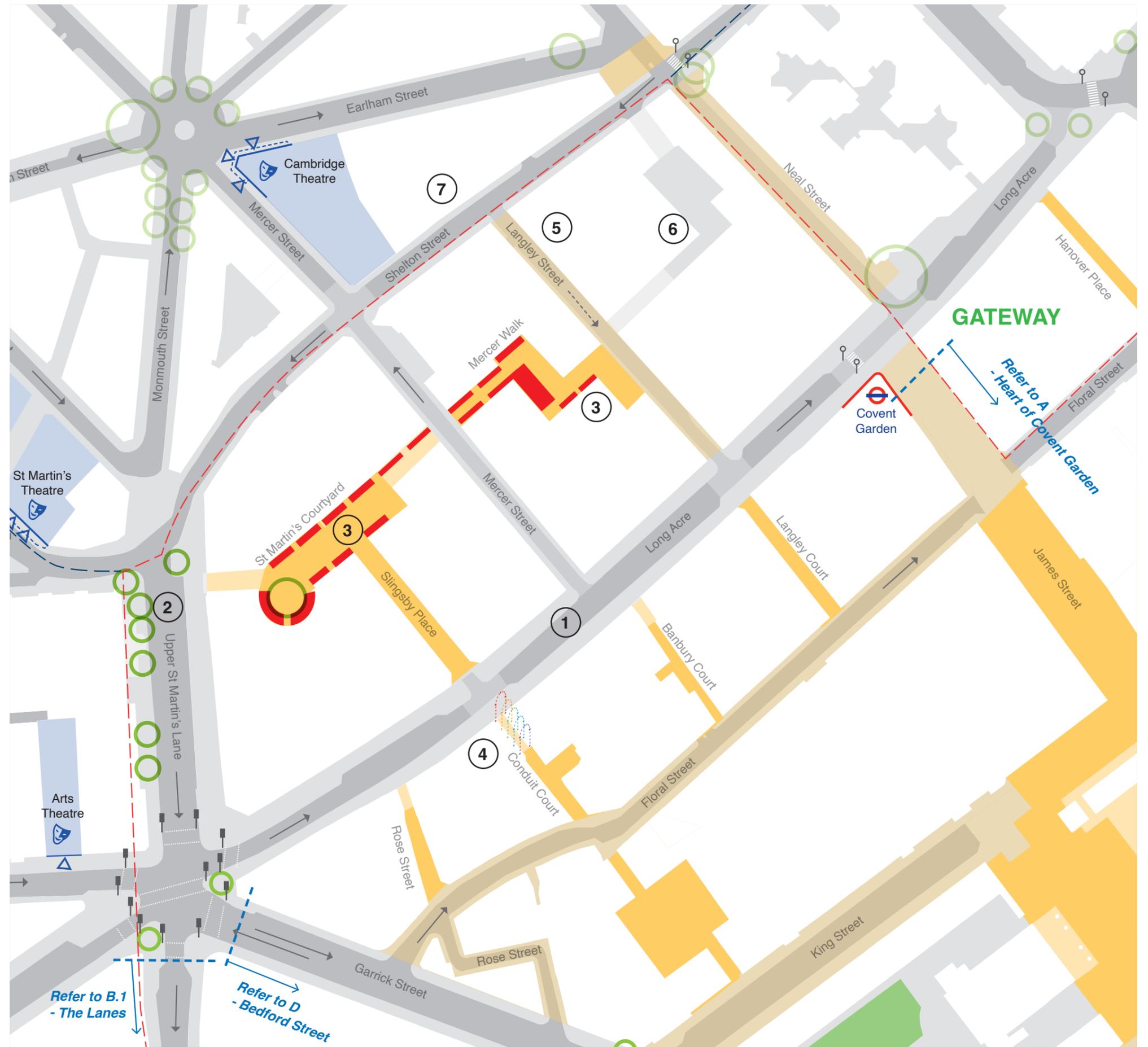
SEPTEMBER 2021 ARRANGEMENT

Some key observations of the current arrangements are:

1. Long Acre is a key route linking Covent Garden into the wider West End to the west, there is a very high footfall along this street. The public realm was recently improved but there is little urban greening.
2. Upper St Martin's is a wide two lane one-way street, with substantial tree planting along its western footway. The recent closure of the junction with Monmouth Street could be an opportunity to revisit the highway layout.
3. Mercer Walk and St Martin's Courtyard have successfully opened up the interior of the urban blocks between Long Acre and Shelton Street.
4. Improvements to Conduit Court show how successful the connections between Long Acre and Floral Street can be.
5. Langley Street has recently been subject to a timed closure allowing this area to be pedestrianised.
6. Brewers Yard is not currently accessible to the public, but could be opened up to Mercer Walk.
7. Shelton Street is a hard working street, supporting servicing in the area, its constrained width is likely to make significant transformation difficult.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Direction of traffic
-  Key cultural venues which act as attractors to the area and act as landmarks
-  Areas of al fresco activity in summer 2021
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



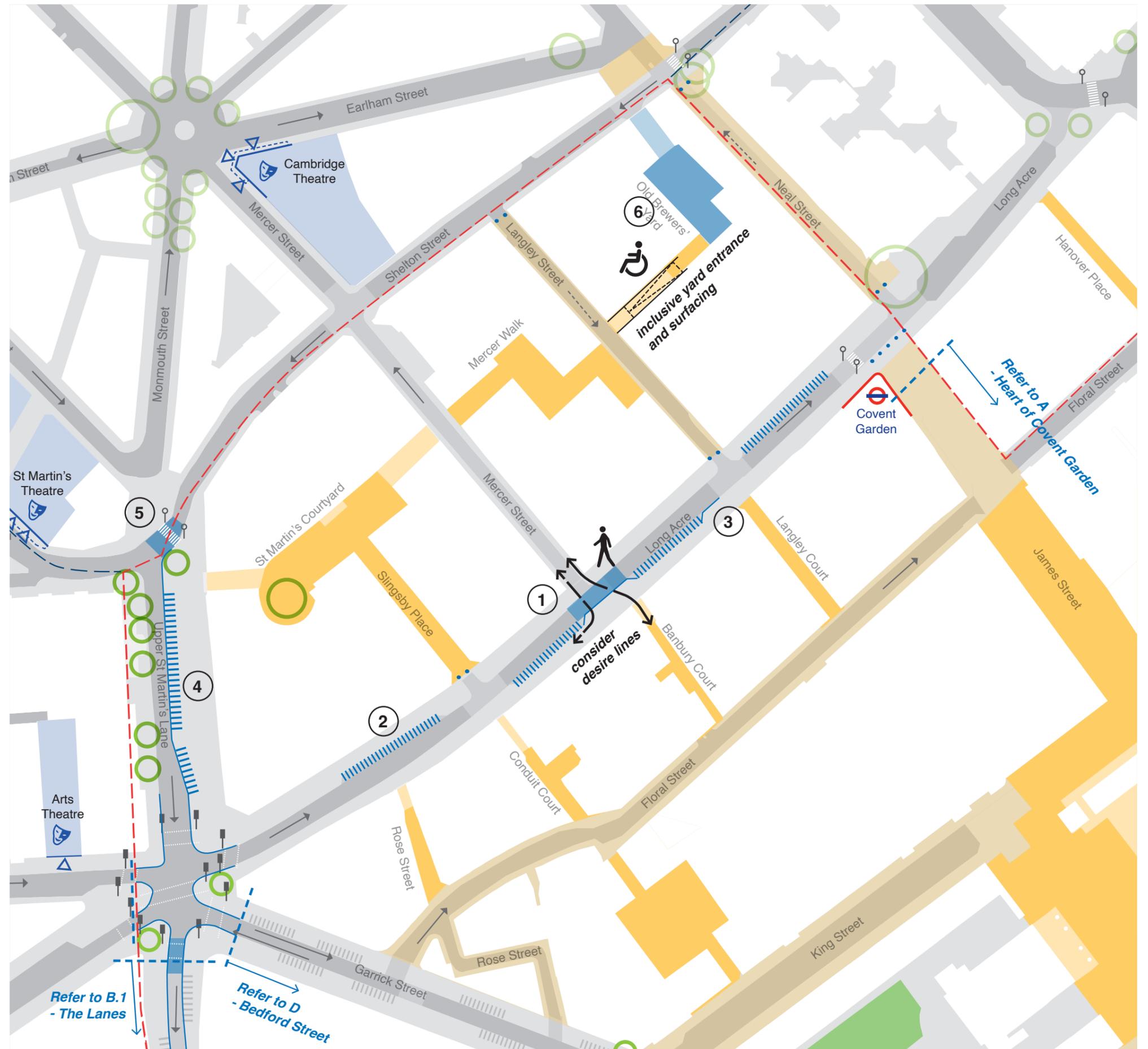
PROPOSED HIGHWAYS INVESTIGATIONS

Although Long Acre was only recently transformed, how could this street be adapted in the future along with Upper St Martin's Lane if traffic demands reduce, offering the potential to widen footways:

1. Identify opportunities to further reinforce safe crossings of Long Acre such as at the junction of Mercer Street.
2. Review the future opportunity to treat parking areas as flush parking bays with timed operation if there is a significant reduction in parking demands.
3. Explore footway widening around key crossings to support potential urban greening.
4. Subject to monitored impacts of the NTM on reducing traffic levels, a study could be progressed for narrowing Upper St Martin's Lane.
5. If the south of Monmouth Street is closed permanently, then close collaboration with LB Camden could assess the suitability for a new crossing to support walking between Seven Dials and Covent Garden.
6. Support the future improvement of Old Brewers' Yard as a space that has inclusive access and balances pedestrian and servicing demands.

KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- ← Direction of traffic
- ⋯ Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
- ||||| Indicative timed loading or parking pad
- Indicative raised table or 'flush' surface
- Indicative kerb lines
- Partially pedestrianised areas
- Pedestrianised areas



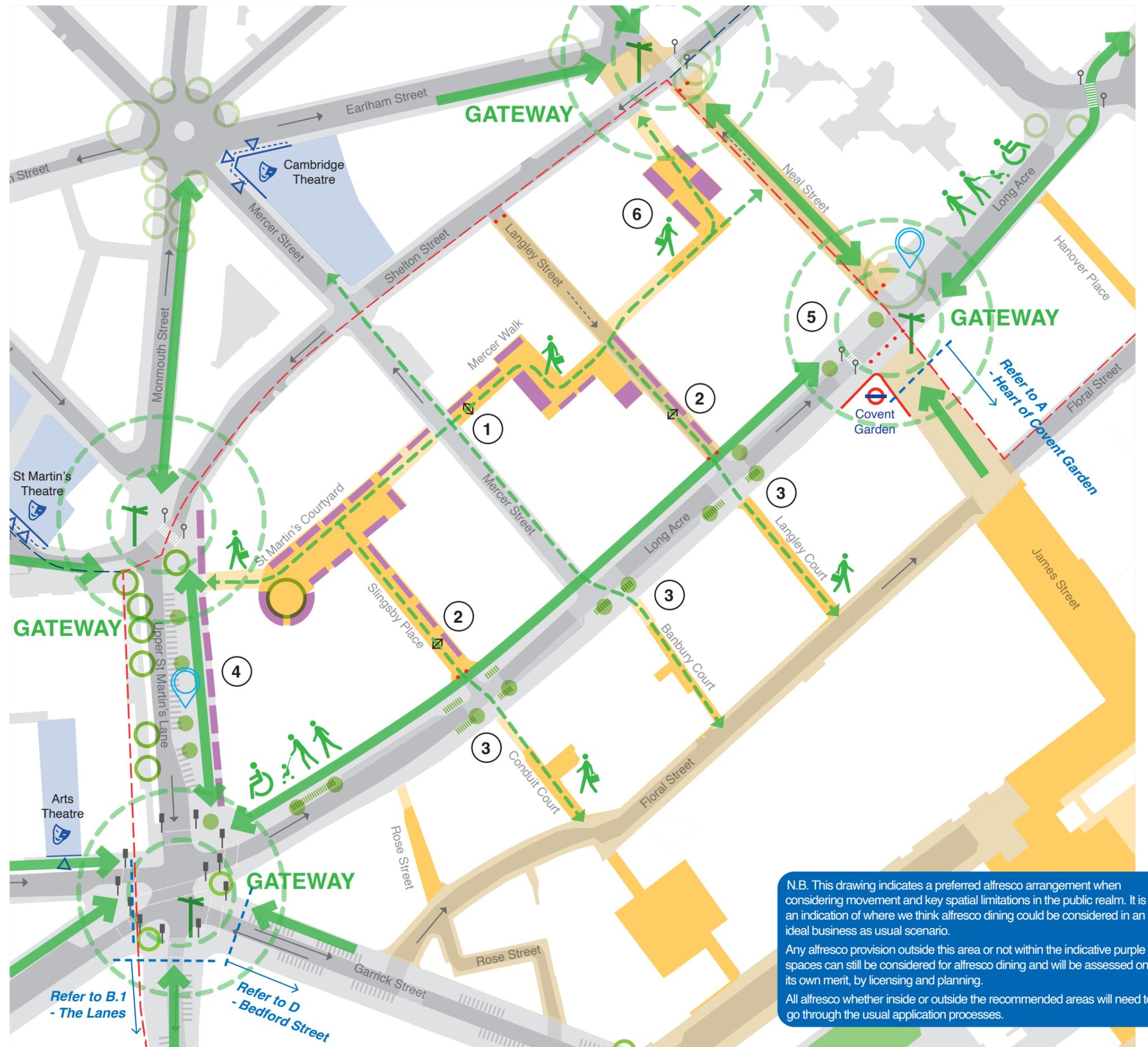
PUBLIC REALM AND MOVEMENT STRATEGY

The ambition of this framework is to inform a holistic approach to the creation of a holistic public realm that reflects a diverse range of activities and users:

1. Support the finer grained network of routes connecting through the urban blocks and across Long Acre. Al fresco within the pedestrianised yards could support an active series of public spaces.
2. Limited al fresco on Langley Street and Slingsby Place could be possible during timed closures if space for emergency vehicle access is possible.
3. Concentrate carefully considered urban greening around key crossings of Long Acre to support traffic calming, ensuring clear line of sight are maintained to side streets and pedestrians crossing.
4. Investigate public realm and greening treatments which could support a widened public realm along Upper St Martin's Lane, which could support al fresco uses and an attractive link to Seven Dials.
5. Support the arrival experience from the station through creating a legible street environment, with safe crossings and minimal street clutter.
6. Support the sensitive transformation of Old Brewers' Yard to create a more permeable urban block.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Indicative street tree locations
-  Indicative areas to be considered for al fresco dining
-  Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
-  Key movement in the area and walking routes linking destinations across the West End
-  Gateways supporting wayfinding and announcing the key public spaces across the area
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



N.B. This drawing indicates a preferred al fresco arrangement when considering movement and key spatial limitations in the public realm. It is an indication of where we think al fresco dining could be considered in an ideal business as usual scenario. Any al fresco provision outside this area or not within the indicative purple spaces can still be considered for al fresco dining and will be assessed on its own merit, by licensing and planning. All al fresco whether inside or outside the recommended areas will need to go through the usual application processes.

4.5 BEDFORD STREET

The cumulative challenges to this network of routes linking Covent Garden into the West End shows that there is a rationale for a long-term highways project to explore many of these issues.

An investigation into the potential to rationalise and improve the traffic movements, parking provision and loading times along Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street and William IV Street could offer opportunities to improve these connections.

These streets act as a manifold of routes and pose some of the most challenging environments by day and night for pedestrians.

This study could follow on from the short-term implementation of the NTM, allowing a study in the medium-term to identify how this impacts traffic operations. It is likely, due to the role these streets serve in supporting the servicing of Covent Garden, the theatres and the Charing Cross Police Station, that significant changes to the public realm will be reliant upon substantial decreases in traffic flows or modal changes.

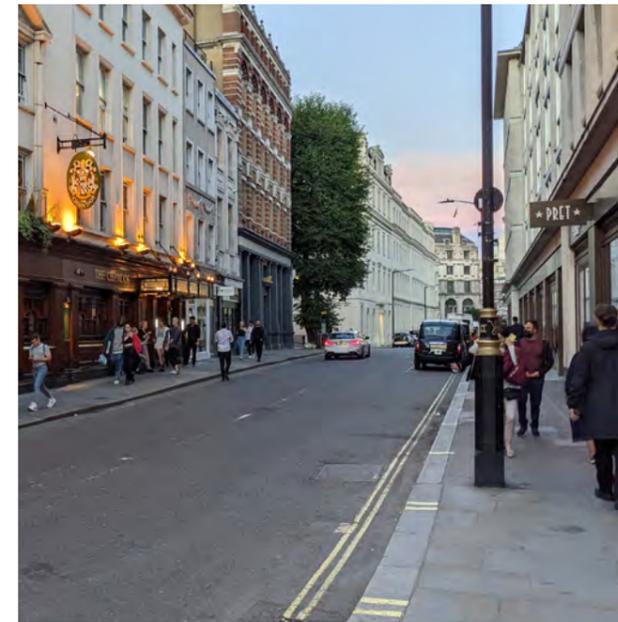
In developing designs all proposals should consider residents needs, and amenity to support the long-term mixed-use character of Covent Garden.



Above: Precedent, public realm improvements on Jermyn Street / Image:HOLBA



Above: Long Acre, recent public realm and highway improvements along an equally busy route



Above: William IV street in the early evening, note dominance of the carriageway



Above: The same view as above in the evening, poor light levels make this space especially uncomfortable.

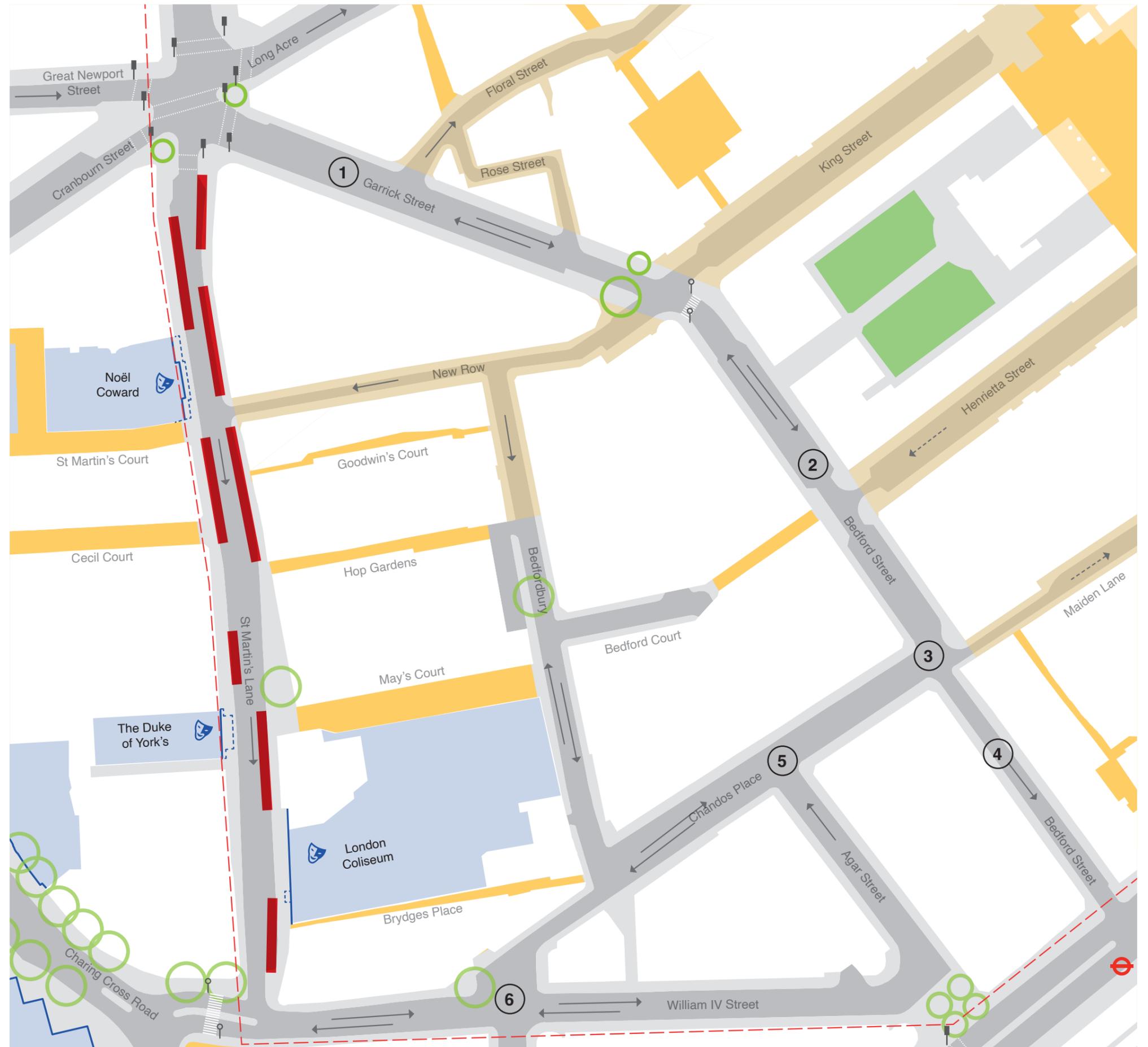
SEPTEMBER 2021 ARRANGEMENT

Some key observations of the current arrangements are:

1. Garrick Street is a key route linking Covent Garden into the wider West End to the west, but it has narrow footways, poor lighting and limited wayfinding.
2. Bedford Street is the threshold to the improved public space of Henrietta Street, King Street and New Row but is dominated by parking, its narrow carriageway is often snarled up with traffic which contributes towards the sense of a highly contested space.
3. The junction of Bedford Street and Chandos Place is poor, despite being on key desire lines opportunities for safely crossing are unclear and lighting is very poor.
4. The southern end of Bedford Street has very narrow footways and poor lighting that makes this connection to Strand unpleasant.
5. Chandos Place is dominated by parking and has poor lighting contributing to this space feeling unsafe at night.
6. William IV Street could form a strong connection between Trafalgar Square and Covent Garden but its public realm and wayfinding are very poor.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Direction of traffic
-  Key cultural venues which act as attractors to the area and act as landmarks
-  Areas of al fresco activity in summer 2021
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



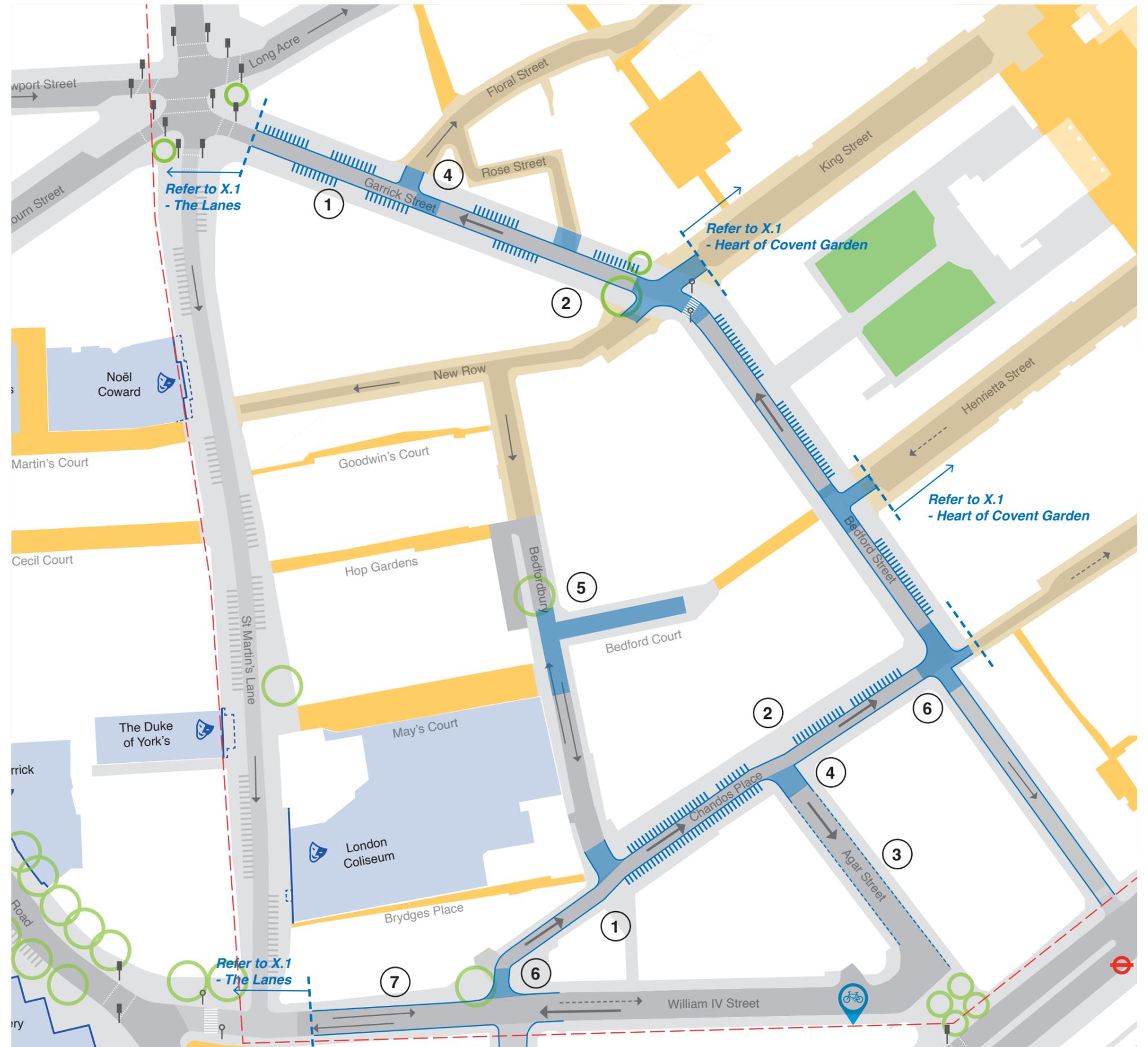
PROPOSED HIGHWAYS INVESTIGATIONS

The collection of Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street, and William IV Street have long played a role in servicing the Covent Garden area. However these streets could also positively contribute towards the wider West End through investigating the potential for:

1. A comprehensive highways study across the area to explore the potential to introduce one-way movements and to rationalise loading and parking to free space for widened footways
2. Reviewing street sections to provide additional footway space which can support walking or potential al fresco.
3. Potential to extend footway widening along Agar Street to support connections to Charing Cross Station.
4. Suitability of 'Copenhagen' style junctions along key walking routes to highlight pedestrian priority across side roads.
5. Considering improvements within in Bedfordbury to support connections between St Martin's Lane and Covent Garden – St James' Market public realm could be a good precedent.
6. Improvements at key junctions used by pedestrians to improve the gateways and support movement across the area.
7. Investigate widening the narrow footway between Chandos Place and St Martin's Lane.

KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- ← Direction of traffic
- ⋯ Indicative HVM / Traffic access management
- ||||| Indicative timed loading or parking pad
- Indicative raised table or 'flush' surface
- Indicative kerb lines
- Partially pedestrianised areas
- Pedestrianised areas



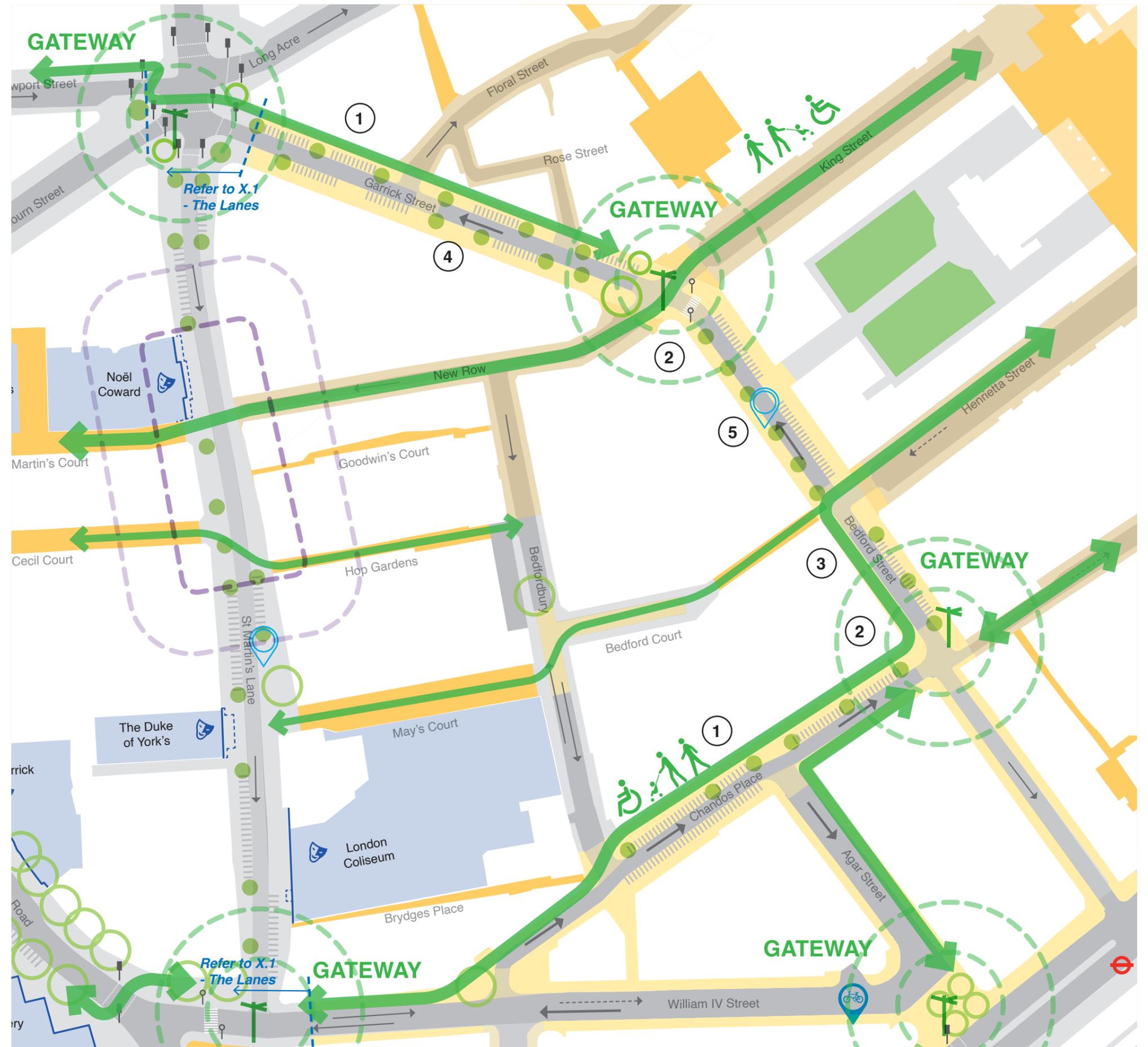
PUBLIC REALM AND MOVEMENT STRATEGY

The ambition of this framework is to inform a holistic approach to the creation of a holistic public realm that reflects a diverse range of activities and users:

1. Support the transformation of Bedford Street, Chandos Place, Garrick Street, and William IV Street to be key pedestrian links to West End destinations.
2. Support the creation of a series of Gateways at the key nodes to provide clear wayfinding and support legible walking routes.
3. Support the creation of an attractive and climate resilient public realm that features suitable tree planting, active street uses, public seating and cycle parking.
4. Introduce additional planting to support climate resilience whilst safeguarding key views
5. Support the integration of cycling infrastructure, to encourage sustainable transport modes.

KEY

-  Extent of study boundary
-  Existing trees
-  Cycle network
-  Existing TfL cycle hire stations
-  Opportunity for future TfL cycle hire stations or cycle hubs supporting active travel
-  Potential for key public space in future scheme
-  Key movement in the area and walking routes linking destinations across the West End
-  Gateways supporting wayfinding and announcing the key public spaces across the area
-  Partially pedestrianised areas
-  Pedestrianised areas



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COVENT GARDEN PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK APPENDIX 1 BASELINE ANALYSIS

NOVEMBER 2021



A1. BASELINE ANALYSIS



A1. BASELINE ANALYSIS

Through extensive site analysis this baseline review provides an overview of the character and operation of Covent Garden as a key piece of the West End.

This chapter presents some of the team's key findings on the opportunities and constraints which Covent Garden presents. The mapping that is presented has been used to develop character areas identified in the Vision.

Our mapping has been supported through consultations and site walks with key stakeholders. Due to the long-term nature of some of the proposals in the vision and framework, these findings could quickly be come outdated as the area continues to change and develop over time. Future design teams should undertake their own assessments and engagement with stakeholders, identifying contemporary issues to support their work.

Key findings:

- There is a need to improve walking and cycling infrastructure to support movement between key West End destinations.
- Areas to the southeast (Tavistock Street/Catherine Street) and southwest (Bedford Street/Chandos Place) of the study area have poor quality public realm and in places critically poor street lighting.
- There are a series of theatre and performance clusters, that along with supporting hospitality uses, forms three key entertainment clusters.
- The north of the study area around Long Acre forms a retail cluster supported by Floral Street and St Martin's Yard.
- There are poor levels of urban greening in the study area, with limited access to green space
- There is a considerable lack of public seating.
- The lack of step-free public transport or bus routes within the study area means that access by taxi is critical as the main form of accessible public transport.
- The study area is a dense mixed-use part of the West End, with a need to balance the relationship between cultural and hospitality uses and the often residential and commercial properties on the upper floors.
- Managing the servicing and waste management of businesses in the area – alongside ambitions for increased pedestrian spaces and kerbside activities – is a challenge which requires careful consideration.



Above: The Grade 2* Central Market buildings sit at the centre of the areas activities



Above: Timed pedestrianisation is supporting the uptake in walking and al fresco uses



Above: Covent Garden has a critical need for public seating, as most rest spots are opportunistic, care should be taken in designing and siting new seating to minimise anti-social behaviour



Above: Waste management and access for servicing properties is essential to maintain an attractive area

A1.1 HERITAGE

Covent Garden is a rich architectural area, capturing the urban expansion of London in the 17th Century and the subsequent development of the West End.

The study area's historic character broadly benefits from protection, either through listed building statuses, or the conservation area designations.

Covent Garden has a strong built character, featuring many listed buildings, including Inigo Jones' Grade 1 listed St Paul's Church and Charles Fowler's neo-classical Grade 2* listed Central Market buildings. A high percentage of the buildings in the area are listed and the public realm will need to consider its relationship to these.

The study area is mainly within the Covent Garden Conservation Area. A small area at the southwest, around Chandos Place, William IV Street and St Martin's Lane is within the Trafalgar Square Conservation Area. A small area of the Strand Conservation Area covering the blocks around Exeter Street and Burleigh Street is also within the study boundary.

Commissioning a detailed conservation area audit of Covent Garden may be deemed necessary in the future in order to further protect and preserve the heritage character of Covent Garden into the future.

There are four areas which fall outside of the conservation areas:

A. An area of recent development consisting of the St Martin's Courtyard and some newer buildings on Long Acre. These street spaces read as continuation of the character areas of Seven Dials and Covent Garden and should be designed to provide continuity with the areas within the conservation areas.

B. A small area of late 20th Century commercial development. As with **A**, the streetscape should be consistent with the Covent Garden Conservation Area which covers the southern half of Long Acre here.

C. The eastern side of Bow Street and northern side of Russell Street fall outside of the Covent Garden Conservation Area. Again, for consistency, this side of the street should be treated as those within the conservation area.

D. Recent development in Bedfordbury has less character than the surrounding area, whilst this area may feel like a back to Covent Garden and St Martin's Lane, it plays a key role in servicing the broader area. This area could be a focus of public realm improvements to support legibility and wayfinding, whilst incorporating hard-wearing public realm materials that can manage the high servicing traffic.

Previous work has been undertaken to reinforce the heritage context, including the Covent Garden Lighting Partnership. This has resulted in the development of the Covent Garden Lantern © design, which is a historic lamp replica which incorporates LEDs. It has been implemented across Covent Garden and Seven Dials areas.



Above: The Grade 2* Central Market buildings form a key focus to the Covent Garden area



Above: Inigo Jones' Grade 1 St Paul's Church is another key local landmark



Above: The tower of the Coliseum forms a local landmark within the Trafalgar Square CA



Above: Several of the areas' street lights are also listed and contribute to the local character

A1.2 CULTURAL VENUES

Covent garden is a cultural hub with a global reach, attracting performances and patrons from far afield.

Covent Garden is an intrinsic part of London's Theatreland, home to several clusters of venues that support the West End as an international cultural hub.

Since the 18th Century, this area has been a focus for performance, with the Royal Opera House and Theatre Royal being landmark attractions. The area now supports a wide range of venues, with performances ranging from touring shows to established decade long favourites. A wide range of hospitality venues has grown around these theatres, with a strong trend of pre and post-theatre dining helping to support many businesses.

In recent years the theatre industry has been under increasing financial pressures, as it attempts to respond to rising operational costs.

The mapping opposite begins to identify the main public frontages and the operational access points for the key cultural venues. Design teams undertaking detailed public realm design work should engage with venues to ensure that technical parameters are developed, which support the ongoing theatre operations. Delivery of public realm improvements should also be carefully phased and stakeholder consultation undertaken, to understand key periods for bringing scenery, lighting and machinery into venues.

Four clusters of cultural venues have been identified:

Piazza. The central public space of Covent Garden is bordered by the Royal Opera House and the London Transport Museum. Currently both of these venues' day-to-day cultural activities are predominantly internal, with seasonal events helping to activate the public space of the Piazza. Street performance can be a positive contribution to the public experience of the Piazza if well managed.

Catherine Street. This cluster to the east of the study area is a mix of theatres and restaurants which has an existing cultural character which could be reinforced.

Strand. Along the south of the study area there is a cluster of theatres along Strand, with some serviced from Maiden Lane.

St Martin's Lane. To the west is a cluster of theatres that, along with the Garrick and Wyndham's, act as a cluster of venues between the heart of Covent Garden and Leicester Square. This cluster lacks the public spaces which define the piazza, or the Leicester Square venues to the west, and could be strengthened through investment in the quality of street spaces.



Above: The Royal Opera House is an international cultural destination.



Above: Theatres have a strong street presence and help to create areas of focus

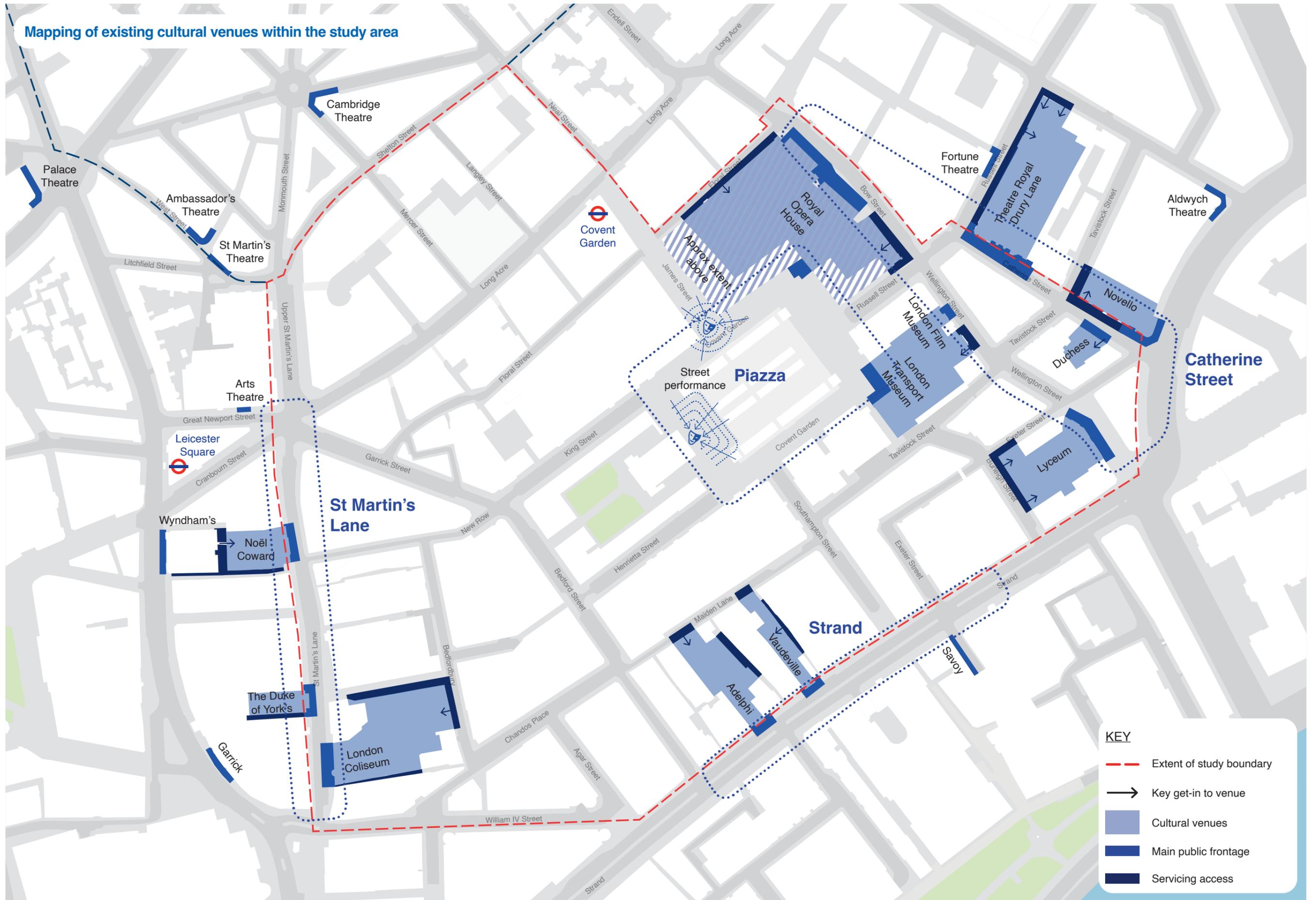


Above: These venues help to support a diverse range of pre and post-theatre hospitality



Above: Requirements for queuing crowds, stage doors, and fire exits should be considered

Mapping of existing cultural venues within the study area



A1.3 ECONOMIC CLUSTERS

Covent Garden supports a diverse range of businesses clustered across the area.

Covent Garden is an area with a rich variety of activity, uses and functionality. Many areas also include a range of uses on the upper floors including offices or residential properties – these occupiers should also be seen as key stakeholders.

Through extensive site analysis and investigation we have identified six key activity clusters, with distinguishable characters and identities.

We found there are areas of Covent Garden that do not form part of these clusters. The Bedfordbury area (A) in the southwest has fewer primary frontages or destination uses, with Charing Cross Police Station and the servicing of the Coliseum contributing to this. This area though does have a high concentration of residential properties. Exeter Street and Burleigh Street (B), have few active frontages and feel like the back of the premises along Strand.

This study considers that the existing clusters should be reinforced through the public realm framework proposals. The areas that are currently outside of the clusters should still benefit from public realm improvements, but these should be more aligned with best-practice guidance as opposed to specific place-making interventions.

From our site visits six economic clusters have been identified:

1. 'Heart' of Covent Garden - Centred around the piazza and a series of highly curated retail and hospitality-led streets – these create a high-end mixed use environment.

2. Long Acre - The parallel streets of Long Acre and Floral Street form a retail cluster with offices on upper floors, but with a shift towards the introduction of experiential or hospitality uses in the near future. The side streets tie these two together and also connect into the St Martin's Courts redevelopment.

3. Opera Quarter - Bow Street, Catherine Street, Tavistock Street and Wellington Street form a cluster of theatre and hospitality uses. This cluster will become increasingly important as a gateway to Covent Garden as the Strand Aldwych scheme is completed.

4. Maiden Lane - Maiden Lane is predominantly hospitality-led, whilst Southampton Street supports both hospitality and retail. Recent traffic calming has supported this cluster becoming a threshold between Covent Garden and Strand.

5. Bedford Street and Garrick Street - these behave more like a 'high street' due to its mix of uses. The street suffers from narrow footways and heavy traffic movement, which negatively impact upon the quality of the public space.

6. St Martin's Lane - Along with Chandos Place and New Row form a cluster of mixed use streets which are characterised by theatre and hospitality uses. This area could be greatly improved to create a street space that helps connect Covent Garden to Chinatown, Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square.



Above: The Piazza is a highly activated public space bounded by retail and hospitality uses



Above: St Martin's Lane is a broad mixed use street but has an overly wide highway

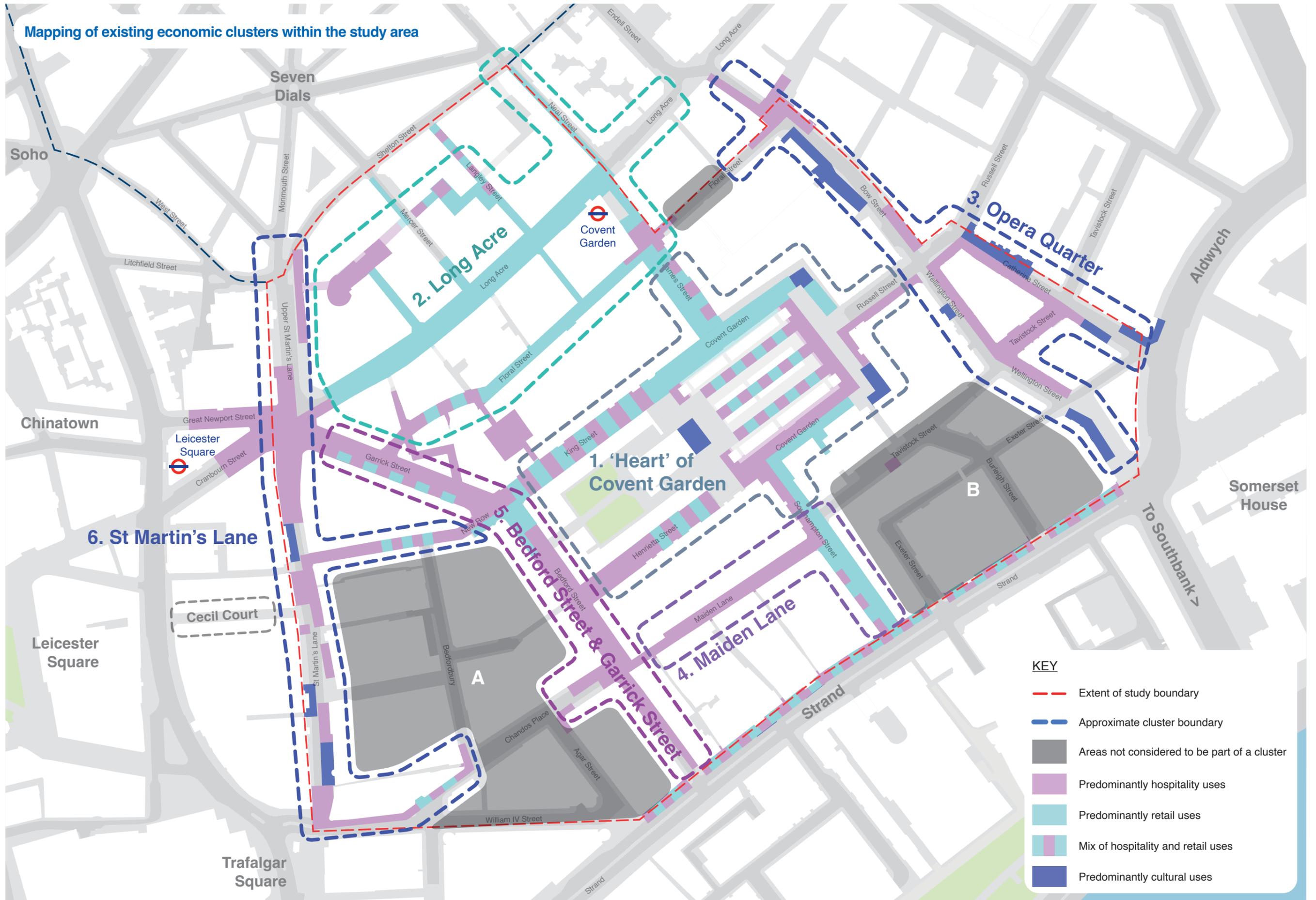


Above: A series of fine grained lanes connect Floral Street and Long Acre.



Above: Catherine Street currently supports al fresco alongside the theatres

Mapping of existing economic clusters within the study area



A1.4 PUBLIC REALM QUALITY

Covent Garden's public realm varies considerably and can significantly impact on the setting of the conservation area and the use of the street spaces

Across the study area there is a sharp contrast between the highest quality and the poorest quality public realm. Most noticeable are the varying paving and highway treatments, ranging from high quality granite and yorkstone, to poorly maintained asphalt footways. There is a patchwork of recent improvements, where yorkstone paving, granite kerbs and granite raised tables have been installed. These are limited in area and correspond to recent highways or development projects such as Long Acre, St Martin's Court Yard, Bow Street or New Row.

At the centre of the area, the piazza and its side streets (including Floral Street) have historically benefited from investments in the public realm. Some of these areas now appear tired, and pose some challenges to contemporary accessibility standards. Immediate maintenance would be suitable in these areas, with existing materials such as granite setts re-finished (i.e. re-pointing the grout between the setts) to provide 'smoother' surfaces that support inclusive movement.

Significant areas towards the edges of the study area have very poor public realm quality by comparison with the contemporary standards seen across the borough. Areas of poor quality paving on key pedestrian links can hinder the legibility of these routes. These areas should be prioritised for investment as funding becomes available to bring them up to a modern standard.

There are several areas which would benefit from short-term improvements:

A. Catherine Street, Russell Street, Tavistock Street and parts of Wellington Street have poor footway treatments. This will be a key link between Covent Garden and Strand Aldwych, so should be more attractive to pedestrians.

B. Burleigh Street, Exeter Street and Tavistock Street currently act as servicing streets, but could benefit from being brought up to a 'baseline' quality.

C. Bedford Street and Garrick Street form a key connection between Leicester Square, Covent Garden and Strand. These footways are low quality, narrow and crowded, and do not support a pleasant environment for pedestrians.

D. Agar Street, Chandos Place, and William IV Street form a key link between Covent Garden and Trafalgar Square or Charing Cross. Materials, parking and junction designs hinder this journey and discourages pedestrians.

E. Bedfordbury is an important link between Henrietta Street and St Martin's Lane but it would benefit from improved wayfinding and public realm treatments.

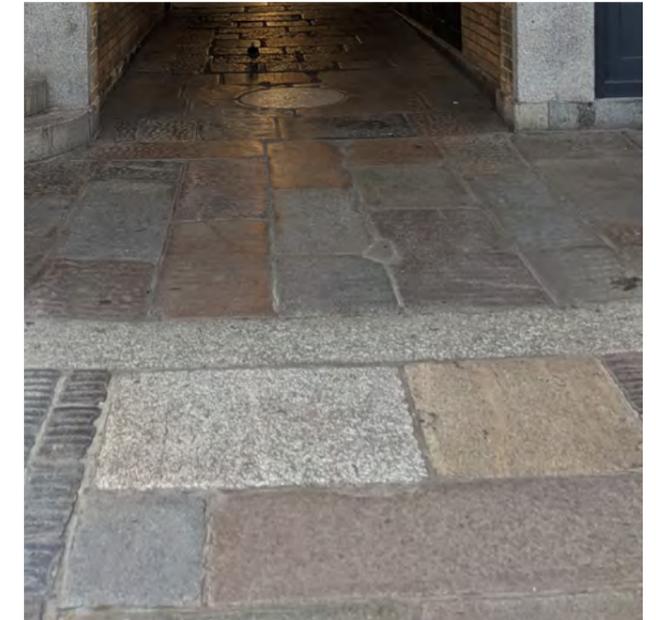
F. St Martin's Lane is a patchwork of different paving materials, with an over proportioned highway. To help create a more characterful area here, a comprehensive redesign of the street is recommended.

G. Shelton Street acts as a principal service road within Seven Dials, and would benefit from co-ordinated improvement with LB Camden.

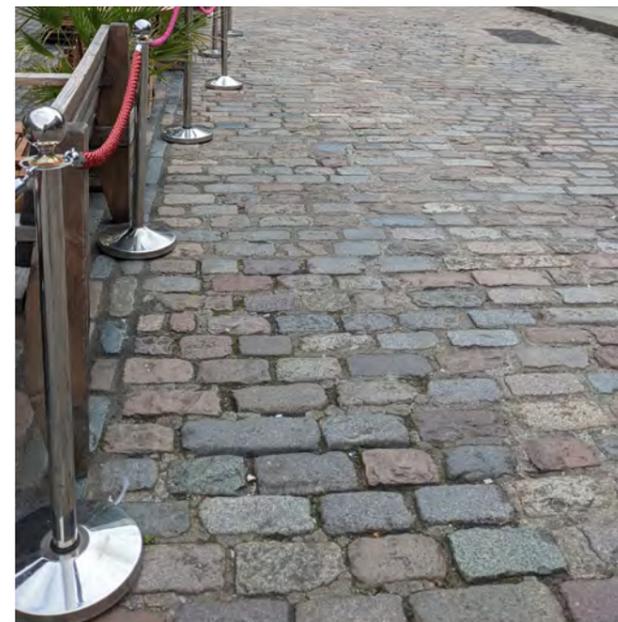
H. The eastern end of Floral Street is acting as a service road to the Royal Opera House. Poor public realm does not support the walking route from Bow Street and Broad Court or the hospitality uses along the north of Floral Court.



Above: High quality yorkstone paving on the eastern side of Wellington Street



Above: Historic materials around listed buildings should be preserved where feasible

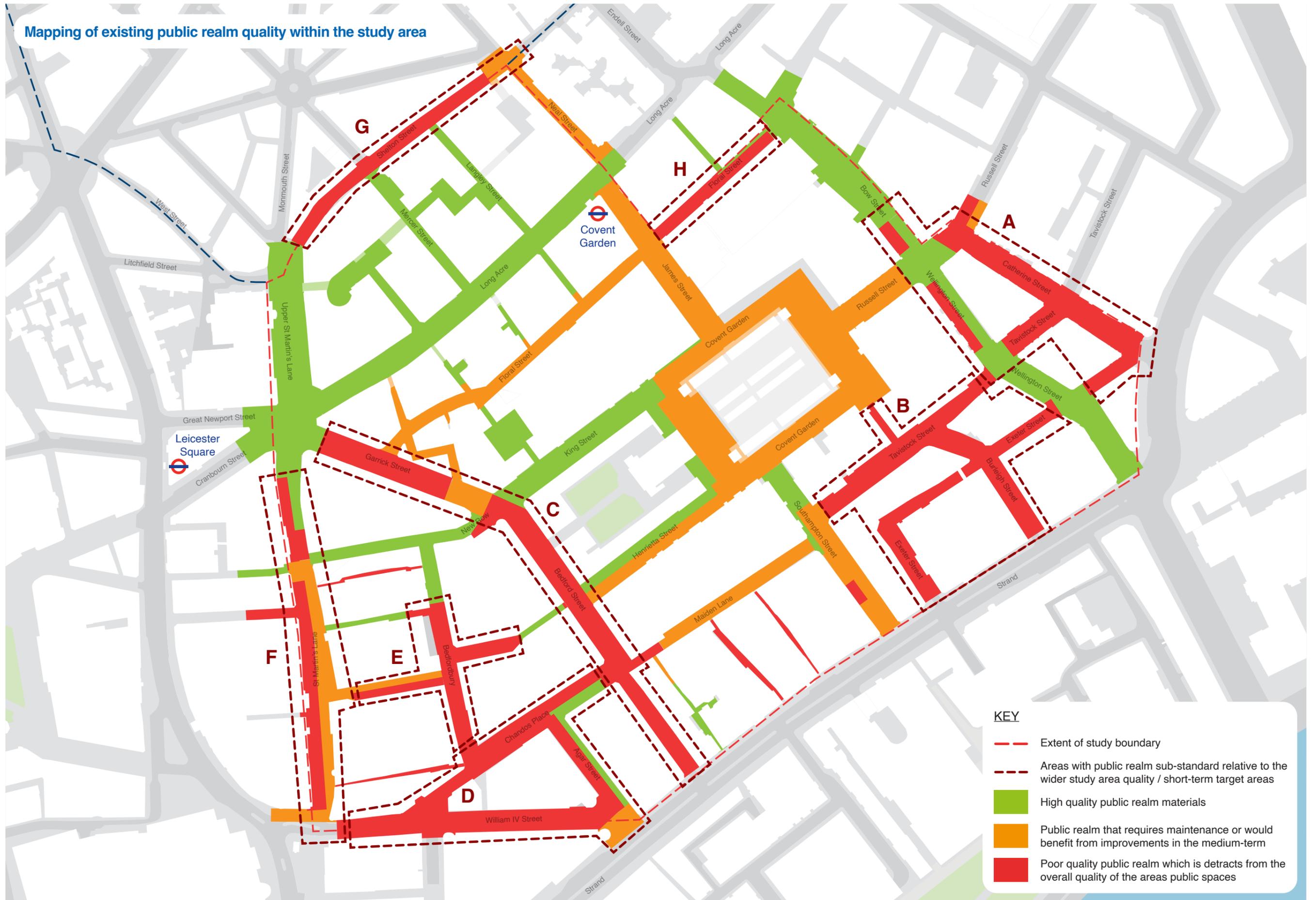


Above: Some areas of high quality paving materials require maintenance to improve their trafficability



Above: Asphalt footways detract from the overall quality of the street space

Mapping of existing public realm quality within the study area



KEY

- Extent of study boundary
- Areas with public realm sub-standard relative to the wider study area quality / short-term target areas
- High quality public realm materials
- Public realm that requires maintenance or would benefit from improvements in the medium-term
- Poor quality public realm which detracts from the overall quality of the areas public spaces

A1.5 URBAN GREENING

Covent Garden is a predominantly hard paved area, with little green space and also very few street trees

The Covent Garden area has little access to green open spaces. There are a series of public open spaces including the Piazza which are identified in the City Plan 2021. Most of the framework area is recognised as having a deficiency in access to play space - as identified in the City Plan 2021. Introducing meaningful areas of new play space is unlikely to be feasible in this framework. However opportunities for incidental play or playful elements which could be safely incorporated into the public realm could still be explored.

Historically, the area has had few street trees, and the current narrow footways and high pedestrian footfall mean that tree planting has not been prioritised in this area. If additional space is found through footway widening or pedestrianisation, then some new tree planting could be incorporated. Key views and the historic street settings will need to be respected in the future placement of trees.

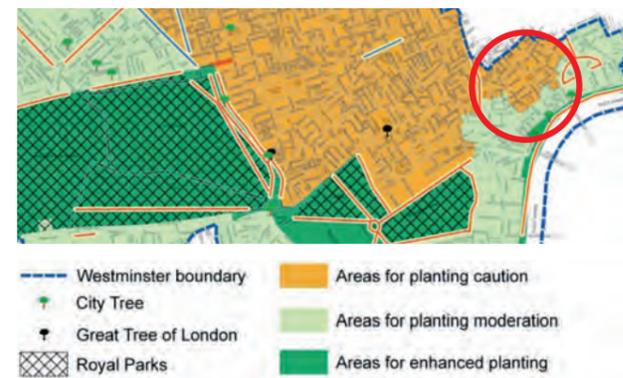
A key reason for considering additional street tree planting is to respond to the challenges of climate resilience. There are few biodiverse habitats in the area, and this would be one benefit of tree planting or increased areas of 'in-ground' soft landscaping. An additional key benefit of tree planting is increased urban shading. Canopies can help to reduce the temperature of surfaces beneath them, potentially helping to reduce future heat stress within the area. Greening can be used to provide pleasant tranquil spaces.

Consideration should be given to highlighting access points to St Paul's Church yard – though with sensitivity to preserving its tranquillity – or creating new pocket parks.

Increased urban greening in the form of tree planting can also help to mask some unwanted street noises. The susurrantion of leaves moving in the wind can help to cover some noise, consideration could be given to selecting appropriate tree species in areas of residential properties.

The Covent Garden planting principles in the 'Trees and the Public Realm' strategy include:

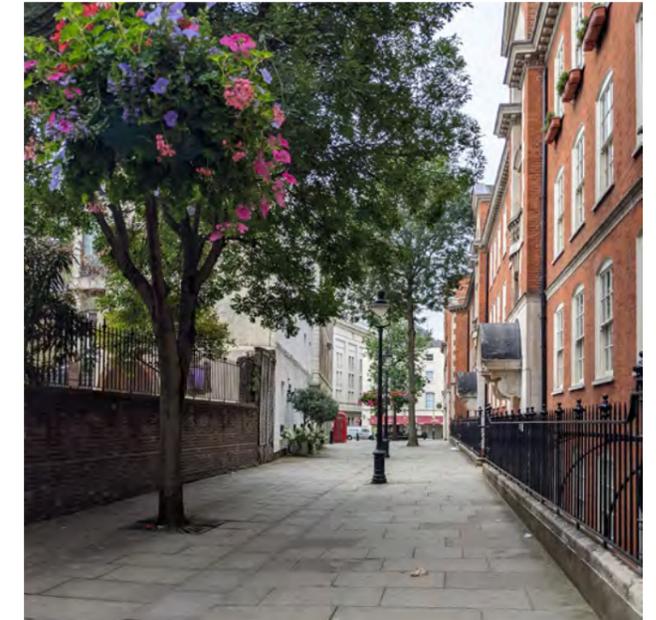
- *The character of this townscape area is derived in part from its dense development and narrow streets, which made the inclusion of trees difficult or impossible. The almost total absence of planting underlines its deliberately 'dry' urban appearance and is one of the characteristics that the City Council is seeks to preserve in those areas.*
- *Avenues of trees, including in front of refurbished or redeveloped buildings, is an inappropriate form of planting in this area due to the historic character of the area and there will be a presumption against it.*
- *Whilst rare, some single landmark trees exist, often at road junctions. All trees in this quarter each require careful consideration when thought is given to succession. However these landmark trees should generally be replaced unless they caused amenity problems.*
- *Covent Garden Piazza is not an appropriate location for new planting. Its hard surfaces, wide open space and lack of greenery are an essential part of its character. The piazza, modelled on renaissance cities in Italy and the first attempt at formal town planning in London, was intended as a clean, unbroken space, with the architecture and formal layout as the focus of the townscape.*



Above: Extract from Westminster policy document: 'Trees and the Public Realm'



Above: St Paul's Church yard is the only publicly accessible green open space within framework area



Above: Adjacent pedestrianised streets such as Broad Court are a good example of tree planting

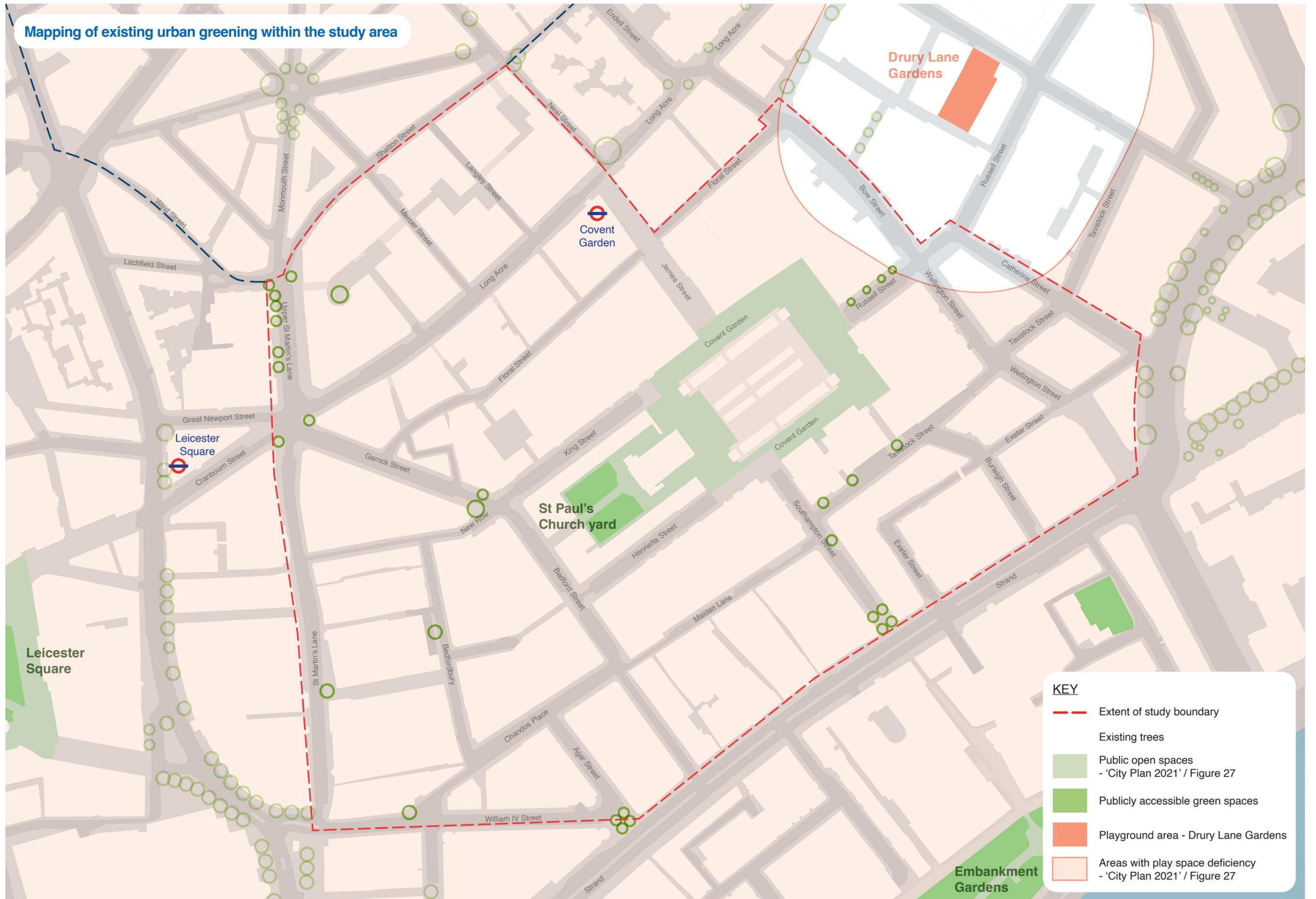


Above: Window boxes can add a sense of greening to streets where footways are too narrow



Above: Planters add to the sense of urban greening but do not support SuDS or habitat creation

Mapping of existing urban greening within the study area



KEY

- - - Extent of study boundary
- Existing trees
- Public open spaces - 'City Plan 2021' / Figure 27
- Publicly accessible green spaces
- Playground area - Drury Lane Gardens
- Areas with play space deficiency - 'City Plan 2021' / Figure 27

A1.6 MOVEMENT

Covent Garden has key city scale spaces and a network of active streets that support movement across the West End.

There are a large number of walking and cycling routes that cross the study area. Long Acre – forming part of a link between Lincoln’s Inn Fields to Leicester Square – has seen recent investment. Strand Aldwych: Westminster City Council has begun to implement ambitious new proposals which will convert busy roadways into a major new public spaces at the Strand and an enhanced pedestrian experience across the Aldwych, including new crossings, wider footways and a new green space.

The mapping opposite focuses on some key routes which connect the core of Covent Garden to the surrounding key destination spaces. Improvements to these could reinforce Covent Garden and the West End as a pedestrian-friendly space. Improving these routes can also help to reduce overcrowding on the underground, as some visitors try to make these connections via the tube network in the absence of clear walking routes. These key routes have varying challenges including:

- 1. Seven Dials to Covent Garden** - The main route (1a) is via James Street and Neal Street. This route is already popular and links to the underground station. A zebra crossing exists over Long Acre, but this route could benefit from a refresh to paving materials to increase accessibility. The alternative route from the west of the piazza via Garrick Street and Upper St Martin’s Lane (1b) is less obvious and suffers from narrow footways along Garrick Street.
- 2. Strand Aldwych to Covent Garden** - This link will become increasingly important as the new public space on the Strand is completed. The route via Catherine Street (2a) will require crossing improvements to improve pedestrian safety at the junction with Tavistock Street. A step-free route to Somerset House (2b) would remain on Wellington Street and would again benefit from improvements to its junctions with Tavistock Street and Exeter Street.

- 3. Embankment to Covent Garden** - A direct route exists along Carting Lane and Southampton Street. Whilst direct, this route features a set of steps, with a step-free connection being a long detour via either Savoy Street or John Adam Street.

- 4. Charing Cross Station to Covent Garden** This route is already signed and is useful to discourage visitors from crowding the underground for an otherwise short journey. This route, whilst signed via Agar Street (4a) has been identified as having a poor daytime and night-time environment, with poor lighting and street space. A cluster of trees on Strand support this as a key gateway, though this could be further reinforced. Bedford Street (4b) is an alternative route, as it has direct views from the end of Henrietta Street to Strand. However, the footways are narrow and would require significant widening, improved street lighting and signage to make this an appealing route.

- 5. Trafalgar Square to Covent Garden** - This is one of the most confusing routes, our observations have highlighted that visitors to the areas find themselves lost, attempting to make this connection. A route via Chandos Place (5a) is the most direct, though this route suffers from multiple deficiencies; the junction of Chandos Place and William VI Street is regularly congested with servicing traffic; a lack of clear pedestrian crossings; narrow footways; and low light levels at night. An alternative route via Bedford Court and Mays Court (5b) would require significant wayfinding and lighting improvements to make Bedfordbury feel safer and function better as a pedestrian route. Care is also required to design out anti-social behaviours and impacts to residents from late night noise.

- 6. Leicester Square to Covent Garden** - A popular route for visitors, this route could be greatly improved to respond to the high footfall. The route via Cranbourn Street (6a) benefits from crossings outside of Leicester Square

underground station and the improved crossing of St Martin’s Lane. However, the route along Garrick Street is narrow, poorly lit and has little wayfinding. An alternative route is via New Row and St Martin’s Court (6b), with recent improvements to New Row making this an attractive route when heading west out of central Covent Garden. An existing zebra crossing over Bedford Street supports this movement. However, there is not a crossing over Charing Cross Road that aligns with this route, and a safe direct crossing of St Martin’s Lane should also be introduced to support this connection.

- 7. Chinatown to Covent Garden** - This route is similar to the northern of the Leicester Square connections (6a) but crosses from Newport Court to Great Newport Street. This route has a clear view from Newport court to St Martin’s Lane/ Long Acre. There is a pedestrian refuge in the centre of Charing Cross Road, but there is no crossing that prioritises pedestrians. The recent public realm improvements to Long Acre support a strong walking route to Covent Garden Tube Station, urban greening projects could make this street even more attractive.

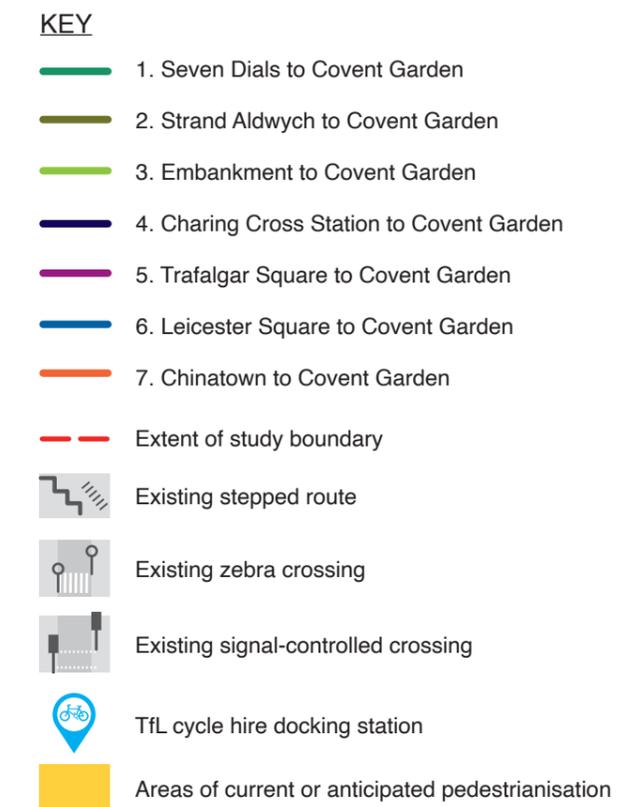
Future public realm schemes should consider these routes and how they can be reinforced. Pedestrian crossings over Charing Cross Road will be challenging, as locations will need to be balanced against the need to keep traffic flowing safely on this key bus route.

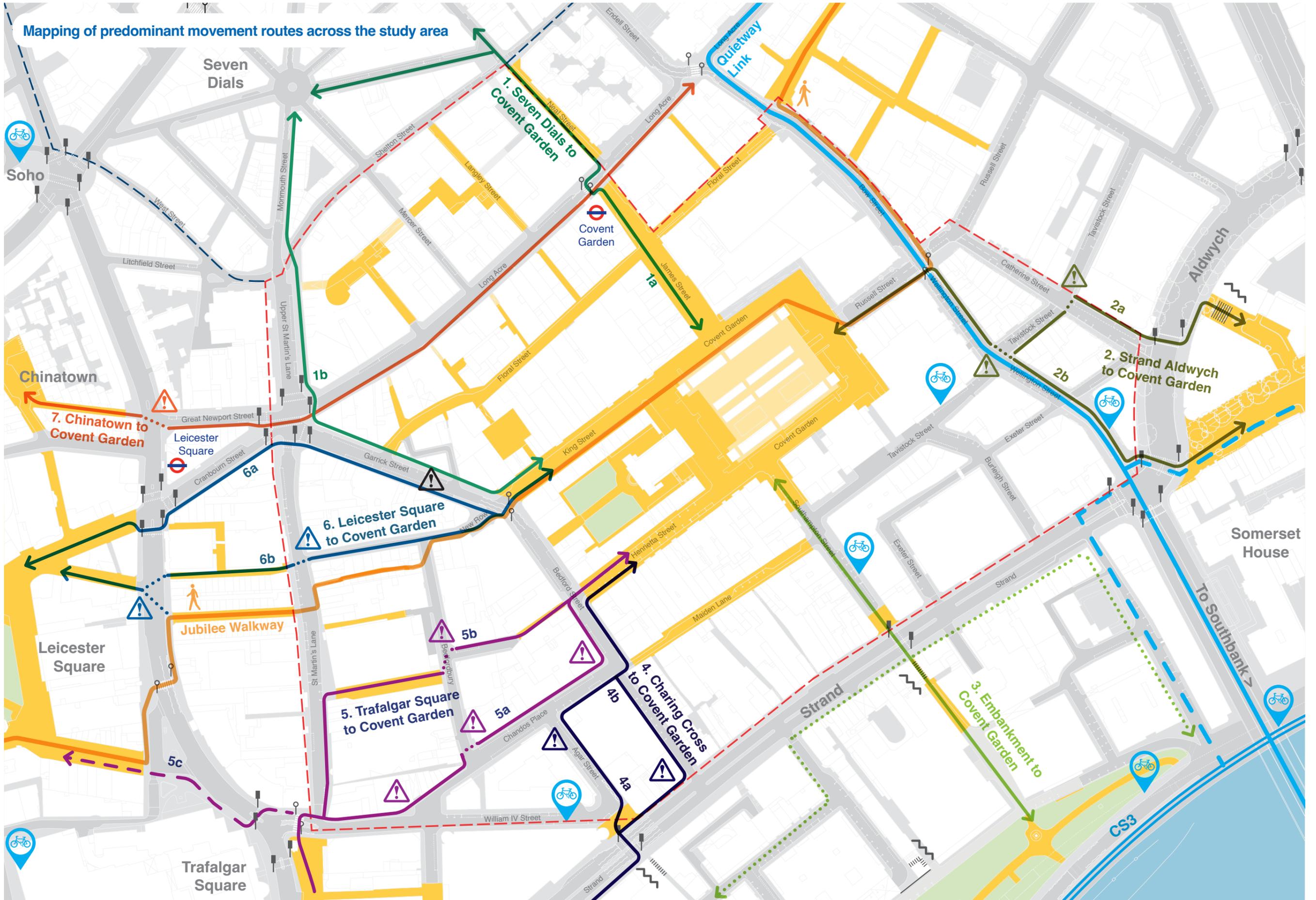
Proposals should also consider the impacts of street clutter on the pedestrian experience in the area. Key footways can often become crowded, with tables, chairs, signs and other obstructions making otherwise generous footways narrow and challenging to navigate.

This mapping clearly shows that St Martin’s Lane and Bedford Street are critical manifolds for routes linking Covent Garden to Chinatown, Leicester Square, Soho and Trafalgar Square.



Above: The TfL walking tube map highlights how short journeys within the West End can be by foot





A1.7 LIGHTING

Covent Garden is one of London’s cultural hubs, with a vibrant evening economy supported by the theatres and the Royal Opera House. This makes the quality of lighting of critical importance to create streets that feel inviting and safe.

OPPORTUNITIES

Covent Garden has long been established as part of the West End cultural and economic cluster. Cultural venues including the theatres, Royal Opera House and the Covent Garden Market buildings have supported the range of bars and restaurants that now help to define the area. A large amount of business has historically been generated through pre and post theatre trade.

This means that the Covent Garden area must establish an environment that is as visually attractive by night, as it is by day. The conservation area, and the presence of listed street lighting has in the past led to a light-touch approach to lighting being adopted that has not necessarily proved to be fit for purpose.

Some stakeholders have expressed concerns about poor light levels in some areas of Covent Garden. Our site surveys have documented several streets where there is a lack of consistency, poor maintenance or very few street lights. Many of these deficiencies are on the key pedestrian links into Covent Garden, so have a negative impact on the journey to and from the area for residents, visitors and workers.

Solving this deficiency in lighting along these routes could be a simple step towards creating a more consistent and pleasant night-time environment.

POSITIVE FEATURES

The Covent Garden area’s rich architectural and cultural heritage is still present through the current approach to lighting.

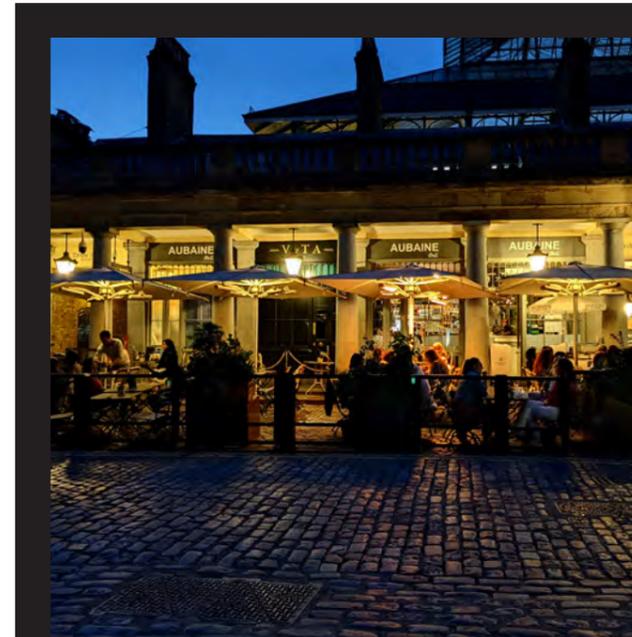
The area retains a large number of historic street lights, with some that are still gas-lit. Though these are increasingly being retrofitted with modern LED ‘bulbs’ that reflect the form of the gas light mantles. Care should be taken to retain historic columns, brackets and the housing of the lights to maintain the character these fittings provide. A successful modern version of these lamps has been developed – The Covent Garden Lantern © – and should be supported to be implemented in future projects. This design has, as of 2021, been installed in: Floral (Braun gas lookalike), Langley, Mercer and Neal, Shelton Streets.

Other forms of lamps exist which contribute positively to the areas character do also exist insitu. These should also be maintained and upgraded to LED lighting too, supporting the rich architectural heritage of the area.

A defining feature of the gas lighting is the colour temperature –a warm white – and the slight variations in light level such as subtle flickering. Retrofitting of gas lighting should look to sensitively replicate these characteristics to avoid introducing harsh white lighting.

Landmark buildings, such as the theatres and Royal Opera House are characterised by more ‘celebrational’ facade lighting, which adds to the character of the area. Care should be taken to manage the light levels and timing of feature lighting to minimise the glare that these brighter surfaces create, which can create an issue if the surrounding street spaces are dimly lit.

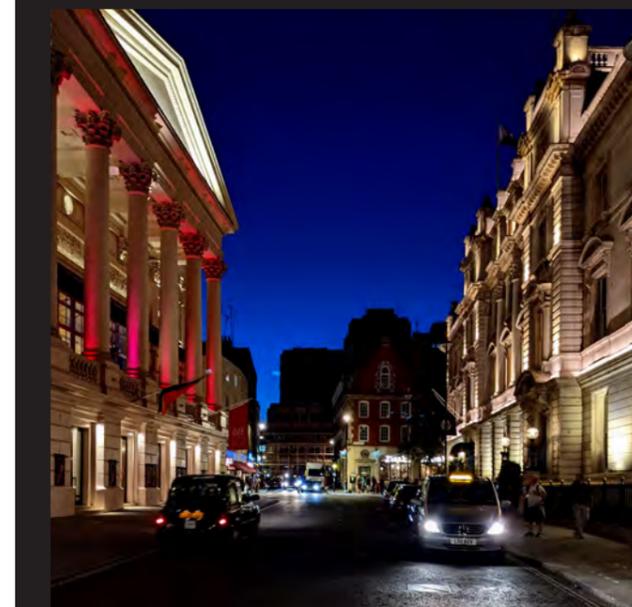
The arcades and colonnades that surround the piazza are carefully lit from within, creating consistently bright edges to the piazza. The arcade of Bedford Chambers is an exemplary example of soft warm-white lighting and up-lighting emphasising the detailing of the listed building.



Above: Warm Colour temperature in the conservation area is an appropriate response



Above: ‘Festive’ lighting can support the theatrical character, but should be sensitive to the context



Above: Architectural lighting of local landmarks helps to emphasise local character



Above: Soft light and greater light levels in arcades supports the thresholds of the Piazza



A1.7 LIGHTING

Areas of Covent Garden suffer from poor light levels which will need addressing to create a safe evening and night-time environment

NEGATIVE FEATURES

Generally the Covent Garden area has a low level of lighting, and future proposals should be co-ordinated to improve lighting to a level which supports pedestrian comfort and supports the use of CCTV, whilst still preserving the historic character.

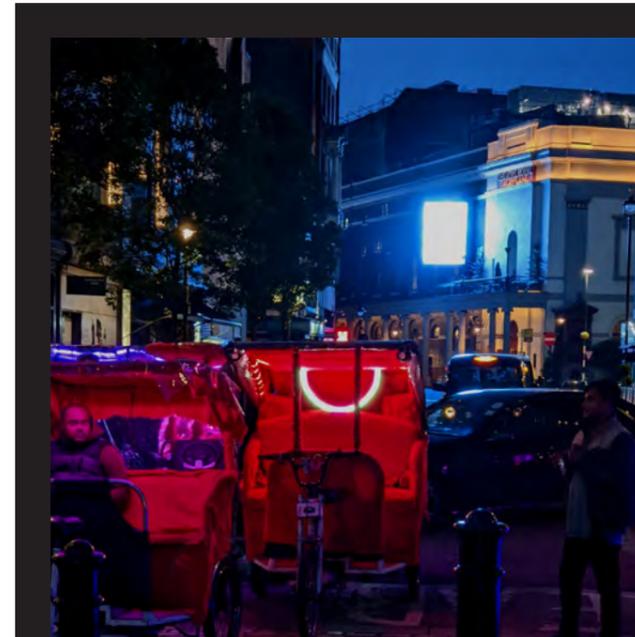
Particular areas of poor lighting level include:

- Garrick Street (1) has few working street lights and is mainly lit by light-spill from premises.
- Bedford Street (2) is very poorly lit, the Chandos Place (3) junction is a particular concern for pedestrian safety given turning traffic.
- Maiden Lane (4) is very dimly lit, with a lot of lighting coming from adjacent premises which leads to issues with glare.
- James Street (5) is a key link to the underground station has low levels of light which could be improved to support pedestrian movement.
- Chandos Place (6) is a main servicing route and a link to Trafalgar Square, poor lighting and high vehicle numbers is a concern here given the footfall through to Trafalgar Square and Leicester Square.
- Exeter Street and Burleigh Street (7) whilst not on main walking routes are poorly lit.
- The LED advertising screen on the north of the Theatre Royal (8) is a detracting feature from as far away as the market buildings, it flicks between colours and its brightness harshly contrasts with the surrounding lower light levels.
- The introduction of neon signage (9) into the conservation area is not considered appropriate, especially given the degree of light-spill that is created.

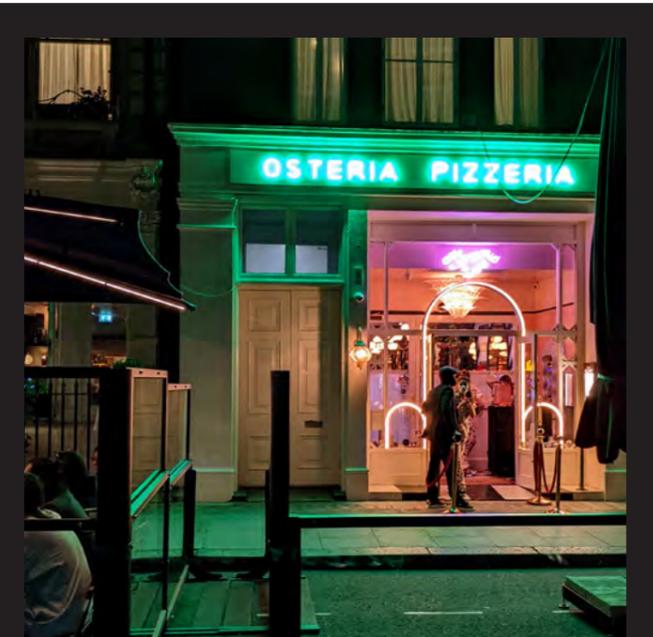
It is important that all future lighting improvements consider balancing higher light levels with the need for appropriate levels of darkness too. Negative light spill, which creates light pollution, should be minimised and consideration given to the residential properties in the area. Unduly bright window displays should not be left on all night, and large moving images on screens can be unpleasant for passers-by and cause nuisance to residents in upper floor properties.



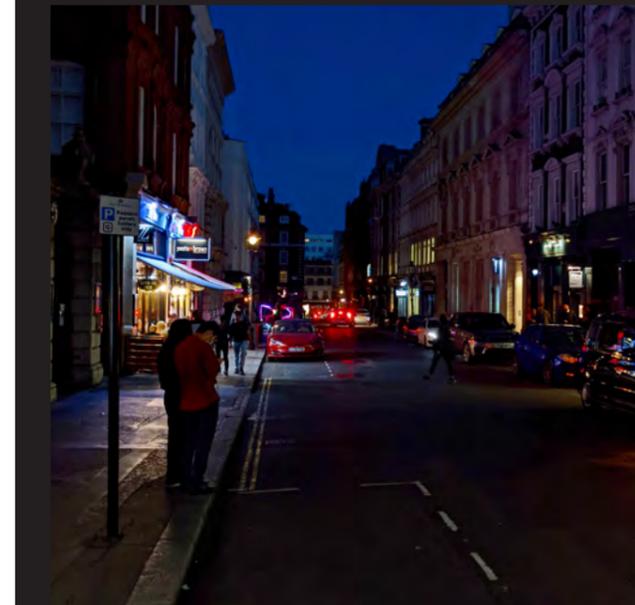
Above and Below: Gas lighting adds to the character of the area, but often fails to provide modern levels of lighting comfort.



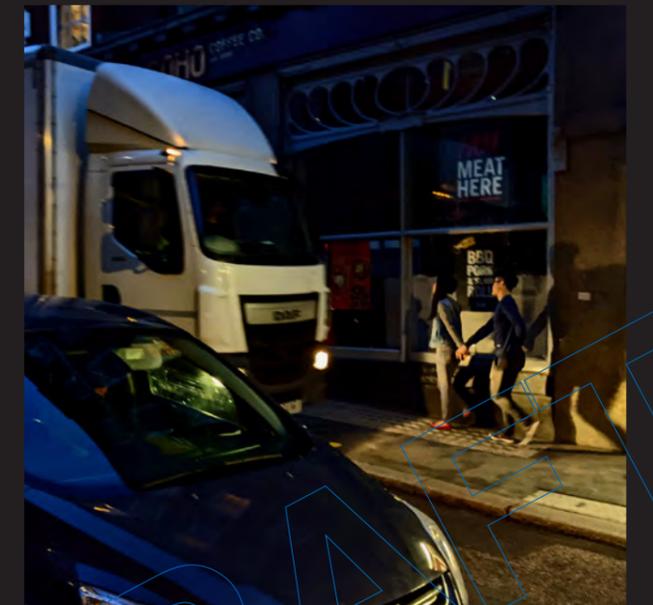
Above: Large very bright advertising screens strongly contrast with surrounding low light levels



Above: Modern fittings, including neon lights are not appropriate in the conservation area



Above: Bedford Street suffers from very low levels of lighting which makes the space feel unsafe



Above: Poor pedestrian safety in narrow streets with poor street lighting

Mapping of existing lighting qualities within the study area



A1.8 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

Throughout the process of this design frameworks production engagement and consultation has been incorporated.

Covent Garden and the study area has a broad range of stakeholders, both business and resident groups, landowners and venue operators. During the process of producing this document invitations to take part were sent out and a series of fact-finding meetings, presentations and workshops undertaken.

Some summaries of the findings in these meetings are included here. It should be noted that some meetings and material presented by stakeholders were introduced as confidential or commercially sensitive so these have not been directly referred to or referenced in this document.

THE MERCERS' COMPANY

A meeting and subsequent site walk were undertaken with Mercers to better understand recent work around Long Acre and the urban blocks which surround it. These have helped to inform the 'Long Acre' project area (C.1)

Key findings included:

- Long Acre is increasingly shifting from a predominantly retail led street to a more mixed environment. Recent lets, and future leases are increasingly including hospitality and experience led uses.
- Local land-owner stakeholders currently contribute towards some of the maintenance of the area and are keen to see further public realm improvements, early proposals for these have included increased urban greening.
- Development of St Martin's Courtyard and Mercer Walk have increased the permeability of the blocks along the north of Long Acre.
- There are ambitions for the block bounded by Langley Street, Long Acre, Neal Street and Shelton Street, to make this as permeable, potentially opening a connection through Old Brewers' Yard.

CAPITAL AND COUNTIES

Several workshops including a site walk have been held with CAPCO in their role as a major landowner at the centre of Covent Garden. These have helped to establish the vision and design parameters for the 'Heart of Covent Garden' cluster.

Key findings included:

- A desire to maintain and build upon the pre-covid al fresco arrangements through the retention of pitches provided during the emergency business recovery scheme.
- The review of the al fresco locations consulted on in alignment with the NTM consultation process.
- An appeal to retain temporary al fresco on Russell Street and to the south of Southampton Street – or see them reprovided permanently in the short-term.
- Suggestions for the pedestrianisation of Russell Street through the relocation of the taxi rank and resident's parking.
- Support for the upgrade of public realm materials to high-quality natural stone finishes.
- A need to improve the accessibility of surfaces across the area, and to introduce improved crossing facilities.
- The need to respond to critical issues surrounding the level of lighting provided across the area.
- Highlighting the opportunities of rationalising the highway of Bedford street/Garrick Street to improve the pedestrian environment.
- Recognition of the need to increase street greening, public seating and sustainable infrastructure such as recycling bins.
- The need to develop and adopt management plans to oversee the servicing and waste handling of the businesses and properties in the Covent Garden area.
- An understanding that al fresco demand along the southern colonnade is likely to be less in the winter, so seasonal responses to the extents of al fresco here could be an option.
- Capco would like to see more regard to the needs of the customer and the operators, balanced with the needs of place shaping and the look and feel of the Conservation Area given the significant extent of cultural and commercial uses in the study area

COVENT GARDEN AREA TRUST

A site walk was held with CGAT to explore the opportunities and constraints in Covent Garden. The outputs of this site visit contributed towards the baseline study, the framework and the proposed look and feel guidance for al fresco in the Piazza area.

Key findings:

- The importance of ongoing monitoring and management of the individual and cumulative impacts of al fresco in Covent Garden to minimise the impact on the setting of the Central Market buildings and to ensure the area remains an attraction to a diverse range of visitors.
- The importance of licencing and physical measures in reducing the impact and disruption caused by noise from events and al fresco – particularly issues with amplification.
- Concerns around the cumulative impact of the temporary al fresco pitches on movement around the Piazza, particularly the southeast corner.
- The risk of serveries and bars placed in the public realm being 'fixed' due to the level of physical servicing required, preventing the spaces being occupied from being cleared at night – so becoming 'permanent' fixtures.
- A preference for al fresco infrastructure such as waiter stations to be easily packed away inside at night along with furniture.
- Poor co-ordination between street performance pitches and al fresco.
- Replacement of gas lighting needs to be undertaken sympathetically.
- Accessibility audits and improvements to the surfaces of the piazza to balance inclusivity with the historic character.
- Impacts of raised screens around al fresco obscuring views across the street. Concerns about branding of these structures.

COVENT GARDEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

WCC and the design team introduced the study to the Covent Garden Community Association representatives and sought feedback on the emergency business recovery al fresco schemes and their impact.

Key findings:

- It was recognised that the al fresco arrangements had benefited some hospitality businesses, but there had been impacts on local residents.
- Access to properties had been impeded, with deliveries, tradesmen, private vehicles or taxis having their hours of access reduced. This has significantly impacted some residents who require transport to their front-door.
- Loss of residents' parking was a concern, especially where this is needed close to properties to support accessibility.
- Noise, particularly around closing time has been a key concern, it was recommended that licenses be curtailed at 10pm (from 11pm) to ensure al fresco is packed away and patrons have left the area by 11pm rather than midnight.
- Noise has been a particular concern in narrower streets with high residential levels such as New Row.
- The cumulative impact of the increase in covers since internal dining has been relaxed was a concern, further contributing towards issues surrounding waste management and a lack of refuse storage.
- Some routes to entrances have been obstructed.
- Clutter of temporary parking control signage.
- Re-appropriated highways poses accessibility challenges during pedestrianisation, with a lack of dropped kerbs on new desire lines, or temporary al fresco blocking current dropped kerbs.
- Some new signage (including neon signs) are out of place in the conservation area and leading to glare into residential properties at night.

HEART OF LONDON BUSINESS ALLIANCE

As one of the two BIDs in the area HOLBA were consulted on to discuss their plans for the Charing Cross Road and St Martin's Lane area. Initial strategies for St Martin's Lane were discussed along with the appropriate level of ambition for the area.

Key findings:

- St Martin's Lane is seen as a key cluster of theatre and hospitality uses.
- Retention of the locations of the temporary al fresco footway buildouts was seen as a key ambition for the long-term transformation of the street.
- There is a strong ambition to see the street transformed, with an ambition from HOLBA for a building-to-building 'flush' surface treatment to support traffic calming in the area.
- Timed restrictions on access to the street including timed loading bays are being considered by HOLBA.
- Access for taxis 24/7 is likely to be a requirement due to the need to drop off patrons and the presence of several hotels along the length of the street.
- Street greening is supported and has been investigated by HOLBA in some high-level visions of their own.
- The consideration of St Martin's Lane as a cluster incorporating the lanes and courts either side of it was appreciated.
- Strategies to decrease anti-social behaviour in these side streets including improved lighting were seen as critical.

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

Two workshops have been held with the Royal Opera House (ROH). These discussed the future of the estate, its operational challenges and the desire to create an all-day attraction.

Key findings:

- Operational access along Bow Street into the ROH's primary loading bay and along Floral Street into the Stage Door and a secondary loading bay is critical for the continuity of business.
- ROH's core operation is serviced by a fleet of 33-tonne lorries bringing sets, costumes and props into the building. Concern was raised over proposed increasing of footways on neighbouring roads impeding lorry access.
- Clearer signposting to the entrance on the Piazza is required following recent investments into refurbishing this entry point.
- The Bow Street/Russell Street corner of the ROH is recognised as having an important signage role along routes from Aldwych and Waterloo Bridge.
- When live broadcasts take place (ca. 6-12 times a year) a truck is parked on Russell Street for optimum alignment with a broadcast satellite, therefore any pedestrianisation of this road must accommodate this requirement.
- Access to taxis is critical for their patrons, with concerns expressed about any relocation of the Russell Street taxi rank making it more remote from the ROH.
- Patrons have expressed concerns that the increase in temporary al fresco dining had reduced the number of and increased the distance to blue-badge parking bays.
- The ROH are keen to increase the visibility of their non-performance related offers from the Piazza to attract visitors into their shop, café, bars, restaurants, exhibitions and tours during the day. Initial proposals about signage and banners were presented.
- Concerns were expressed about the need to increase cycle parking provision over time to respond to and support the uptake of cycling to performances in line with sustainable transport policies.

SHAFTESBURY

As a key landowner within the eastern Covent Garden area – as well as interests in St Martin's Lane – Shaftesbury have been consulted to understand their ambitions and concerns around the suspension of the temporary al fresco arrangements.

Key findings:

- The suspension of the temporary arrangements on Tavistock Street, Wellington Street and Catherine Street were of particular concern.
- Would support rationalisation of the highway widths to unlock additional footway space, as in some instances such as Wellington Street, even 0.5m additions can make a big difference in supporting al fresco.
- Shaftesbury are very keen to see some of this al fresco return in spring 2022 to support this cluster of hospitality uses.
- Keen to see routes between Strand Aldwych and Covent Garden supported alongside longer connections to destinations outside of the West End such as the British Museum.
- Street clutter has impacted on adequate footway widths and moments of clearance where footfall is higher, or where pedestrians dwell whilst orientating themselves.
- Clear footway widths and widened pavements are supported as they also support inclusive movement.
- Would support public realm and lighting improvements around St Martin's Lane that reduced anti-social behaviour in the side streets.

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

The design team have continually developed the proposals within this framework through multiple workshop sessions. It is hoped that this continual review has helped to identify key challenges to delivery and future management of public space.

Key findings:

- The NTM will in the short term offer increased timed-pedestrianisation in some areas. Future highway interventions should build upon the findings of the experimental traffic order period, as iterative steps towards wider pedestrian improvements across the wider area. This means that some proposals are likely to be long-term (10-15yrs) such as any transformation of Bedford Street and Chandos Place.
- Any relocation of taxi ranks, parking and loading should be subject to comprehensive studies and consultation.
- Al fresco should not be reliant on space released through timed closures, and any short-term retention of the emergency al fresco should be supported by permanent high-quality footway buildouts.
- Al fresco should be managed and designed to respect its context and be located to maintain clear footway widths – which must respond to levels of footfall. Barriers and shelter to dining areas should not obstruct sightlines and be easily moved or packed away.

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