

# Holborn Public Realm Strategy

October 2023

LD&DESIGN



Camden



THE  
BRITISH  
MUSEUM



No large

eight mammals  
with five  
right skulls  
Ancient lives  
new discoveries  
From 10.00 am  
to 5.00 pm

Chasing beauty  
The body in  
ancient Greek art  
10.00 am - 5.00 pm



TOMMY

# Contents

1.0 Introduction	3	5.0 Key Projects	116
1.1 Overview	7	5.1 New Oxford Street	118
1.2 Holborn's Public Realm	9	5.2 Great Russell Street	124
1.3 Project Objectives	10	5.3 Southampton Place	128
1.4 Partnership Working	12	5.4 High Holborn	132
1.5 Purpose of this document	13	5.5 New Turnstile	136
2.0 Analysis	14	5.6 Theobalds Road	140
2.1 Bigger Picture	17	5.7 Queen Square	144
2.2 Historical Context	31	5.8 Great Ormond Street	148
2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses	43	5.9 Lamb's Conduit Street	152
2.4 The Built Environment	47	5.10 Red Lion Street	156
2.5 Movement	67	5.11 Red Lion Square	160
2.6 Public Open Space and Green Infrastructure	81	5.12 Clerkenwell Road	164
3.0 Vision	100	5.13 Leather Lane South	168
3.1 Why a Vision?	103	5.14 Brookes Market	172
3.2 The Vision for Holborn & Farringdon	104	5.15 Hatton Garden	176
4.0 Opportunities Plan	112	5.16 Great Queen Street	180
		5.17 Bedford Place	184

Version: 4  
Version date: 12.02.2024  
Comment: Final

This document has been prepared and checked  
in accordance with ISO 9001:2015

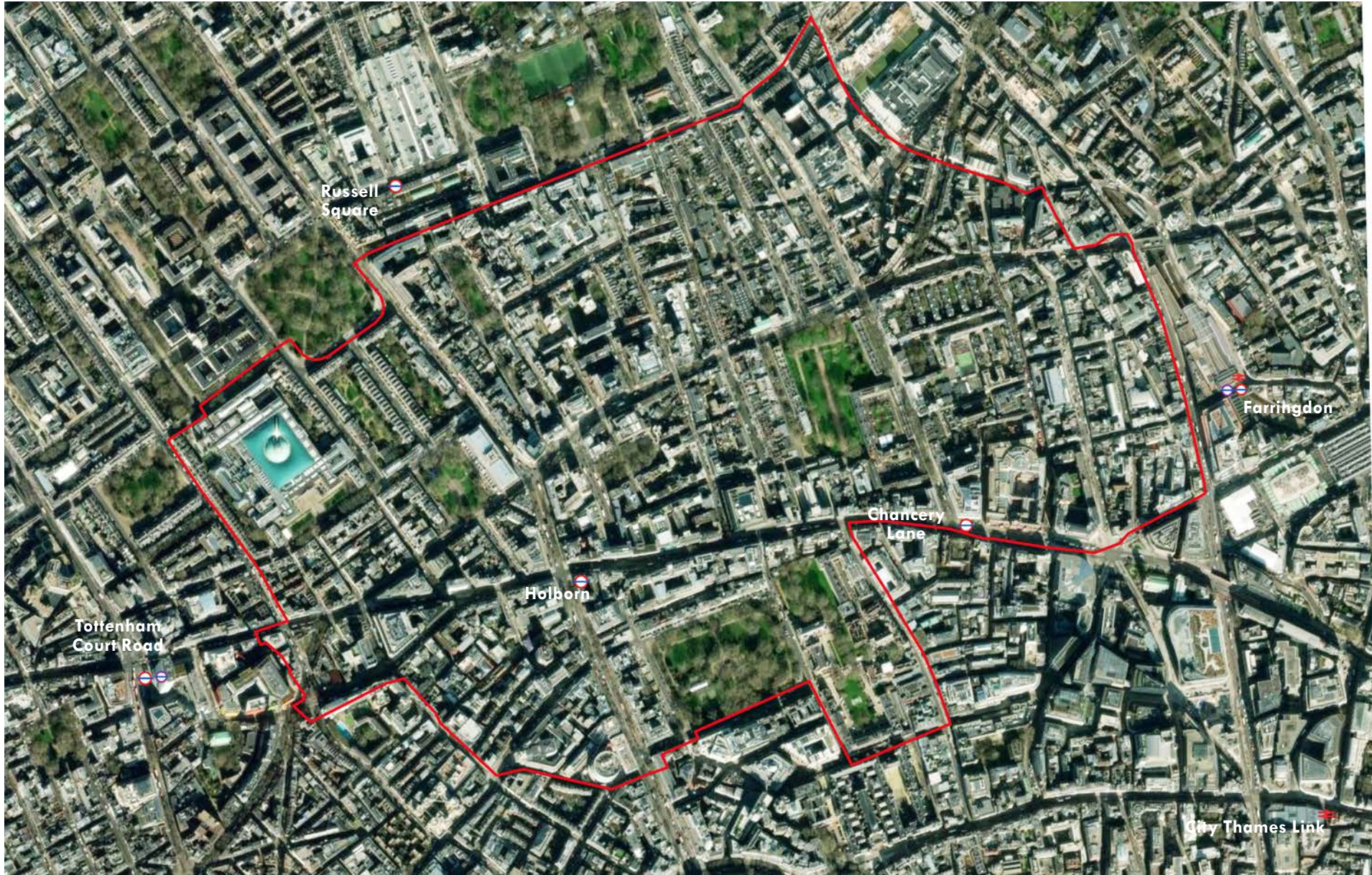


ST CROSS STREET  
E.C.



# 1.0 Introduction

A street scene in London, featuring a mix of architectural styles. On the left, a brick building with classical architectural details, including statues in niches and arched windows. To its right is a modern brick building with a grid of windows. Further right, a white building with classical columns and a section under scaffolding. The street is lined with various signs, including 'TO LET' and 'Edgware', and a blue van is visible in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.



Holborn Public Realm Strategy project boundary

© Maxar, Microsoft

## 1.1 Overview

Holborn lies between the West End and the City, in the very heart of London. At the boundary of four boroughs – Camden, Islington, The City and Westminster, it is an area of dramatic contrasts. Within the district we find Bloomsbury elegance, remnants of medieval fabric, and twentieth century commerce, bisected by major highway. At its centre is one of London's busiest tube stations, while four lane roads with some of the highest air pollution, sit adjacent to tranquil garden squares, formal Georgian streets, and intimate passages. The area comprises many different characters, and this is one of its great strengths.

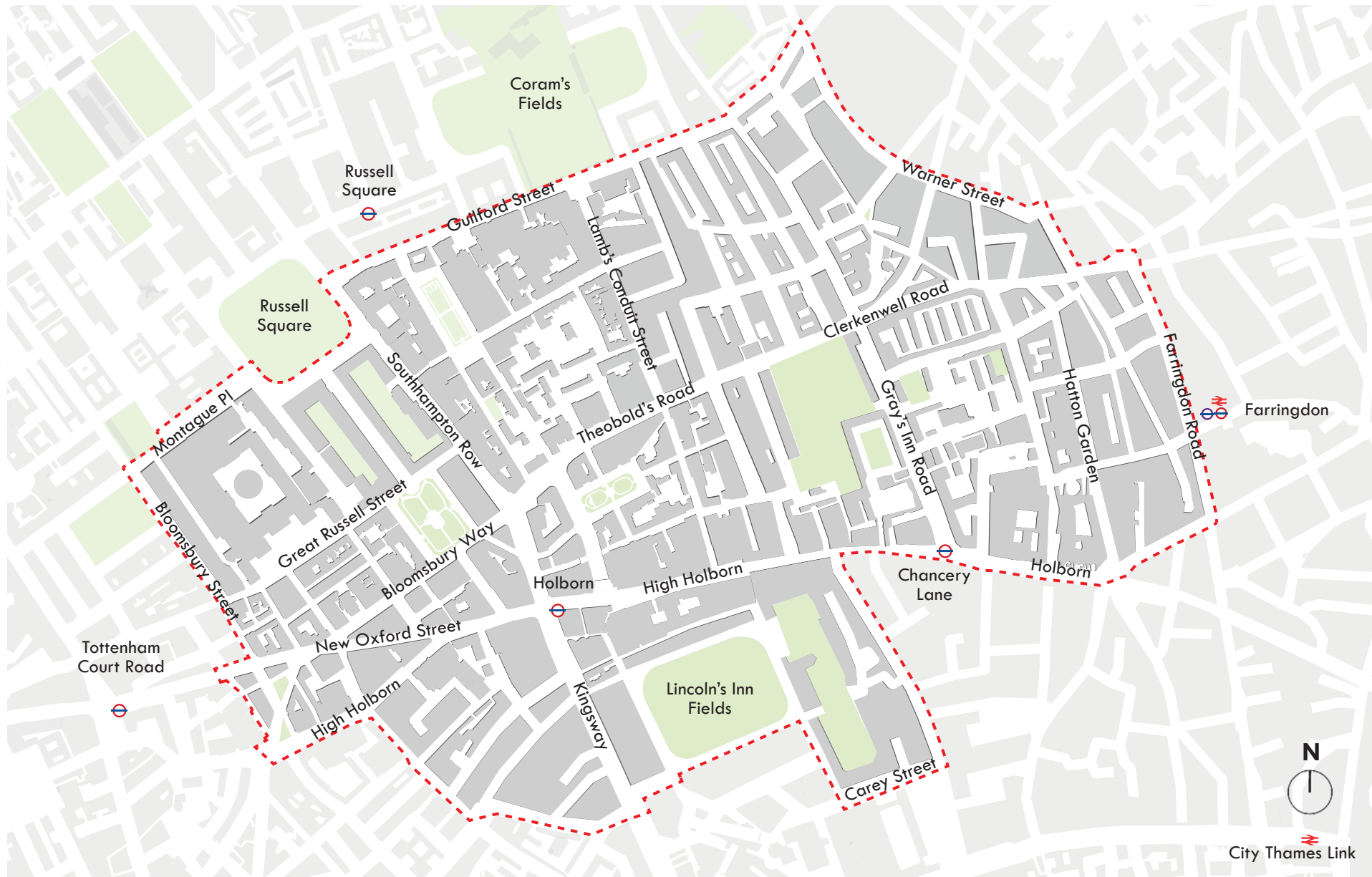
Holborn has been shaped by a rich and varied history. In the west, expressed physically in the shift from the once fetid warren of St Giles to the elegant city grid of Bloomsbury, and amended significantly after the Second World War and through the arrival of major highways. To the east, once an expanse of open fields, springs and wells, shaped by the River Fleet and its banks, transformed by Ely Palace and events in history like the Italian immigration and The Blitz.

Today, Holborn comprises an eclectic mix of uses and a strong architectural heritage. Leading businesses, and nationally significant institutions such as The British Museum, Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Inns of Court, sit cheek by jowl with smaller independent shops, specialist markets, traditional pubs, and housing estates. In contrast, the public realm is often degraded, with major roads causing congestion, severance, and pollution, creating a poor environment for walking and cycling. Important streets are often dominated by parked vehicles and street clutter. There is a severe lack of incidental public spaces, biodiverse planting and trees, sustainable urban drainage, opportunities for play and places to dwell. Limiting the attractiveness of the area as a place in which to live, work and visit.

In recent years, the area has undergone major change. The new Elizabeth Line at Tottenham Court Road and Farringdon typically carries around 600,000 passengers a day, bringing many people into the area. The West End Project has removed the one-way system and general traffic on Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street, introduced segregated cycling, widened pavements, and closed streets to create eight new and refurbished parks and squares.

It continues to be an exciting time for Holborn. The Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme proposes wide-ranging benefits. Encouraging walking and cycling, improving bus infrastructure, transforming the public realm and facilitating new development and regeneration. This accords with The Mayor's Transport Strategy and the Camden Transport Strategy and is key to Camden's work in reducing air pollution, encouraging active travel, and improving health and wellbeing. 'We Make Camden' proposes a refreshed vision for the whole borough, and a positive future, developed following conversations with residents, partners and community leaders.

It is in this context that the Holborn Public Realm Strategy has been developed. It aims to provide a holistic vision and strategy for change, exploring tangible projects and 'the art of the possible'. Creating a public realm that is safe, attractive, and connected. Introducing new models for greener, climate resilient, and more sociable streets and spaces. Ones that are more experiential and celebrate the special qualities of place that make Holborn special. Creating places to bring communities together, fostering vitality, equity and resilience.



Holborn Public Realm Strategy project boundary



## 1.2 Holborn's Public Realm

Historic England defines public realm as all parts of the built environment where the public has free access; it is sometimes referred to as the spaces between buildings. This includes the streets, pedestrian routes, parks and open spaces that shape both our use and perception of the City.

Public realm should accommodate the full range of human activity, providing places for movement, socialising, play, exercise, shopping, eating, entertainment; places to work and places to relax.

Successful public realm typically comprises streets and spaces with clear roles and identity. Places that can be used comfortably and safely, with well-considered arrangements of paving, lighting, signage, street furniture, trees and planting, adding to overall identity.

Streets, parks and open spaces also have a key role to play in mitigating the impacts of climate change. Urban greening, climate-resilient planting, shading and shelter, and sustainable drainage are an integral part of the public realm.

Holborn's public realm has been the focus of the City's commercial and public life for a long time. Crucial to the success of the area is an improvement in the quality of its public spaces and its transformation into a great place to walk and cycle through.

The Holborn Public Realm Strategy comprises a 120 Hectare area, stretching from Bloomsbury Street and Drury Lane in the west to Farringdon Road and Warner Street in the east. To the north lies Montague Place and Great Guildford Street and to the south it follows the line of the borough boundary at Lincolns Inn Fields. It includes Holborn underground station at its heart, and a network of streets, pedestrian routes and public spaces. These include High Holborn, Kingsway, Southampton Row and New Oxford Street, as well as Bloomsbury Square Gardens, Red Lion Square, Great Ormond Street Hospital and Hatton Garden. It includes Theobalds Road and Bloomsbury Way which, it is proposed, along with Clerkenwell Road will become a new strategic cycleway, connecting with Islington to the east.

The site's location, history and architectural capital demand a world-class response with the project providing the opportunity for the most radical and biggest transformation of Holborn for many years.

## 1.3 Project Objectives

### **Camden is a borough where every child has the best start in life**

- \* Provide streets and spaces where children feel safe and have things to see and do,
- \* Incorporate enrichment experiences for children, and
- \* Provide a public realm that encourages physical and outdoor activities for all ages.

### **Camden's local economy should be strong, sustainable, and inclusive – everyone should have a secure livelihood to support them to live a prosperous life**

- \* Support Camden's markets and high streets as vibrant and diverse places, supporting the arts, culture and night-time sectors, and
- \* Provide a flexible and adaptable public realm that encourages and supports community activation.

### **Camden actively tackles injustice and inequality, creating safe, strong and open communities where everyone can contribute**

- \* Provide a public realm that is accessible and inclusive, and caters for everyone (multi-generational, people with disabilities etc),
- \* Ensure everyone feels safe and promote a sense of belonging,
- \* Deliver on Camden's 'Diversity in the Public Realm' objectives, and
- \* Encourage place specific rather than generic streets and spaces – build on the character and communities of the area.

### **Camden communities support good health, wellbeing and connection for everyone so that they can start well, live well, and age well**

- \* Provide a public realm that encourages socialising and improves health and wellbeing,
- \* Create a place where people want to spend time - one that fosters and encourages artistic endeavour, play, exercise and social and cultural exchange, and
- \* Where possible reassign road space for people and nature, including new opportunities for highways greening.

### **Everyone in Camden should have a place they call home**

- \* Provide opportunities to support local communities and encourage interaction, and
- \* Provide streets and spaces that are safe, inclusive and accessible for everyone.

### **Camden should be a green, clean, vibrant, accessible, and sustainable place with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency**

- \* Provide opportunities for nature to help to deliver Camden's Biodiversity Strategy,
- \* Provide a safe and healthy streets that promote walking, cycling and public transport and help to deliver Camden's Transport Strategy,
- \* Improve climate resilience, addressing overheating, water stress, flooding and loss of biodiversity, to help deliver Camden's Climate Action Plan, and
- \* Reduce air pollution to help deliver Camden's Air Quality Action Plan.



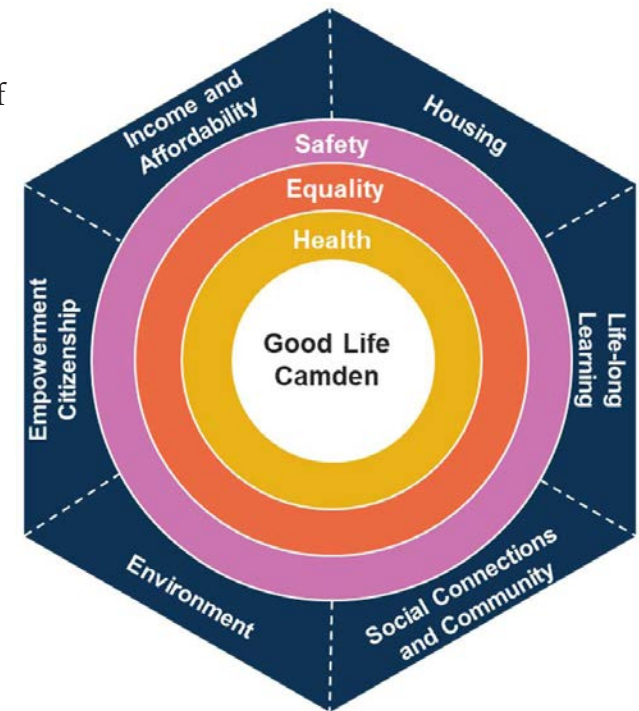
The Holborn Public Realm Strategy objectives support the six ambitions identified in the 'We Make Camden' Vision (March 2022)

## 1.4 Partnership Working

People and communities are at the heart of everything Camden does. Working with landowners, charity and business providers, developers, architects, stakeholders and community members is critical to deliver the objectives for public realm. Ultimately, the success of any change to public realm and place will be judged by the many people who live, study, work and visit Holborn.

It is in this context that Camden has been working closely with residents to develop the 'Good Life Camden Framework'. This offers an alternative to traditional measures such as GDP, which measure 'success' according to how much we produce and trade. Instead, the 'Good Life Camden Framework' puts resident wellbeing at the heart of decision making and will enable the Council to measure wellbeing consistently over time.

The framework will be used as a tool that, alongside other tools, research and participatory methods, will support council, community and partners to make decisions related to the public realm that are better informed by the needs of residents. For instance, in the context of the Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme, The TfL Healthy Streets Toolkit may be used alongside the Good Life Framework tools to align activity and work strategically towards delivering the 'We Make Camden' ambitions.



The 'Good Life Camden' Framework

Residents identified 9 themes that are essential to living a good life. 'Health', 'Equality' and 'Safety' are 'core themes' because they relate to all the others.

## 1.5 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to set out in detail the analysis, vision, public realm framework and potential projects for the Holborn area. It has been developed to help inform and direct future schemes such as the Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood scheme and Holborn Urban Strategy, and guide changes to the public realm as they come forward in a considered and holistic way.

The study builds on previous studies that were undertaken in 2015 by Camden Council, LDA Design, and local stakeholders and community members. At the time of writing, public realm projects by key stakeholders and landowners have been integrated into the strategy, including The Central District Alliance (CDA), and Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH).

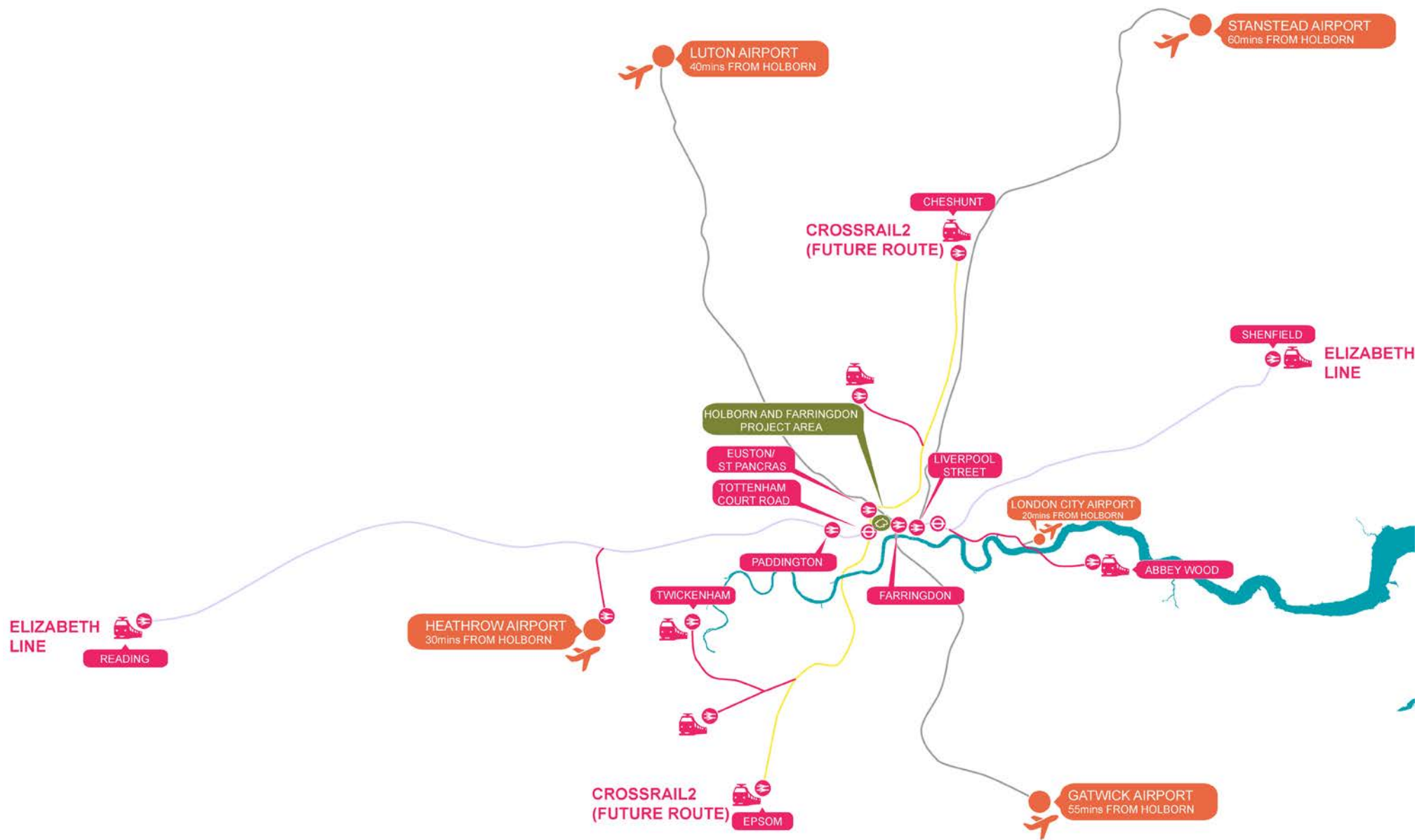
For clarity, The Holborn Urban Strategy sets out guidance to help coordinate development and investment in the area and it is the Council's intention that the final version will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood scheme, is a transport and public realm project that includes traffic modelling to examine options for movement. This is expanded on further in Section 2.1.8.

This public realm strategy is not a statutory document - it is intended to provide supplementary information and should be read in conjunction with the suite of Camden's policy documents.





## 2.0 Analysis





## 2.1 Bigger Picture

Holborn is a complex area and extensive analysis was undertaken to understand the pertinent issues and opportunities that relate to the public realm. These include but are not limited to an assessment of historical influence, all modes of movement, townscape, open space and environment.

In order to set the project and site analysis in context, it is important to understand the strategic picture and triggers for change that directly affect Holborn. These are highlighted on the following pages.

---

**“To attract people suggests more emphasis on quality of place, including the public realm. London’s rivals, especially Paris, have taken significant action in this space already. A centrepiece of (the Central Activity Zone) should be higher quality and diverse public realm, more green and natural spaces, leading to an improved urban experience, higher levels of sustainability, stronger climate change resilience, and a better offer for residents, workers and visitors.”**

---

Economic Future of the CAZ Report, January 2021, GLA

## 2.1.1 A new era for our cities

London and our major towns and cities are entering a new era. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated longstanding inequalities, as well as highlighting new ones. It triggered major changes in patterns of life, leisure, shopping, and work. People developed a much greater appreciation of nature, open space, places to socialise and relax, walking and cycling and clean air.

It is widely acknowledged that this marked the beginning of the great reset for our cities. They are now being reimagined in the context of decarbonisation and adaptation for climate resilience, and biodiversity and ecosystem decline. They are starting to become more socially equitable and are responding to the housing and health and wellbeing crises, and to major technological change. Cities need to become more experiential, creating places that can be adapted and support new types of uses. And taken collectively, it is recognised that major change will improve health and wellbeing, boost inward investment, increase footfall and dwell time, access and inclusion and as a result will lead to wider regeneration benefits.

The Greater London Authority's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy seeks to create a 'truly inclusive London' where 'everyone should be able to share in its prosperity, culture and community life'. This is further supported by Camden's Strategy for Diversity in the Public Realm in Camden. The strategy aims to increase equality, diversity, and inclusion in the public realm, including parks and green spaces, high streets, public art, planning, Community Investment Programmes, and the naming of places.

It is in this context that London is entering a greener, fairer, and more prosperous era, for everyone who lives and works there.

And public realm lies at the heart of this change.

## 2.1.2 A busy transport hub

Holborn is a substantial public transport hub. Holborn is one of the busiest stations on the London Underground network and is often heavily congested. Proposals to upgrade the station's capacity have been planned for many years but are currently on hold due to funding constraints. In addition, a significant number of bus routes pass through the area, resulting in roughly 10 million bus passenger boarders a year.

In the last few years, the Holborn area has undergone significant change because of the arrival of The Elizabeth Line, which officially opened in May 2022. Collectively, Tottenham Court Road and Farringdon Stations provide interchange between Thameslink, and the Underground, whilst also giving direct links to Heathrow and Gatwick Airports. Tottenham Court Road is currently used by more than 200,000 people every day, and now links the West End to Canary Wharf in 12 minutes and Stratford in 13 minutes. City Airport is a 20-minute journey and Heathrow 30 minutes. This has propelled the station into the top five most-used stations in the TfL network, above Waterloo and Liverpool Street stations. As a consequence, the number of people in the area has risen dramatically in the last few years.

### 2.1.3 Healthy streets and active travel

The future of Crossrail 2 remains uncertain, in 2020, as part of the Transport for London Funding Agreement, a decision was made to pause further work on the design and development. It is imagined that this will restart when the political will and substantial funding is in place.

Transport plays a vital role in reducing health inequalities. Along with deteriorating air quality, noise and road casualties, sedentary lifestyles present significant health challenges. To address these issues, by 2041, the Mayor of London wants 80% of journeys to be made on foot, by cycle or using public transport. The Camden Transport Strategy (2019-2041) sets out a bold vision for the delivery of transformational, area-wide transport and public realm improvements that prioritise and enable active travel modes and reduce the dominance of motor vehicles. The strategy seeks to achieve an ‘increase in sustainable transport mode share by Camden residents from 85% (2017) to 93% (2041), including a quadrupling in cycle mode share by Camden residents, from 3.6% (2017) to 15% (2041), and half of all residents’ trips to be made on foot by 2041’. Measures to achieve this ambition and target will improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. They will revitalise high streets, moderate our obesogenic environment and aid nature recovery. Taken together, the measures will make London more socially equitable.

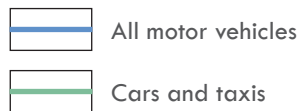
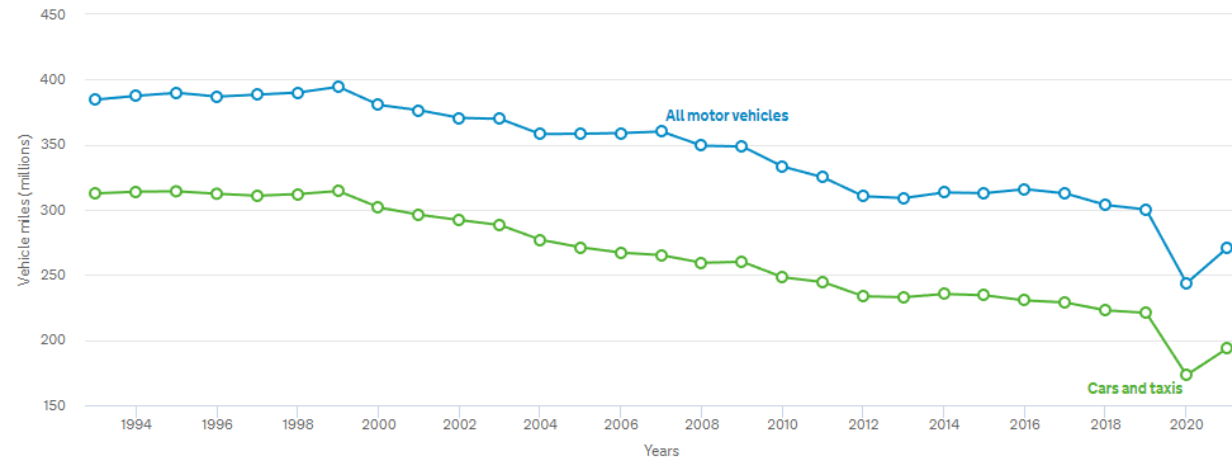
Holborn’s streets have a key role to play in delivering the Healthy Streets outcomes. Streets need to become inclusive environments that not only make walking and cycling possible, but they also need to be welcoming and attractive environments, to actively encourage this modal shift. The Healthy Streets framework will be adopted to assess the quality of the street environment, focusing on public health outcomes and the human experience.



TFL- Healthy Street’s wheel.

## 2.1.4 Traffic trends in LB Camden

The total traffic numbers crossing the London Borough of Camden have been declining year on year since 2006. Despite a short-term rise during the Covid-19 pandemic, general traffic numbers remain at their lowest and continue to fall. The Camden Transport Strategy targets a 'reduction in motor traffic volumes by 20 - 25% by 2041 compared to 2016 data'. The public realm strategy has been developed with an assumption that this will continue, in order to facilitate reassignment of road space for people and nature.



Annual traffic by vehicle type in Camden.

Source: <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/local-authorities/145>

### 2.1.5 Pedestrian and Cyclist Casualties

The Holborn area has an extremely poor safety record with several collisions over many years involving pedestrians, cyclists and powered 2-wheelers, resulting in multiple killed or seriously injured. This has included two cyclist fatalities since 2020, one on High Holborn and one at Theobalds Road/Southampton Row junction. Other incidents range from more serious to slight incidents involving cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles, typically at junctions.

The Mayor’s and Camden’s Transport Strategies adopt a Vision Zero approach to road safety, working towards the elimination of road traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2041, by reducing the dominance of motor vehicles on London’s streets and the risks that this presents.

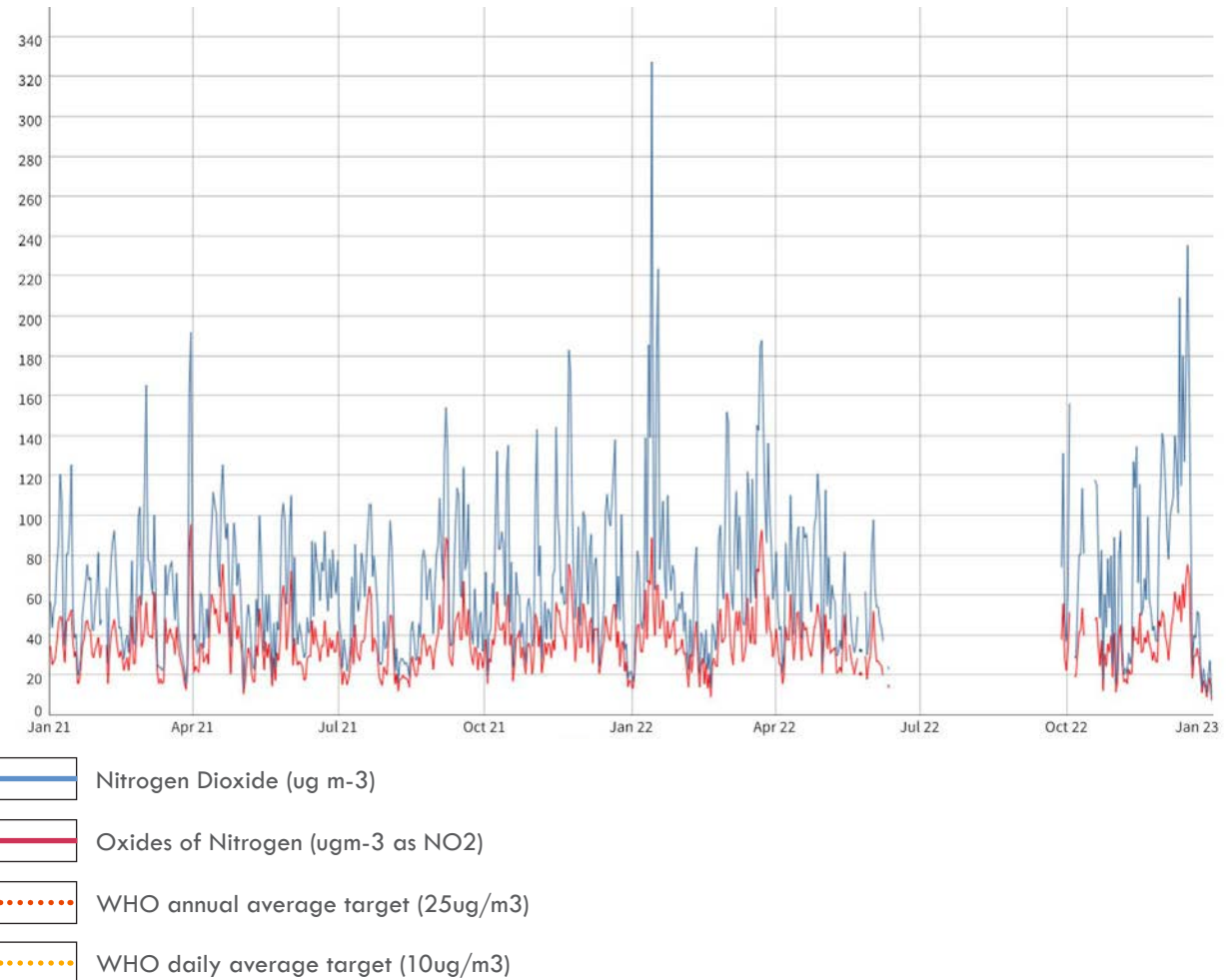


Collision data for Holborn and Farringdon between November 2020 and October 2022.

## 2.1.6 Air Pollution

Holborn's air quality is poor, the area's busiest roads fail the annual mean acceptable levels for both Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and PM<sub>10</sub> particulates. These include High Holborn, Kingsway, Bloomsbury Way, Theobalds Road and Procter Street.

Camden's Transport Strategy aims to achieve reductions in Nitrogen Oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) and Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) from road transport, of 95% and 61% respectively by 2041 (compared to 2013 data), to assist the Borough in meeting World Health Organisation targets for both.



Air pollution graph, location: Holborn Station Entrance, Source: londonair.org.uk

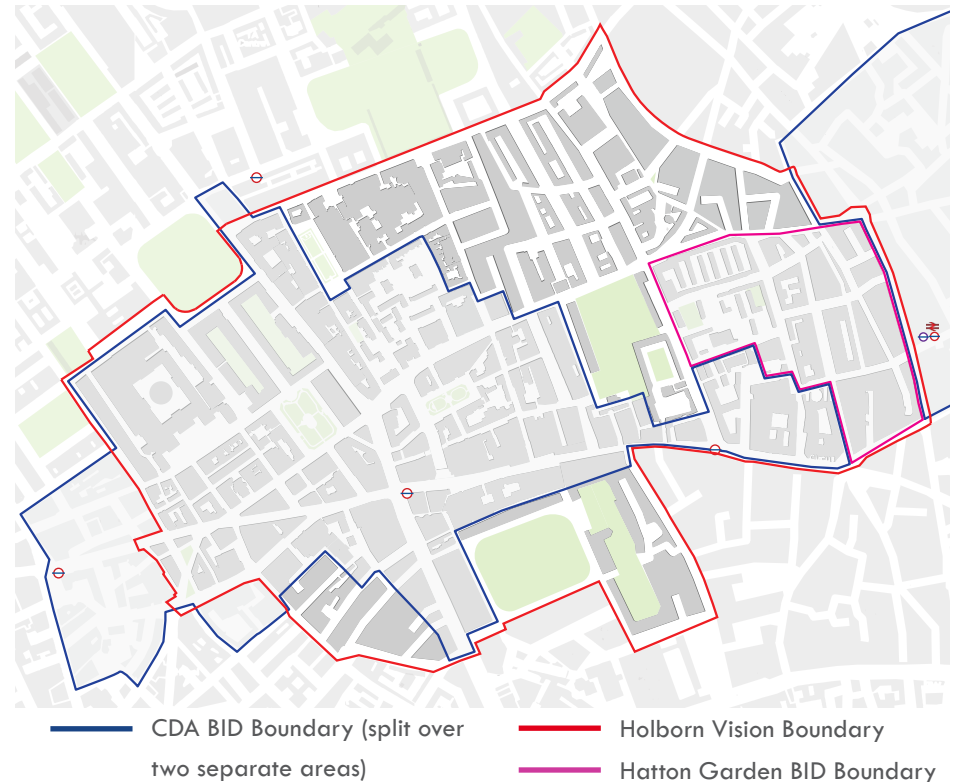
### 2.1.7 The Central District Alliance Business Improvement District

The Central District Alliance (CDA) is the Business Improvement District (BID) for Holborn and Clerkenwell. A BID is a business-led and business funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area. They are created through a robust ballot process and deliver additional services benefiting not just local businesses but the whole community. They directly involve businesses in local activities and act as a conduit for the business community and local authorities to work together to improve the local area. Quite often this involves supporting and often part-funding public realm projects within their area. For instance, in November 2022, working in partnership with Camden, CDA supported public realm works at Red Lion Street, providing new trees, improved cycle lanes and pedestrian links and better wheelchair mobility. In July 2023, Princes Circus - a new and improved public space between New Oxford Street and High Holborn opened, also a jointly funded Camden/ and CDA project.

CDA represents over 400 businesses in the area and is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of representatives from a diverse range of sectors with representatives from

all of the various business sectors including offices, technology, cultural and educational institutions as well as property owners and the BID company Primera. In 2022, the BID developed the Holborn and Clerkenwell Place Plan - a public space design and delivery strategy. It identified six strategic objectives – Neighbourhood Identity, Business Trade and Collaboration, Safe Sustainable Movement, Environment and Sustainability, Safe and Welcoming for all, Delivery, and Maintenance and Management. The Place Plan included the streets within the neighbouring Hatton Garden BID which is also administered by the team at the CDA. It identified priority projects, including Holborn Gateway (resurfacing, decluttering, consolidating and

managing kiosks around Holborn station) Red Lion Street south, Clerkenwell Road and Leather Lane and Museum Street. The Holborn Public Realm Strategy aims to incorporate these priorities and projects to provide a co-ordinated and holistic strategy alongside other key public realm schemes.



## 2.1.8 Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood Scheme

The TfL Liveable Neighbourhood Programme aims to deliver attractive, healthy, accessible and safe neighbourhoods for people. The Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood scheme is one of five Livable Neighbourhood projects identified by TfL. Camden Council has secured funding to take forward the feasibility stage of development work on the scheme. Its delivery would provide wide-ranging benefits to the Holborn area through the prioritisation of sustainable transport modes. This will help to support the growing number of residents, visitors, and businesses, as well as the local economy. The scheme will help to deliver against the Mayor's Transport Strategy, under all three themes: Healthy Streets and Healthy People – by delivering world-class streets for people; Good Public Transport Experience – through the introduction of new bus lanes; and Good Growth - by encouraging new development and regeneration in the area.

The scheme aligns with Camden's Transport Strategy. Examples of key aims include the prioritisation of walking and cycling under the road user hierarchy, the reduction of car use and ownership in the borough and reducing all road casualties with a target of

zero killed and seriously injured casualties. Additionally, removing the Holborn traffic gyratory is a key priority. Following several road traffic accidents in the area, work on the delivery of several safety improvements to key streets in the area is now underway. This is centred around High Holborn, Drake Street, and Proctor Street as well as Southampton Row.

The Liveable Neighbourhood scheme aims to deliver wide-ranging benefits to the Holborn area, including:

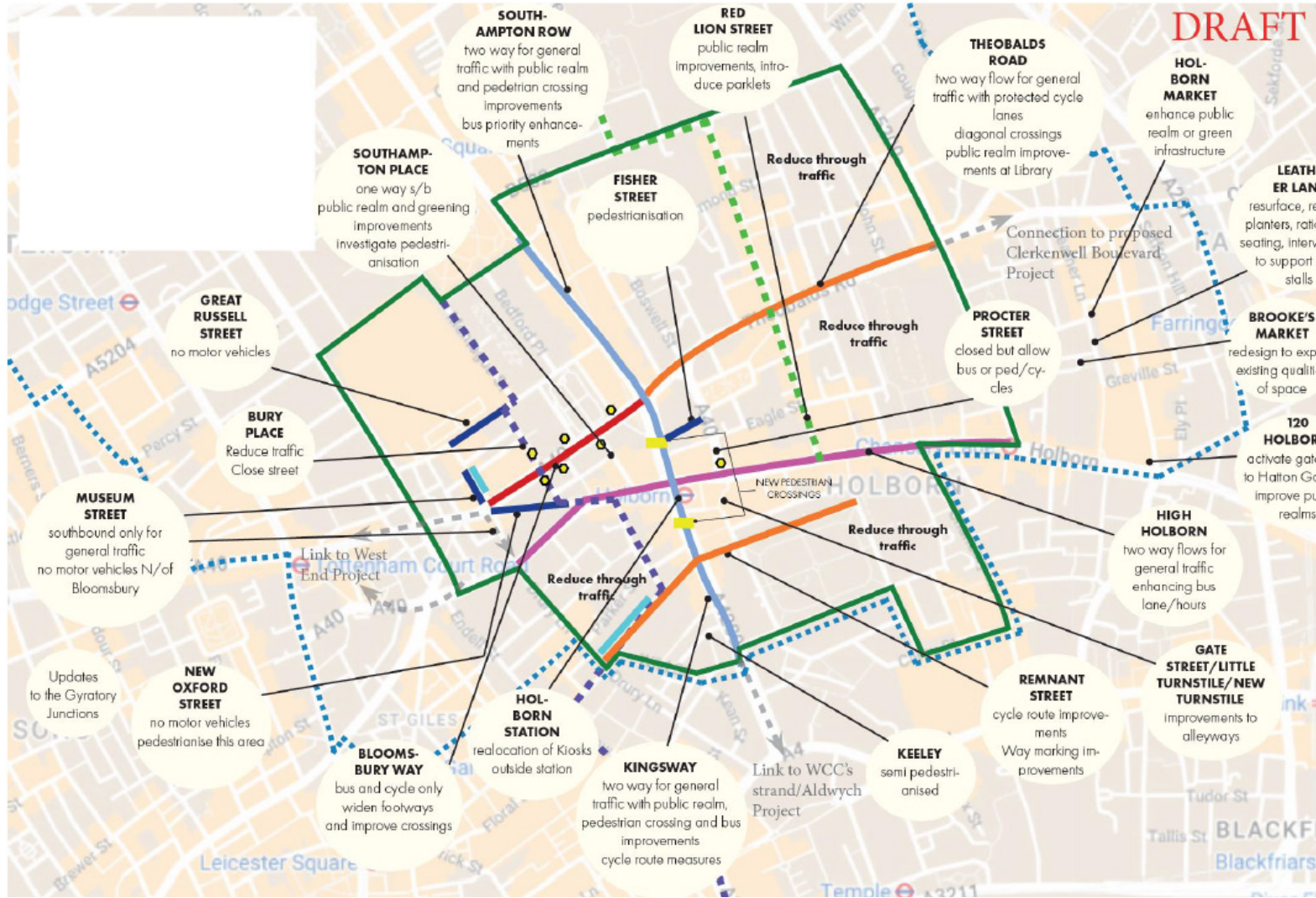
- \* Promote more people in neighbourhoods to walk, cycle and use public transport.
- \* Protect bus journey times.
- \* Increase the number of trips made by walking, cycling and public transport.
- \* Reduce barriers to walking, cycling and accessing public transport.
- \* Create safer neighbourhood environments for people to travel to and from.
- \* Reduce road danger, fear of road danger and the number of killed or seriously injured casualties.
- \* Fewer car journeys which would create opportunities for













neighbourhood improvements.

- \* Reduce motor traffic dominance and increase the active use of streets and public space.
- \* Reduce pollution to create more attractive neighbourhoods for people.
- \* Help tackle the climate emergency by reducing motor traffic and encouraging sustainable transport (walking and cycling)
- \* Improve the quality and resilience of the public realm.
- \* Provide new and improved green/public spaces, as well as increase biodiversity.
- \* Boost the local economy.

At this stage, options for change, are currently being tested and will be subject to further consultation. The plan opposite shows one potential scenario; however this is not fixed.



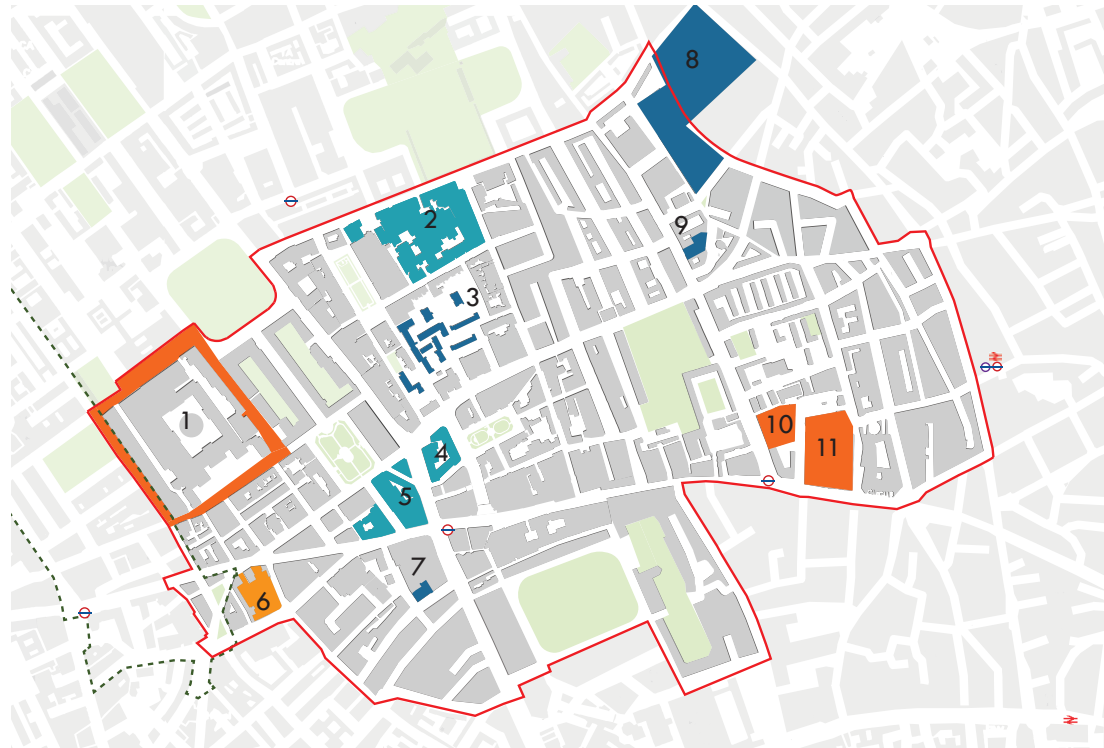


- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  Camden Borough Boundary                    |  Two-way flow for general traffic with protected cycle lanes |  Bus and cycle only |  Modal Filters |
|  Livable Neighbourhood Application Boundary |  Two-way flow for general traffic                            |  No motor vehicles  |  Cycleway Link |
|  2 Ways for General Traffic                 |  Bus and cycle only  |  Streeteries        |  Quietway 1    |

## 2.1.9 Regeneration in and around Holborn

The London Plan 2021 identifies Holborn as a strategic area for regeneration. Classified as a retail cluster in London's Central Activities Zone (CAZ), with 'high' commercial and 'incremental' residential growth potential. By 2031 the area is predicted to have at least 200 new homes and 2,000 new jobs<sup>1</sup>. The Holborn and Covent Garden area covers the ward of the same name and is the most southerly ward in the Borough of Camden. It is a key destination that links the West End to the City of London. The redevelopment of The Post Building and Commonwealth House at New Oxford Street and 6 acres at the old sorting office at Mount Pleasant (Postmark) continue to bring major new commercial, residential, and retail uses to the area. Other projects at One Museum Street, The British Museum, The Old Central St Martin's College site and Great Ormond Street are set to continue this positive transformation. These have the potential to improve pedestrian connections, provide new active frontages and a diverse mix of uses, raising the quality of the townscape.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/implementing-london-plan/opportunity-areas/oa-monitoring/holborn-ment>



### Project List (accurate at October 2023)

1. The British Museum Public Realm Masterplan (comprising pedestrianisation/public realm improvements)
2. Great Ormond Street Masterplan (including the new Children's Cancer Centre)
3. Tybald's Estate
4. Former Central St. Martin's College Site (planning permission granted, 2020/2470/P Full redevelopment of the site)
5. Holborn Links Estate

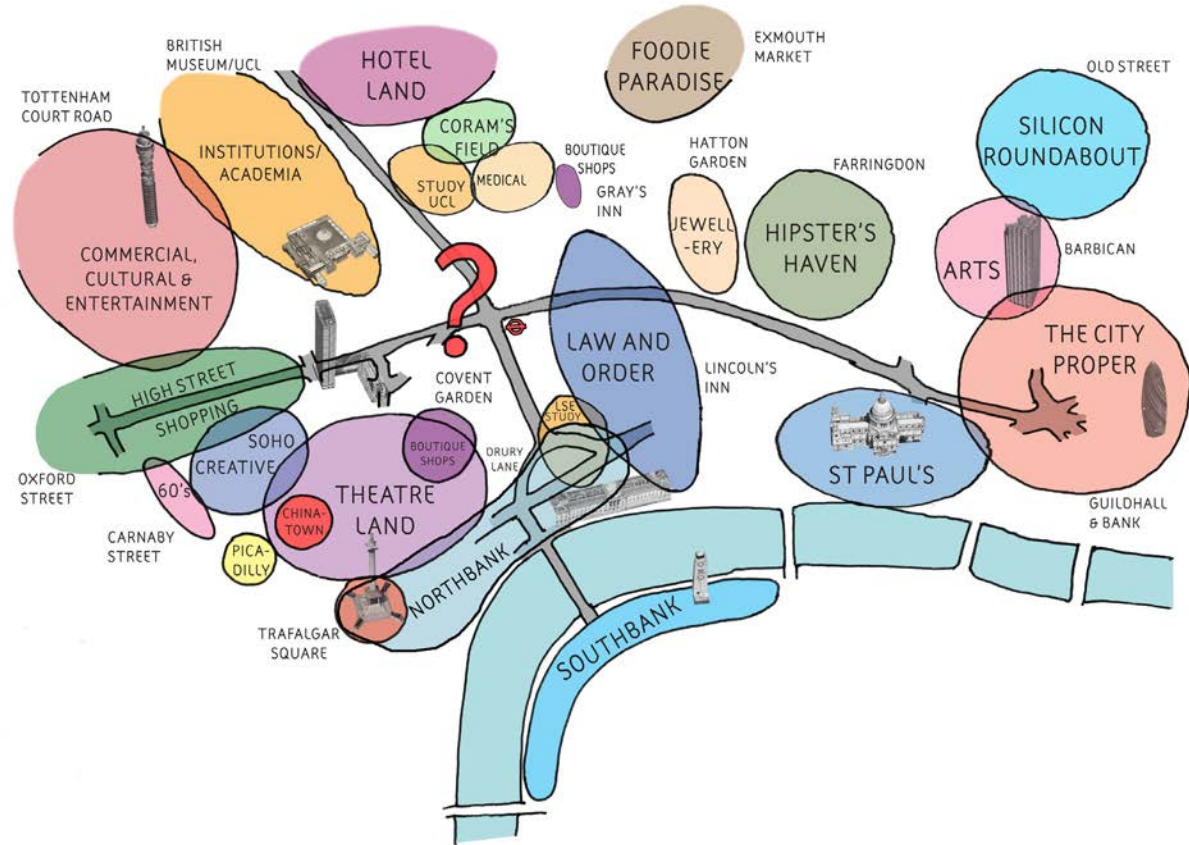
(ambition to redevelop site for mixed-uses)

6. Selkirk House re-development (One Museum Street)
7. Parker Street
8. Postmark (Mount Pleasant mixed use re-development)
9. 156-164 Gray's Inn Road Panther House re-development
10. Fox Court (potential refurbishment/re-development)
11. Waterhouse Square (potential refurbishment/re-development)



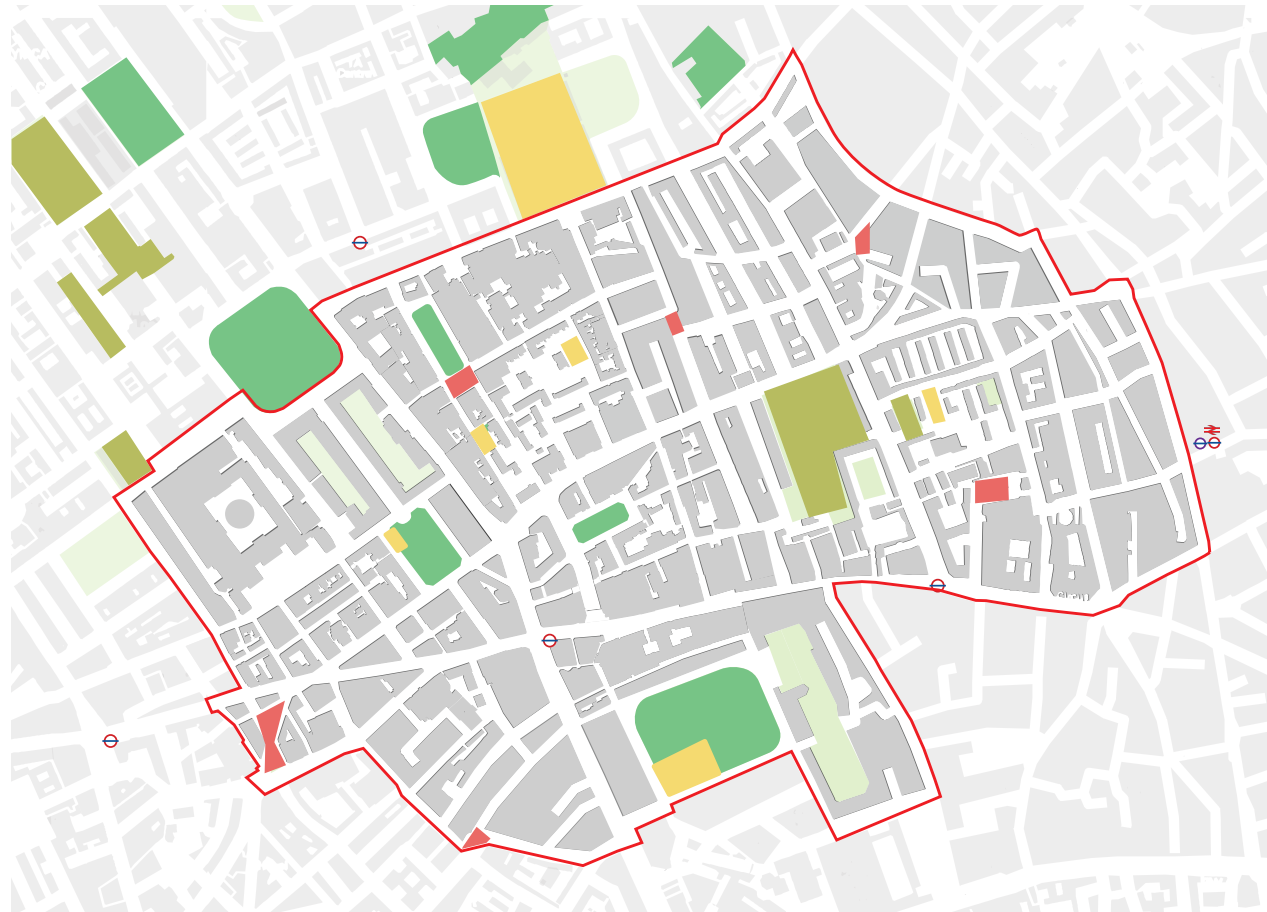
## 2.1.10 City Identity

London has a distinct series of city neighbourhoods that provide an enduring mental map of the Capital. This identity is derived from unique associations of land-use, urban morphology, landmark buildings and structures, and anchor destinations. The rich history of Holborn has resulted in a number of distinct character areas with their own unique identities and functions. However, there are also parts of the area where major highways and congestion undermine an areas character, inhibiting an appreciation of the architecture and important vistas. Alongside new build development and traffic improvements, the Holborn Public Realm Strategy provides a crucial opportunity to identify character areas and help strengthen and shape identity.

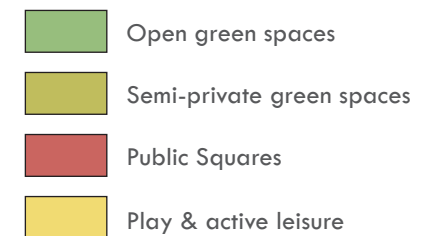


## 2.1.11 Lack of Incidental Public Green Spaces and Contact with nature

The area comprises a significant residential, visitor and working population; however, the provision of publicly accessible open space and opportunity for contact with nature is woefully inadequate. Several of the spaces that do exist are poor quality and lack a clear role and identity.



Public and semi-private open space.





Welcome to



# Queen Square Gardens

London Borough of Camden, Leisure & Community Services Department  
Parks & Open Spaces Service, manage this garden on behalf of the  
Trustees of Queen Square Gardens.

**BEEs at the park**

**Please do not feed the birds**

**PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE BIRDS**

Closes at



The park will be opened for 7  
be closed from the time shown

**IT IS PROHIBITED UNDER THE**

- Ride bicycles, use roller skates or skateboards over 14 years of age
- Play ball games except in designated areas
- Sell or exhibit any written material
- Disturb or annoy anyone using the park or obstruct any pathway

Please place all litter in the bins

**THE DOGS (FOULING OF LAND)**

Dog owners can be prosecuted if they do not clear up after their dog has fouled the park

Please keep dogs under control and on a leash.

Should you wish to contact us please contact the Parks and Open Spaces Service

this facility

Tel: 020 7695 3333





## 2.2 Historical Context

### 2.2.1 Introduction

The aim of the historical analysis is to explore the past in order to elucidate the present condition and inform richer layered responses to contemporary urban design problems and the public realm. For instance, the analysis helps us understand why some parts of the modern Holborn environment and its character areas are not working and establish priorities for improvement. Some of the key areas are not necessarily of the highest heritage significance but instead offer the opportunity for the highest impact in terms of improving the setting of nearby heritage assets and supporting movement strategies.

For the avoidance of doubt, Holborn in this historical analysis deals largely with High Holborn (centred on Holborn underground station) and its 17th and 18th century periphery rather than the late Georgian swath of Bloomsbury to the north.

### 2.2.2 How a two millennia long history informs Holborn today

As previously mentioned, Holborn's origins can be charted back to when the Roman Road led westward from 'Londinium' crossing the valley of the River Fleet at today's Holborn viaduct, along what is now High Holborn. Aldwych Cross most likely once stood at the junction of High Holborn and Drury Lane (a Saxon road leading down to the Thames). At this time St-Giles-in-the-Fields at the western edge was still a village surrounded by vineyards, marshes, ponds and fields, an image difficult to imagine today.

### 2.2.3 The Roman Road: High Holborn meets Drury Lane.

This charts the route of the original Roman Road where High Holborn meets Drury Lane. Until the time of the civil war, the High Holborn area marked the northern edge of London with fields and views of Hampstead available until Bloomsbury was developed.

### 1570

In Elizabethan times, the northern edge of London corresponded roughly with High Holborn, north of which were fields. Ely Palace, west of the River Fleet near the Holborn Bridge was the London residence of the Bishops Ely from 1292 to the late 18th century but the estate around the house was granted to Sir Christopher Hatton in 1570. Hatton's family later developed the palace garden (hence Hatton Garden) and the area to the west and north of the palace became a residential extension of London from 1659 when a grid of streets began to be laid out across the estate.

### 1746

Holborn embodies London's morphological shift from the organically medieval street pattern to that of the formal square and terrace and the grid. This corresponds with the change from a world of superstition and chaos to order, science and secularism. Lincoln's Inn Fields, Red Lion Square, Queen Square and associated streets such as Southampton Place and Great Ormond Street became a model for first Bloomsbury then London and the nation as a whole. Some of these streets remain intact today (such as Southampton Place) while others have

change markedly such as Red Lion Square with its unusual diagonal approach streets and Bloomsbury Square that was originally the forecourt to Southampton House.

### **1851**

Two waves of Italian immigration in the 19th century changed the Clerkenwell Road area dramatically and led to the area being called Little Italy – a remnant of which remains in the form of St Peter's on Clerkenwell Road which was the largest Catholic Church in England until the building of Westminster Cathedral. The first wave of Italians were skilled makers of mirrors, picture frames, barometers and thermometers but the second wave were poor, surviving on street trading. In 1851 a third of the population were street musicians while by 1900 there were some 900 ice cream makers and vendors based in the area, fanning out each day across London.

### **1870**

In the preceding years Great Ormond Street Hospital and the British Museum have been built. These illustrate the origins of the area as a hub for London's deep thinkers, writers and anti-establishment activists. Massive non-conformist chapels were built, scientific experiments carried out, secularism and humanism promoted. The arrival of New Oxford Street continues the attempt to

impose order on the chaos and mass social cleansing, with the slum clearance of the notoriously squalid St Giles Rookery. To the east, a second wave of Italian immigrants arrived, they were desperately poor and Inspectors from The Lancet c.1879 found some of the worst slum conditions in Europe. The steep streets such as Eyre Street Hill and Back Hill that fall towards Ray Street and the Fleet (still running in a line along Warner Street) led to a neighbourhood called Hockley-in-the-Hole, once known for its dog fights, bear baiting and similarly boisterous pursuits. Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist located Fagin's den of thieves in the vicinity of Saffron Hill.

In contrast, to the east, during the late 19th century Hatton Garden became reputed for its jewellery.

### **1914**

The driving through and widening of new roads in late Victorian London, including Theobalds Road, Southampton Row and Kingsway starts to sever the area into enclaves. The opening of Kingsway, London's only grand north-south avenue after Regent Street, served not to reunite Holborn's various districts but to help divide the area into quadrants. The failings that remain evident today along some of these streets

(e.g. where they are over scaled and inhibit pedestrian movement) obliterated pedestrian desire lines 1500 years old.

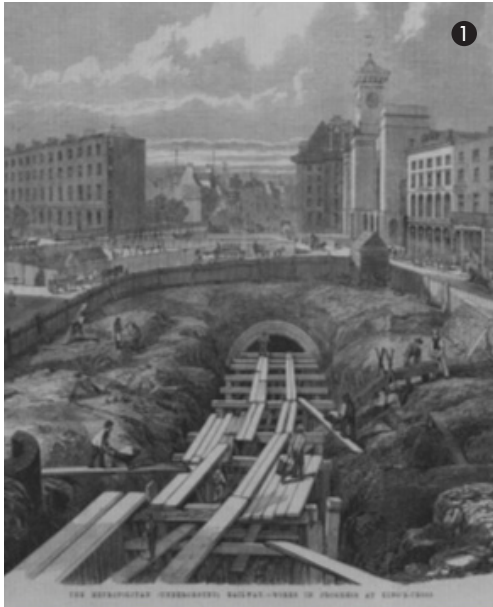
### **1951**

Areas of Holborn were extensively damaged in the Second World War and extensive re-development continued to break up pedestrian connections and reduce permeability. Red Lion Square suffers significant damage with the removal of the distinctive diagonal connecting streets and the impressive church of St John the Evangelist to the west of the square. Parts of Kingsway, Southampton Row, High Holborn, Bloomsbury Way and Theobalds Road have all become subsumed into a giant traffic junction. The second area exhibiting extensive post-war disruption is around the southern end of Museum Street/northern end of Drury Lane. The two Travel Lodge buildings, multi-storey car park and the sorting office have been brutal in their effect on morphology and create un-attractive and in-active connections.

### **1968**

Procter Street gyratory is created on the bomb-devastated ruins of Red Lion Square and Parton Street and Drake Street are eradicated.





- 1 Metropolitan Railway being built
- 2 Bloomsbury Square (1800)
- 3 High Holborn (1830)
- 4 Kingsway tunnel (1905 before Sicilian Avenue)
- 5 Saffron Hill slums (1870)
- 6 St John the Evangelist church (1870) - To the west of red lion square (pre-war)
- 7 Vernon Place looking east



<sup>1</sup> Reverse Figure Grounds - Historic 1914



<sup>1</sup> Reverse Figure Grounds - Present Day

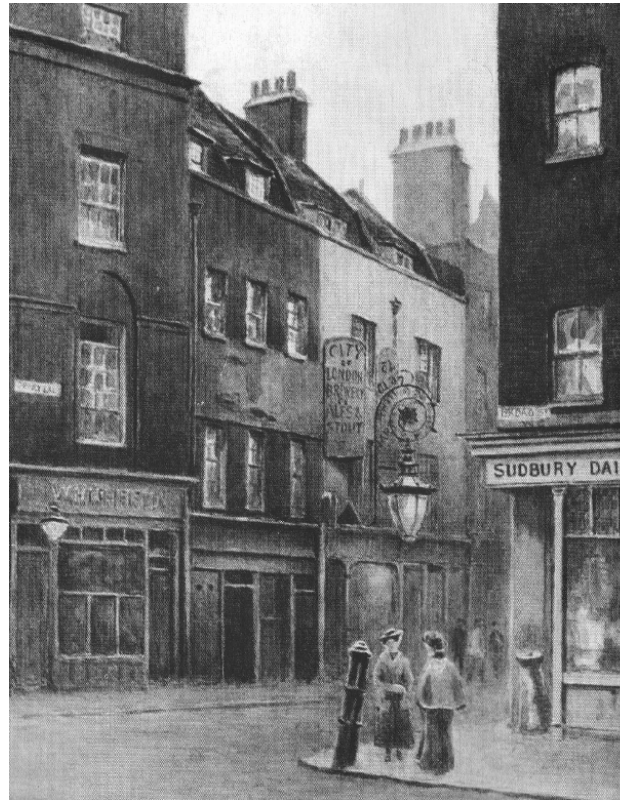
## 2.2.4 Holborn, past, present and future

### Drury Lane Past (1906)

The area between Great Queen Street and High Holborn/New Oxford Street would have been characterised by a bustle of theatre scenery painters, street walkers, breweries, merchants and preachers.

### Present (2023)

The modern day image typifies the brutal effect of insensitive post war re-development around Drury Lane, Museum Street and New Oxford Street. An area that provides a crucial linkage with Covent Garden, yet now provides poor permeability, large inactive façades and a bland 'no-man's land' to pass through in order to reach more favoured areas.



past (1906)



present (2023)

## **Eyre Street Hill Past (1800's)**

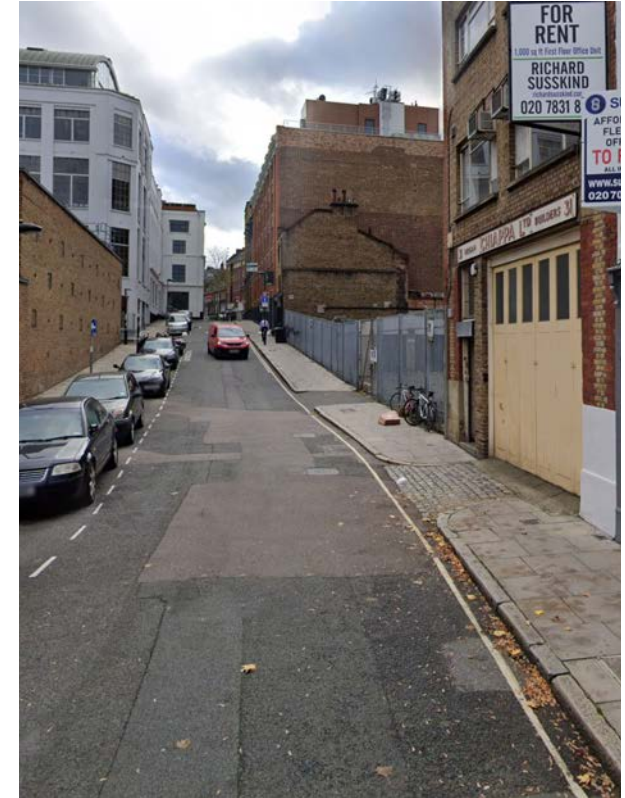
Little Italy looking up Eyre Street Hill from Warner Street. This street was once well known as the area where Italian street organ builders were located. Also in this area was based an Italian ice cream factory where vendors would come to obtain ice cream to sell from their carts on the streets of London.

## **Present (2023)**

Today the street resembles little of the life and bustle of what it once was. Consisting of blank frontages, a building plot and further along larger office blocks as it nears Clerkenwell Road. Chiappa Ltd are the last remaining organ builder on the street.



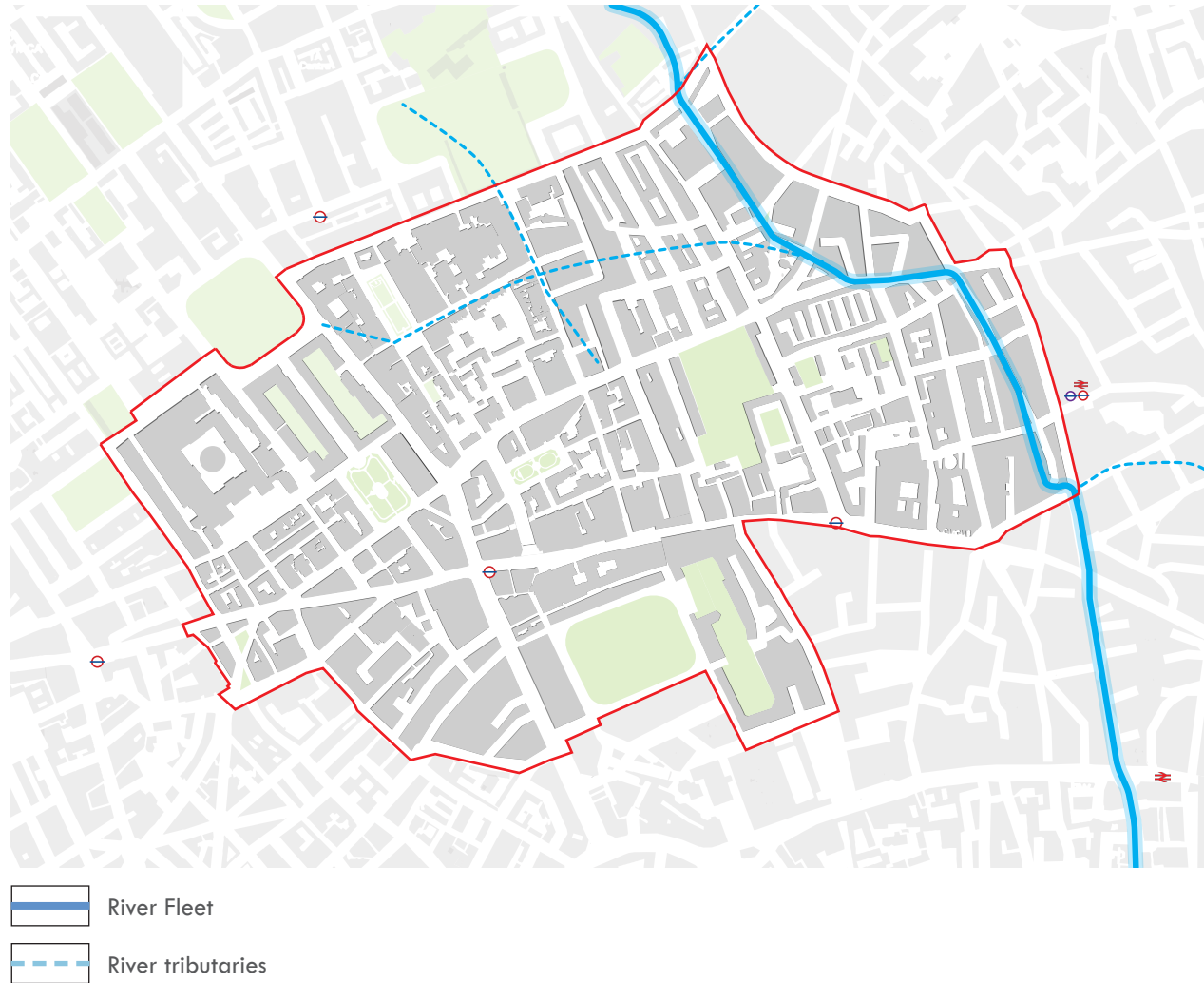
past (1800's)



present (2023)

## 2.2.5 The 'Lost' River Fleet

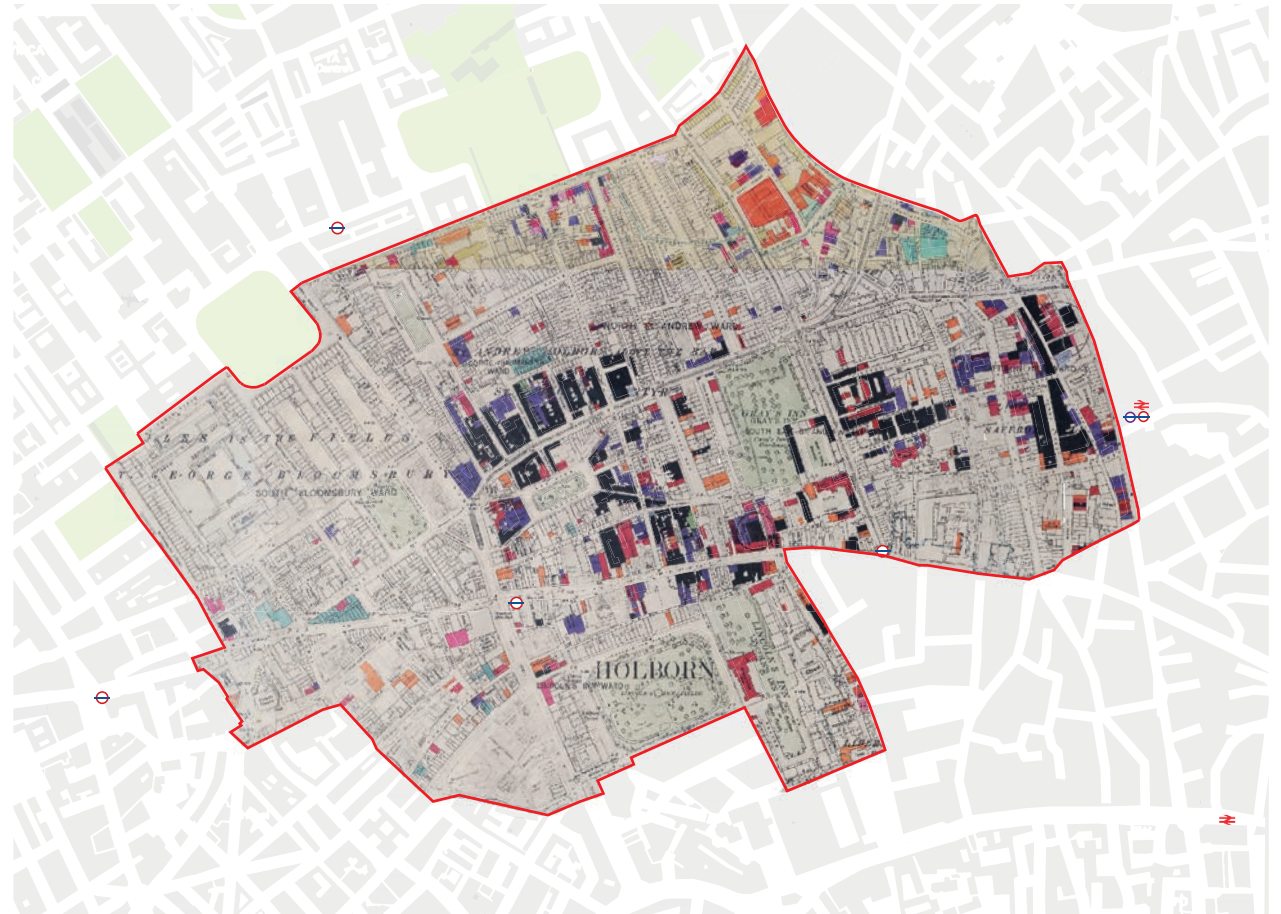
The River Fleet is London's largest and best-known lost river. It rises on Hampstead Heath and flows via Kentish Town, King's Cross, Clerkenwell and Farringdon down to the Thames. The course of the river and its banks has had an impact on the development of the area since at least the Roman period. The Fleet is counted amongst London's 'lost rivers', however it still exists as a storm drain along much of its original north to south course. The lower section of the Fleet valley falls largely within the boundaries of the study area – Gray's Inn Road and Farringdon Road – and it is this topography and the growth in human settlement along the river that still, to some degree, informs the morphology and built character of the area today. There is a lack of clear narrative that unites this part of London at present, however Fleet Valley and the lost river provide enormous opportunity to bring the past to life through the built environment and public realm to the east. In recognition of this opportunity the Fleet Valley pocket park was recently opened adjacent to the Mount Pleasant development, providing a vital SuDS function in the area and raising awareness of the Fleet River below.



Source: <https://www.hiddenhydrology.org/london-barton-the-lost-rivers-of-london/>

## 2.2.6 The Blitz

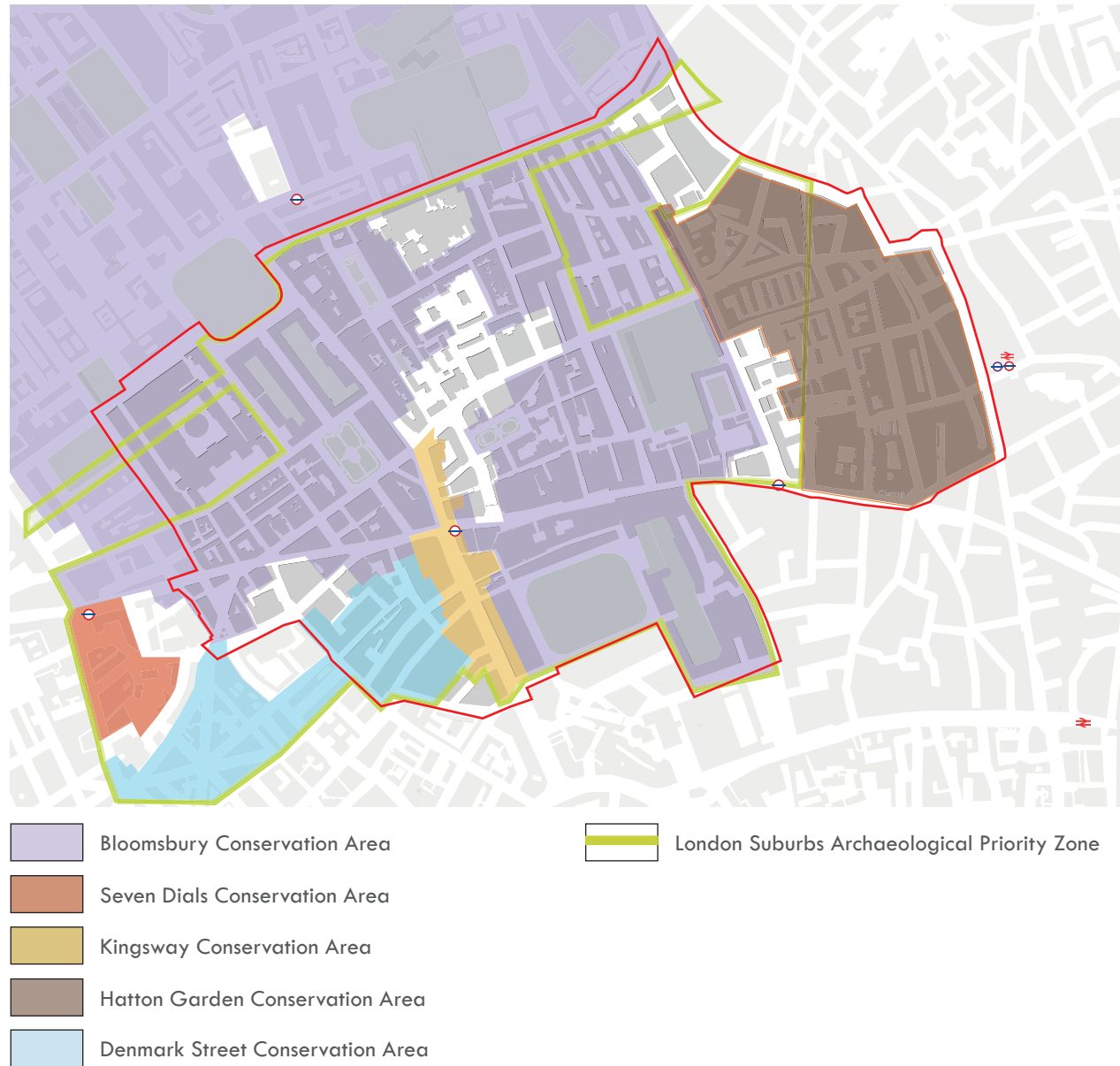
From the very first air raid which occurred in the early hours between the 24 and 25 of August 1940, to the first 'doodlebug' that hit on 13 June, 1944, the central and eastern areas of Holborn were severely affected by German aerial bombardment. In particular, areas to the south of Great Ormond Street, across much of the area between Hatton Garden and Farringdon Road, and large swathes of the neighbourhood between Hatton Garden and Gray's Inn Road. Post-war redevelopment saw more changes with public housing inserted into sites across the study area including towers overlooking Mount Pleasant and Leather Lane. Areas that suffer from a degraded built environment and legibility present day can often be charted back to this bombing and redevelopment, such as The Church of St Alban the Martyr adjacent to Brooke's Market, blitzed and rebuilt but given a remarkably poor quality and under-scaled setting.



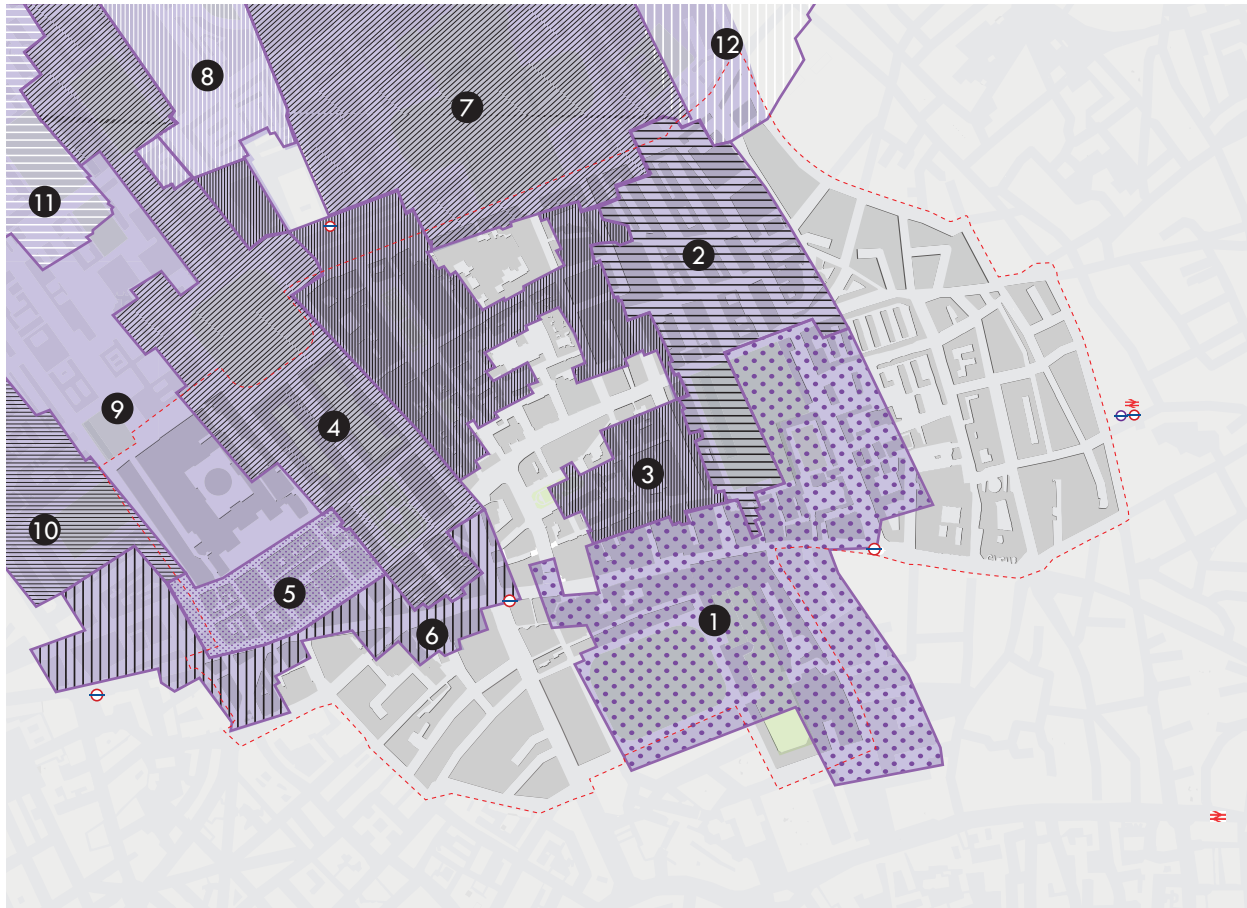
London Bomb Damage Map (1945)

## 2.2.7 Conservation Areas

The historic importance of Holborn is recognised through its conservation area designations. The area is protected in the main by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area, (which includes six sub-areas in the project boundary), as well as The Kingsway, Seven Dials, Hatton Garden and Denmark Street Conservation Areas.







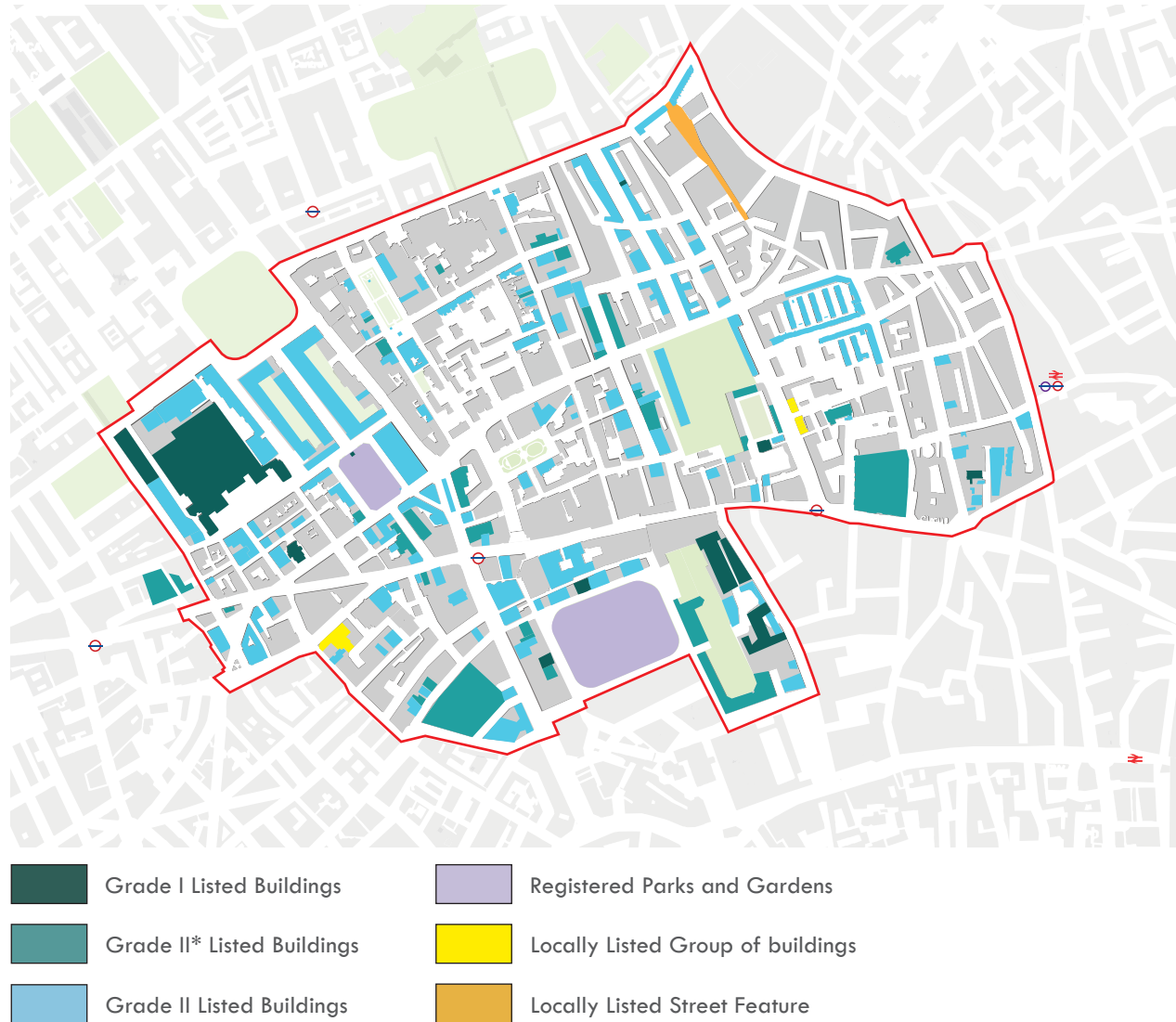
## 2.2.8 Bloomsbury Conservation Sub-Areas

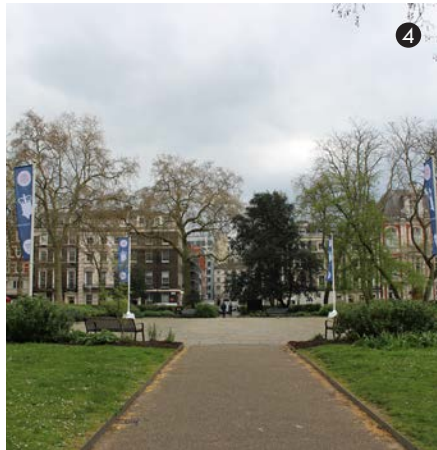
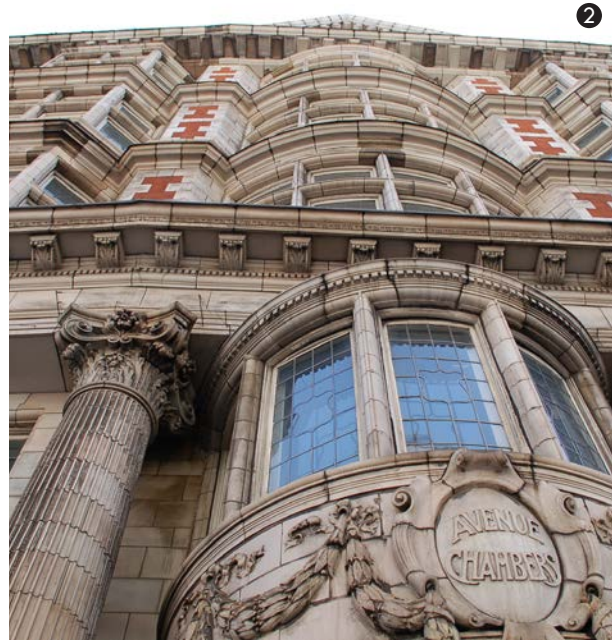
Bloomsbury Sub Areas:

1. Lincoln's Inn Fields/ Inns of Court
2. Great James Street/ Bedford Row
3. Queens Square/ Red Lion Square
4. Bloomsbury Square/ Russell Square/ Tavistock Square
5. The Museum Street/ Great Russell Street
6. New Oxford Street/ High Holborn/ Southampton Row
7. Coram's Fields/ Brunswick Centre
8. Cartwright Gardens/ Argyle Square
9. London University/ British Museum
10. Bedford Square/ Gower Street
11. Gordon Square/ Woburn Square/ Byng Place
12. Calthorpe Street/ Frederick Street

## 2.2.9 Heritage Assets

Throughout the area are numerous listed buildings. Grade One Listed buildings include The British Museum, Sir John Soane Museum, Hawksmoor's St George's Church and St Etheldreda's Church. The latter is the former private chapel of the Bishops of Ely, on Ely Place and is the only surviving building in London from the reign of Edward I (1239–1307). In the study area there are two registered parks and gardens, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Bloomsbury Square Garden.





<sup>1</sup> Blue plaques

<sup>2</sup> Avenue Chambers

<sup>3</sup> Lincoln's Inn

<sup>4</sup> Bloomsbury Square Gardens

<sup>5</sup> 47 Great Ormond Street

## 2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses



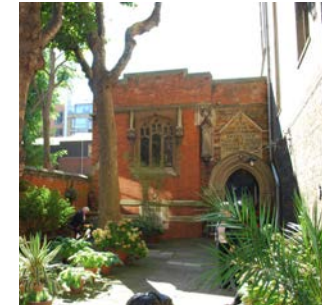
Vast quantities of people



Hidden passages



Tired open spaces



Hidden gems



Dominated by parking



Poor arrival experience



Barriers to movement



Congested streets



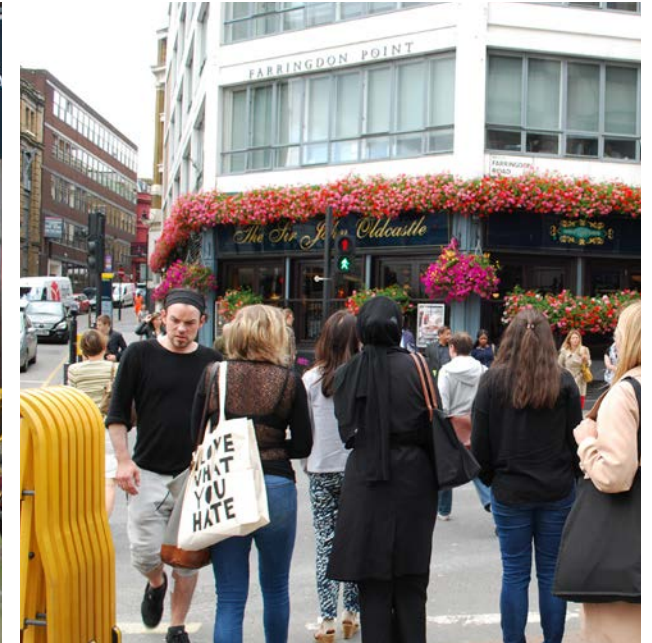
Garden Squares



Beautiful communal gardens



Intimate streets



Difficult crossings



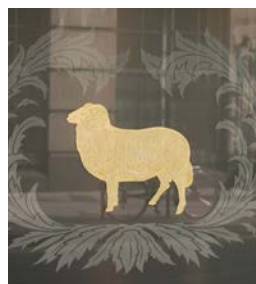
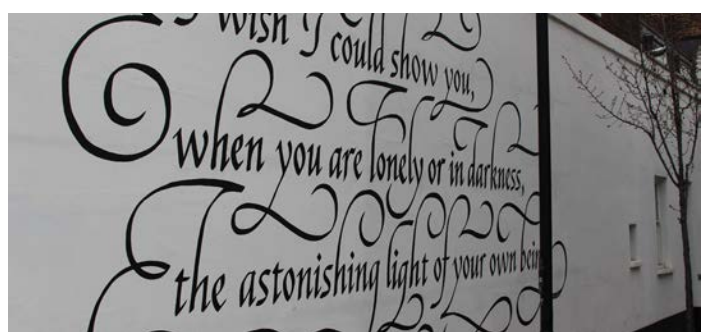
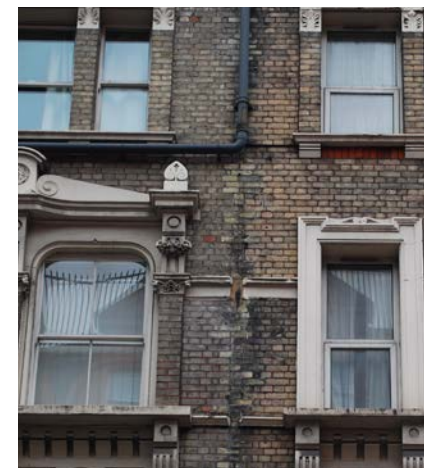
Much loved markets



Street clutter



Guerilla gardening



## 2.4 The Built Environment

Holborn's townscape has been assessed, including how identity, landmark buildings, land-use and short and long range views contribute to this.

### 2.4.1 Identity

A place's identity concerns its meaning and significance based on several different environmental factors such as use, character, architecture and public realm. The methodology used for understanding identity in Holborn involves qualitative techniques, such as observation and mapping a range of physical elements. This also draws on some early work as part of the previous Strategy that asked the local community to communicate their mental map of the area and their overall impressions.

Holborn's identity is rich and varied. In some places the character is discordant or weak, whereas in other areas it is intact and coherent. For instance, the impression of Holborn at the exit from the tube comprises a clash of kiosks, signage and rubbish, traffic congestion and vast quantities of people. There are, however, glimpses of historic

buildings and the mature trees on Kingsway and Southampton Row are elegant and grand. Only a short walk away, Lincoln's Inn Fields offers a tranquil, green oasis.

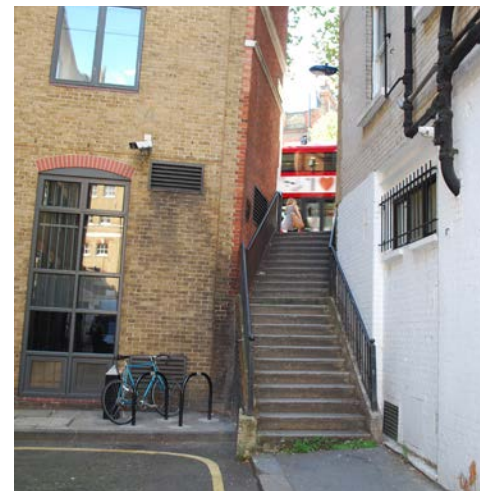
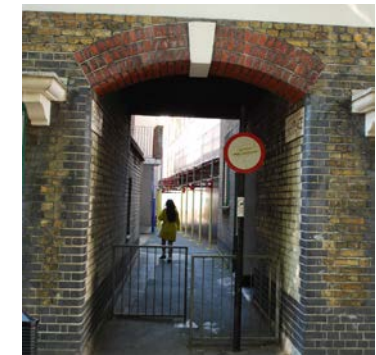
Typically people feel that the area can be so busy and chaotic it is difficult to step back from the crowds and traffic and appreciate the architecture and the more endearing character of the area. Some of its charms are hidden down back streets and unseen by visitors. In his novel *Heart and Science* (1883) Wilkie Collins described the surrounding areas as an oasis of peace in the midst of a toiling city, an area of culture strategically situated between the fashionable West End and the City of London. This contrast between busy Holborn – the toiling city and the small pockets of calm, as experienced in the garden squares and internal courtyards is profoundly evident today.

The varied personality of the area is also evident when comparing Holborn's visitor attractions: Within a short walk there is The British Museum housing a vast collection of art and artefacts, Sir John Soane's Museum - the beautiful, bewitching home of one of Britain's greatest architects, the Hunterian Museum housing a collection of human and animal anatomical specimens and the Museum of Comedy, which includes curiosities such as Charlie Chaplin's cane and the Two Ronnies' glasses. These cultural institutions add to the eclectic mix and special character of the area. The Conway Hall continues the area's radical traditions and the universities and hospitals its scientific heritage.

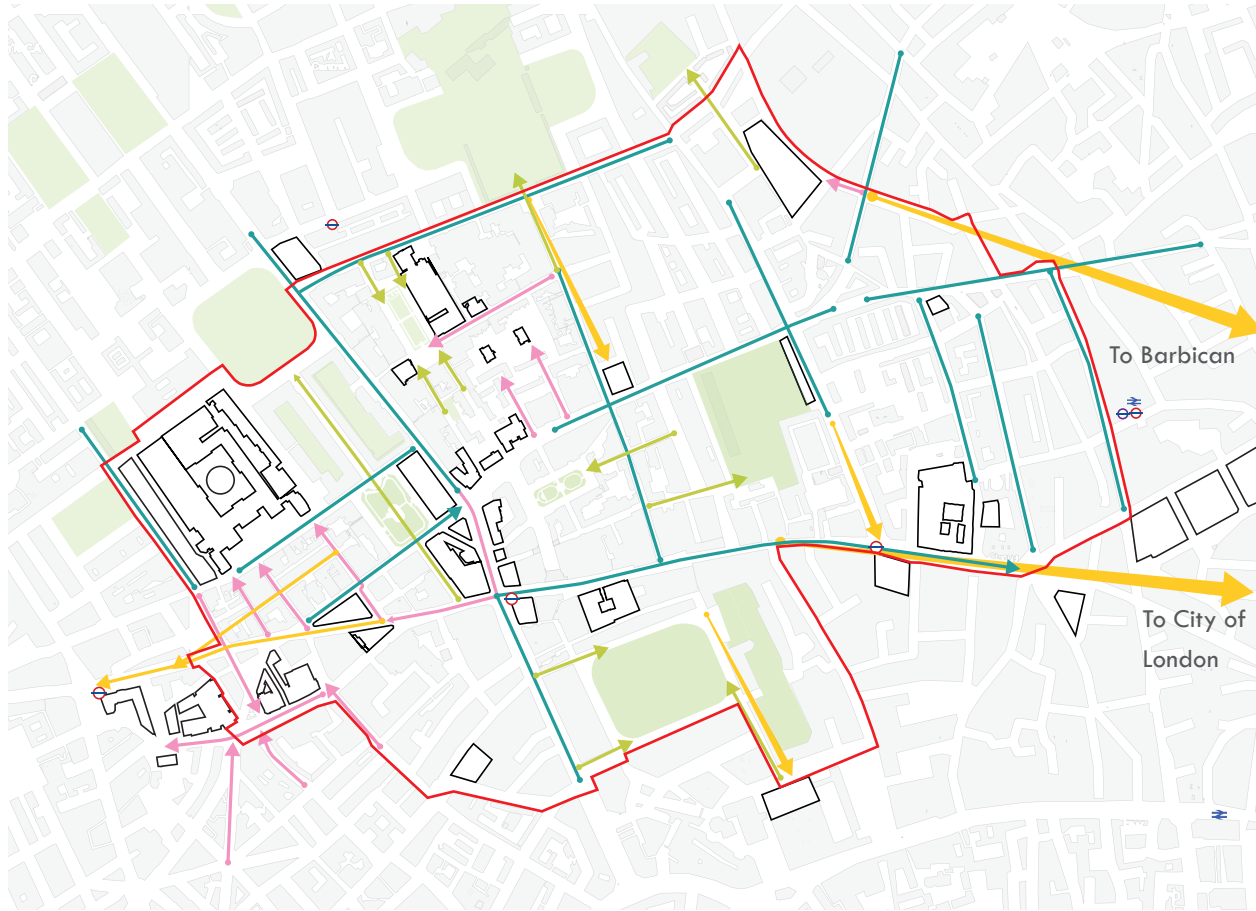
Holborn's built environment presents a variety in architectural styles and detailing. Signage, artwork and historic details in the paving also contribute to the richness and personality. This is explored further on the following pages.

## 2.4.2 Street impressions

Holborn has a wide variety of streets, passageways and linking spaces. The hierarchy, role and character of these has been analysed and expressed using a key word association map. This is derived from first impressions and urban analysis. This analysis concludes that whilst there is a clear hierarchy to the different routes, with a significant range both in street widths, built form and predominant uses, the implication of vehicular traffic has a significant bearing on people's experience and the identity of the streets. It is noted that as a consequence of the one-way system, several parallel streets (such as Procter/Drake Street and Southampton Row, as well as High Holborn and Bloomsbury Way) differ in character but duplicate the function of moving large volumes of traffic in the same direction. This would seem un-necessary.







### 2.4.3 Townscape

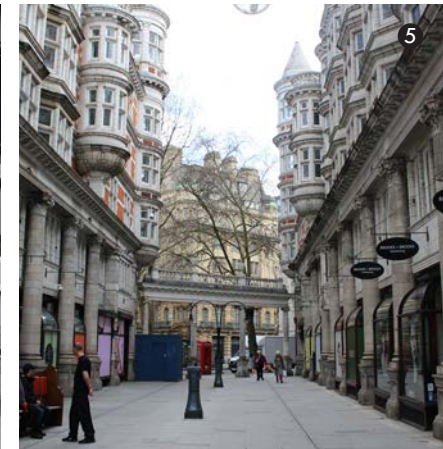
A number of distinctive buildings contribute significantly to the area’s identity and aid orientation. The ‘Townscape Legibility’ assessment plan maps both these buildings and the long and medium range views through streets and parks. It is evident that if townscape is analysed in isolation, it appears that Holborn generally has a good legibility - there is a regular distribution of buildings at key junctions and journey decision points and notable views between. It is an interesting assessment because, as identified later in the report, this contradicts the perception of pedestrians on the ground.

(To note: there are some exceptions, for instance legibility south from High Holborn towards Covent Garden is poor, as well as pockets to the east, for instance to the west of St Alban the Martyr Church and Brooke’s Market).

## 2.4.4 Streetscapes



- 1 Great Russell Street
- 2 Theobalds Road
- 3 John Street
- 4 Bury Place
- 5 Sicillian Avenue

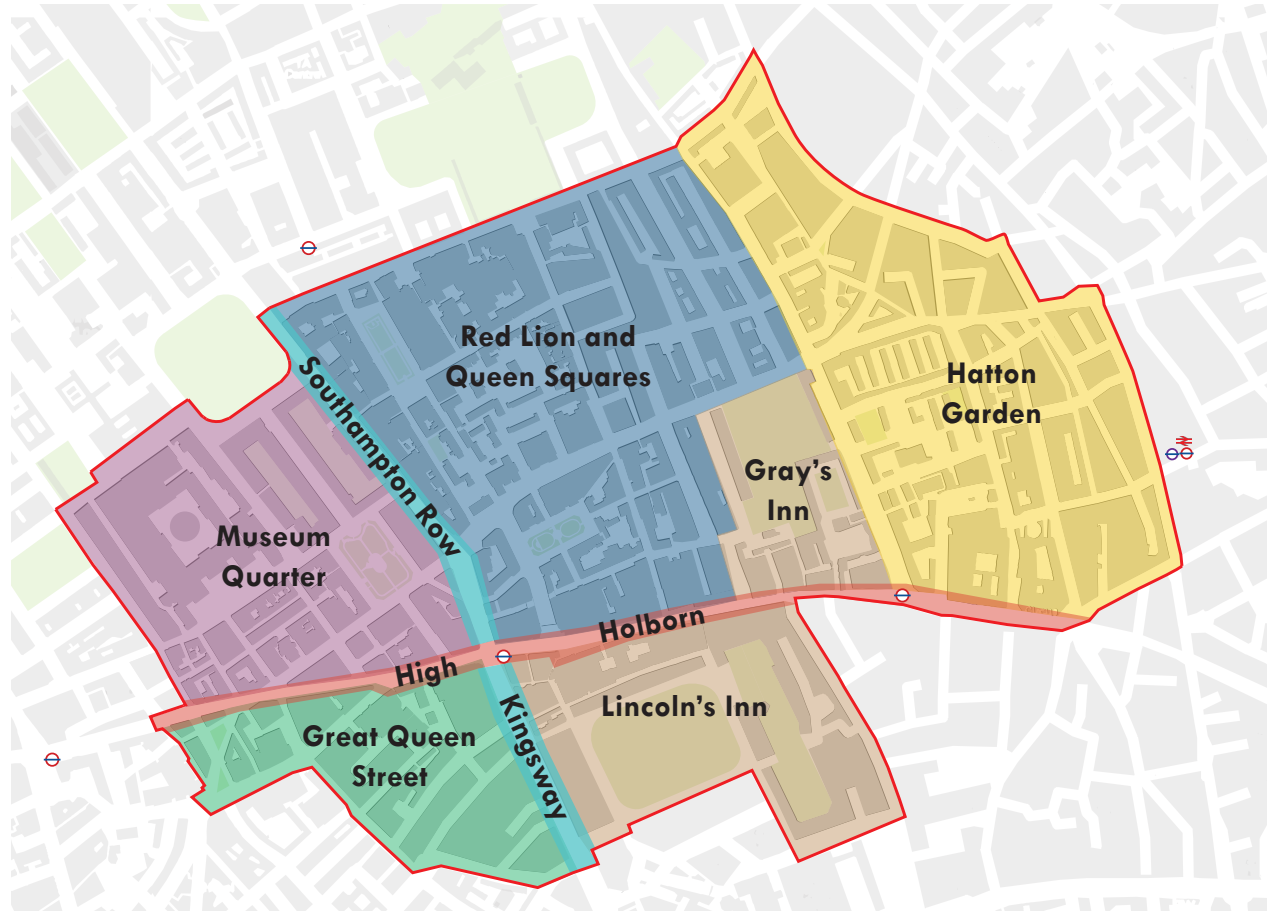




- 1 Theobalds Road
- 2 Doughty Mews
- 3 Kingsway
- 4 Bourbon Close
- 5 Orde Hall Street

## 2.4.5 Character areas

Holborn is remarkably varied and heterogeneous. However, building on the conservation area appraisals and unifying characteristics, five broad 'character areas' and two 'character corridors' have been identified. These do not always coincide exactly with the areas and sub-areas identified in the conservation area appraisals because they incorporate broader parameters for definition. The character areas are a judgement of quality of townscape and other factors, such as land use and activity, based on the evidence. The diversity provides a rich walking and cycling experience, it can also make legibility and orientation confusing in certain localities.



## Hatton Garden Character Area

This character area includes the area to the north of High Holborn, west of Farringdon Road, east of Gray's Inn Road and south-west of Warner Street. Much of the area is covered by the Hatton Garden Conservation Area, which is sub-divided into six smaller areas.

In broad terms this area derives much of its character from its robustly detailed industrial, commercial, and residential buildings of the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries, laid out on a loose urban grid. Also in evidence are a few Georgian terraces and some unexceptional late twentieth-century buildings. In the late 19th century, Hatton Garden developed on the estate of Ely Palace and became a focus for the jewellery trade, and this influence remains today. The neighbourhood comprises around 70 shops and a further 300 allied trades and jewellery related businesses. Over recent years, it has also become home to a growing range of creative and media industries.

Streets are of human-scale, however typically compromised by degraded public realm, parked cars and motorbikes. Larger footprint commercial buildings are prevalent to the east at Farringdon Road - a hostile, traffic dominated street with a notable lack of trees.

The character area includes the Leather Lane market, historically it was a bric-a-brac market, and now a trendy haven for food lovers and the slightly ramshackle appearance of the street compliments this.

The area also includes the imposing Grade II\* listed Waterhouse building and Brookes Market, one of the few urban squares in the area, albeit compromised by road space.

The area to the west of Leather Lane, is largely made up of residential uses. This includes the Arts & Crafts Bourne Estate and post-second war bombing infill. Some of this housing is highly characterful and includes delightful communal gardens with mature trees. Other elements detract from the overall character – most notably the low-rise housing that provides a very weak setting to the grade II\* listed Church of St Alban the Martyr. Between the housing, an informal east-west route provides an important connection through back alleyways towards Gray's Inn.

To the northeast, the character changes. Denoted by the redevelopment of the old Royal Mail sorting office at Mount Pleasant, partially complete. This major mixed-use development comprises around 650 new homes and over 20,000 sq. ft of commercial and retail space. The six to fifteen storeys

buildings are brick, reminiscent of London stock and ground floor frontages comprise cafes and vacant retail units awaiting occupants.

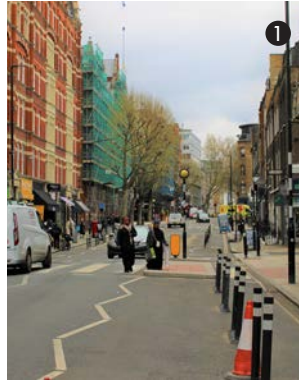
What is striking about this area is the underlying topography of the Fleet Valley. The land slopes east west and north south and even with the river now culverted, the valley still provides the area with a strong and distinctive character.



<sup>1</sup> Hatton Garden

## Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn Area

Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn form a character area that straddles to north and south High Holborn. Established in the 14th century within medieval manor houses, the Inns of Court of Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn have a unique character in the context of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. They have been major centres for the legal profession for over five hundred years. Their unique character is derived from the marked contrast and transition in scale and sense of enclosure experienced by lawyer's chambers buildings arranged in terraced or courtyard forms. Mature trees, planting and large areas of lawn play a significant role in the character of the areas. Two larger open spaces at Lincoln's Inn Field and Gray's Inn Gardens and complimented by a network of smaller courtyards and gardens - New Square, South Square, Gray's Inn Square, The Walks and Old Buildings. Glimpse views along narrow passageways and to adjacent courtyards and gardens add to the character. And despite the sometimes quite imposing terraces and limited interaction at ground floor, the Georgian buildings typically provide good passive surveillance, and the collegiate feel provides a secluded and peaceful ambience. This is in complete contrast to the adjacent busy streets at High Holborn and Gray's Inn Road.



- 1 Gray's Inn Road
- 2 Rosebery Avenue
- 3 Doughty street
- 4 Clerkenwell Road
- 5 Lincoln's Inn

## Red Lion and Queen's Squares

Lying to the west of Gray's Inn, the character area is enclosed by High Holborn, Southampton Row and Guildford Street. And whilst the area is architecturally diverse and divided by Theobalds Road and larger scale 20th century development, there are several unifying elements. The historic building form consists of terraces of townhouses opening out into squares. These create a fine urban grain with predominantly small footprints, and narrow frontages.

The area is characterised by two larger squares - Queen Square in the north and Red Lion Square in the south. The surrounding streets are relatively narrow and have a strong sense of enclosure, emphasising the scale of the built environment and the transition from space to space. The area comprises shops, offices, public houses, churches and residential areas. Lamb's Conduit Street and Red Lion Street both provide important local retail functions and north-south walking links. There are a particular concentration of specialist hospital uses to the north at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Short, narrow passageways and alleys which are mostly pedestrianised run throughout the area, these include Lamb's Conduit Passageway and Queen's Place.



- 1 Lamb's Conduit Passage
- 2 Procter Street
- 3 Lamb's Conduit Street
- 4 John Street
- 5 Cockpit Yard

## Great Queen Street Area

The Great Queen Street character area is contextually strategic, lying to the south of New Oxford Street, between Kingsway and Drury Lane. It provides a key gateway to Covent Garden and Holborn.

As well as Great Queen Street itself, the area comprises the area around High Holborn and the network of typically narrow streets, pedestrianised laneways and courtyards to the south, including Stukeley, Macklin, Parker and Newman Street.

On High Holborn, traffic flows one-way westbound from its junction with Procter Street to Museum Street, and then runs two way to Shaftesbury Avenue. The area around High Holborn is characterised by large-scale, late 19th and early 20th century blocks fronting a busy three lane thoroughfare. The predominant use is commercial, with a range of shops, banks, offices, theatres and hotels. In this locality piecemeal modern development of a ubiquitous and poor quality has eroded the areas character. Four to nine storey buildings with limited interaction at street level create a canyoning effect. And except for the former Holborn Town Hall, with its Belle Époque flourishes and a cluster of buildings around Drury Lane, there are no buildings of

architectural or heritage significance.

The tertiary streets to the south of High Holborn are often framed by buildings of good townscape quality, although there are some notable detractors. Several streets are closed off or dominated by parked vehicles, inhibiting pedestrian movement and compromising legibility. There is also a notable lack of street trees and greening.

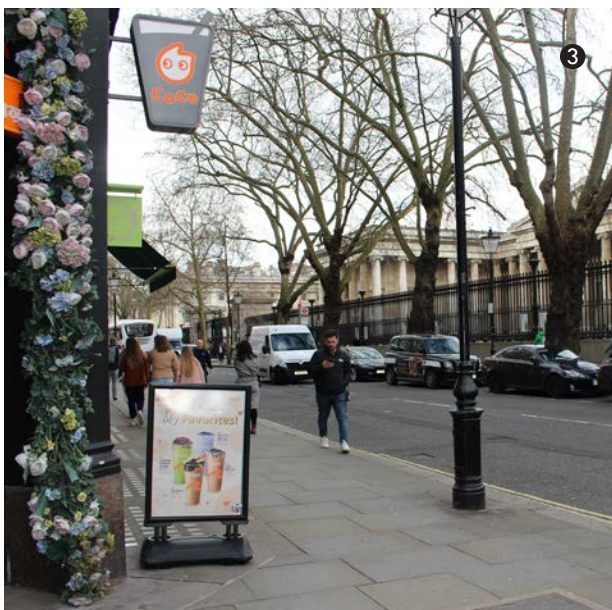
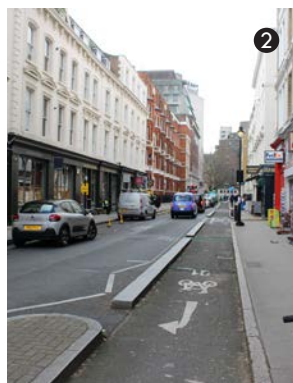
Great Queen Street itself was laid out around the time of construction of Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields. It has great importance in the development of street design. Sir John Summerson in 'Georgian London' said that it "put an end to gabled individualism, and provided a discipline for London's streets which was accepted for more than two hundred years". In the 18th century it was known as the 'first regular street'. Today the street comprises a mix of offices, pubs, shops and restaurants. The character of the street is greatly influenced by the imposing Freemasons Hall, the central headquarters of English freemasonry. The Hall is Grade II\* listed and is recognised as one of the finest Art Deco buildings in England. The building contrasts heavily with the domestic scale of the 17th century terraced buildings on the north side, dominating the view eastwards along Long

Acre by virtue of its scale and bulk in relation to its surroundings.

Running north to south is Drury Lane, one of the oldest streets in Covent Garden possibly dating back to the Saxon settlement of Lundenwic. The street has a colourful history, once a rowdy thoroughfare, replete with gin shops and prostitutes – and the focus of Hogarth's 'The Harlot's Progress' and comprising notorious slum housing before being cleared in the early 20th Century.

The street provides an important walking route, connecting The British Museum southwards to Strand-Aldwych and the river. In this transect, Drury Lane comprises predominantly two to four storey terraced buildings, originally domestic, now with a fine grain of independent shops at ground floor. There are some noteworthy 19th century buildings, as well as some major detractors, including the brutalist concrete Travelodge built in the 1970's, and providing a weak relationship at street level. On Drury Lane pedestrians are typically confined to narrow pavements, adjacent to parked cars, and alfresco uses are often perched beside the road.





<sup>1</sup> Museum Street

<sup>2</sup> Bury Place

<sup>3</sup> Great Russell Street

## Museum Quarter Area

The Museum Quarter is an enclave of independent shops, cafes, offices, homes, hotels, and educational uses. It lies in the Bloomsbury Conservation area and includes three sub-areas - The Museum Street/Great Russell Street sub-area, The New Oxford Street/High Holborn/Southampton Row sub-area, and The Bloomsbury Square/Russell Square/Tavistock Square sub-area.

The character of The Museum Quarter has its roots in the Bloomsbury tradition, and for a long time it was reputed to be the hub for London's deep thinkers, writers and anti-establishment activists. Today, with its arts and literary uses, antiquarian book shops, galleries, offices, publishers and language schools, and the omnipresence of The British Museum, it remains the place where London thinks.

The urban morphology to the south of The British Museum typically comprises a grid pattern of historic streets, enclosed mainly by three to four-storey buildings. In accordance with the Bloomsbury tradition, these streets open out onto more formal landscaped spaces, as depicted at Bloomsbury Square Gardens. The area includes some courtyards, and alleyways, providing intimate spaces

with a particular charm and sense of history. Notably Sicilian Avenue lies to the east, this was London's first purpose-built pedestrian street, with beautiful stone facades and ornate wooden shopfronts.

Pedestrian and cycle connectivity to and from the British Museum from Holborn and Tottenham Court Road Stations and Covent Garden area is relatively poor, with arterial routes, such as Kingsway, Bloomsbury Way, New Oxford Street and High Holborn severing links. Pedestrians are typically confined to narrow and cluttered pavements and cyclists share road space with high volumes of traffic. Connectivity has however improved in recent years, through small-scale interventions on the streets to the south of The British Museum and the creation of a traffic-free pedestrian route at Princes Circus, however, the balance of 'movement' and 'place' remains out of kilter.

Whilst best known for its retail, cafe and educational uses, the area also hosts a large residential population and includes local clusters of hotels, particularly to the streets between the British Museum and Southampton Row.

## **Southampton Row/Kingsway Character Corridor**

Southampton Row and Kingsway (A4200) form a strategic north/south connection between Russell Square and Strand-Aldwych. The area to the north of Bloomsbury Way/Theobalds Road lie in the Bloomsbury Conservation area and the area to the south lies in the Kingsway Conservation area.

The road was built as part of major highway changes in the 1900s, triggered by a desire to remedy overcrowding, poverty, ill-health, and crime associated with the slums at that time. The street is one of the broadest in London, averaging 24m wide in Southampton Row and extending to 30m wide at Kingsway.

The street has a grandiose feel, comprising prestigious commercial buildings in neo-classical style, generally uniform in materials, scale and massing and following a consistent building line. It provides a complete example of large-scale Edwardian architecture. The street comprises wide pavements and includes an avenue of mature London-plane trees, contributing significantly to the overall boulevard character, reminiscent of many Parisian streets.

## **High Holborn Character Corridor**

The corridor comprises New Oxford Street in the west at the junction with Shaftesbury Avenue and runs past Kingsway and Southampton Row, becoming Holborn at its eastern junction with Gray's Inn Road, as it runs towards Farringdon Road. The majority of the route lies in the Bloomsbury Conservation area and it charts the original Roman Road that led westward from Londinium, and now connecting The City with Oxford Street and Hyde Park.

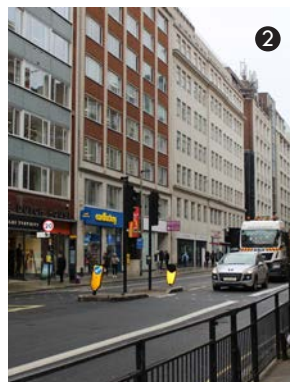
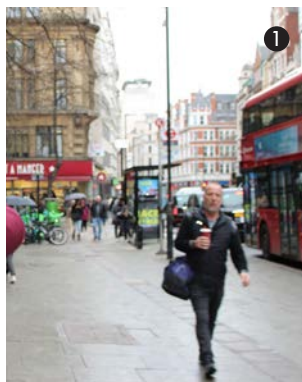
To the west, the large and busy junction at New Oxford Street, Bloomsbury Way and Museum Street dominates the street scene. The identity of buildings that enclose the junction and overall townscape quality is diverse, although the impact of high traffic volumes, narrow pavements, poor cycle infrastructure and lack of trees compromises experience at this key gateway.

Transitioning to a quieter section of street at New Oxford Street, the character contrasts to the surrounding richness of the more historic areas. A wide section of street is fronted by more recent and modernised buildings, such as The Post Building, with limited interaction at street level. In contrast, to the east Commonwealth House is a 1930s

modernist-inspired landmark building of nine storeys, with a prominent clock tower, and high quality original shopfronts.

As the corridor meets High Holborn (A40), the buildings are typically of a greater architectural and historic quality. There is a diversity of materials - red brick and stone, together with yellow stock brick and stucco characterise older buildings, whereas buildings from the 1960s insertions tend to be concrete or glass. Notwithstanding this, the dominance of vehicles, narrow pavements and clutter at the junction, compromises overall pedestrian experience.

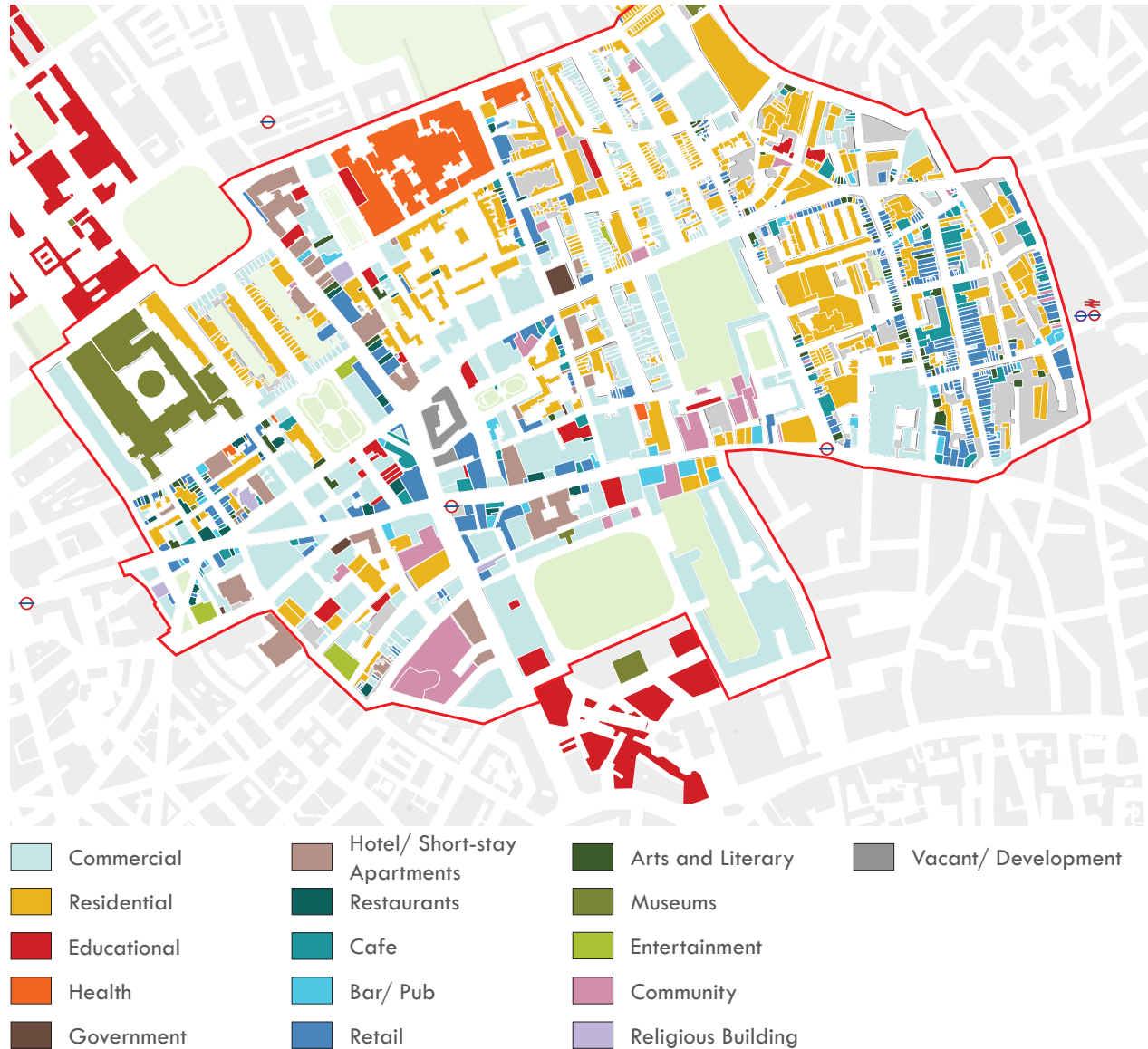
Heading towards the city and Chancery Lane the street broadens out, and the large concrete Holborn Gate building responds accordingly, stepping back to meet the building line at the grade II listed Staple Inn. The generous width of the street creates an airier character, however this is again compromised by the large proportion of space dedicated to vehicles, with a noticeable lack of trees, planting and opportunities for rest and spend time.



- 1 High Holborn
- 2 High Holborn
- 3 New Oxford Street
- 4 High Holborn
- 5 High Holborn




## 2.4.6 Ground Floor Land Use

The predominant land uses have been mapped for the ground floors to assess the distribution of uses and how they influence character and public realm. The maps that follow also chart the clusters of similar land use types such as cultural and educational uses, residential, retail, markets and food and beverage. These clusters start to provide an indication of how patterns of building use may influence the public realm. For instance, where the residential estates lie that would benefit from a much greater level of green infrastructure and doorstep play, and the interaction of 'inside' and 'outside' uses at groundfloor, such as alfresco.

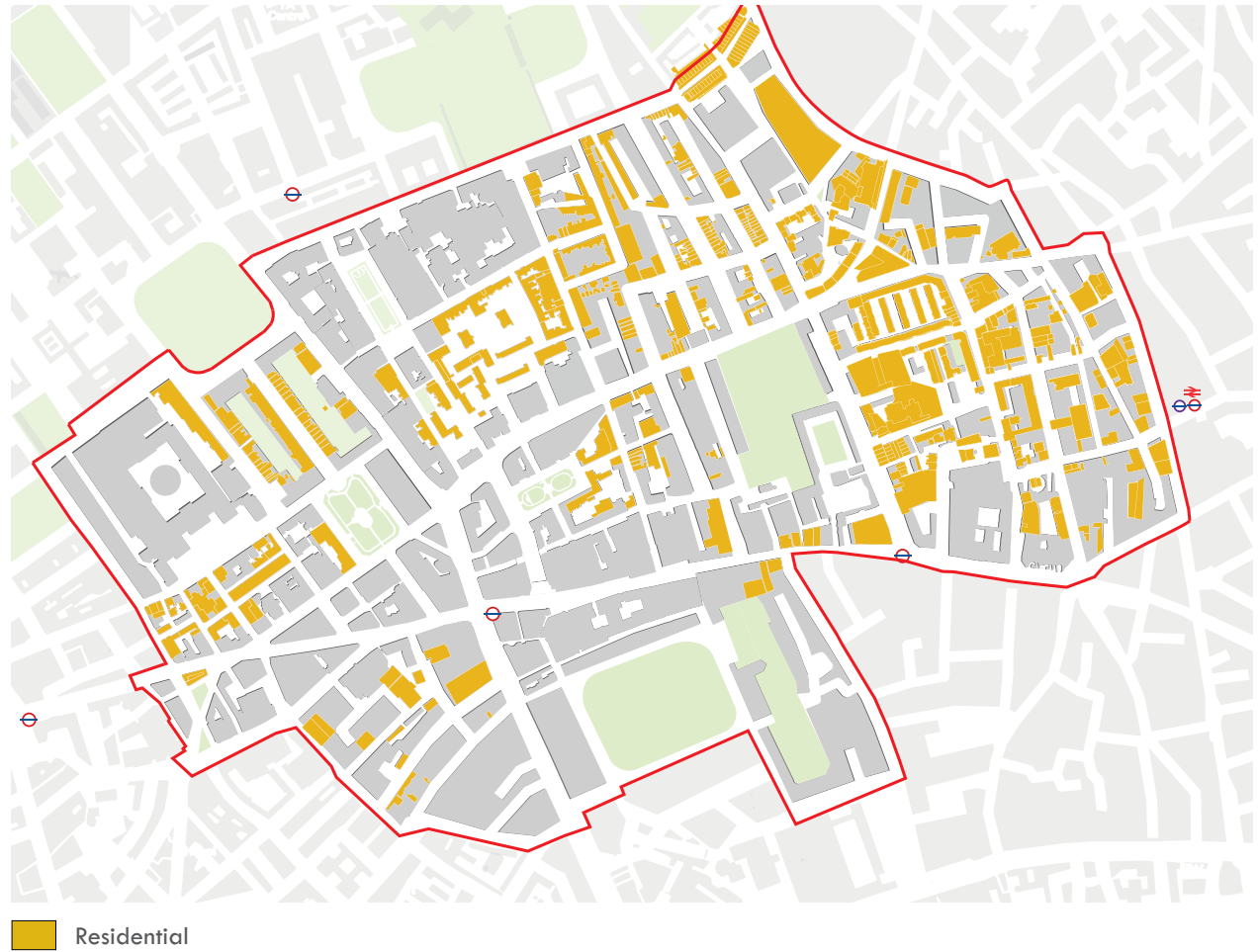


## Learning and Culture

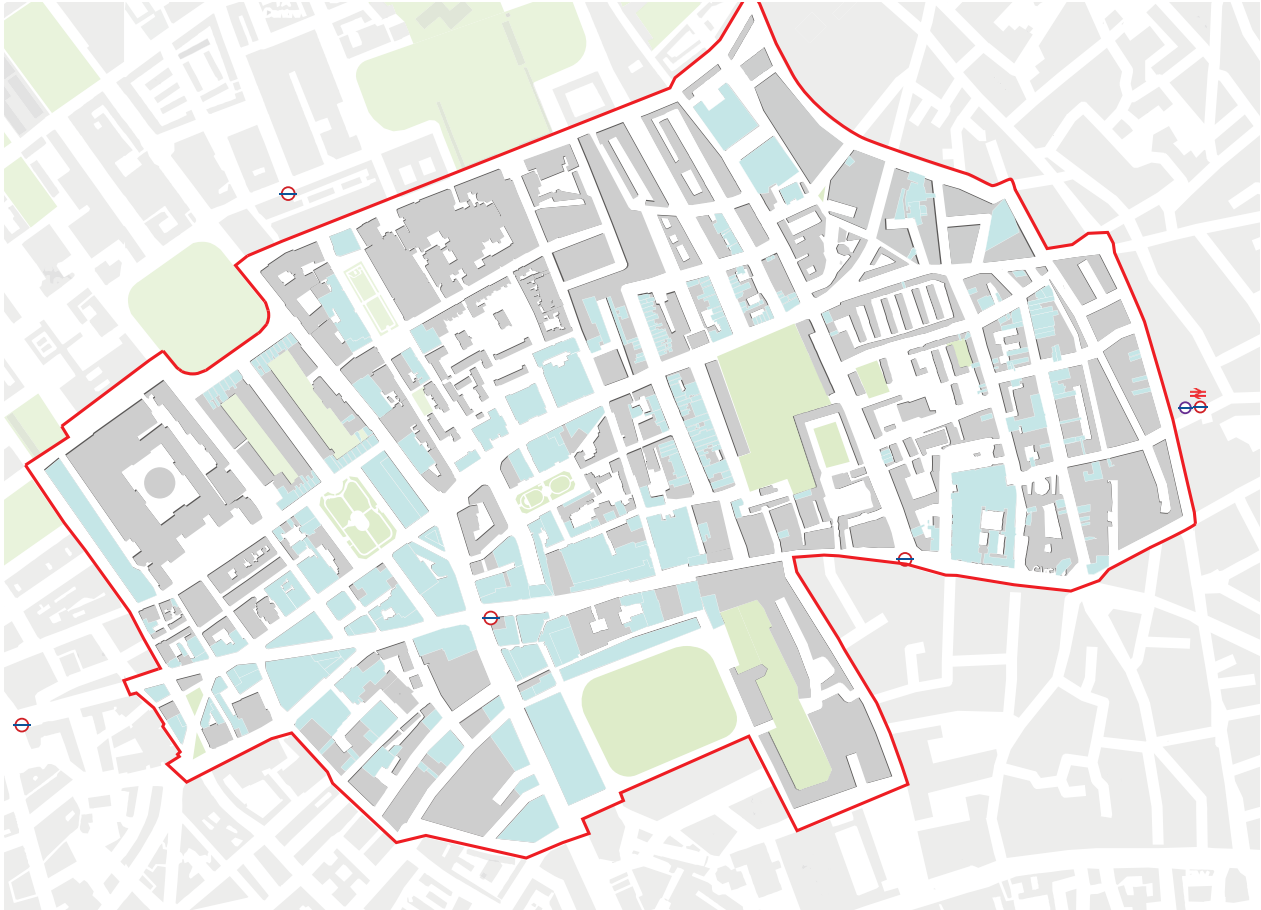


-  Educational
-  Museums
-  Entertainment (Theatres, Bowling etc.)

## Residential Ground Floor Land Use

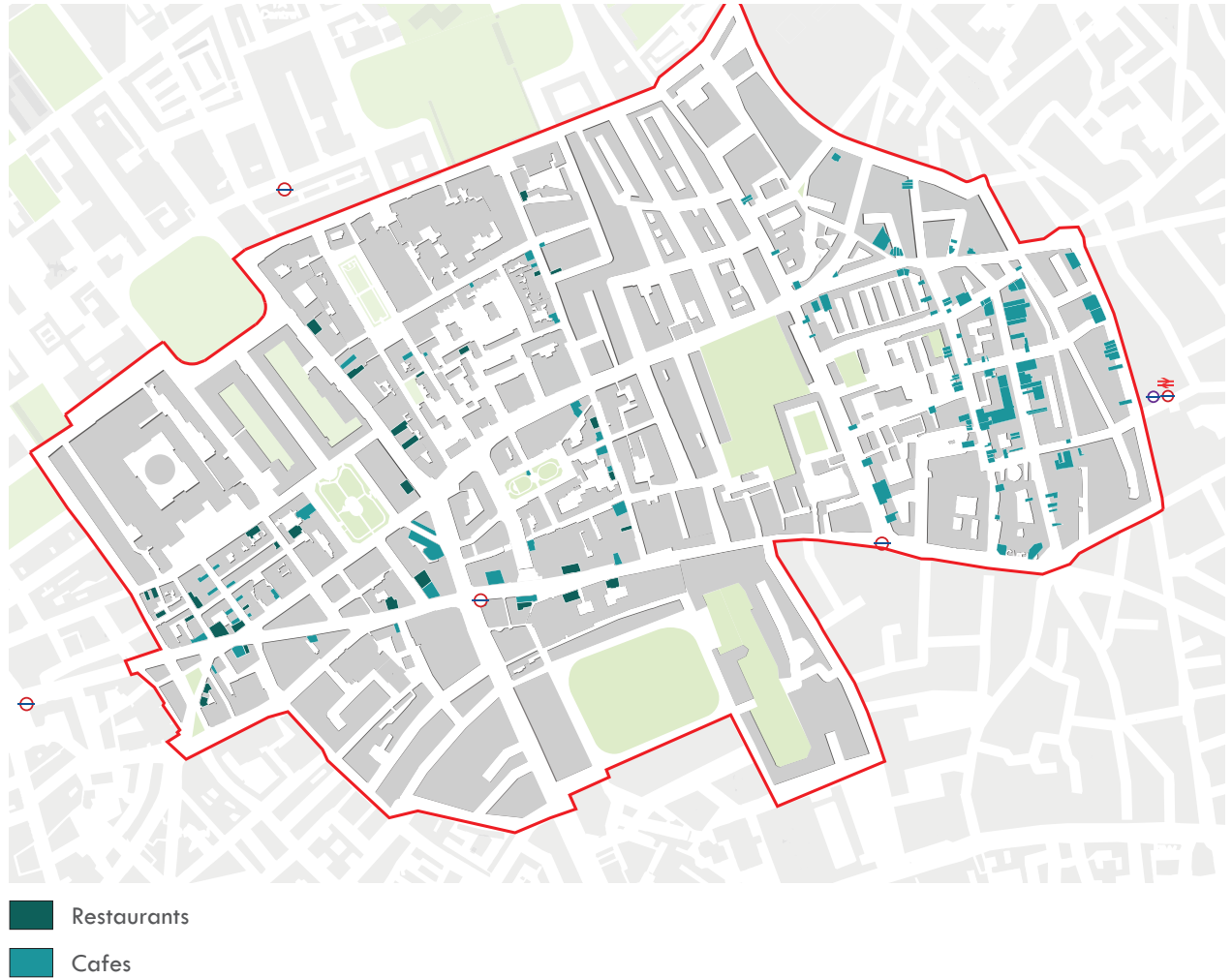


**Commercial Ground Floor Land Use**



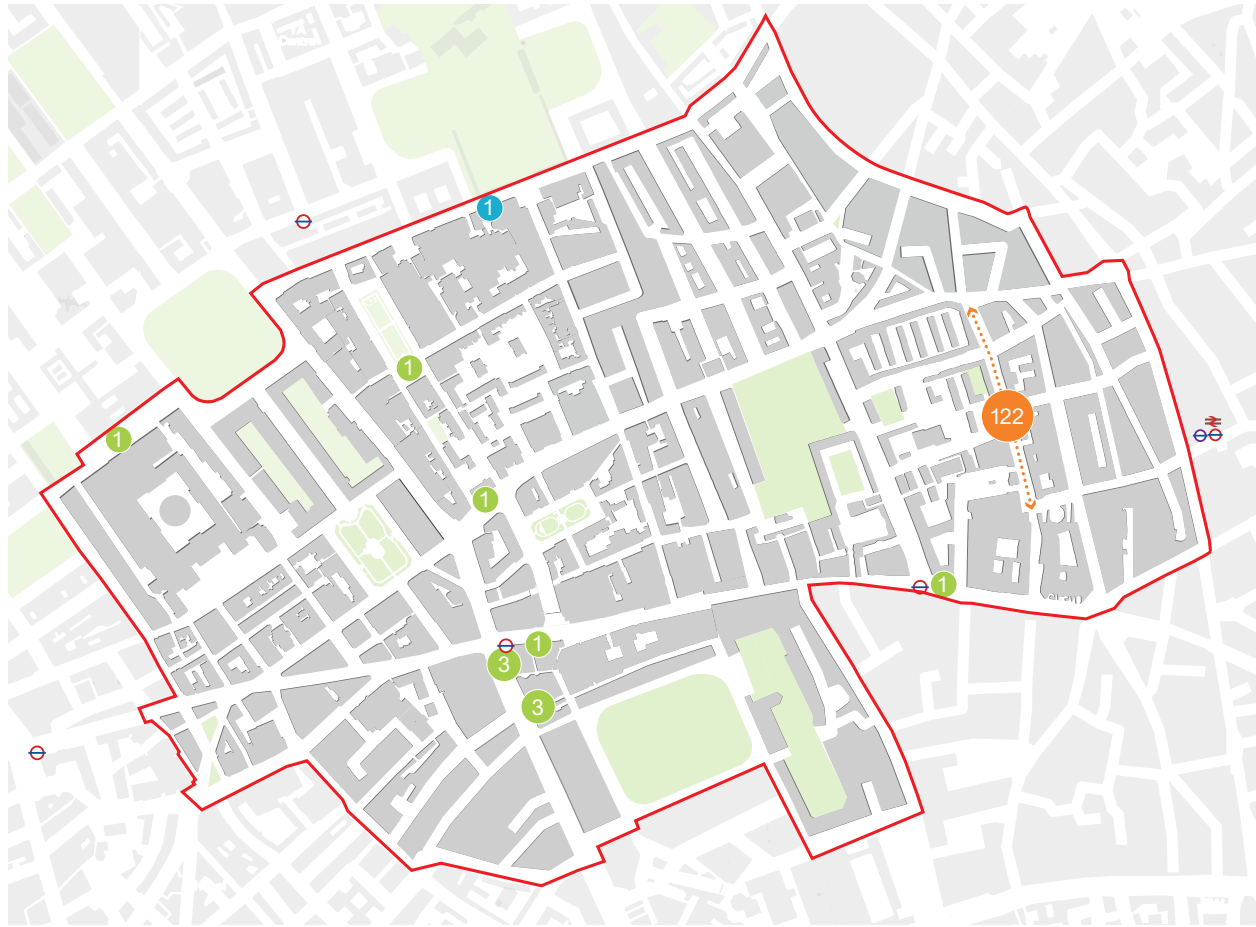
Commercial

## Restaurants and Cafes





### 2.4.7 Street Markets and Kiosks



-  Leather Lane Market
-  Kiosks
-  Ice Cream Kiosks

Number accounts for amount of trader spaces available

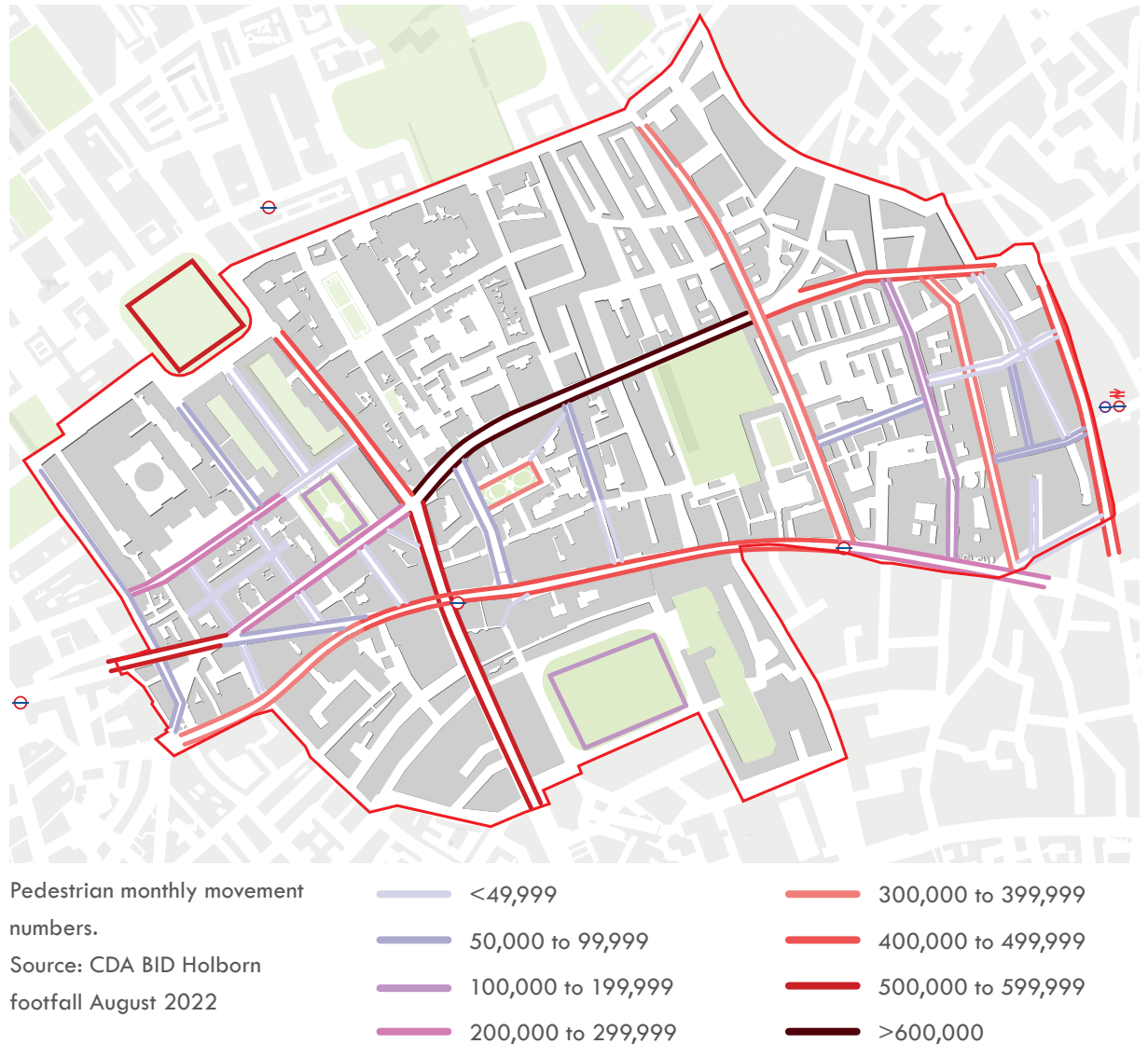


## 2.5 Movement

### 2.5.1 Pedestrians

Holborn is one of the busiest pedestrian areas in London. Holborn station is one of the busiest tube stations on the London Underground network and is often heavily congested. In 2016 around 56 million customers used it each year. This fell to 7.2 million in 2020, during the pandemic, however has risen again in the last few years. Proposals to upgrade the station's capacity have been planned for many years but are currently on hold due to funding constraints.

Since the opening of the Elizabeth line, Tottenham Court Road station has become the busiest station in London, and coupled with Farringdon station, typically carries around 600,000 passengers a day. The British Museum is the second most visited visitor attraction in the UK with over four million visitors in 2023 (for comparison, the Natural History Museum is first, with 4.4 million visitors). Outside Holborn tube station tourists and school parties unfamiliar with the area orientate themselves while busy commuters hastily try to get to work. The pedestrian experience is congested and chaotic. This is further compounded by poor legibility to onward destinations, lack of pavement space, street furniture, kiosks and guard rails creating obstructions, miscellaneous street clutter and rubbish, described in more detail later.

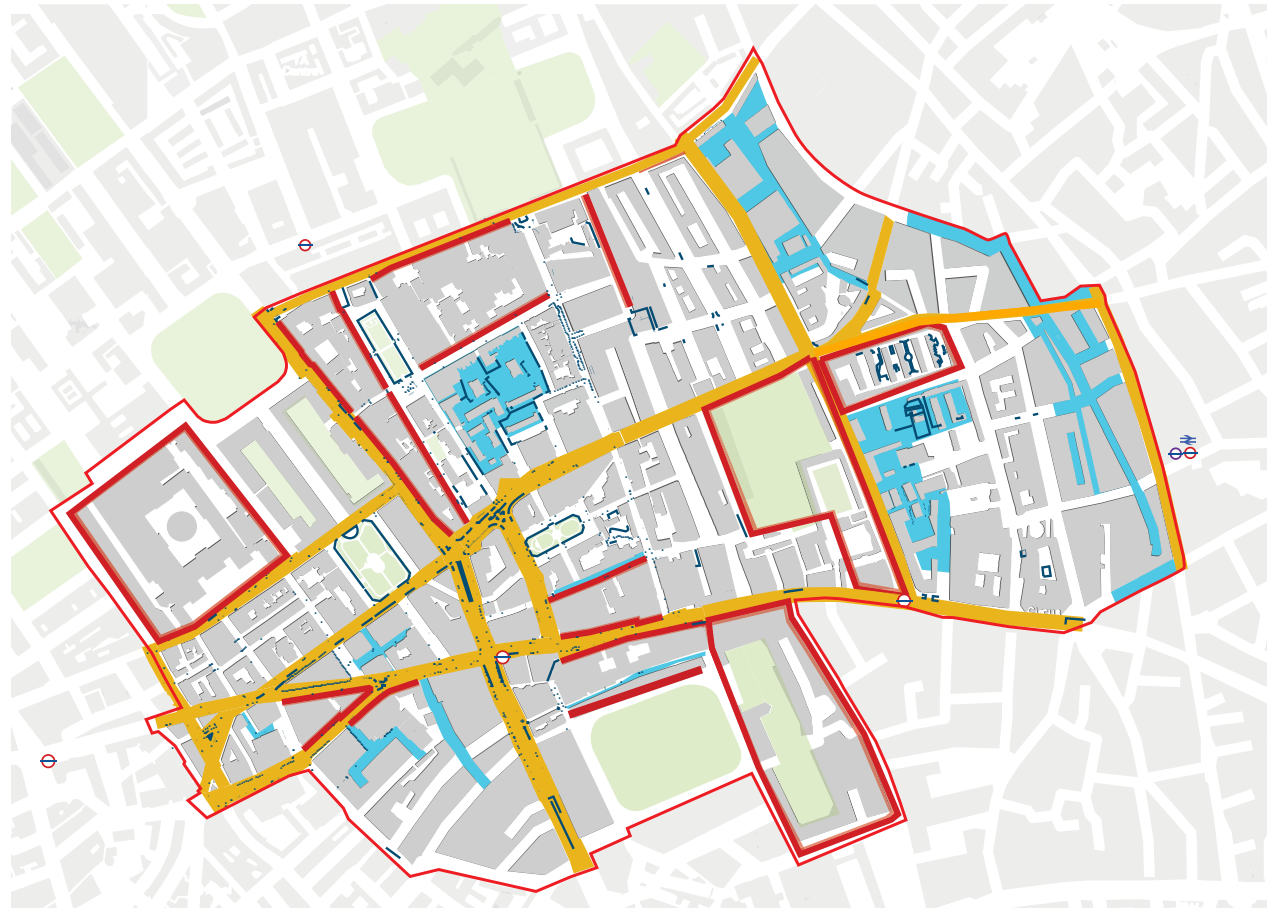


## 2.5.2 Pedestrian Connectivity





An analysis has been undertaken to establish both where pedestrian connectivity is strong and where it is weak and needs improving (shown in orange).

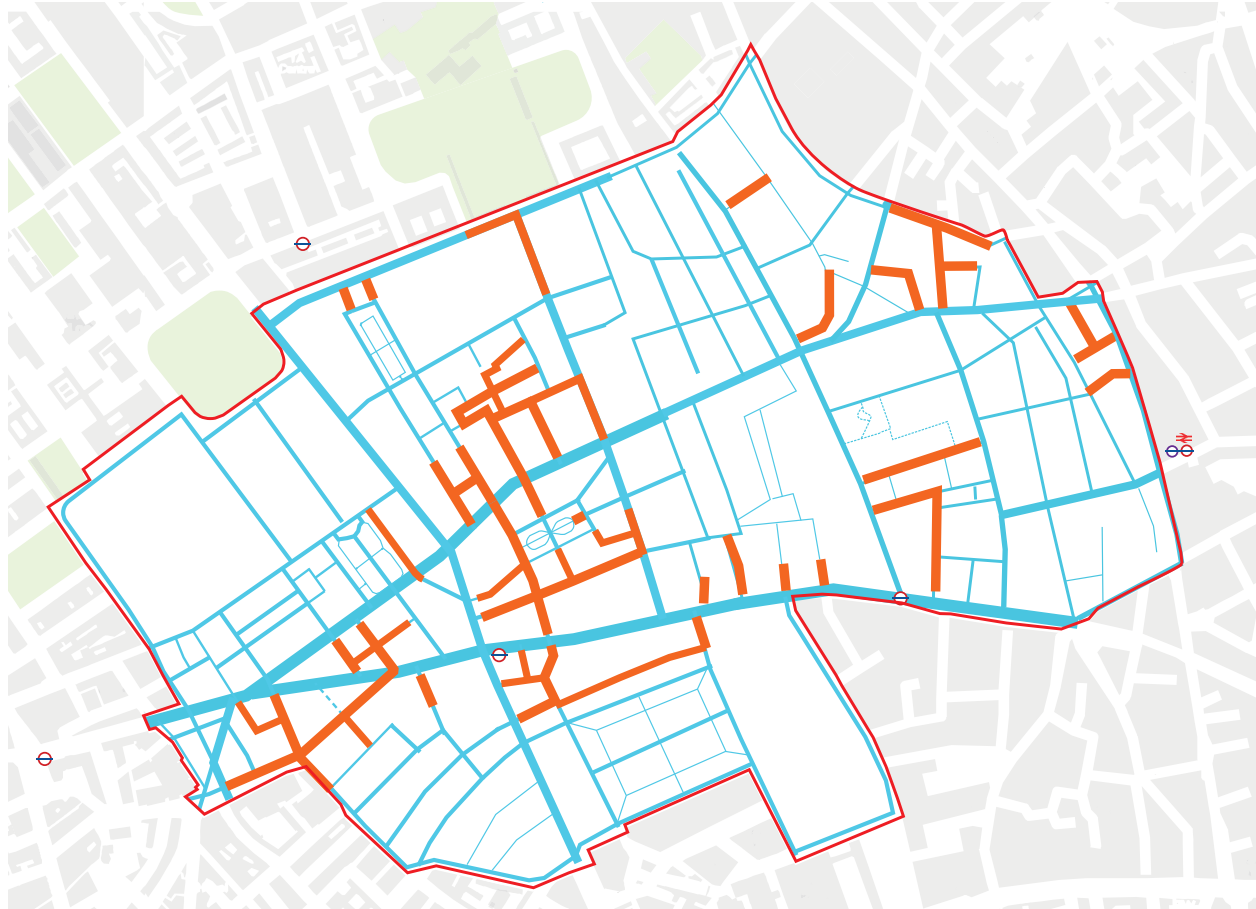
The criteria for weak connectivity includes the following:

- \* Routes of poor legibility (e.g. routes connecting the Tybald's Estate and Procter Street to the south)
- \* Routes with poor active frontages (e.g. High Holborn to the west and Museum Street)
- \* Apparent dead end routes (e.g. Barter Street and Coptic Street south)
- \* Where there is a lack of pedestrian space (e.g. High Holborn and Kingsway adjacent to the tube station)
- \* Where there are physical obstructions such as signage or furniture clutter (e.g. Little Turnstile passage)
- \* Routes which are unappealing and not well overlooked (e.g. New Turnstile Passage and Lambs Conduit Passage)





Pedestrian barriers to movement.

	Large urban block
	Roads and streets that are barriers to movement
	Weak legibility
	Railings & Fences

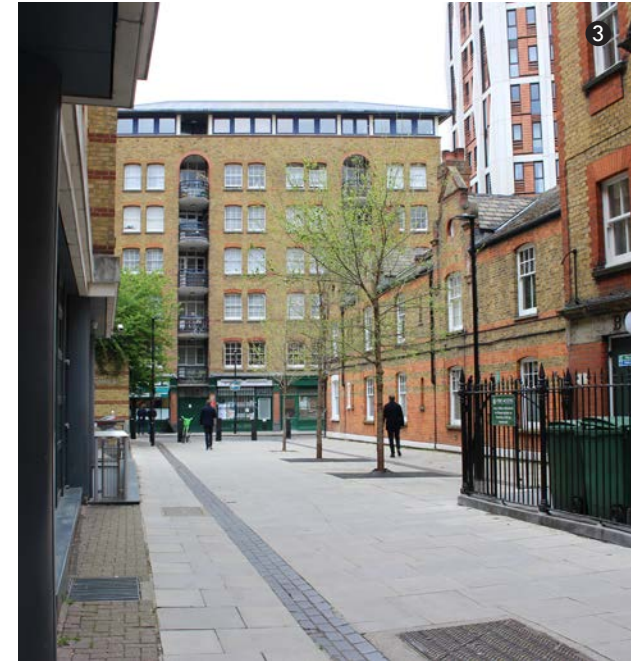


Weak pedestrian links.

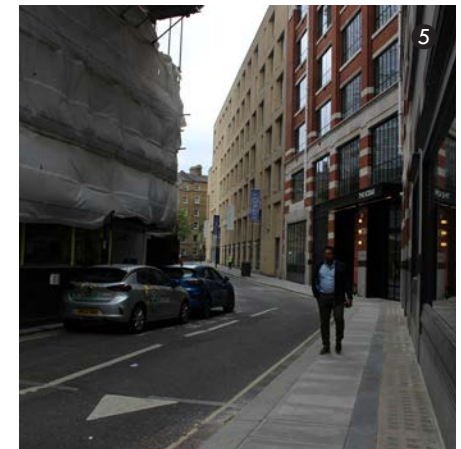
	Pedestrian connections
	Weak connections

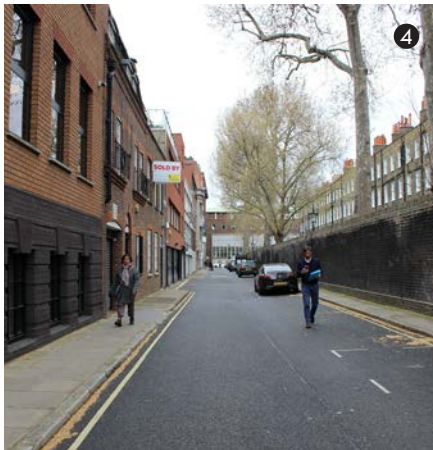
This analysis highlights further issues for pedestrians in the Holborn area. The sheer number of people, narrow footways and physical obstructions on busy routes, such as High Holborn, are further compounded by the pedestrian connections off them which do not encourage people to quickly disperse to relieve this pressure.

## 2.5.3 Weak Footpaths and Passageways



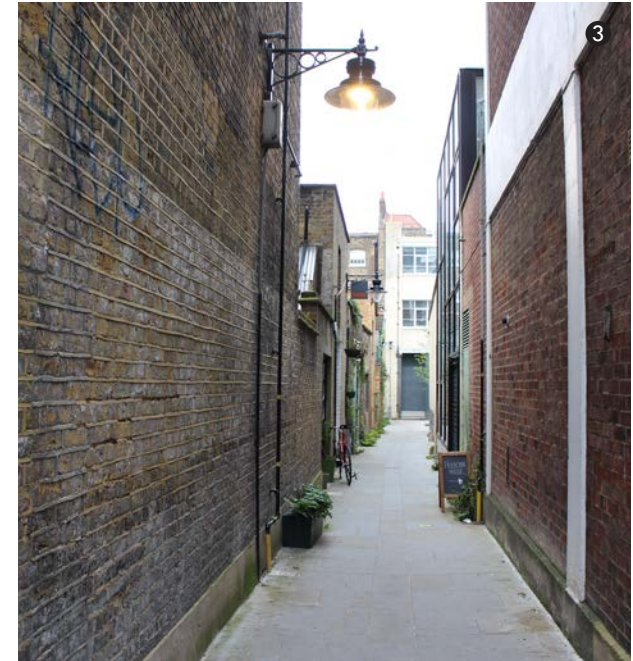
- 1 West Central Street
- 2 Stukeley Street
- 3 Macklin Street
- 4 Wild Court
- 5 Keeley Street



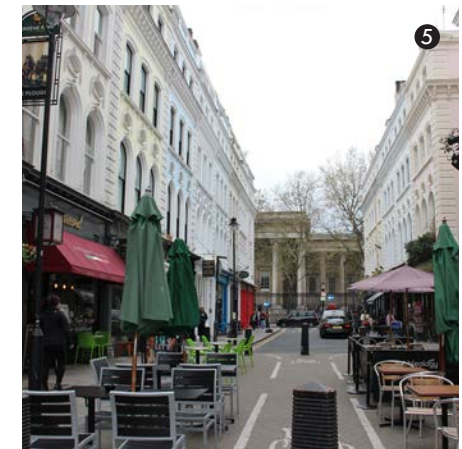


- 1 Chichester Rents
- 2 Warwick Street
- 3 Bishop's Court
- 4 Jockey's Fields
- 5 Brooke's Court

## 2.5.4 Positive Footpaths and Pasageways



- 1 Lamb's Conduit Street
- 2 Gray's Inn Gardens
- 3 Emerald Street
- 4 Eastern Great Ormond Street (East)
- 5 Museum Street







- 1 High Holborn
- 2 Doughty Mews
- 3 Doughty Street
- 4 Doughty Mews
- 5 New Square

## 2.5.5 Cyclists

Cycling has grown substantially in London during the last few years. In 2022, there were 1.2 million daily cycle journeys in London. The Mayor's vision is that cycling in London will become an integral part of the transport network, and a normal part of everyday life. The Mayor's Transport Strategy set the aim to make London the world's best big city for cycling, where everyone who wants to cycle can do so and where it becomes a fundamental part of a thriving, progressive modern city. The Mayor's 2022 Cycling Action Plan sets a target of 1.6 million daily cycle journeys by 2030, increasing by a third from 1.2 million journeys made in 2022.

In Camden, residents still make more than three times more trips by car than by bike. Only 8% of journeys between 2 and 5 kilometres made by Camden residents are cycled (the majority up to 2km are walked). This tails off to 5% of journeys of 5-10km. TfL analysis shows that Camden, along with two other central London Boroughs (Lambeth and Westminster) have the greatest overall levels of cycling potential across the capital. It is estimated that approximately 600,000 trips per day could be cycled in Camden. Over 200,000 of these would be by residents, of which only 20,000 residents' trips are

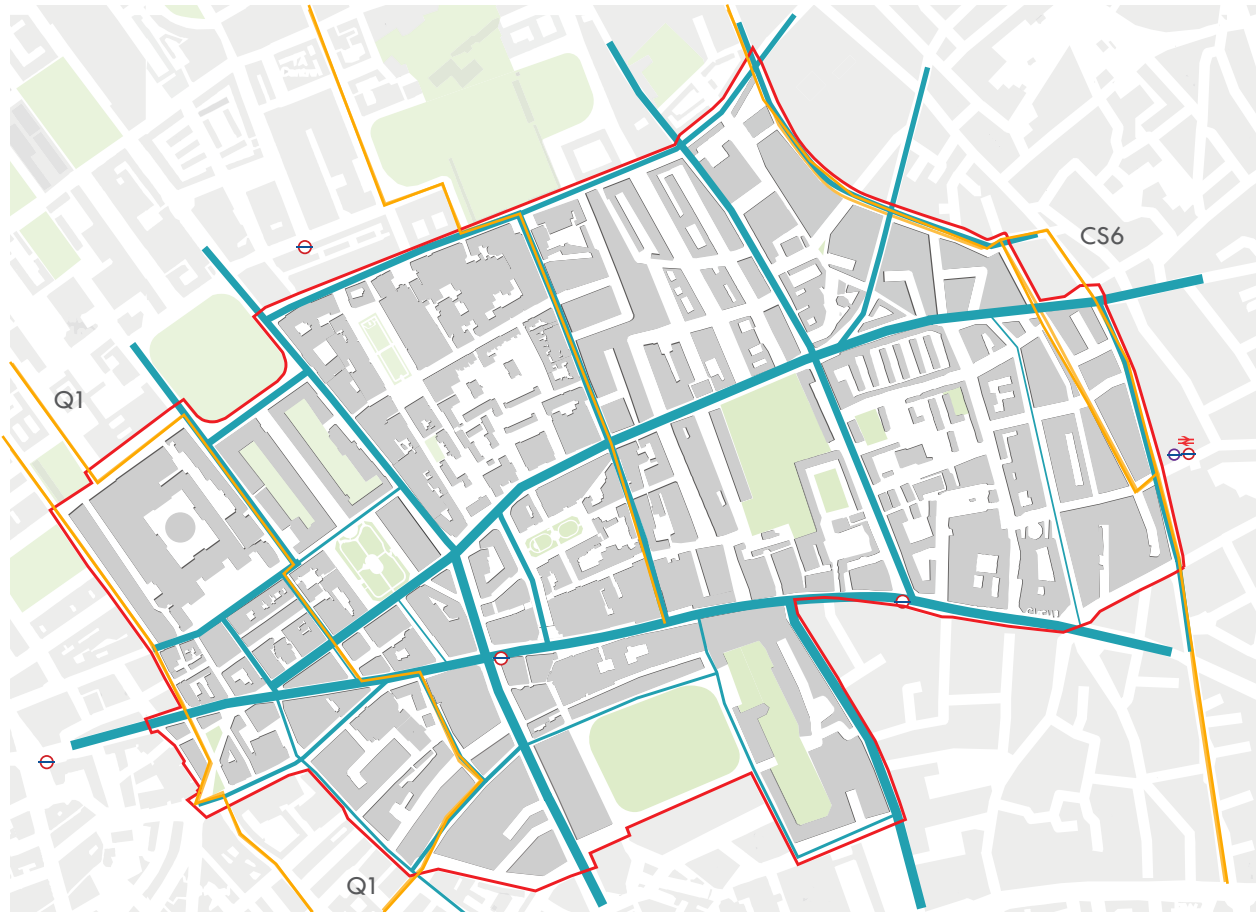
currently being made by bike. This would include those 70% of car journeys which are under 5km, particularly the 41% which are under 2km.

The High Holborn and Theobalds Road/Bloomsbury Way corridors both feature in TfL's Strategic Cycling Analysis as being within the top 20% of roads in London for current and potential cycle demand. In total these east-west routes are used by nearly 1,000 cyclists an hour at peak times, despite there being limited provision for cyclists, with two 'Quietways' bisecting the area.

The current provision for cyclists is poor - there are very few protected and designated cycle lanes with under provision along the busiest routes. In the main, cyclists share with buses and this provision is not continuous or joined up.

Camden's Transport Strategy 2019-2041 has an objective "to substantially reduce all road traffic casualties in Camden and progress towards zero Killed and Seriously Injured casualties." Since 2008, eight cyclists have been killed in the Holborn area. With the latest tragic death of a cyclist in Holborn, in March 2022. The incidents have been





Cyclist movement, highest used routes.

Source: Strava, March 2023

- Most to least used.
- Main cycleways

typically at the junctions and have involved buses or general traffic. These incidents have been attributed to a lack of formal and safe provision for cyclists, narrow pavements, high vehicle flows and traffic congestion in the gyratory and competing demands from all users. The area is a well-known blackspot for cyclists in the City yet continues to be a popular route because it provides direct connections linking key areas.

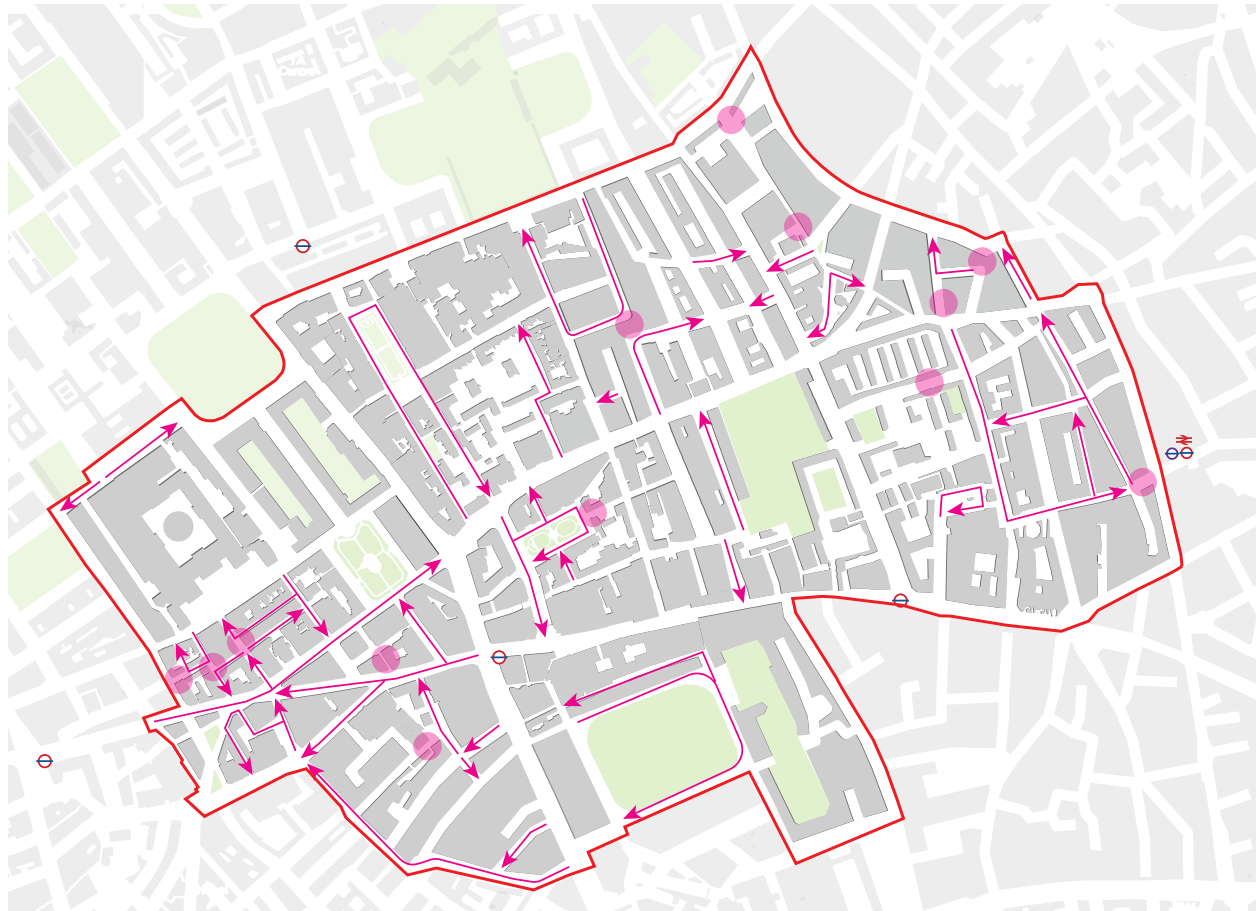
During summer 2023, Camden Council progressed the detailed design of the Holborn Safety Scheme which includes two-way protected cycle lanes on Procter Street due to be completed in 2024 as well as a contraflow protected cycle lane on Red Lion Square. The Council have also been working on plans to implement 'quick wins' for cyclists ahead of the main construction. These include advanced cycle stop line extensions at the junction of High Holborn and Kingsway.

Cycle safety improvements were already implemented at the junction Southampton Row/Theobalds Road in 2022/23.



## 2.5.6 Buses

Holborn is a substantial public transport hub. Approximately 10 million bus passengers travel through the Holborn area every year. 104 buses an hour typically travel on Kingsway, 91 buses an hour on Bloomsbury Way, 61 buses an hour on Drake Street / Procter Street and 34 on New Oxford Street. The gyratory including Theobalds Road, Bloomsbury Way, Southampton Row and Kingsway are part of the Central London Bus Grid, defined as Bus Priority Corridors (with 19 million bus passenger boarders every year). The Grid aims to prioritise buses on key corridors in central London to improve bus journey times and passenger experience, with an aim to deliver reliable bus speeds of between 10-13 mph.





General vehicle traffic movement - one-way roads and closed sections.

	One-way routes
	Closed road sections

### 2.6.7 General Vehicles

Through the latter part of the 20th century the Holborn area has become dominated by vehicular traffic to the detriment of the place. Traffic flows on High Holborn, Kingsway and Theobalds Road are particularly high, with freight vehicles comprising high proportion of those vehicles. The existing traffic, in particular around the gyratory causes a number of major issues for the area, including air and noise pollution, safety, the restriction of pedestrian movement and the creation of a poor-quality environment to move through, as well as spend time.

## 2.5.8 Parking

In July 2017 Camden introduced a new borough-wide car free policy as part of its new Local Plan. All new developments do not provide any on-site or on-street parking opportunities except for essential users such as for servicing and deliveries and spaces for people with a disability. This marked a new era for the borough, as part of a gradual transition to create car-free streets and spaces. The Camden Transport Plan advocates changes to how road space is allocated, including reducing kerbside space for parking/loading provision, and reallocating carriageway space to active, sustainable travel modes, if necessary, to enable and encourage people to walk and cycle, to improve road safety and deliver enhancements to the public realm. The Council have committed to ensure that there is no net increase in on-street residential parking bay provision as part of any transport scheme or related policy, and remove motor vehicle parking provision where necessary in order to facilitate sustainable transport modes. Alongside this, the Council continue to promote and expand where appropriate Camden's 'back to base' car club network as an alternative to car ownership, including managing a permit scrappage scheme to encourage residents to give up a parking permit in exchange for car club membership.









## 2.6 Public Open Space and Green Infrastructure

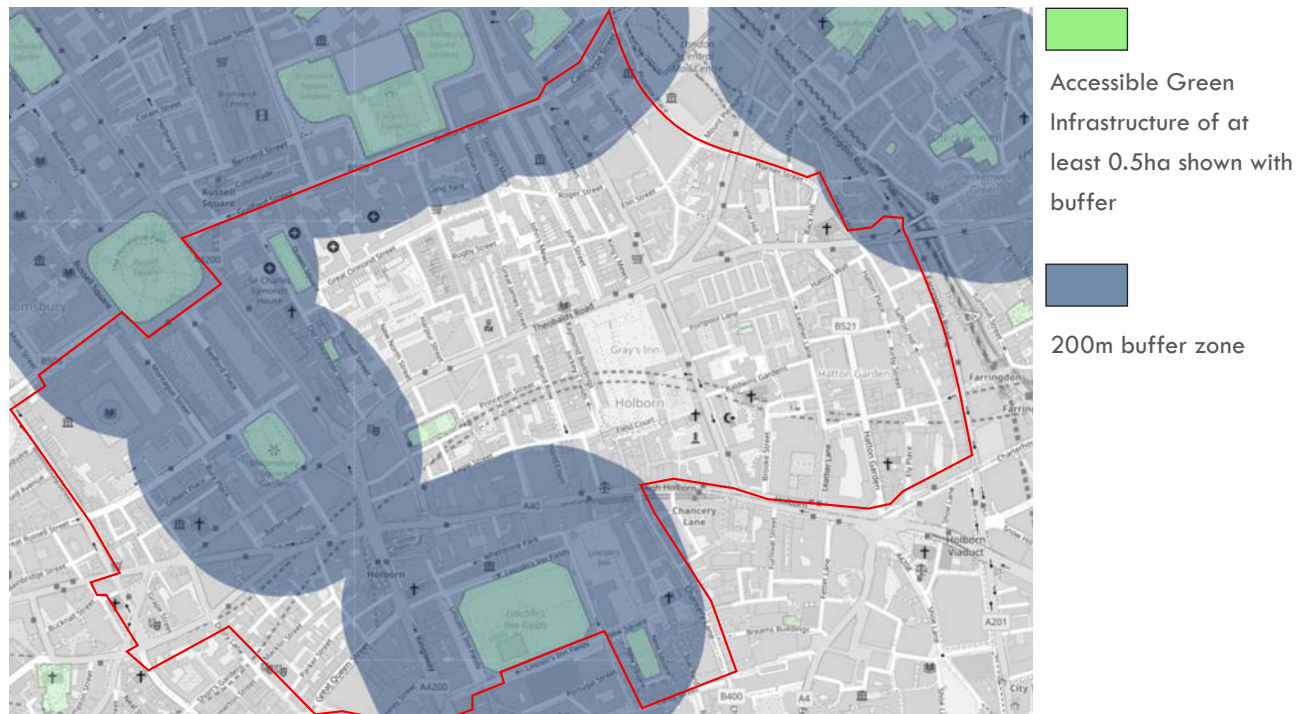
### 2.6.1 Fifteen-Minute walking distance to green space

Parks and greenspaces in England deliver an estimated £6.6 billion of health, climate change and environmental benefits every year. But with 80% of people now living in towns and cities, one third of people do not have access to good quality green and blue space within 15 minutes of their home. The government’s Environmental Improvement Plan, published 1st February 2023, includes a commitment that the public should be able to access green space or water, such as woodlands, wetlands, parks and rivers, within a 15-minute walk from their home, and in urban areas with high density and greater levels of deprivation, this should be even greater.

The Natural England Green Infrastructure Mapping tool identifies green spaces of at least 0.5Ha within 200m – ‘the doorstep ANGSt assessment’. This includes green space in less than a 5-minute walk. In Holborn the map clearly indicates the catchment

around publicly accessible green spaces that meet this threshold, such as Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Bloomsbury Square Gardens. It discounts Gray’s Inn Gardens, known as ‘the Walks’ because they are privately owned, and typically open 12-2.30pm weekdays, and can be closed by discretion at any time. The map clearly requires a level of interpretation, given in certain areas there are public spaces that offer opportunities for relaxation and contact with nature, that at this stage have not been mapped, such as Princes Circus, or fall below the size threshold, such as Red

Lion Square. Nonetheless, if this information is assessed in conjunction with the earlier open space typology mapping, and lack of seating mapping, and acknowledging there is a high influx of people travelling to the area each day, then it is clear there is a significant deficit of public space on the area. This is particularly significant in an area with a high working population who might only have a 30-minute lunch break to sit and relax in nature, or a borough that is keen to attract families with children.

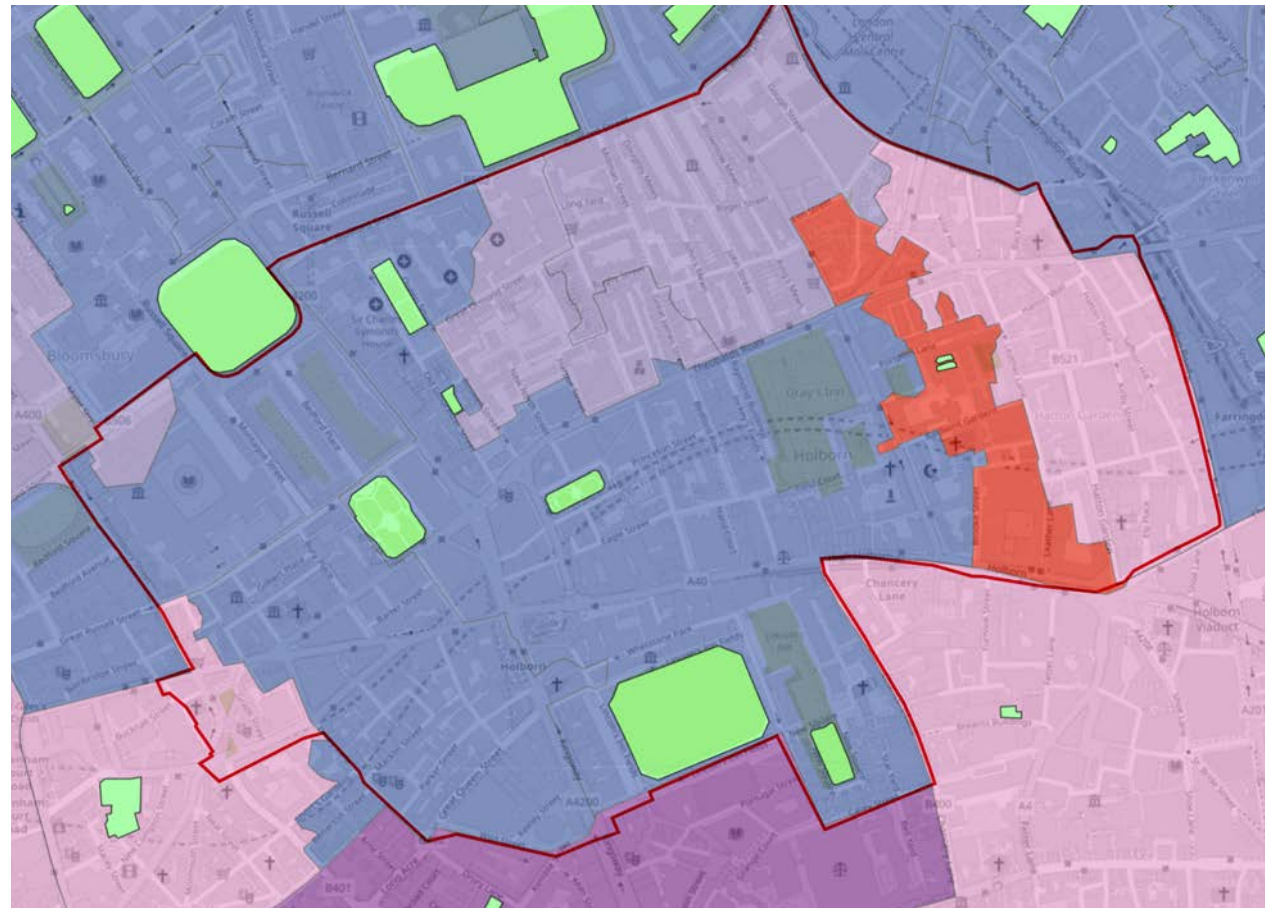


## 2.6.2 Greenspace inequality and deprivation

The Natural England Green Infrastructure Mapping identifies locations with respect to level of accessibility of natural green spaces alongside the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IoMD). It clearly shows a severe deprivation of spaces to the east of the area, given the high resident population and IoMD levels around some of the residential estates, such as The Bourne and Tybalds Estate. It also shows lack of green space around the Hatton Garden area.

### Key greenspace deprivation stats:

- \* Holborn Public Open Space per capita: 3m<sup>2</sup> (average in Camden 18m<sup>2</sup>)<sup>1</sup>
- \* % of Holborn residences with private gardens: 67% of dwellings without private or shared garden (up to 92% to the southeast of the area)
- \* Tree canopy cover in Holborn and Covent Garden: lowest in the borough



 Accessible Green Infrastructure

 Accessible Natural Greenspace Inequality and Deprivation Infrastructure. Doorstep Buffer Coverage

L1	M1	H1
L2	M2	H2
L3	M3	H3

L1 - Least favourable scenario to H3 - Most favourable scenario

<sup>1</sup> based on 2014 Open Space Study and existing Local Plan)



The public resorting to using walls and steps for seating due to the lack of open spaces and seating in the area.

### 2.6.3 Garden Squares and Green Open Spaces

Holborn has a reasonably good provision of publicly accessible garden squares. Within the study boundary Bloomsbury Square Garden lies to the west, Lincoln's Inn Field to the south, Queen Square to the north, and Red Lion Square and Gray's Inn to the east.

The garden squares within the study area are a hugely popular resource for locals, workers and visitors. They provide an escape from the busy trafficked streets and congested pedestrian areas. Many squares originally developed on the edge of the town, still had views of open country. The ideal was 'rus in urbe' – to bring a feeling of the countryside into the town. The garden squares were laid out by the original estate landowners and all broadly follow the same structure. Large grassed areas with predominantly shrub planting, tarmac paths, mature trees and railings (with low hedges) to their boundaries. They share a common

characteristic of being largely introverted and cut off from their surroundings, not always picking up pedestrian desire lines at entrances.

For the avoidance of doubt, this report provides a brief history but does not include a full historical appraisal of the garden squares, of which other bodies and studies have covered extensively (including The Association of Bloomsbury Squares and Gardens, The London Parks and Gardens Trust, The Garden History Society and The Bloomsbury Project).

## Bloomsbury Square

Bloomsbury Square is a garden square located to the south east of the British Museum between Bloomsbury Way to the south and Great Russell Street to the north. Bloomsbury Square was the centrepiece of the Bloomsbury Estate, which was developed from the 1660s to the 1850s. It was the first square to be called a 'square' and was laid out by the fourth Earl of Southampton as the forecourt to his grand London home. As one of the earliest London squares Bloomsbury Square has huge significance historically. The gardens were originally laid out by renowned Landscape Architect Humphrey Repton, and living in Bloomsbury Square was the height of fashion in the early eighteenth century (Camden History Society, Streets of Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia, 1997). The gardens lie along a historic vista that includes Bedford Place through to Russell Square. The gardens provide a through route to the British Museum; however, this route is not legible or well signed.

The character of the gardens is greatly influenced by the stunning neoclassical Victoria House to the eastern edge which houses an Art Deco Ballroom, office, retail and leisure uses. Along the edges, to the north, south and west, Georgian terraces

remain with residential and business uses. The gardens are a popular lunchtime spot and host to a small number of community and corporate events such as the Bloomsbury and Holborn Festival. They comprise a historic formal arrangement of paths, lawns and planting beds and a young children's play area of modern design. There is a large central paved area that feels over-sized and its day-to-day role is unclear. The garden also contains a bronze statue by Richard Westmacott of Charles James Fox, who was an associate of the Dukes of Bedford. The gardens were restored in 2003 to reflect elements of Humphrey Repton's 1806 layout, including the planting to reflect Regency style and restoration of the views and link to Russell Square.

Bloomsbury Square is a relatively insular space with large trees, railings and hedge to its boundary and does not pick up a number of key pedestrian desire lines, such as those from Sicilian Avenue in the south east travelling onwards to the British Museum and to Pied Bull Yard in the west. Severance is further compounded by the eastern and western ramps to the underground car park that lies beneath the gardens. Interestingly during the Second World War, the railings of many squares were taken to be melted down and used for armaments. Their loss affected

the appearance of the squares, however, the removal of railings created greater access.

The organisation 'Friends of Bloomsbury Square' was formed to provide the square with a voice after years of neglect and decline; which ultimately led to the 2003 renovation. They now work alongside the Commissioners of Bloomsbury Square, Camden Council and the Bedford Estate to preserve the square and ensure the square is well maintained.



## Queen Square

Queen Square is comprised of two parts, a traditional garden square to the north and a hard plaza space to the south (discussed in the next section). Many of the buildings surrounding the square are devoted to providing, researching and administering health care. Two hospitals, the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery (NHNN) and the Royal London Hospital for Integrated Medicine (formerly the Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital), make up the east side of the square. The Institute of Neurology, part of University College London (UCL), is located in the northeast corner of the square. Several buildings on the west side of the square are also devoted to medical research.

Queen Square was originally constructed between 1716 and 1725. It was formed from the garden of the house of Sir John Cutler baronet (1608-1693). The square was previously named Queen Anne's Square because a statue contained within it was misidentified as depicting Queen Anne. This statue is now believed to be a portrayal of Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III.

Queen Square is a popular spot for residents, workers, patients and their relatives. It

hosts a small number of events every year including the annual Queen Square Fair that includes music and dance performances, family workshops and stalls. Queen Square is a smaller, more intimate garden square than nearby Russell and Bloomsbury Squares and comprises a simple arrangement of tarmac paths, central lawn, rose beds and railings to the perimeter. The surfacing and furniture are in a poor state of repair and do not reflect the high quality of the surrounding architecture or the historic importance of the square. The mature trees to the edges are a valuable asset.

In 2023, a joint project between Great Ormond Street Hospital and Camden Council developed proposals for the south section of Queen Square to reduce the dominance of the road to the south and improve its attractiveness and usability. These are likely to be implemented in the next few years.



## Red Lion Square

Red Lion Square is a garden square located immediately to the east of Procter Street with Theobalds Road to the north and High Holborn to the south. The square provides a crucial linkage with High Holborn and Lamb's Conduit Street via Lamb's Conduit passage, however this route isn't obvious.

The square was laid out in 1684 by the estate developer Nicholas Barbon, taking its name from the Red Lion Inn. Originally Red Lion Square was tightly enclosed by buildings with distinctive diagonal approaches at its four corners, an unusual feature for a garden square in the UK. According to some sources the body of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was popularly believed to have been buried where the square now stands. The square was extensively damaged by bombing in the Second World War; the impressive church of St John the Evangelist was destroyed (site now occupied by Westminster University's School of Law) and the square was extensively redeveloped, along with the eradication of all but one of the diagonal linkages as well as the finer grain network of streets, including Drake and Parton. Some eighteenth-century houses still survive on the southeast side, along with purpose-built residential at Brampton House and Tresham

House. Conway Hall—which is the home of the South Place Ethical Society and the National Secular Society—opens on to the square. At the centre of the garden today is a statue by Ian Walters of Fenner Brockway, which was installed in 1986. There is also a memorial bust of Bertrand Russell.

Due to its close proximity to High Holborn, Theobalds Road and Procter Street, Red Lion Square is a popular lunchtime spot for workers and has a café with outdoor seating at its centre. Red Lion Square hosts the annual Festival of Life celebrating raw/vegan and ethical lifestyles. The square has a traditional layout and due to the large mature trees, planting and railings to the perimeter it is very well enclosed, however does not connect well or interact with its surroundings. The juxtaposition of the busy four-lane Procter Street and the green oasis of Red Lion Square typify the current opposing identities of Holborn.

The entrance to Red Lion Square is currently dominated by large rubbish bins and is uninviting. The footpath surfacing and furniture are in a poor state of repair, the mature shrub planting has gone 'woody' and the grass suffers because of over-shading. During community and stakeholder engagement there was divided opinion

about the current design and layout of Red Lion Square. A large number of people (in particular the business community) felt strongly that the square could offer improved and more diverse facilities, better connection with surrounding areas and a more modern design. However, other participants felt that the layout should be preserved and welcomed the enclosed character adjacent to Procter Street, acknowledging the square needs some restoration work.



## Gray's Inn Gardens

Gray's Inn Gardens are known as 'The Walks'. They are one of the largest private gardens in London and sit on the Historic England List of Registered Parks and Gardens. They were originally designed by Francis Bacon in 1606 using plant species brought back by the great explorer Sir Walter Raleigh. The design was simplified in the mid-1700s by a 'Mr Brown' – likely to be the reputed Landscape Architect Capability Brown. The undeveloped north side of the Gardens has been purposely left open, originally giving way to views of the then undeveloped hills of Highgate and Hampstead which were much valued by the Inn's residents. The main feature is a broad gravelled path between an avenue of mature plane trees, with ornamental trees and shrubs to the rear.

The gardens are typically open to the public between 12:00pm to 2:30pm on weekdays. At other times the Walks are for members use only by the Inns members,

tenants and licensees. Most of the tenants are practising barristers in chambers, other legal professionals and educational establishments.

The south comprises smaller garden areas within South Square and Gray's Inn Square consisting of lawns, rose beds with lavender hedging and areas of seasonal bedding displays. The courtyard plan of buildings here has its origins in a medieval layout when the Inn was first founded and the experience of moving around this space has remained largely unchanged, with narrow walkways, carriageways and alleyway leading from one space to another.





## Lincoln's Inn Fields

Lincoln's Inn Fields is reputed to be the largest residential public square in London. Before that, the land was fenced and used for grazing cattle. It was laid out in the 1630's by William Newton, and it is reported that Inigo Jones drew up a plan for grand houses round the outside of the field and for crossing paths. Lincoln's Inn Fields takes its name from the adjacent Lincoln's Inn, of which the private gardens are separated from the Fields by a perimeter wall and a large gatehouse.

The square was re-planned as a Victorian public garden and opened to the public in 1895. The surrounding houses are now mostly solicitors' offices, though Sir John Soane's house, is now a museum of antiquities.

The grassed area in the centre of the Fields contains a court for tennis and netball, and a bandstand. Cricket and other sports are thought to have been played here in the 18th century.



## Tybalds Estate

Tybalds Estate is located to the north of the study area, between Theobalds Road to the south and the Great Ormond Street Hospital complex to the north. It was built in the aftermath of the Second World War bombings and is a typical high rise housing estate with poor legibility and connections to surrounding areas and low environmental quality. It includes leftover grass and tarmacked areas and limited planting. The estate also includes the more 'natural' play space on Orde Hall Street.

Regeneration of the Tybalds estate in Holborn is part of Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP). This is the Council's 15-year plan to invest money in homes, schools and community facilities.

The Tybalds regeneration programme (planning application 2021/3580/P) received planning approval in November 2022 and in December 2022, Camden approved the award of the regeneration programme's Phase 1a contract and work started in March 2023 to convert the existing ground floor 'undercroft' areas of three buildings (Falcon, Richbell and Blemundsbury) into ten new homes for social rent.

This represents the first phase and the community investment programme at Tybalds Estate.



### 2.6.4 Active recreation (including play)

Notwithstanding the playground and park for children at Coram's Fields to the north of Guilford Street and the tennis courts in Lincoln's Inn Fields (both just outside the study area), the current play provision is inadequate for the size of the permanent population and daily influx of visitors and workers.

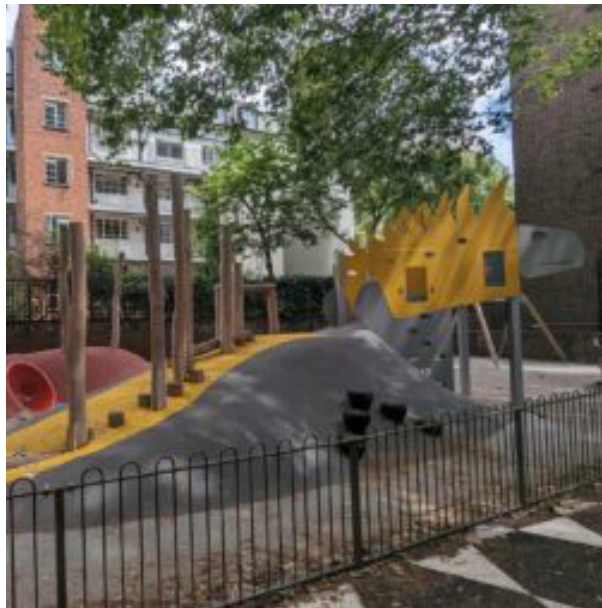
In particular, provision is deficient to the south of the study area. Not only is the quantity of provision poor, the existing play areas are unimaginative, not well integrated with their surroundings and on the whole providing play for younger children only. There is currently very limited provision in the study area for children aged ten and upwards. Given the demographic of the area (a large professional population) there is very little active recreation, such as exercise stations, or urban sports areas provided.

#### Bloomsbury Square

A younger children's traditional play area comprising railings, safety surfacing and proprietary equipment.

#### Old Gloucester Street

The Alf Barrett Play Area, underwent regeneration in 2022 with landscaping, unique play equipment and murals on the walls making it a world away from the previous state. There is a lizard themed climber taking centre stage with exercise stations also provided for a more varied age range and diversity of provision.



#### Tybalds Estate

Orde Hall Street Play Area, comprising traditional equipment for younger children as well as grassed mounding, boulders and large timber logs.



## 2.6.5 Urban Squares and Spaces

Holborn has a very poor provision of public urban squares and spaces. The social life of a city is often played out in its public urban squares and spaces, ranging from the grandest piazzas to small incidental pocket plazas and seating areas. A world class city like London would expect to host a multitude of urban squares, parades, marketplaces, arcades and courtyards and Holborn is no exception. The seasonality of the garden squares also indicates the need for urban spaces that provide year-round use.

The current provision is as follows:

### Queen Square

A paved space to the south of Queen Square Gardens located to the west of Great Ormond Street Hospital and east of Southampton Row and Cosmo Place. The square has a simple grid of mature trees and contains a limited number of seats. In the summer months a number of market stalls reside here, including a large fruit and vegetable stall. The square hosts the occasional street performance and is reasonably well used by hospital.

In 2023, a joint project between Great Ormond Street Hospital and Camden Council developed proposals for the south section of Queen Square to reduce the dominance of the road to the south and improve its attractiveness and usability. These are likely to be implemented in the next few years.



### Princes Circus

In 2023, a new and improved public space at Princes Circus opened. Lying at the junction of High Holborn, Shaftesbury Avenue and New Oxford Street a once constrained, polluted, and underused space was transformed. Reclaiming a section of Shaftesbury Avenue and Bloomsbury Street created a new city piazza, bowtie shaped, with new planting, seating and traffic-free walking and cycling routes.



## Brooke's Market

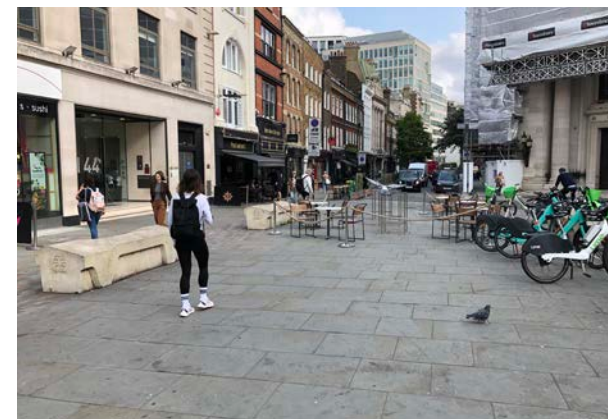
Brooke's Market is an existing public square located to the west of Leather Lane, north of High Holborn, south of The Bourne Estate and east of Gray's Inn Road. It lies on an important east west pedestrian connection that links Farringdon station with Holborn via Greville Street and Gray's Inn Gardens. In the Brooke's market area this connection has poor legibility. The square is framed on all sides by buildings, including the Grade II\* listed Church of St Alban the Martyr and surrounding post-war commercial and residential uses. To the west the post-war social housing has a poor relationship with the square and there is much scope for improvement. Brooke's Market provides vehicular access from High Holborn, via Brooke Street along a small loop through Dorrington Street (to the north) and Beauchamp Street (to the south). Given its close proximity to areas of intense activity, the space provides a cherished refuge for office workers, yet given its location, it is currently under-utilised and only known in the immediate vicinity. Beautiful mature plane trees are a defining feature of the space, yet their large canopies cast deep shadows, hindering its use. The square is dominated by parked cars on all sides; these create a barrier to pedestrian movement, but also detract from the special qualities of place.

## Leather Lane South

The southern section of Leather Lane forms a pedestrianised street that connects Holborn in the south with the intersection of Greville Street in the north. High volumes of people use the street as a thoroughfare, in particular to visit the popular Leather Lane food market at lunchtime. Given the vast numbers of people in the area and its close proximity to the market, the space provides little opportunity to stop and sit, eat lunch or people watch. To the western boundary is the Grade II\* listed former Prudential Assurance Building – an imposing Victorian Gothic building that now provides the headquarters to Historic England. To the east are residential and commercial uses with ground floor retail and cafes.

## The Square at Great Queen Street

At the junction of Drury Lane and Great Queen Street lies a small urban square, comprising seating and alfresco uses, parked scooters, motorbikes and divided by highway. Despite the attractiveness of the street and the notable presence of the grade II\* listed Freemasons Hall, the square lacks a sense of place and a clear role and identity. It is cluttered by street furniture, and contains the renowned Camden bins and benches, the latter were originally designed to restrict anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping and are now reputed to be the pinnacle of 'hostile architecture'.



## Fleet Valley Pocket Park

A pocket park and triangular space at the junction of Mount Pleasant and Laystall Court, outside the entrance of Christopher Hatton Primary School. Comprising planting, seating and SuDS, including rain gardens and underground water storage.



## 2.6.6 Semi-private Open Spaces

There are several spaces within Holborn that do not feel public, however they are publicly accessible. This is because they lie adjacent to restaurants and cafes and the seating is provided by these establishments only. These include:

- \* Waterhouse Square (accessible daytime only)
- \* Pied Bull Yard (accessible in the daytime only)
- \* Pied Bull Courtyard (accessible in the daytime only)
- \* Cosmo Place
- \* Internal Courtyard to The Rosewood Hotel (accessible in the day time only)
- \* Alfresco dining spaces in Coptic Street and Museum Street



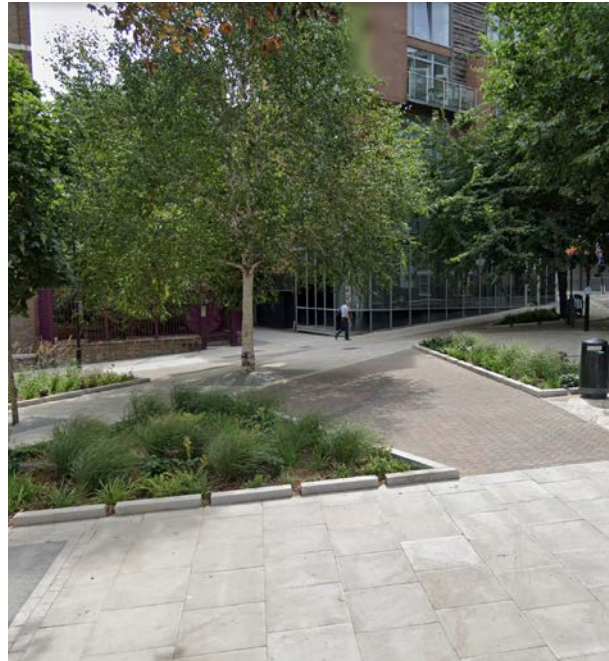
Cosmo Place



## 2.6.7 Public Open Space



- <sup>1</sup> Bloomsbury Square Gardens
- <sup>2</sup> Mount Pleasant Pocket Park
- <sup>3</sup> Brookes Street
- <sup>4</sup> Lincoln's Inn Fields
- <sup>5</sup> Tybald's Estate Play Area







- <sup>1</sup> Parklet at Great Ormond Street
- <sup>2</sup> Gray's Inn Fields
- <sup>3</sup> Red Lion Square
- <sup>4</sup> Alf Barret Playground
- <sup>5</sup> Princes Circus

## 2.6.8 Places To Sit

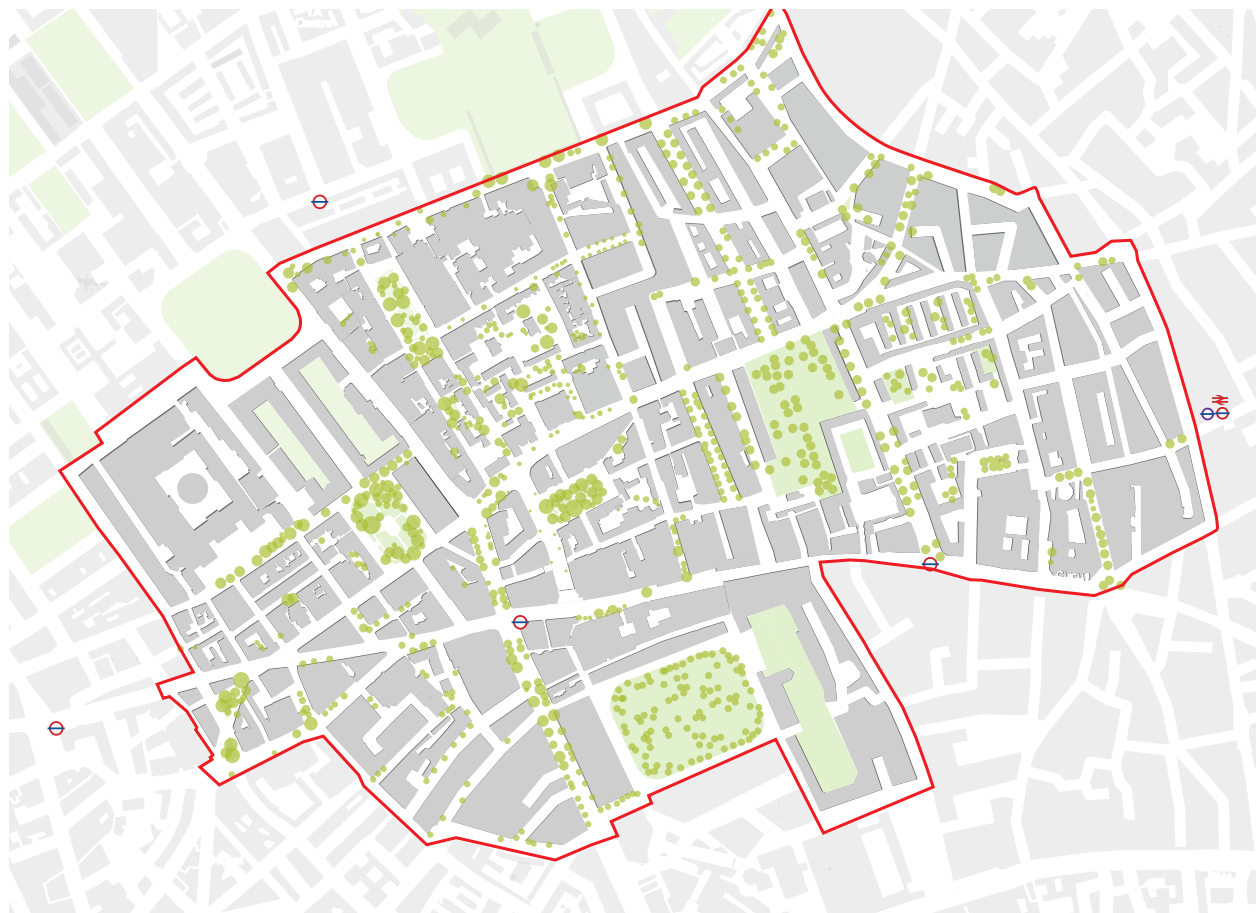
The provision of places to sit in Holborn is grossly inadequate. Only eleven public seats were counted in the streets and incidental urban spaces in the 120 Hectare study area (outside of the Garden Squares). Of those eleven the quality was very poor and most seats not fit for purpose. This provision characterises Holborn as a transitional place for movement as opposed to a place to socialise, people watch, rest or spend time in. In addition, this statistic is woefully short of the accessibility standards which recommend a place to sit every fifty metres.



- Public seating in streets and urban spaces  
For the avoidance of doubt, seating in the gardens squares/parks has been omitted.  
The diagram relates to incidental seating outside of more formal green spaces

## 2.6.9 Trees and planting

Holborn's green infrastructure varies considerably across the area. Tree provision ranges from grand avenues of mature London Planes along Kingsway, Southampton Row (south) and Great Russell Street to streets with little or no trees along Theobalds Road, New Oxford Street, Bloomsbury Way and High Holborn. Tree provision in the garden squares and public spaces is good, however in certain instances trees over-shade and need selective pruning.



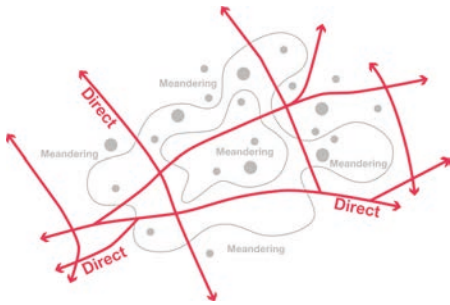
Tree coverage across the study area.

Some trees within private ownership not shown.





## 3.0 Vision



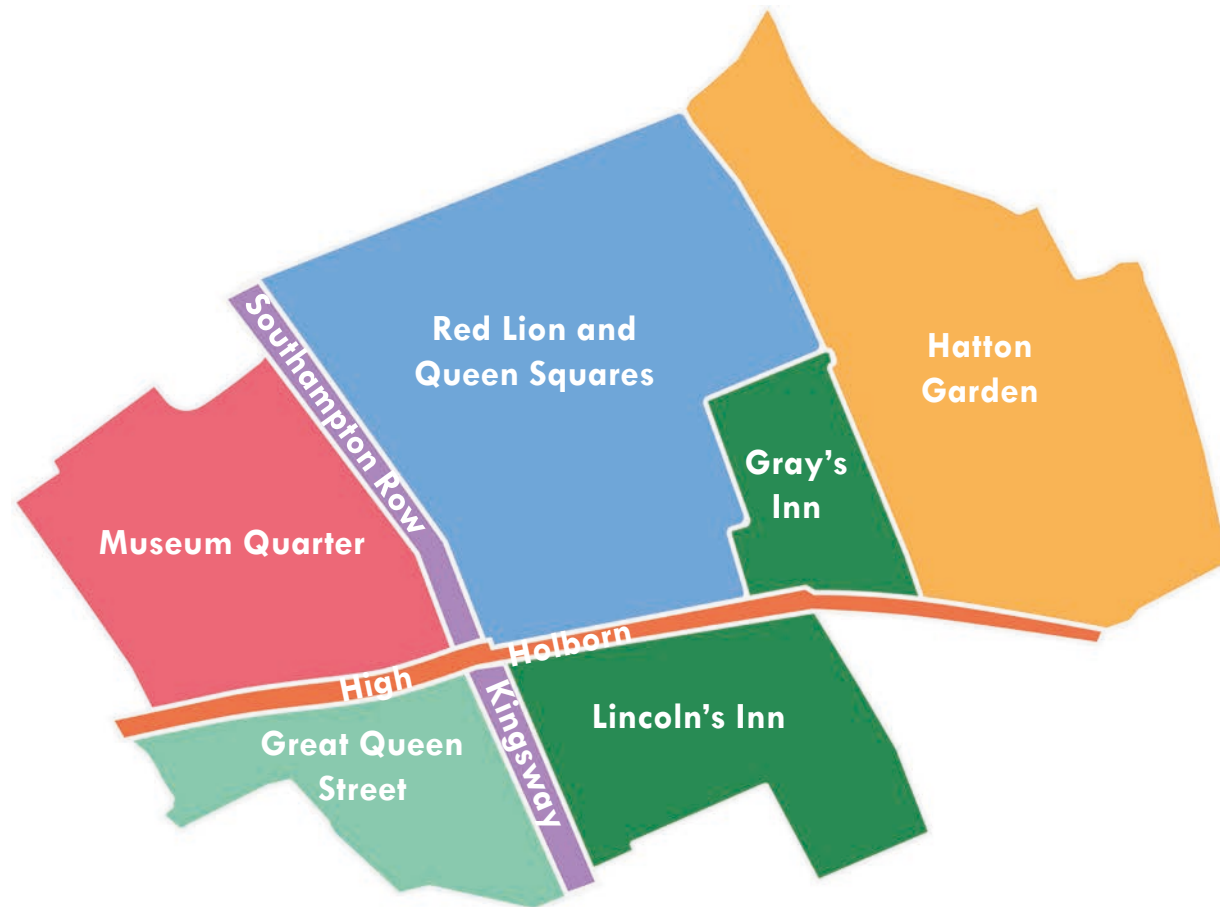
## 3.1 Why a Vision?

Holborn's Public Realm needs a compelling vision that everyone is behind, it is at the heart of the project. The vision needs to reflect true ambition and provide the opportunity for major transformation. It will provide an overarching framework and benchmark that options can be measured against to ensure the level of aspiration is achieved. Importantly, it needs to be deliverable.

## 3.2 The Vision for Holborn & Farringdon

### 3.2.1 A Celebration of What Makes Holborn and Farringdon Special

- \* The area is diverse and comprises a series of identities, not just one.
- \* The public realm should connect people and place, drawing on special qualities to repair eroded identities and broken links.
- \* The remarkable architectural heritage should be made more prominent.







### 3.2.2 A Clear Role & Identity For The Streets

- \* The public realm should demonstrate a clear hierarchy, role and identity to streets to aid connectivity and legibility and reinforce sense of place.
- \* Design streets as ‘places’, with the right balance between ‘place’ and ‘movement’.
- \* Healthy Streets principles should be prioritised in all instances.

### 3.2.3 Safe and Connected Walking and Cycling Routes

- \* All streets should be designed to promote safe walking and cycling, this might comprise de-cluttering, widened pavements, improved legibility, play on the way, green-blue infrastructure etc.
- \* Only in special circumstances should cycling be compromised and, in such cases, nearby alternative routes found.



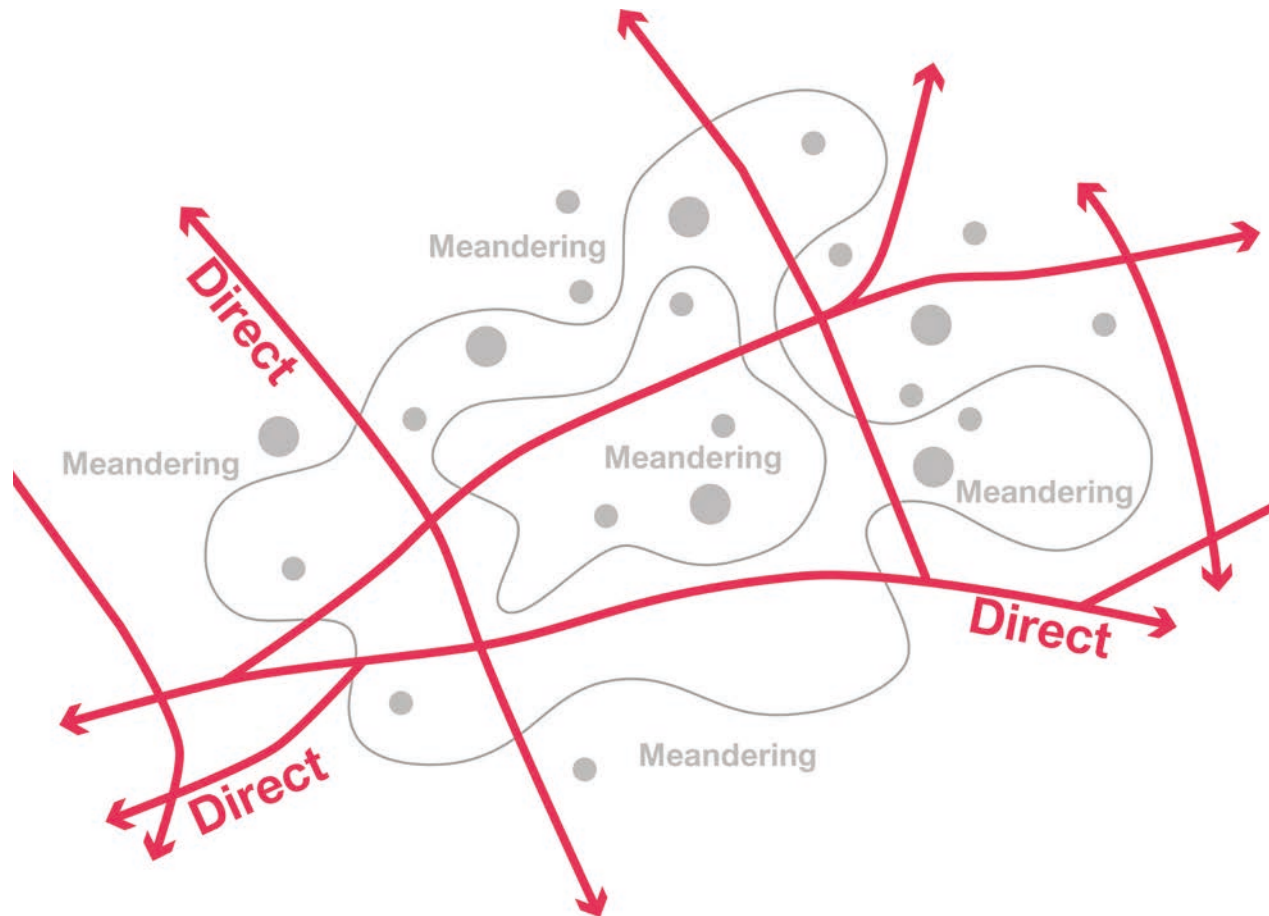
### 3.2.4 One Main Through Route For General Traffic East West



- \* General traffic should be focused along two-way strategic routes, and not duplicated in parallel streets
- \* A safe and direct strategic east/west route to be provided for cyclists

### 3.2.5 Meandering and Direct

- \* A network of beautiful, direct and busy routes should contrast with quiet enclaves, intricate passageways and hidden jewels.
- \* The differences should be intensified.





### 3.2.6 Connecting People and Nature

- \* A holistic approach to place should be adopted, recognising the close links between climate, biodiversity and ecosystem decline, health and wellbeing, and social and economic equality.
- \* Public realm should connect people and place and amplify all opportunities to increase contact with nature and water, improving biodiversity and climate resilience.
- \* Spaces for nature should be interconnected, strengthening the local biodiversity network.

### 3.2.7 A Diverse Network Of Healthy Urban Spaces

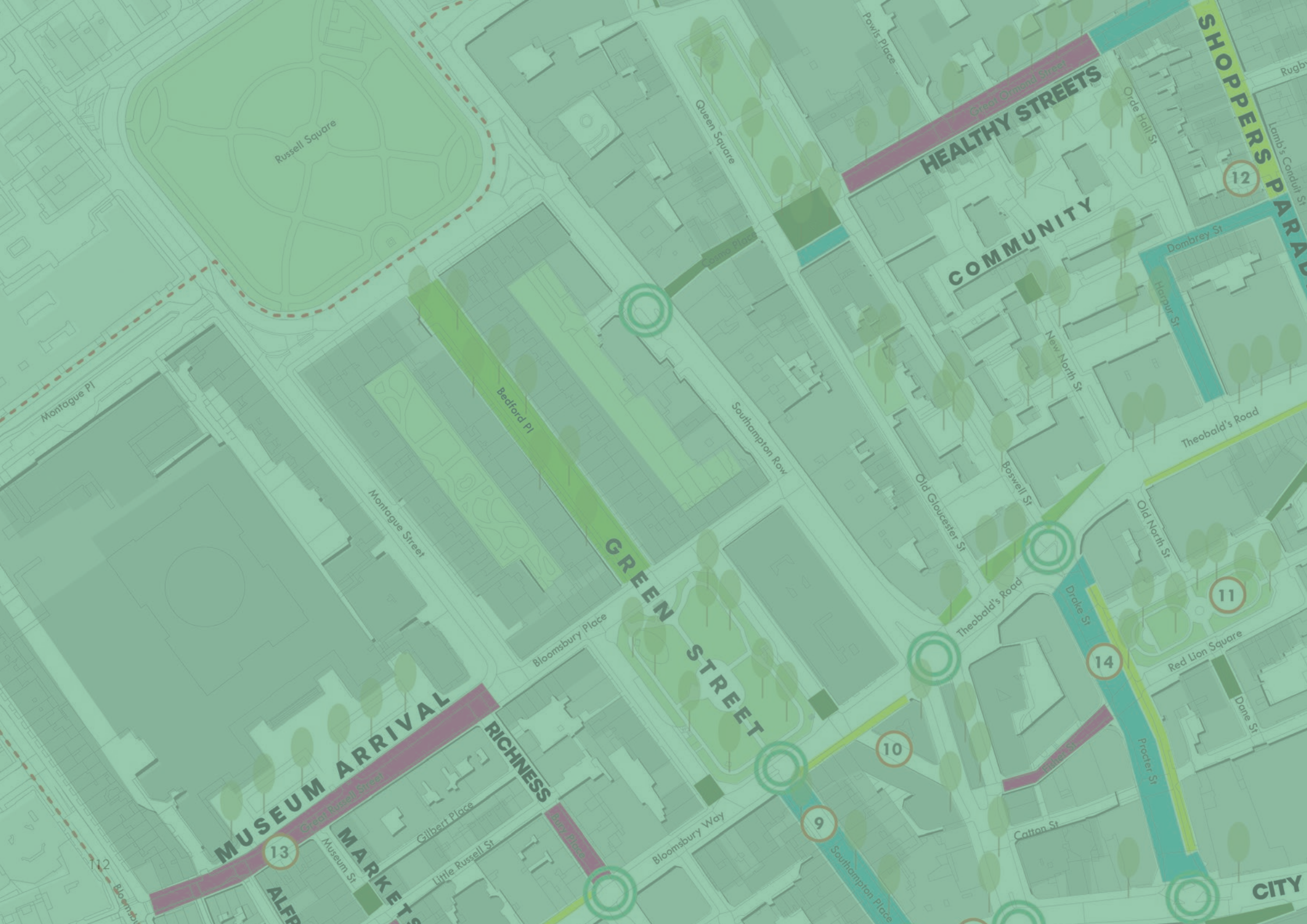
- \* The area needs to provide a network of different public spaces, ranging from larger civic and green spaces where the community can come together, to smaller incidental spaces and seating areas.
- \* Where possible spaces should be flexible and adaptable, with pop up uses and varied activation to supporting local culture, communities and businesses
- \* The public realm should be more experiential





### 3.2.8 Uncovering the Secret Histories

- \* The public realm should be distinctive and be informed by local history, heritage and culture.
- \* It should reveal the extraordinary histories and stories of the area to reinforce sense of place.



**HEALTHY STREETS**

**COMMUNITY**

**GREEN STREET**

**MUSEUM ARRIVAL**

**MARKETS**

**RICHNESS**

**SHOPPERS PARADE**

Russell Square

Red Lion Square

12

11

10

9

13

14

Powis Place

Queen Square

Great Ormond Street

Orde Hall St

Montague Pl

Bedford Pl

Southampton Row

Montague Street

Bloomsbury Place

Old Gloucester St

Boswell St

New North St

Dombrey St

Harpur St

Theobald's Road

Old North St

Theobald's Road

Drake St

Dane St

Procter St

Cotton St

Bloomsbury Way

Gilbert Place

Little Russell St

Bury Place

Museum St

ALFR

CITY



# 4.0 Opportunities Plan









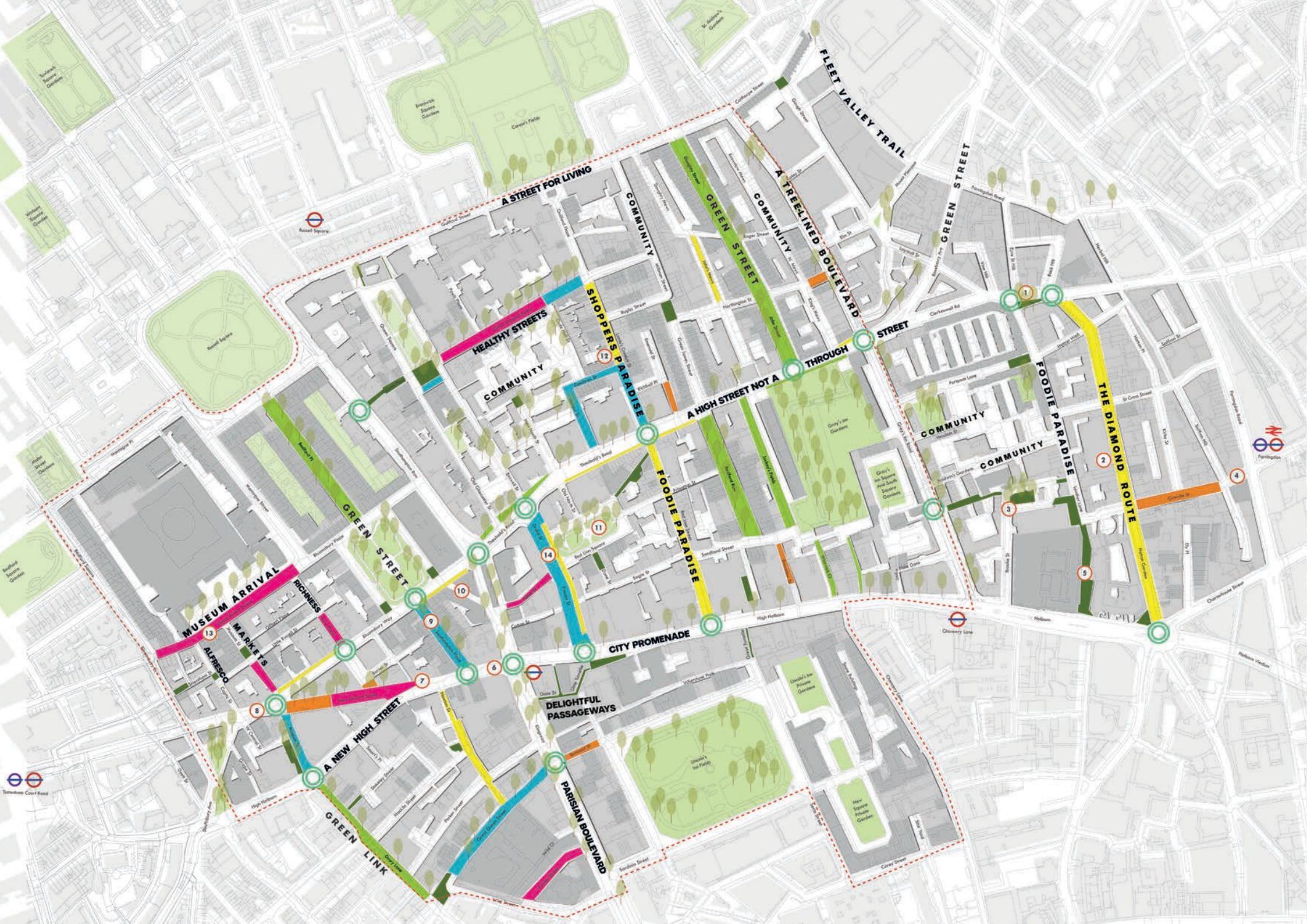
## 4.1 Opportunities for movement and public realm change

The following plan highlights the movement and public realm opportunities across the study area.

### Key Projects (As of 2015)

1. The Clerkenwell Piazza
2. Hatton Garden
3. Brooke's Market
4. Greville Street
5. Leather Lane South
6. High Holborn Kingsway Junction
7. High Holborn New Oxford Street Junction
8. New Oxford Street Bloomsbury Way Junction
9. Southampton Place
10. Kingsway Sicilian Avenue
11. Red Lion Square
12. Lambs Conduit Street
13. Great Russell Street
14. Procter Street

-  Street closed to general traffic at all times except emergency access
-  Closed to general traffic (Timed servicing 7 - 11am & emergency access only)
-  Street becomes one-way/ one-lane
-  Opportunities for new and enhanced public spaces
-  Streets with green infrastructure improvements (no movement changes, however space gained through reassignment of under-utilised or on street parking space)
-  Streets with public realm enhancements (no movement changes, opportunities for de-cluttering, new materials, seating, parklets etc.)
-  Proposed key locations for new/ improved crossings



A STREET FOR LIVING

A TRELINED BOULEVARD

HEALTHY STREETS

SHOPPERS PARADISE

A HIGH STREET NOT A THROUGH STREET

FOODIE PARADISE

THE DIAMOND ROUTE

MUSEUM ARRIVAL

MARKETS

RICHNESS

A NEW HIGH STREET

CITY PROMENADE

DELIGHTFUL PASSAGeways

PARISIAN BOULEVARD

GREEN LINK



11

14

9

6

7

8

10

12

3

5

2

4





N  
E  
W

COFFEE



## 5.0 Key Projects

## 5.1 New Oxford Street

### Existing

New Oxford Street was once part of the notorious rookeries of St Giles, an expanse of slum dwellings with high levels of crime and poverty. At the time, the area would have comprised intertwined streets and passages, with densely populated housing, street markets and inns. In 1847 a slum clearance programme created New Oxford Street, providing a new and important link between High Holborn to the east and Oxford Street to the west.

In contrast to the colour and life that once prevailed, today, the character of the street is rather ubiquitous and not befitting of its strategic role, or location. Lined with modernised ten-storey buildings, it presents a rather ordinary, two-lane route, lined with parked cars and motorbikes and providing access to Bury Place. To the southeast, Commonwealth House, a landmark Art Deco building, with attractive shopfronts, is the notable exception. And whilst there are a few active frontages, these are primarily on the southern side of the street, and don't spill out onto the street itself, and there is nowhere to sit. It is a place to hurry through

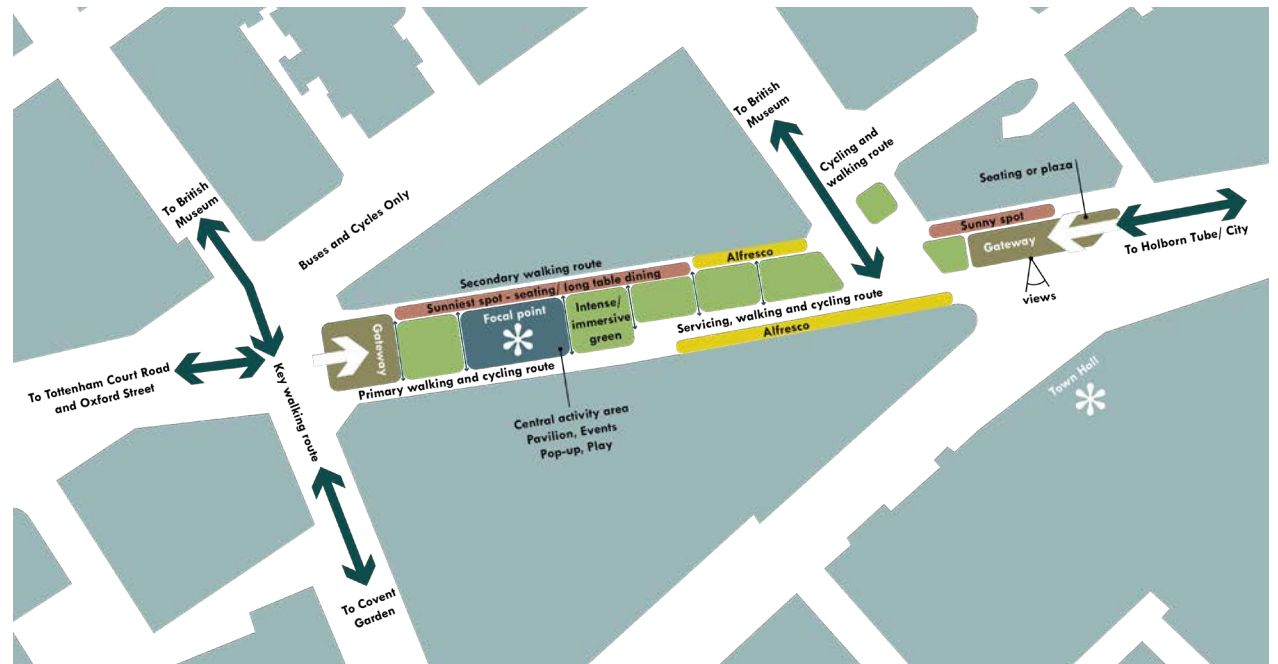


and not spend time. The street is shaded for much of the day; however, it does get sun in the afternoon. The existing street trees that were put in when the Post building was redeveloped suggest there is opportunity for further greening amongst the existing underground utilities.



## Proposed - A Sanctuary in the City

The traffic changes proposed as part of the Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood project potentially close New Oxford Street, to create a new safe pedestrian and cycle connection. This will provide a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a new type of public space for London. It will re-imagine the street for people and nature and how we view our city streets. The vision is to create a street that has a unique sense of place and authenticity within the Holborn community, whilst providing an opportunity for activation and discovery throughout the day and at night. A rich tapestry of vertical gardens, biodiverse rainwater planting and signature trees, will create an immersive experience. A green oasis, with incidental play and comfortable seating. A beautiful new kiosk with alfresco seating, will provide a sculptural centrepiece and activate the space. 'Play on the way' will weave in and out of sensory planting - stepping stones, traversing beams, balance pads, swing seats, musical xylophones, wind chimes, and giant seesaws, could all have a place here. Magical lighting will help to activate the area and create calm, inviting spaces which are also safe. Environmental benefits will include supporting pollinators, cooling the urban heat in summer, providing flood resilience and better air quality.



Spatial principles



Aerial views of the potential scheme



## Existing - New Oxford Street





**A Sanctuary in the City** *(indicative image)*



## Existing - New Oxford Street/ High Holborn



**A Sanctuary in the City** *(indicative image)*



## 5.2 Great Russell Street

### Existing

Great Russell Street lies in a remarkable and contextually strategic location adjacent to The British Museum, an internationally renowned architectural masterpiece and destination. The arrival experience that greets over six million visitors a year, is currently congested, polluted, and noisy.

Stretching from Bloomsbury Square to the east and Tottenham Court Road to the west, this study focuses on the stretch of Great Russell Street directly in front of the museum, lying between Bloomsbury Street and Montague Street. In this section, the existing two-way road is heavily used by buses, tourist coaches, taxis, and general traffic. Pedestrians are typically confined to narrow pavements and cyclists share busy road space. Despite the two zebra crossings, there are regular conflicts between pedestrians and traffic. Beautiful London Plane trees line the northern edge alongside the British Museum railings; however, their roots have lifted the Yorkstone paving creating an uneven walking surface. Along



the southern edge, the street is cluttered, and shops and cafes spill out onto the small pavement and reduce space for pedestrians to move freely.



## Proposed - The Museum Boulevard

Great Russell Street is closed to through traffic, providing a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a befitting setting to The British Museum and a new public space for London. A simple, elegant and uncluttered new square will accommodate large numbers of people visiting the museum and create a lively and sociable place. Proposals include natural stone paving (with a richness of detailing), new seating and removal of clutter such as unnecessary signage. The introduction of beautiful planting at the boundary wall, will reinforce the street as an attractive green boulevard. Opportunities to explore the sensitive removal of the existing railings, being mindful of heritage sensitivities should be explored. This would provide a startling new entrance square, and setting to the building, and a bold message that The Museum is *for* the people.



Borås Textile Fashion Center | © Dorien Monnens



Leuven, Belgium | © Kevin Liebens



Cathedral Square | © Claire Borley Photography

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Great Russell Street



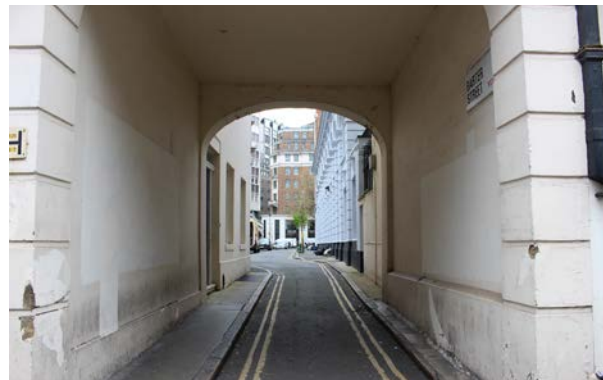
**The Museum Boulevard** *(indicative image)*



## 5.3 Southampton Place

### Existing

Southampton Place is an attractive Georgian street that sits on a historical axis that runs from Russell Square to Bloomsbury Square Gardens. Originally the arrival promenade into the gardens, the historic architecture remains largely intact, with the exception of the south-eastern corner where a newer commercial block now sits. The one-way road is currently used as a connection from High Holborn to Bloomsbury Way and therefore, can often have disproportionate levels of traffic on it, diminishing its historical significance. Much of the parking that lines both sides of the street is permit holder only, but there are also some pay to park spaces.





**Proposed – A beautiful street in the Museum Quarter**

The public realm design aims to create a high-quality street that infers pedestrian and cycle priority and creates a beautiful setting the Georgian buildings. A symmetrical design reinforces the historical axis, improving connectivity with Bloomsbury Square Gardens, and the introduction of formal rain gardens and carefully located tree planting, draws the garden feel down into the street. Proposals include, reducing parking numbers, new rain gardens, new street tree planting and surface treatment to the carriageway to infer pedestrian priority.



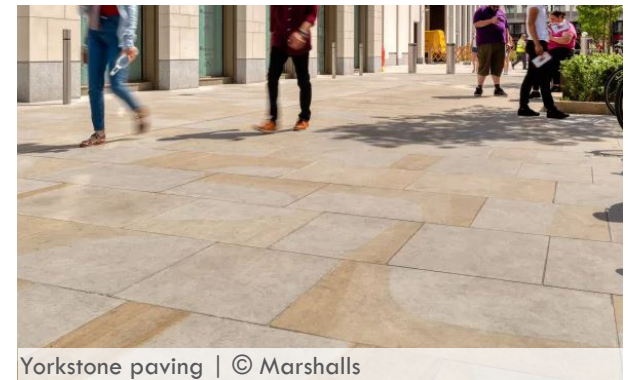
Lavender | © Danielle Corner



Street branding



Planting | © Zane Lee



Yorkstone paving | © Marshalls

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

**Existing - Southampton Place**



**A beautiful street in the Museum Quarter** *(indicative image)*



## 5.4 High Holborn Junction

### Existing

The junction at High Holborn, Southampton Row and Kingsway remains one of the busiest in London, both for pedestrians, and vehicles. And whilst the junction was improved in 2018 to include new diagonal crossings and a widened footway, the area is still heavily congested during peak hours and there are high numbers of road casualties. The Holborn Safety Scheme proposes another tranche of improvements to the area, due to start soon. The scheme will reduce Drake Street and Procter Street to one traffic lane and one bus lane, to allow space for a segregated cycle track and introduce other cycle improvements to High Holborn. At the junction thus includes a cycle early release and bigger cycle box, with two-stage right turn facilities.

The public realm presents a weak arrival gateway to Holborn from the underground station. The environment is cluttered, the kiosks are poor quality and obstruct views and space available and there no clear wayfinding. The experience is chaotic and



stressful, further compounded by large number of visitors to The British Museum, lingering in the area to orientate themselves and find a clear and safe onward route



### Proposed

The vision for the area is to create a new welcoming and uncluttered arrival space. This will relocate the existing kiosks and remove any un-necessary street clutter. It will improve paving and introduce new wayfinding to key destinations, such as The British Museum.



Oxford Street, London | © Krists Luhaers



Oxford Street, London | © Joe Stubbs

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - High Holborn Junction



Picture taken before improvements in 2021

## High Holborn Junction *(indicative image)*



## 5.5 New Turnstile

### Existing

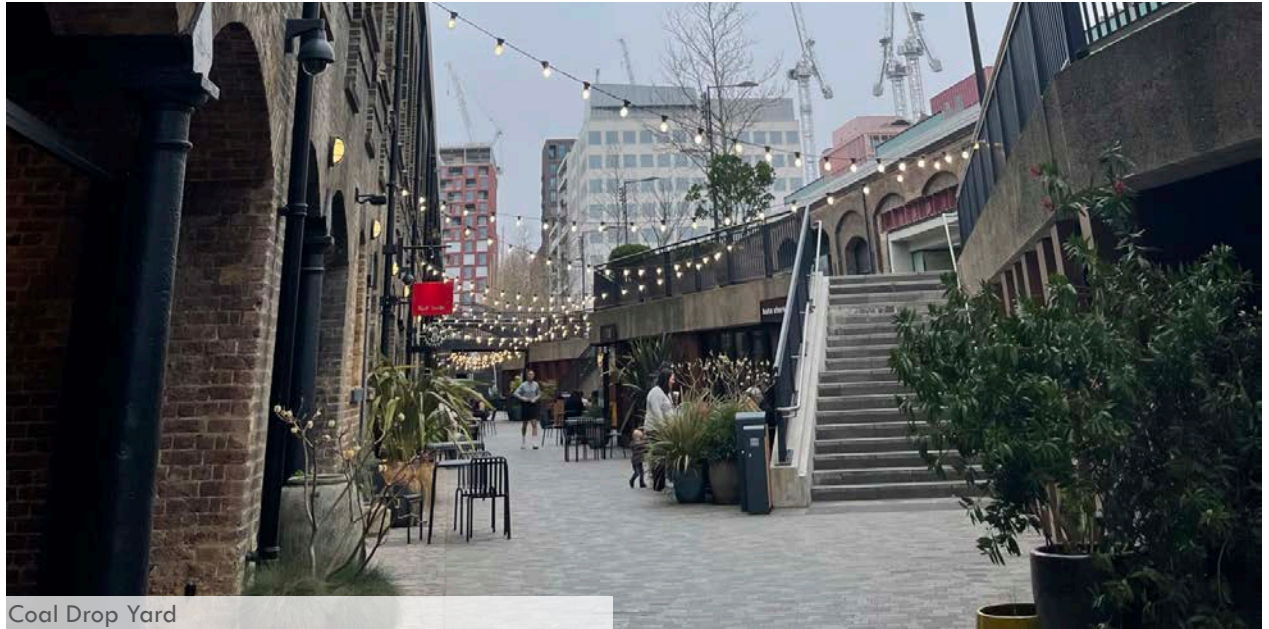
New Turnstile passage lies to the east of Holborn tube station and provides an important pedestrian link from High Holborn to Lincoln's Inn Fields. The passage is currently lined by blank frontages to both sides, and has low-light levels, making it feel unwelcoming during the night.



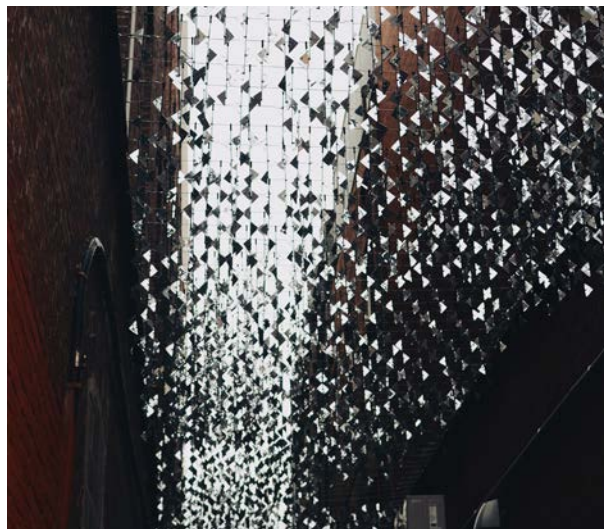


**Proposed**

The public realm will be enhanced to create a safe and attractive walking route. New paving and catenary lighting will provide a welcome alternative for pedestrians on High Holborn.



Coal Drop Yard



Urban Chandelier, Chattanooga | © Christian Bowan

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - New Turnstile



**New Turnstile** *(indicative image)*



## 5.6 Theobalds Road

### Existing

Theobalds road provides an important connection. It links Bloomsbury Way in the west with Clerkenwell Road in the east. The road is currently a busy four-lane (two-way) carriageway, dropping down to three lanes to the east of Red Lion Street. The character of the street varies along its length. Large commercial blocks line a wide carriageway to the west, transitioning to a more compact and human-scale street lined by historic mansion blocks to the east. There are two high street areas along the street, the first opposite Harpur Street, and the second adjacent to Holborn Library. Gray's Inn Gardens line the south-eastern length of the street, however at present they create a long blank frontage, made up of a brick wall. Much of the street is devoid of trees, however two pockets lie to the very western end at the Old Gloucester Street junction, and at the Lamb's Conduit Street junction.

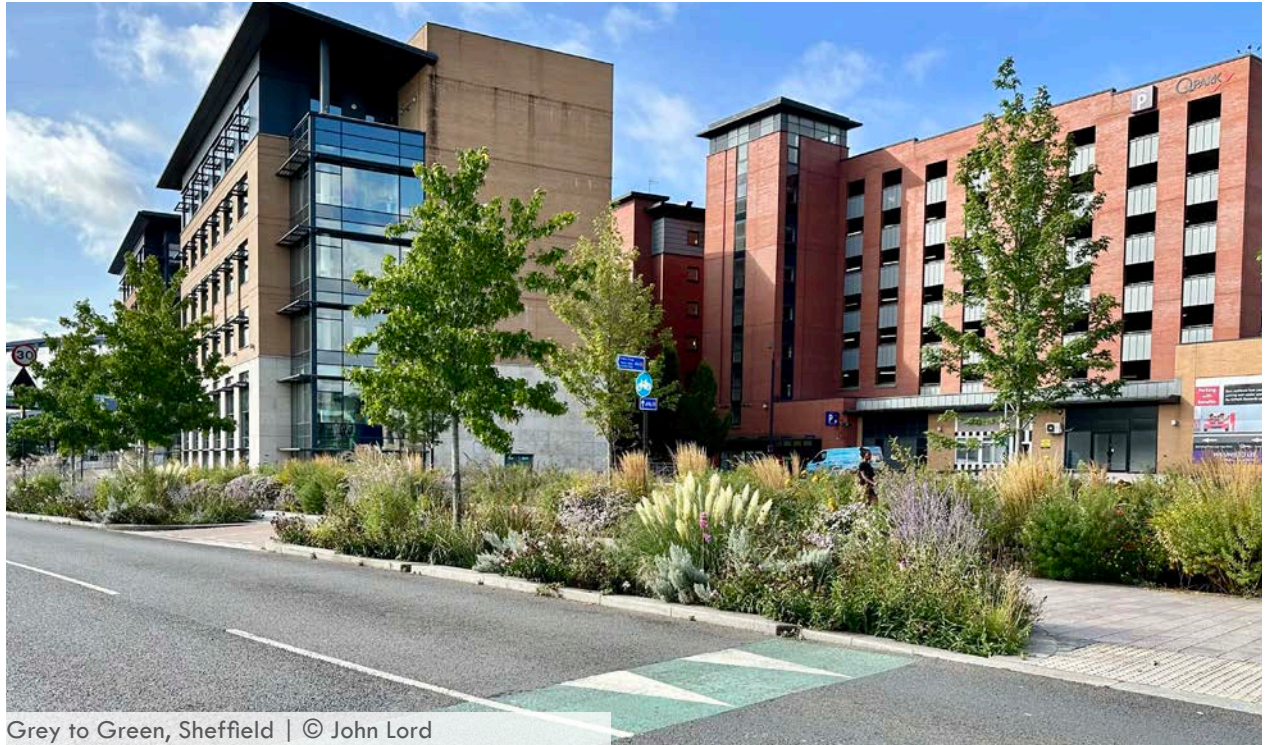


## Proposed - A High Street not a through street

As part of the Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood and the Holborn to Clerkenwell Strategic Cycleway scheme, Theobalds Road is transformed. It changes from four vehicular lanes to two, with segregated cycle lanes, floating bus stops and de-cluttering. The character of the street will transition, responding to local context, identity and space available. Where space affords, it will comprise generous pavements, beautiful rain gardens and new tree planting. Providing an attractive and more climate resilient environment for pedestrians and cyclists. In the high streets areas, the public realm will support local uses, introducing spill-out space, incidental seating and planting, as appropriate. North south pedestrian connections across the street will be reinforced, through measures such as raised tables, wayfinding, de-cluttering, art and material changes.

Features include:

- \* Street layout amended to give a more informal park-like feel.
- \* New trees and low maintenance planting.
- \* Pocket parks (seating, art and planting) where space and desire lines allow.
- \* Wider pavements where space allows.



Grey to Green, Sheffield | © John Lord



Grey to Green, Sheffield | © John Lord

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Theobalds Road



**A High Street not a through street** *(indicative image)*



## 5.7 Queen Square

### Existing

Queen Square lies between Great Ormond Street and Southampton Row at Russell Square. It comprises a traditional London Garden square to the north and a paved space with mature trees to the south. The southern space is currently cluttered, has a lack of social opportunities and is compromised by the road, rendering access difficult for people travelling from the Mary Ward Centre and Sight and Sound Centre with sight impairment. There is the opportunity to provide a much needed resource for the local community, as well as visitors and patients to Great Ormond Street Hospital. This proposal primarily focuses on the space to the south; however, the northern green space has the opportunity for new connections through the space, improved planting, and events use.





### Proposed - A green and sociable square

The phrase ‘Less is more’ describes a future Queen Square. The square should be befitting of its historic stature, using the canopy cover as a green backdrop to new social seating opportunities, a simplified materials palette, and newly laid accessible footways. The space has been viewed in conjunction with the northern Queen Square Gardens, providing an ‘anteroom’ to the green gardens, that’s more flexible for a different range of temporary uses and events. There are no plazas in the area around Queen Square, so this space provides an important role in the wider public space network.

(To note - this a joint Camden and Great Ormond Street Hospital Project)



Whitfield Gardens | © Michael Grubb Studio



Pétanque | © Michal Parzuchowski

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing Queen Square



**A green and sociable square** *(indicative image)*



## 5.8 Great Ormond Street

### Existing

Great Ormond Street is unsafe and noisy, dominated by vehicles and traffic congestion. Its air pollution levels frequently exceed World Health Organisation guidelines. This is of particular concern for the local community who use the street every day, and Great Ormond Street Hospital, which receives and treats children with respiratory disease. Reimagining the street could address these issues and create an exemplar street that demonstrates how healthcare can integrate seamlessly with community as part of the healthy city.



### Proposed - A Green, Playful and Social Street

Great Ormond Street is transformed from a two-way, traffic dominated street into a pedestrian friendly, green, playful and social space for all of the local community to use. New mature trees would be located to the northern edge of the street where utilities allow more flexibility. Rain gardens are located along the edge of the carriageway to capture water from the street and surrounding footways. Social spaces that allow relaxation, contemplation, or informal play provide mini breaks along the street. On the southern side of the street the footpaths would be re-laid to provide accessible routes for all with new lighting features, and space for spill out from adjacent retail, food and beverage , and coffee shops along the southern edge.

(To note - this a joint Camden and Great Ormond Street Hospital Project)



Alfred Place | © Neil Speakman



Battersea | © Neil Speakman



Alfred Place | © Neil Speakman



Burgess Park | © Helena Smith

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Great Ormond Street



**A Green, Playful and Social Street** *(indicative image)*



## 5.9 Lamb's Conduit Street

### Existing

Lamb's Conduit Street, named after William Lambe, who in 1564 made a charitable contribution to rebuild the Holborn Conduit, is today a bustling street full of independent shops. The Lamb and Perseverance pubs date back to the early 18th Century and spill-out onto the street, complementing the coffee shops and wine bars which sit next to independent retail.

The street stretches from Guildford Place in the north, to Theobalds Road in the south and transitions from general traffic to service access only in the central section where the street hosts the majority of the shops. This central section is lined by bollards which clutter the streetscene, alongside mature trees at intermittent intervals which create a softer, more residential feel. The shops have started to colonise the street with planted pots, providing a richness, however for the most part the street is paved from frontage to frontage.





### Proposed - A Community Haven

The existing street is simplified to provide an attractive and uncluttered setting and allow the shops and cafes to spill out, where appropriate. Clutter in the form of bollards, barriers and signposts are removed and rationalised to provide a high quality street for pedestrians and cyclists. A simple palette of natural stone paving is proposed with a richness of detailing and a simple organisation of trees and furniture.



Pavilion Road, London



Earlham Street West



Earlham Street West

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

**Existing - Lamb's Conduit Street**



**A Community Haven** *(indicative image)*



## 5.10 Red Lion Street

### Existing

Red Lion Street runs from Theobalds Road to High Holborn. Known for its collection of restaurants, cafes, and pubs, it has recently been closed to through traffic (in 2022) between Eagle Street and Princeton Street, and now features wider pavements and a dedicated cycle lane for people moving between Theobalds Road and High Holborn.

The southern section of the street opens out to a wider street section and is lined by larger footprint commercial blocks. This section has existing mature trees lining the eastern side, along with an extensive run of cycle hire facilities.

The community character that exists to the central closed section starts to be lost to the northern and southern sections, reducing the appeal of the street on arrival.



**Proposed**

Developed by Central District Alliance (CDA), these early ideas explore opportunities for a greener and more comfortable Red Lion Street. Potential opportunities include more trees and plants, seats, and livelier spaces to meet or play. Blank gables ends to buildings could incorporate street murals, as part of a contextual driven arts programme. Trees and rain gardens would also help the street adapt to a changing climate and stay comfortable for everyone.



Westgate, Oxford | © Claire Borley Photography



Alfresco Dining | © Igor Starkov



Westgate, Oxford | © Claire Borley Photography

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Red Lion Street



**Red Lion Street** *(indicative image)*



© Central District Alliance/BDP

## 5.11 Red Lion Square

### Existing

Red Lion Square is a garden square located immediately to the east of Procter Street with Theobalds Road to the north and High Holborn to the south. The square provides a crucial linkage with High Holborn and Lamb's Conduit Street via Lamb's Conduit passage, however this route isn't obvious. In recent years Dane Street and Princeton Street have been closed to through vehicular traffic.

Originally Red Lion Square was tightly enclosed by buildings with distinctive diagonal approaches at its four corners, an unusual feature for a garden square in the UK. The square was extensively damaged by bombing in the Second World War; and the square was extensively redeveloped, along with the eradication of all but one of the diagonal linkages as well as the finer grain network of streets, including Drake and Parton.

Due to its close proximity to High Holborn, Theobalds Road and Procter Street, Red Lion Square is a popular lunchtime spot for workers and has a café with outdoor seating at its centre. The square has a traditional layout and due to the large mature trees, planting



and railings to the perimeter it is very well enclosed, however does not connect well or interact with its surroundings.

The entrance to Red Lion Square is currently dominated by large rubbish bins and the bus stop along Procter Street. The footpath surfacing and some furniture are in a poor state of repair, the mature shrub planting has gone 'woody' and the grass suffers because of over-shading.





## Proposed - The outdoor living room

Comprehensive re-design of Red Lion Square to provide a new square fit for the 21st Century. This would forge a new identity and create a new square of the highest design and build quality.

Proposals would include the following:

- \* New pedestrian connections east west from Procter Street through Lamb's Conduit Passage to Lamb's Conduit and Red Lion Streets, picking up existing pedestrian desire lines
- \* Removal of railings and planting to the boundaries (in particular to the west) so that Red Lion Square 'opens up' to improve connections with surroundings
- \* Design from building edge to edge.
- \* New and improved uses such as water play, raised lawns for sitting and sunbathing, giant jenga, table tennis, chess and connect four.
- \* A quieter area with lawn, planting and mature trees for local residents to the east of the square
- \* New herbaceous planting, with an emphasis on colour, biodiversity and low maintenance
- \* New high quality refreshment



Battersea | © Neil Speakman

- kiosk and outdoor seating area
- \* Lighting to encourage safe night-time uses and provide an attractive identity
- \* New park furniture
- \* New entrance gates
- \* Crown reduction and removal of mature trees to reduce shading impacts
- \* New tree planting in more appropriate locations



St James Park, London

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

**Existing - Red Lion Square**



**The outdoor living room** *(indicative image)*



## 5.12 Clerkenwell Road

### Existing

A prominent space located at the junction of Leather Lane and Clerkenwell Road. It lies on an important pedestrian connection linking Clerkenwell in the east with Holborn and Bloomsbury in the west and Leather Lane Market and Hatton Garden in the south with residential areas in the north, including the new residential areas at Mount Pleasant. The space is framed by attractive buildings. These include the Lever Building to the south - a prominent former Victorian warehouse that provides office space and the Grade II listed Radcliff Buildings, part of the Bourne Estate. To the north lie a mix of uses including offices, local retail, pubs, cafes and restaurants. At the northern boundary the space is severed by Clerkenwell Road, a busy east west connector with poor provision for cyclists.

Three beautiful mature London Plane trees with sculptural forms are a defining feature of the space, however their presence is lost with the surrounding clutter with detracts from their special qualities and obstructs pedestrian movement. This includes two toilet units, litter bins, phone boxes, hire



bikes and traffic signage. Given its close proximity to areas of intense activity, in particular the popular Leather Lane market, the space does not fulfil its potential and provides a through route rather than a space to gather.

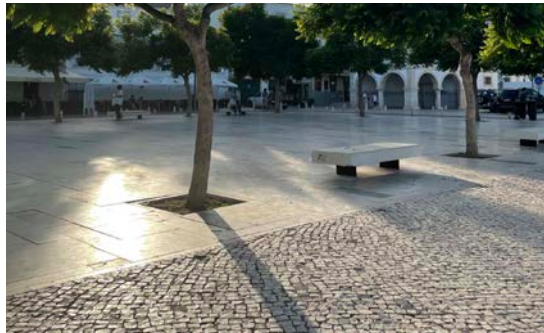


## Proposed – The Clerkenwell Piazza

The vision seeks to create a much-needed public square at this key gateway. The design removes the existing clutter and provides a high-quality setting to surrounding buildings of architectural quality.

Features include:

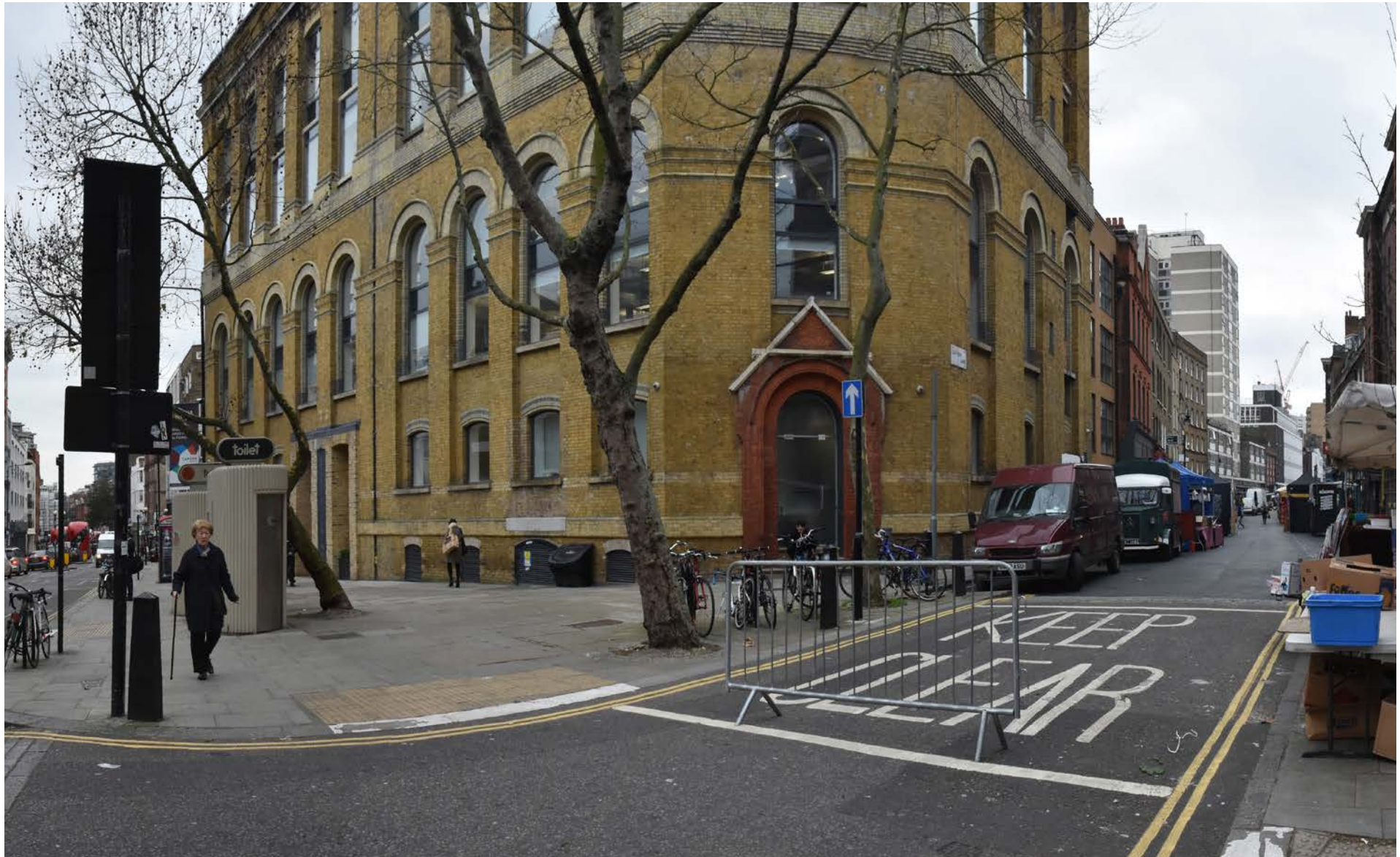
- \* Subtle references to the areas Italian heritage interpreted through potential arts projects and the use of beech hedges (low clipped hedges are a signature Italian planting design style). The hedges also provide some protection from the road. Reference to a Piazza in the name also pays homage to this past.
- \* A single high quality natural stone surface (such as yorkstone) unifies the space.
- \* Clerkenwell Road from St Peter’s Church in the east to Laystall Street in the west incorporates a raised table to infer pedestrian priority and accommodate multiple desire lines. This reinforces the strategic role of the street as a ‘High Street not a Through Street’.
- \* Detailed design of the street should ensure that any accessibility issues are addressed, whilst incorporating elements to infer a different character



- and provide a high-quality setting.
- \* The access to Leather Lane market is maintained via a shared surface and removable bollards.
- \* The square will provide a much-needed incidental seating space, in particular at lunchtimes to support the market.

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Clerkenwell Road



**The Clerkenwell Piazza** *(indicative image)*



## 5.13 Leather Lane South

### Existing

Leather Lane is contextually strategic, linking Holborn, Hatton Garden and areas to the north. The quality of the public realm at this key gateway is poor. It does not provide an appropriate setting to the Prudential Assurance building or reflect the importance of the street as a popular pedestrian route. The furniture comprises a disarray of raised brick planters, concrete and brick patterned pavers, heritage lanterns, litter bins and an ugly upright structure that provides air ventilation. There are few opportunities for seating and railings on brick planter walls suggest that it is actively discouraged. The first impression of the street from Holborn is characterised by large refuse bins. There are a number of small to medium trees running to the centre of the street that are reasonably attractive.





## Proposed - An attractive and welcome linkage

Developed by Central District Alliance, the vision is to provide a street that's a greener, more comfortable space for all.

Features include:

- \* Retain the existing trees and keep the space open to support ease of movement.
- \* Potential to modify the external structure to the London Underground vent to create a 'local marker' identifying Leather Lane.
- \* Add cycle and E-scooter parking.
- \* Replace existing planting with a more diverse and ecologically rich palette.
- \* Provide opportunities along the existing wall to meet, sit and rest.
- \* Retain spill out space for pubs, and introduce tables and chairs to the north for market visitors, helping to animate the public realm.
- \* Remove existing brick planters to improve circulation and allow space for more cycle parking.
- \* Remove existing planting to improve circulation and maintenance.
- \* Declutter excess street signs to make the area more welcoming.



A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Leather Lane South



**An attractive and welcome linkage** *(indicative image)*



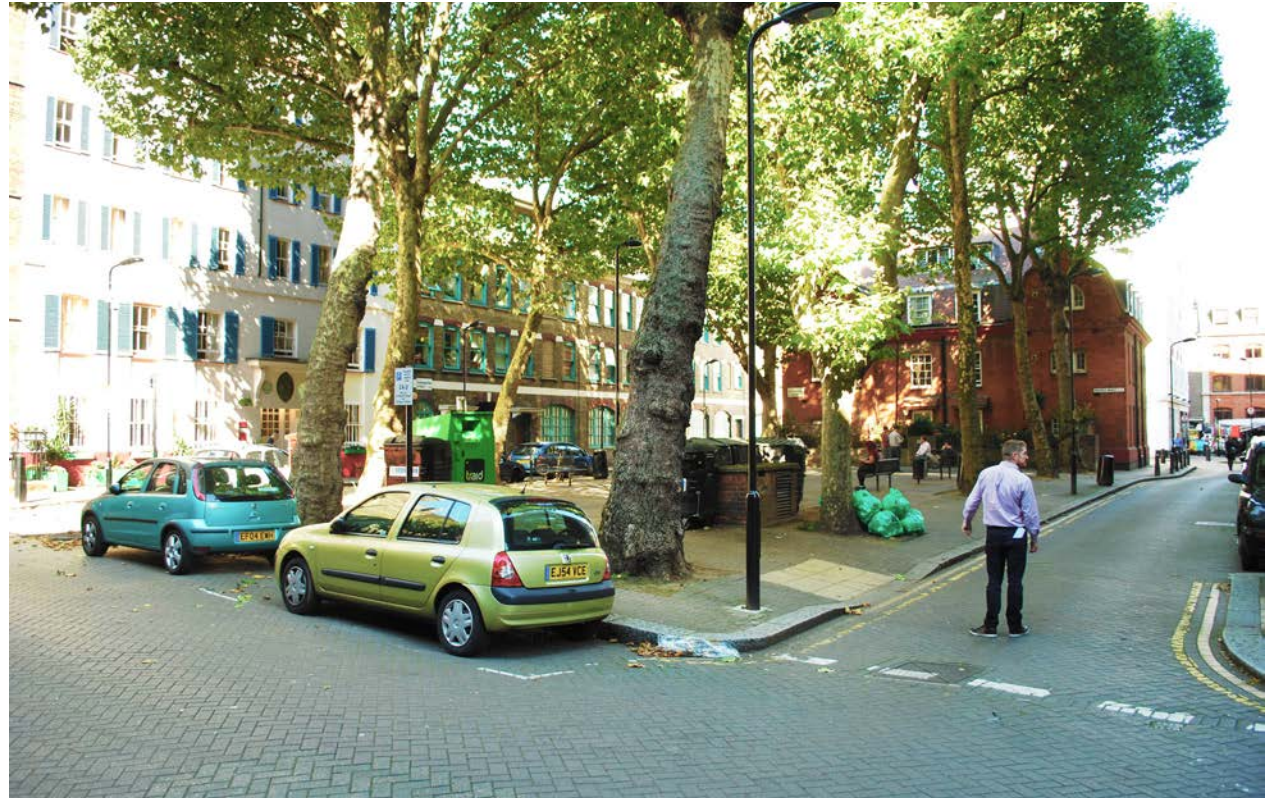
© Central District Alliance/BDP

## 5.14 Brookes Market

### Existing

Brooke's Market is an existing public square located to the west of Leather Lane, north of High Holborn, south of The Bourne Estate and east of Gray's Inn Road. It lies on an important east west pedestrian connection that links Farringdon station with Holborn via Greville Street and Gray's Inn Gardens. In the Brooke's market area this connection has poor legibility. The square is framed on all sides by buildings, including the Grade II\* listed Church of St Alban the Martyr and surrounding post-war commercial and residential uses. To the west the post-war social housing has a poor relationship with the square and there is much scope for improvement. Given its close proximity to areas of intense activity, the space provides a cherished refuge for office workers, however, it is currently under-utilised.

Beautiful mature plane trees are a defining feature of the space, yet their large canopies cast deep shadows, hindering the attractiveness and use of the space. The square is dominated by parked cars on all sides; these create a barrier to pedestrian movement, but also detract from the special



qualities of place. A large number of large and small litter bins, poor quality paving, street furniture clutter and utilitarian seating infer a low quality public realm.



### Proposed – An oasis of calm

The vision is to create an oasis of calm in contrast to the hubbub of Leather Lane, Gray’s Inn Road and Holborn. A simple re-design is proposed that exploits the existing qualities of the space – the beautiful mature plane trees and surrounding architecture. Features include:

- \* New biodiverse rain gardens to enhance biodiversity and new social seating niches.
- \* The trees will be pruned to reduce their crowns to allow more light to penetrate into the square and festoon lighting in the canopy will provide a magical and welcoming atmosphere.
- \* Bin storage is rationalised and incorporated into a simple green wall structure.
- \* Woodland under-storey plants such as ferns, ivy and grape hyacinths will be selected for shade tolerance, wildlife value and character.
- \* The surrounding roadway will be refreshed to infer pedestrian priority, including new flush crossings and surface dressing/setts to compliment the character of the square.
- \* The square will provide a much-needed lunchtime space providing the opportunity to eat food from the Leather Lane Market in comfort and relaxation.



Princes Circus, Holborn | © Michael Grubb Studio



A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Brookes Market



**An oasis of calm** *(indicative image)*



## 5.15 Hatton Garden

### Existing

Hatton Garden is a street that lies at the heart of the Hatton Garden area - a district that has been the epicentre of London's jewellery trade since the 1880's and remains the largest and most concentrated cluster of jewellers in the UK. Hatton Garden provides an important pedestrian link with Holborn Circus in the south, Clerkenwell Road in the north and linking Farringdon Road and station in the east.. It dissects a number of east west streets including Greville Street, St Cross Street and Hatton Wall.

Hatton Garden is world renowned for fine jewellery and craftsmanship, yet the quality of the public realm does not reflect this or reinforce the profile and identity of the area. Both sides of the street are dominated by parked vehicles, the pavement materials are typically low grade concrete pavers and the furniture is in a poor state of repair. The shop fronts and signage that line the pavements are of varying character and quality. There is a lack of incidental seating, encouraging



the street as a place to move through, and not spend time. The attractive mature London plane trees to the south of Hatton Garden provide a contrasting character, but the space can feel dark and unwelcoming at night.





## Proposed – The Diamond Route

The strategy proposes a new ‘Diamond Route’ – beautiful and unified streets that provide a collective identity and reflect the areas association with exquisite jewellery and craftsmanship. The re-designed streets would help to create a destination shopping experience to support visitors meandering from shop to shop looking for that special jewellery purchase.

Features include:

- \* A co-ordinated and restricted palette of detailing, materials and colours should be used. These should infer high quality materials. Natural stone, bronze or brass are deemed appropriate.
- \* The quality and detail of the craftsmanship associated with jewellery in the area extends out onto the street. A signature identity could be developed that incorporates subtle patterns or motifs. Careful consideration needs to be given to ensure these provide subtle cues and are not pastiche.
- \* Planted pots, such as topiary Buxus (box) unify the street and infer a premium quality.
- \* Visual clutter should be removed from the street where possible. This includes painted road markings, un-necessary bollards and excess road signage.

- \* Car parking is rationalised and should be removed from most of the western side of the street to continue the parking arrangement from the south. Pavements should be widened and built out to improve opportunities for pedestrians crossing, create incidental opportunities for seating and improve the setting to historic buildings, such as ‘Wren House’.
- \* A shop-front and facade design strategy should be developed to provide a unified high-quality appearance to the shops, cafes and restaurants. This should also encourage individuality to reflect the richness of the Hatton Garden offer.
- \* The introduction of a limited number of high quality cafes, restaurants or bars on Hatton Garden should be encouraged to extend dwell-time and increase street life and vitality



Strand Aldwych



Earlham Street



An example brass stud that could reinforce the character

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Hatton Garden



**The Diamond Route** *(indicative image)*

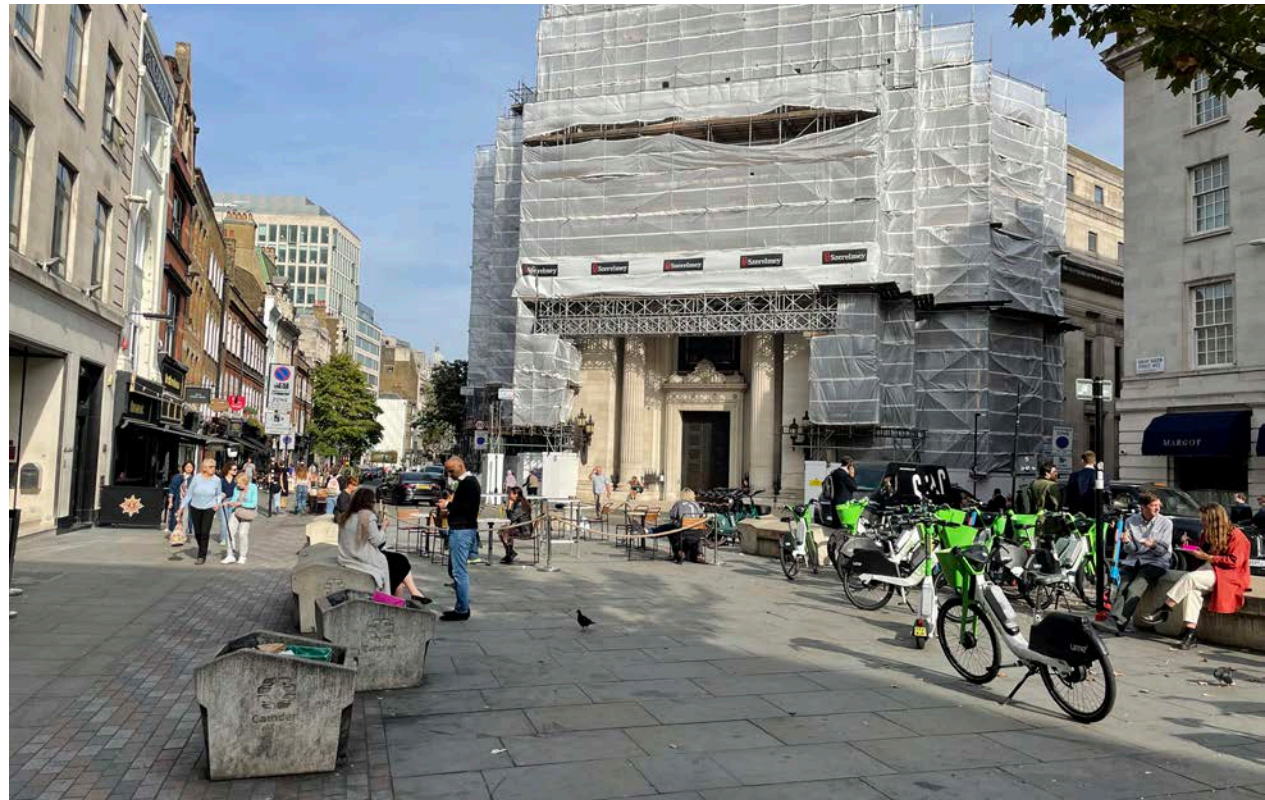


## 5.16 Great Queen Street

### Existing

Great Queen Street lies in a strategic position, linking Leicester Square and Covent Garden to the west, Lincoln's Inn Fields to the east, and The British Museum and Strand-Aldwych along Drury Lane to the north and south respectively. Historically, Great Queen Street and The Freemasons' Hall is hugely important, laid out around the time of the construction of Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields. Originally a residential street, it dates from the first half of the 17th century and is famous for being the "first regular street in London". Several houses from this period remain and create a rich and fine grain character. In contrast, the Freemasons' Hall, intended as a Masonic Peace Memorial after the Great War, is an imposing and grandiose building.

The Hall is Grade II\* listed and is recognised as one of the finest Art Deco buildings in England. It is the only Art Deco building in London that remains unaltered. Today, it continues to host public and members' events and meetings, being one of the few buildings in London that continues to be



used for the purpose it was initially built for. The building also provides a remarkable landmark on arrival from the west.

In 2005, partial removal of highway created a small square at the junction with Drury Lane. At the time, this set a new standard in de-cluttering and provided a fitting setting to the Hall. Unfortunately, in recent years, the square has become cluttered with a plethora

of dockless bikes, outdoor tables and chairs, and sandwich boards. The concrete seating has latterly received criticism as an example of hostile architecture that is 'anti-homeless'. The street itself is dominated by four lanes of highway, parked cars, motorbikes and scooters. Pedestrians are typically confined to narrow pavements, and alfresco uses are perched beside the road.

## Proposed

The proposals re-imagine Great Queen Street as a beautiful, green and sociable street, creating a fitting setting for the remarkable architecture and celebrating the history of the area. Highway space will be re-assigned through the creation of a one-way route, and the potential removal of a short section of road between Wild Street and Drury Lane. Selective removal or relocation of on-street parking bays will also free up space. For example, the motorbike bays located in front of Margot restaurant and the Prince of Wales Pub and some pay-by-phone parking bays. In this location, the cycleway connection with Drury Lane and Newton Street will be maintained, as well as emergency access. Overall proposals will include widened and uncluttered pavements, high quality outdoor dining, biodiverse street planting and pockets of seating. The square/ piazza will be re-imagined and include an area of reconfigured alfresco, beautiful planting, and comfortable and accessible seating. It will also include flexibility of the street furniture for public events and celebrations.



Strand Aldwych



Westgate | © Claire Borley Photography



A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

**Existing - Great Queen Street**



**Proposed** *(indicative image)*



## 5.17 Bedford Place

### Existing

The project area includes Bedford Place and the section of street lying to the east of Great Russell Street and The British Museum leading to Southampton Row. These streets are contextually strategic, lying between Russell Square and Bloomsbury Square, they provide a key gateway and connection to The British Museum, Bloomsbury and Holborn districts, but are failing to fulfil their full potential. Historically, Bedford Place is hugely important, laid out in the early 1800's, along with Russell Square and Tavistock Square. It lies at the heart of a historic vista and formal sequence of streets and spaces stretching from Endsleigh Street and Bedford Way in the north, through to Southampton Place and Holborn in the south. Bloomsbury Square to the immediate south is one of the earliest London squares, originally laid out by renowned Landscape Architect Humphrey Repton.

The streets are currently dominated by large areas of tarmac for vehicles and continuous lengths of on-street parking. Pedestrian space is particularly limited on the section of street from Southampton Row to Great Russell Street, providing a poor walking



connection to The British Museum. Bedford Place itself has several existing trees but lacks biodiversity and all the benefits that planting provides. The street has no seating opportunities where people can stop and pause to enjoy the beautiful Georgian Architecture.



## Proposed

The Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood project proposes the long-term closure of Great Russell Street between Museum Street and Montague Place. As a result of this, and other changes to movement planned for the area, it is anticipated that traffic volumes will reduce in these streets. This provides the opportunity to reassign space from highway and parking and create a beautiful, green and invitational place to stroll through and spend time. Wider pavements and new informal crossings will improve the connection between Bloomsbury Square Gardens and Russell Square and provide a generous walking route from Holborn station to The British Museum and surrounding areas. The street's location, history and architectural capital demand a fitting response with high quality materials, symmetrical ordering and a rich planting palette respecting the character of the adjacent public squares. Social seating opportunities have been integrated within the planting areas and seating could integrate new art interventions, through subtle detailing further enhancing the richness of the streets. Functional elements are woven through the new reclaimed space such as secure covered cycle parking and potential refuse stores to keep the street free of clutter and obstructions. Designated loading areas have

been proposed close to hotels for servicing, whilst residential parking has been provided in short groups bookended by planting to further help reduce the visual presence of vehicles within the street.



© Robin Forster



© Neil Speakman



Earlham Street - high quality materials

A selection of images to demonstrate the type of uses and character appropriate.

## Existing - Bedford Place



**Proposed** *(indicative image)*



## *London*

209 – 215 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NL  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 20 7467 1470

## *Bristol*

Hanover House  
Queen Charlotte Street  
Bristol BS1 4EX  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 117 203 3628

## *Cambridge*

The Courtyard  
17A Sturton Street  
Cambridge CB1 2SN  
+44 (0) 1223 949054

## *Exeter*

Kings Wharf  
The Quay  
Exeter EX2 4AN  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 1392 260 430

## *Glasgow*

Sovereign House  
158 West Regent Street  
Glasgow G2 4RL  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 1412 229 780

## *Manchester*

Unit 209 Ducie House  
37 Ducie Street  
Manchester M1 2JW  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0)161 359 5684

## *Oxford*

Worton Rectory Park  
Oxford OX29 4SX  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 1865 887050

## *Peterborough*

17 Minster Precincts  
Peterborough PE1 1XX  
United Kingdom  
+44 (0) 1733 310 471

[www.lda-design.co.uk](http://www.lda-design.co.uk)

LDA Design Consulting Ltd  
Registered No: 09312403  
17 Minster Precincts, Peterborough PE1 1XX

---

LDA Design is a ISO 9001 / ISO 14001 accredited company