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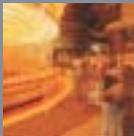
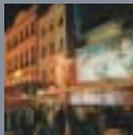
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City of Westminster
consulting on the future of Leicester Square



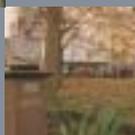
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This is a consultation document.

We want to know your views on the ideas contained within this document, and how you see the future of Leicester Square, and how you see the future of Leicester Square. Page 20 of this document details how you can have your say.



Lift here





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Setting the Context

Though it is important architecturally, as a landmark, as a meeting place, and as a key route from north to south and from east to west, what stands out most about Leicester Square is how busy it is. Our overall approach to Leicester Square focuses strongly on the services being provided to the people that live in, work in and visit the Square as well as addressing the physical aspects of the area.

Leicester Square has always been a lively place. The hustle and bustle in the Square has continued since 1670 when it was first laid out as one of London's more stylish residential neighbourhoods. Through the mid-19th century residents moved out and made way for shops, hotels, exhibition centres, museums and cultural institutes. One interesting exhibition was the Globe of James Wyld. At the time of the Great Exhibition in 1851, Wyld built a rivalling exhibition space in Leicester Square that featured a globe of the world measuring 60 feet in diameter as a centrepiece. After his ten year lease expired it was removed and the green oasis that is now the central garden was created.

Taking a look around Leicester Square in its present state, you will find that most of the buildings date from the 1930s onwards. A few survivors of earlier times include the Hippodrome, Café de Paris (described as probably the most sophisticated cinema design produced in Britain before 1914), and the Hampshire Hotel.

For us, it is important to respect the history of the place – which means understanding the Square's importance as a lively space in the centre of London, in terms of exhibitions and events, and its importance in providing a green space. The Square has seen a great deal of change in the nine years of steady expansion in the leisure and entertainment industry since its pedestrianisation in 1992. The pressures on every aspect of this home of entertainment from its management to the surface you walk on, have increased beyond what anyone could have imagined. In this draft action plan, we are bringing forward proposals which aim to address some of the current pressures on Leicester Square, while recognising and reflecting its unique historical character.

It is also important to remember that Leicester Square does not exist in isolation. The work we propose to carry out in and around Leicester Square will have an impact not only on the Square itself, but also on the surrounding area, and indeed on other parts of the West End. By encouraging people to come into and through the Square, our proposals could have an impact on routes such as Coventry Street, Whitcomb Street and St Martin's Street. Our suggestions for managing the way vehicles access the Square could have implications for Charing Cross Road and Lisle Street. Our proposals for the cinema could be important for cinemas elsewhere in the West End, and our ideas for an events programme would need to be closely coordinated with places such as Soho, Chinatown, Trafalgar Square and Covent Garden. We are keen to hear your views not only on how the proposals will directly impact Leicester Square, but also on ways in which those proposals might affect other areas.



Leader's message

By Simon Milton

For many people, especially visitors and tourists, Leicester Square is the heart of the West End and not only the focal point of Westminster but of London itself.

Sadly, in recent years, the West End and Leicester Square have lost their allure. Huge increases in visitor numbers, litter, loutish behaviour, traffic congestion and an ageing public transport system have all taken their toll.

Westminster City Council's aim is to revitalise the West End as the proud core of a "world class city" – and by that I mean a place characterised by its strong business base, vibrant local community, supporting infrastructure and its cultural attractiveness for the rest of the world.

The Leicester Square project is the first stage in reclaiming this world class city status. We are absolutely committed to delivering real improvements to Leicester Square and this document outlines our proposals for the area for the next three years, as part of our ongoing Civic Renewal Programme.

But unless everyone with an interest in the area works together towards a common vision our progress will be limited. We want your views to enable us to achieve this goal so that Leicester Square can once again become the jewel in the crown of a truly world class city.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Simon Milton
Leader of Westminster Council



A word from the LSA

By Diane Fairfoot

I have lived in Leicester Square for more than twenty years and during that time the weekend increase of thousands of late night revellers has become increasingly apparent.

The consequence is a littered, dark and daunting square, providing ideal conditions for crime and drunken disorderly behaviour after the bars and clubs close.

Fortunately, Westminster City Council has now produced an Action Plan. I am impressed, not only by the thorough analysis of the issues, but also by the proposed initiatives and vision for the future.

Leicester Square has always aspired to be the focus of the film industry in London. Now, it will have other appealing and enjoyable qualities, not just attracting a limited and often disruptive age group, but providing a green oasis with varied entertainment, attracting a broader spectrum of the public.

As Chair of The Leicester Square Association and a resident, I am greatly encouraged by this comprehensive vision and strategy for the future of Leicester Square.

Diane Fairfoot
Resident and Chair
of Leicester Square Association.



4AM: LEICESTER SQUARE

Leicester Square seems a twenty-four hour place: there are more people on the street in the Square between four and five a.m. than there are in the morning rush hour.





DAY & NIGHT

Introduction

A full time Space

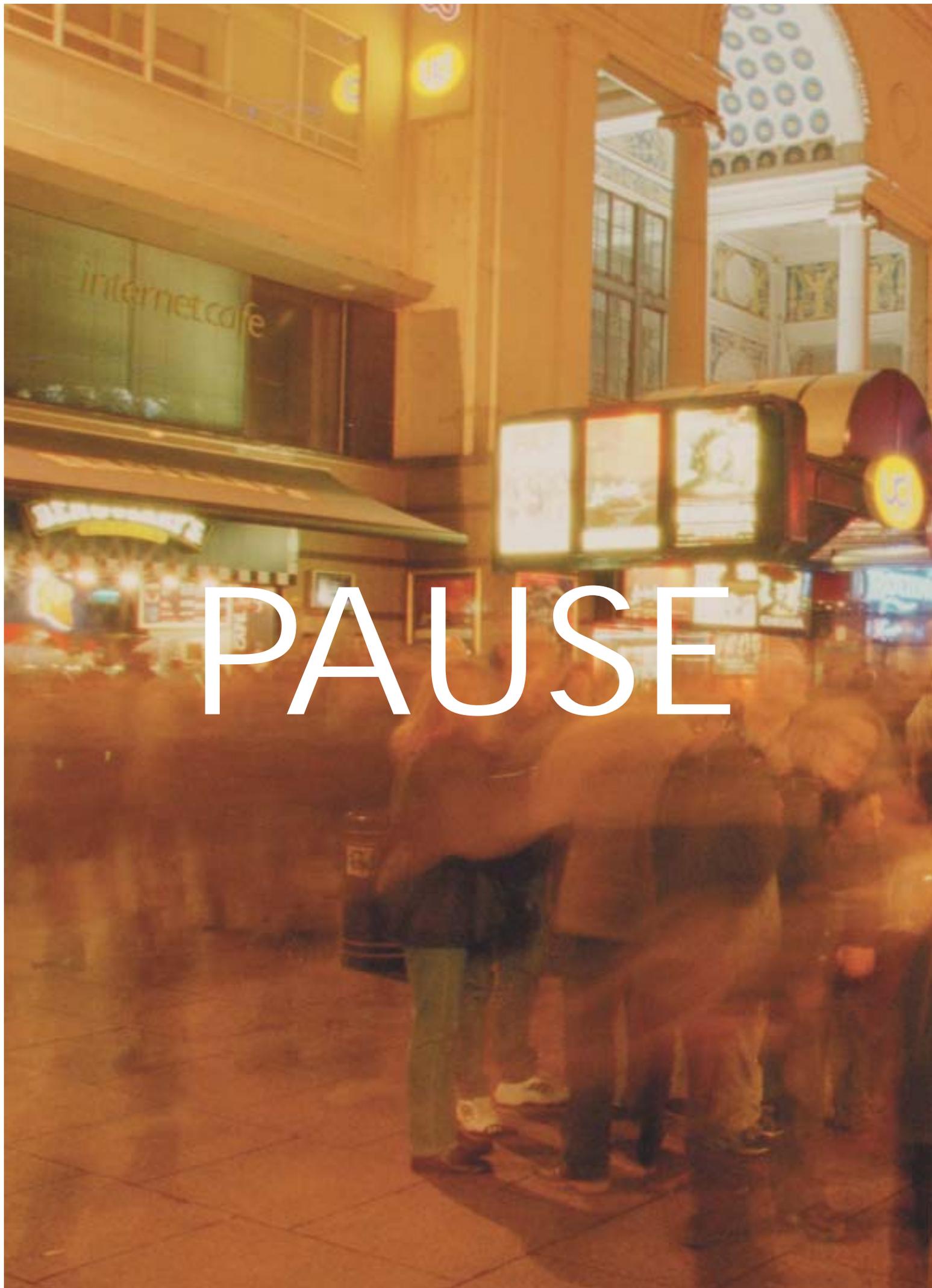
Leicester Square is one of the busiest and liveliest public places in the whole world. Up to 250,000 people pass through the Square every day. It has more than 25 cafés and restaurants, 15 bars and nightclubs, and 7 cinemas. Nearly 9,000 people can use the cinemas at any one time, and 12,000 can use the nightclubs. With that sort of use, it is not surprising that Leicester Square seems a twenty-four hour place: there are more people on the street in the Square between four and five a.m. than there are in the morning rush hour.

In the past few years Leicester Square, along with the rest of the West End, has undergone a significant change. As the number of visitors to the area has doubled, and the hours they visit have stretched further into the night, the pressures of keeping the Square clean, safe and attractive have mounted. Now it is time to take stock of the ways in which the Square is used and managed. In this document, we offer a vision for the Square and the streets leading off it and we set out the ways in which we intend to achieve that vision. It is a vision for people: the people who live in and around Leicester Square, the people who run businesses there, and the many, many people who visit the area. Our proposals are both about the way the Square looks and about the way people use it: about how good they feel about the place, how enjoyable their visit is and how safe they feel.

By presenting our proposals in the form of a draft action plan, we want to make clear our commitment to take action, and to start right away we cite over twenty things we have already done, and offer over fifty further proposals for action over the coming two years.

Some of what we have proposed can be achieved with existing resources. Some projects, however, are likely to require additional funding that has yet to be secured. The response we receive to our plans will form a critical input when considering priorities for projects suitable in bidding for further funds.

None of this can be achieved by the City Council alone, and it will be our task to work with many others to give this important part of London's heritage the management it needs and deserves. In developing this draft action plan, we have worked closely with the Leicester Square Association – representing both residents and businesses – and the Police. We have also kept in close contact with the emerging Piccadilly Circus Partnership – a group establishing a voluntary Business Improvement District from Piccadilly Circus to the edge of Leicester Square. Now, we are keen to hear from you.



PAUSE



A PLACE TO STOP

AND ENJOY

At the moment, it is difficult to get any distinctive sense of what Leicester Square is. Though large numbers of people come to the Square, most are either passing through, or going directly to a cinema, bar or nightclub. Few come to enjoy the Square itself; and few see the Square as a genuine landmark which is worthy of a visit and a place to spend time. The result is a transient, unwelcoming atmosphere, which at night can become intimidating and even unsafe. Our aim is to change that: to transform the Square into a welcoming, attractive, clean and secure landmark at the heart of London.

Our vision

A unique Identity



the home of British cinema We also want to build on the Square's positive identity. With 7 cinemas, London's own collection of stars' handprints, and close to fifty film premieres each year (including the recent world premieres for Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings), Leicester Square is the home of British cinema. It is also close to Soho, with its many creative and media businesses. We want the Square to reflect the modern, imaginative, creative feel of the local area. Building on these foundations, we want to encourage premieres and other cinema or creative industry related events, such as film memorabilia festivals and graphic design fairs, and we propose to promote a lively programme of themed events which will encourage people to visit and spend time in the Square.

a family atmosphere We want to emphasise a family atmosphere in the Square. We have been working in partnership with cinema owners to show special screenings of animated films produced by local children. We want to build on this foundation by providing more events for children, and we will specifically build these into our events programme. We also want to encourage families to come to the cinema and to stay on in the Square. To this end we will be working with cinema owners with a view to establishing a voluntary agreement to have films with a U or PG certificate available in the Square on any given evening. We will also investigate other ways in which we can attract families e.g., extend family parking deals, or introduce deals for public transport. The Leicester Square Association's proposals to encourage a well managed alfresco dining environment could also be key to encouraging families to visit and spend time in the area.

the feel of the Square Physical layout is important in emphasising a distinct identity. We could open up a vista through the trees from north to south, so that visitors passing across the busy north terrace would get an eye-catching view down through the gardens, across the fountain with its statue of Shakespeare, past the collection of lit monuments including the bronze statue of Charlie Chaplin, to the Hampshire Hotel and the cinemas on the south and east of the Square.

Imaginative use of public art and lighting schemes could serve to reinforce the atmosphere and encourage people to spend time in the Square. Our vision is of public art of high quality, reinforcing a strong modern theme, closely tied to imaginative lighting, which would help to draw people down

from the north terrace. To enable the process, we could explore various funding options to engage a public art facilitator, working closely with our own Public Art Panel and perhaps with a lighting consultant. The facilitator would work with local residents and businesses with a view to bringing together a coherent vision for public art and lighting in the Square. Many ideas have already been put forward, including the use of banners, holograms, lit walkways, actors in costume relating to upcoming film premieres, and even employing an artist to work with local schoolchildren in decorating some of the bare walls on access roads with murals of a cinematic theme. We are keen to hear your views too.

reinforcing the image It will be important to make any new image not only very visible in the Square itself, but also in the minds of those who might be visiting London. To that end, we will be seeking to work with London's media and with organisations such as the London Tourist Board in establishing this new, strong image of Leicester Square for potential visitors.

planning and management We propose to use our planning powers to reinforce the atmosphere and identity we are seeking to create for the Square. We are preparing draft planning guidance for the Square, based upon the Unitary Development Plan and the proposals in this draft action plan. We are also close to setting out specific planning briefs, in line with this vision, for areas at the north west and north east of the Square. These briefs will advise and guide development and building improvement, seeking to keep it in line with the overall vision for the future of the Square.

Though our planning powers do not extend to the improvement of existing building frontages, we would be keen to encourage businesses to put forward their own proposals for improving frontages, bringing them into line with the vision for the Square.

We recognise that the improvement of planning and management is not just about planning policies and physical layout, and have no doubt that safe and effective management of the Square and the activities within must be an integral part of any vision. In this document, we put forward a raft of proposals designed to address the pressures caused by the saturation of nightclubs, bars, and take-aways in the area, to improve the management of both private premises and public space, and to ensure a cleaner, safer and more welcoming environment.

THE HOME OF
BRITISH CINEMA



50

PREMIERES

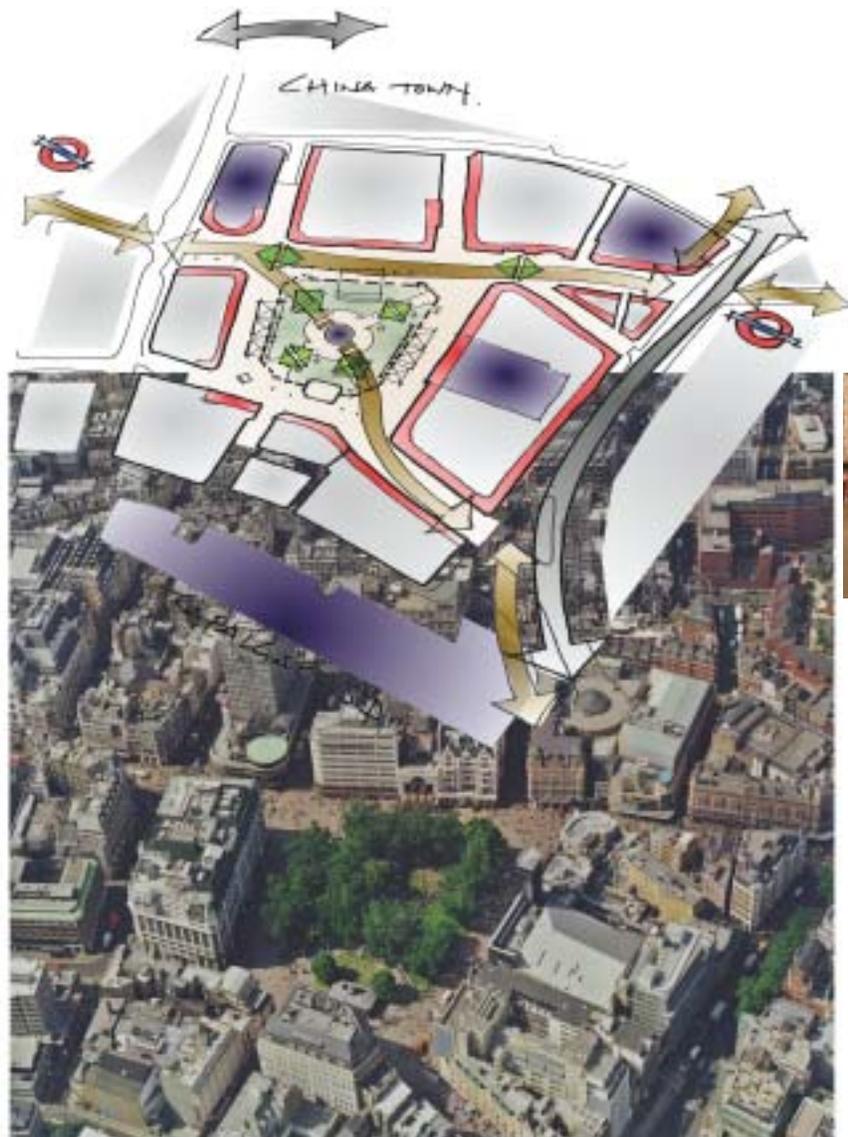
LEICESTER SQUARE

ADMIT ONE

With 7 cinemas, London's own collection of stars' handprints, and close to fifty film premieres each year (including the recent world premieres for Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings) Leicester Square is the home of British cinema.

The physical environment

Building on the Identity



Pedestrian flow, views across the square and traffic routes are amongst the many things to consider

While much that has to change in Leicester Square involves the way in which it is used and managed (we deal with that in detail below), a great deal can be done by addressing the physical environment. Subject to funding, we are proposing a number of changes to the physical environment of the Square, while maintaining its basic structure.

the streetscape As well as opening up a vista through the trees from north to south, we propose to clear the streetscapes of clutter, regularly reviewing with the Leicester Square Association the amount of furniture and ornament which has built up, so that we can maintain a pleasant, open atmosphere and allow pedestrians to feel comfortable strolling through the Square. We want to encourage people

to come off the crowded north terrace and through to the south side by employing better use of signage to different destinations, such as Trafalgar Square, and through the use of public art and imaginative lighting mentioned earlier. This will mean attention to the attractiveness and security of the smaller streets off the Square, so that people will be encouraged to walk through them, from one national landmark to another.

If the possibility presents itself, we will discuss the option of providing a new entrance to the Leicester Square underground station with landowners considering any new development in the area. Meanwhile, we will try to lessen the pressure from commuters on Cranbourn Street by directing people to other stations such as Piccadilly Circus,



or south through Trafalgar Square to Charing Cross. While signs will have only a limited effect, we can also work with the London Tourist Board to encourage guidebooks to point people away from the most obvious overcrowded routes. As the efforts to control overcrowding on the north terrace and Cranbourn Street develop, we will review pedestrian safety around the junction of Cranbourn Street and Charing Cross Road, where people currently cross the road to and from the underground station.

We will look at the street furniture, and discuss options to emphasise the strong cinema and creative industries identity with the Leicester Square Association and local businesses.

lighting Lighting is not only important in creating the feel of a place, it is also important as a security measure. We have already implemented a programme of repair to all outstanding lighting faults, and instituted regular inspections together with the Leicester Square Association and the Police. While repairing the main lights, we have also developed a scheme of fixing lights to properties around the Square to floodlight the area, and we will continue with this until the Square and all the streets off it are well and fully lit at nights. Of course, lights will stop working from time to time, but with the new management arrangements for the Square discussed below, we will be able to respond quickly to rectify any lighting faults.

the gardens The gardens in the centre of Leicester Square are a long-standing, popular green oasis at the heart of London. They offer a relatively quiet space to stop and relax amidst the bustle. They also provide a safe place to which people could be evacuated from any of the cinemas or nightclubs, and a space that can be closed off when necessary, when constructing event seating or lighting gantries for example.

At the moment the gardens close at dusk. As part of our measures to encourage families to stay into the evening, and to entice people down from the north terrace, we propose to keep the gardens open longer, perhaps to eleven p.m. or even later. To do that, we will need to upgrade the lighting. Doing this in an imaginative way would add to the modern feel as part of the overall approach to lighting and public art mentioned above. It has been suggested that, as part of enhancing the feel of the gardens, we move the collection of stars' handprints into the gardens, making more of a feature of them, and that we work with the cinemas to continue to add to the collection.

Should we be more radical, though – for example, removing the railings around the gardens altogether and making the space completely open? Although the removal of railings is subject to any restrictions that may exist on title, it could reduce the cluttered, sometimes claustrophobic feel that a closed off central area can bring, and would again be something to reduce the pressure of pedestrians on the north side. We are keen to hear your views on this.

Meanwhile, we have already taken some steps to improve the feel of the gardens as they are, including re-turfing worn out grassed areas, restoring the fountain and commencing a programme of cleaning and upgrading the statues and monuments. Soon we will be undertaking some tree-logging to reduce the tree canopy and allow more light to filter through.

surfacing We have looked long and hard at the surface of the Square. The eye-catching Iberian pink granite slabs which were laid a decade ago are showing signs of wear and cracking with the intensive use which the Square experiences. For the time being, we have re-laid the corners of the Square with red asphalt, as these are the areas of paving which suffer the greatest damage from vehicles such as those preparing for premieres. This stronger surface will be safer for pedestrians, and less prone to damage from vehicles. We have also replaced the black asphalt patches in less-used parts of the Square with the pink granite slabs, restoring the original appearance.

In the long run we will need to look again at the surface of the Square. This is a difficult task, as there is nowhere in the world with the same intensity and mix of uses as Leicester Square. At one and the same time it is an important part of the nation's heritage, deserving the highest quality of design; it is the busiest pedestrian route in the country with the highest demands for cleaning; and it is an important venue for special events requiring a strong supporting surface for lorries, cranes and podiums. Finding the right surface is no simple matter: granite has proved an attractive surface but the current slabs cannot take the weight of large lorries and can also prove slippery in the rain; cobbles have been suggested by the Leicester Square Association, and although they would be strong they might prove difficult to keep clean; asphalt is simple and cheap to lay but visually is a less impressive surface and could be broken down by the hot-washers required to lift chewing gum.

The use and function of the Square are key in determining surfacing options. Your response to the vision we propose in this draft action plan is important in defining the range of



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surfacing options we might consider. Once the consultation is complete, we propose to set out for public discussion a range of different approaches to surfacing compatible with the future use of the Square. This should not, of course, preclude you from offering us any views you might have at this stage on the surface of the Square, we would be glad to hear any views you might have.

The timing and extent of any resurfacing works will depend upon the results of this consultation, your comments on the different approaches we set out to surfacing, and a variety of other factors such as cost, the availability of funding, and the need to programme works to cause the minimum disruption to the life of the Square and the many events going on in it.

Discussion of surfacing and repair is inevitably caught up with discussion of the activities of the utilities companies, who dig up the surface to carry out essential works.

Unfortunately, the council has no authority over the works of utility companies, therefore their activities are difficult to coordinate, and their reinstatement of the existing surface can be markedly different from that done by the City Council. In order to protect the heritage of the Square and maintain a high quality streetscape, we propose to designate the Square as an area of 'High Duty and High Amenity.' This will mean that the City Council can specify the quality of materials to be used when reinstating surfaces that have been dug up, and we will work with utilities companies with a view to coordinating the timing of any essential works. We also propose that in any resurfacing work we do, we increase the number of access ducts, enabling utility companies to get under the Square in the future without actually digging it up.



vehicles on the square. We have mentioned the impact of traffic on the surface of the Square. Although the Square is pedestrianised, there can be dozens of vehicles using it on any given day. These vehicles have access for servicing, delivery, refuse collection, and event preparation. Access is also allowed for taxis coming to and from the hotels. In the morning or early afternoon there are far too many vehicles gaining access to the Square, and those that do have access often stay too long.

We propose to introduce a much more stringent approach to vehicular access. We could replace the current access barriers, which are unsightly and often broken, with rising bollards at all entrances, operated from our new CCTV control room in the Trocadero on Coventry Street. Permits will be strictly controlled, and where issued will give a strict time limit.

Vehicles on the Square will be monitored by our wardens, and any exceeding their time limit will be subject to parking fines and, ultimately, clamped and removed. While on the Square, the places where vehicles will be allowed to stop will be clearly designated, and we will consider placing weight limits on parts of the Square to help to protect the surface.

As a key to maintaining the surface and the area's safety, we could also allow traffic to enter along Leicester Place and exit along Leicester Street, in order to minimise turning on the north east side of the Square as well as reducing the number of vehicles passing along the busy Cranbourn and Irving Streets.

Hotel guests will need to continue to have taxi access. We propose to allow this activity with close CCTV supervision. In addition to this, although our aim is to reduce the amount of traffic on the Square, we do recognise that some elderly and disabled residents should be offered an arrangement where taxis are able to collect them and drop them off.

Furthermore, at nights it would be helpful if it were easier for people to leave the area quickly and safely. With that in mind, we propose to work with nightclubs and other venues to adopt a scheme whereby we can give access to taxis or minicabs to collect both customers and staff directly from venues.

Touting for business by unlicensed minicabs is a serious and persistent problem around the Square. We will continue to operate joint crackdowns on this activity in association with the Police. In recent work with the Police, we introduced temporary barriers during the evening along the side of Whitcomb Street. This prevented cars from pulling up on the double-yellow lines – effectively stopping what at peak times can become a “rank” for illegal minicabs. Together with the Police, we will make further use of this and similar initiatives to tackle this dangerous activity.

parking. While we would encourage all those who can visit by public transport to do so, and are looking to promote schemes for families, we recognise that travelling by car might be an important method of transportation for families who might struggle with small children or pushchairs on buses or the underground. There is adequate parking in central London for those who choose to come to Leicester Square by car. In our car-parks we currently have a parking discount scheme for theatre-goers and cinema-goers, and we propose to work with the cinemas in the Square to see if there are ways in which we could extend this scheme even further.

We appreciate that there are others who might find it difficult to get to and from Leicester Square. While Leicester Square itself is very accessible, parking might prove difficult for the disabled, and we propose to create two disabled parking bays close to the Square.



toilets Public toilets are another facility important to the area. We have public toilets open and staffed 24 hours a day in the Square, and as part of our Civic Renewal commitment we have also recently introduced mobile pissoirs in Leicester Place and are consulting on nearby Newport Place in Chinatown on evenings over the weekends. Though there is no disabled toilet facility at present, these will be provided at the junction of Charing Cross Road and Orange Street as part

of the works within the "World Squares for All" initiative. We will also discuss with local cinemas, bars and restaurants the possibility of introducing a scheme to provide access to their disabled toilet facilities and parent and baby facilities for the general public.

Looking to the longer term, we will discuss with local landowners the possibility of incorporating new, ground level public toilet facilities into new developments in the area.

JAZZ



A key part of the approach will be to change who the Square is seen to be for: the programme will be designed to encourage families to come to the Square throughout the day, and to stay on into the evening.



The Life of the Square

A Welcoming Environment

For most of those we have spoken to, it is not the layout of the Square so much as what goes on in it, that needs attention. Leicester Square is and always has been a lively place. At present, however, this liveliness seems to come by default, as people make their way through, to and from clubs and bars. Our vision is of a place which is lively for the right reasons – a family atmosphere encouraged by a well managed programme of events and activities, and sustained by an attractive, safe and welcoming environment.

a programme of events Already, the Square plays host to many film premieres, is a base for the London Film Festival, and home to several exhibitions and fairs. These events are a major strength of the area. It is when such events are over that the Square can lose its character. So it is with that in mind that we intend to build on the existing programme of events, to fill the Square not only with premieres but also with fairs, festivals and exhibitions even more regularly, proactively seeking out a programme which reinforces the vision for the Square as the nation's home of cinema and the related creative arts. A key part of the approach will be to change who uses the Square and who it is seen to be for: the programme will be designed to encourage families to come to the Square throughout the day, and to stay on into the evening.

In being proactive, we intend to establish a programme for the Square which is distinctive, and different from other parts of the West End. At the same time, we will work closely with others to ensure that the programme is coordinated effectively with activities in surrounding areas, such as Trafalgar Square, Covent Garden, and Soho. Although it is not proposed to introduce regular music to Leicester Square, it could, for example, be offered as an additional venue for one-off performances as part of the Soho Jazz Festival.

the funfair The Christmas funfair is considered by many to provide a positive seasonal addition to the Square. The police have expressed concerns that it may attract anti-social elements and provide opportunities for crime. Options may include changing the funfair's hours of operation or its design to make it more family oriented.

We will be exploring the future of the funfair as part of the consultation process and the views received will inform a review of the current contract in May of this year.

a link with the theatre Our vision of Leicester Square as home to the cinema is complemented by its connection with the theatre, symbolised by the statue of Shakespeare at its centre, and reinforced by the many theatres in the surrounding area. Open air "tasters" for upcoming shows could form a regular part of the events programme, and the presence of the ticket booth on the south side of the Square would continue to reinforce this link.

The Square, as a place to come for authorised discount tickets to see shows, is a good draw and fits well with the image of the area as a centre of excellence for the cinematic arts and we would want to continue to support the presence of the ticket booth. A number of options, such as the introduction of a lighting scheme for the gardens, will be examined with the intent of highlighting the booth as a feature of the Square. At the same time, we are concerned by reports of poor quality tickets being passed off as good seats from some of the small ticket booths dotted around the Square. Our trading standards team will inspect regularly and stamp out any such behaviour.



The Leicester Square Association's proposals to encourage a well managed alfresco dining environment could also be key to encouraging families to visit and spend time in the area.

portrait artists Portrait artists are generally welcomed. We currently operate a pilot scheme of licensed pitches for these artists, and we propose to make that scheme permanent. In doing so, we will consider offering pitches within the gardens.

alfresco dining The vision of a high quality, family-orientated atmosphere fits well with the vision proposed by the Leicester Square Association of a well managed alfresco dining environment. This would be well lit at night, with waiter service to tables and chairs outside restaurants, and also around the gardens at the heart of the Square. For many of those we have spoken to, this is a proposal to be welcomed. We want to respond positively to this initiative and support the Leicester Square Association's vision. To that end, we could introduce a number of changes on a pilot basis. Firstly, we could pilot an initiative that would allow certain businesses a license to put tables and chairs outside their premises. These businesses would be around the less busy west, south and east sides of the Square, with the busier north side to be reviewed at a later date. In order to ensure the highest standards of safety and cleanliness we would require premises to operate waiter service, to keep their areas clean, to keep within a designated area (which we would mark out on the ground and strictly enforce), and to use furniture only of a designated standard and design. The area would be marked in a precise manner, perhaps through the use of planter boxes of a specific design. The layout and standard of design will be developed in close cooperation with both businesses and the Police. It has also been suggested that we develop a scheme where local charities are involved in the upkeep of these planter boxes. Your views and any other ideas you might have on this are welcome.

Secondly, and again in line with the Leicester Square Association vision, we could pilot an initiative wherein we allocate premises space for tables and chairs around the gardens. Clearly, such a step would be contingent upon

the future design of the garden space – another issue upon which we invite your comments. Again, any tables and chairs around the gardens would be waiter serviced, within specific boundaries, and using furniture of a set design. We do not propose permanently fixed pitches around the centre. It will be important for the cleansing of the Square and the programme of events that these tables and chairs can be cleared away each night. We recognise that waiter service to tables and chairs around the centre of the Square, without there being fixed sites, would mean people passing back and forth across pedestrian areas with hot food, plates, glasses and so on, and that this would present new challenges to keeping the area safe. This need not prove an insurmountable problem; such schemes work well in other areas, and we welcome your ideas on how we might approach this.

Thirdly, and again on a pilot basis, we could consider some premises licenses for tables and chairs extending beyond our current 11 p.m. limit. Assuming that tables and chairs are set out according to our standards of safety and design, premises which are in line with the high-quality, family-orientated vision for the Square, and have a record of good management, would be considered able to offer waiter-serviced meals at outside tables until their premises close. As we do not want to encourage a late-night drinking culture, we would not allow the service of alcohol without meals outside premises. The tables and chairs around the gardens would be cleared away at 1 a.m., with the last food orders taken at midnight. If storage space for tables and chairs cannot be found in the area around the gardens, this late time for clearing away could cause a considerable noise nuisance. We welcome your views on the balance between enhancing the area by allowing facilities to be open later and the disturbance caused to residents by a later closing time.

While we could pilot this more flexible approach to tables and chairs, it is important to emphasise that we do not propose a free-for-all. Unregulated tables and chairs can cause difficulties for vehicles and pedestrians, can make

cleaning a problem, and can even offer a haven for those intent on unruly behaviour. Wardens will monitor the use of tables and chairs outside businesses through site inspections and the use of CCTV. We will enforce against breaches far more strictly than ever before. Those operating without a license or outside the terms of their license will run the risk of having their tables and chairs seized, and of being refused a license on future application. Already, we have demonstrated our determination to implement this new approach with a rolling programme of enforcement throughout the West End.

late night venues Turning to the general running of premises in the Square, it is clear that the pressure of people attending nightclubs, using take-aways, and visiting alcohol led venues has taken the Square beyond the point where a safer, more welcoming atmosphere is difficult to sustain. We need to act to constrain the alcohol-fuelled culture that so often blights the late evening and early hours of the morning in the West End. In the longer term, we will seek to use our powers to reduce the overall numbers attending and using such venues in Leicester Square by setting lower capacity limits for venues. Where premises want to open late into the night, we will use our powers to press for larger venues to be broken down into smaller, distinct parts, making them safer and more manageable, and reducing the “closing time” impact on the surrounding area. Generally, we will seek to encourage venues with waiter service, and to discourage any activities that appear to be alcohol-led.

In our licenses for public entertainment, or for night cafés, we are already adopting a requirement that occupiers take responsibility for keeping the space outside their premises clean. We propose to establish considerate business schemes, in cooperation with the Leicester Square Association, and encourage all licensees to subscribe to the schemes.

We propose to write to the national licensees certificate awarding body which deals with the training of door supervisors, requesting amendments to their scheme to

include the control of queues, the behaviour of individuals outside premises, and the provision of safety advice to people leaving premises. We also propose to amend our own rules of management for licensees to cover these issues, and to work with venues to implement this new approach.

A greater on-street presence and the use of CCTV will enable us to gather detailed evidence against licensing breaches or any other aspects of poor management, which we will use in considering applications for license renewal.

Some of the greatest problems in the Square come during the early hours of the morning, when people leave venues in great numbers. The lack of late night transport is a major problem, often leaving people wandering around the Square. We will continue to press for longer operation of the underground. In the meantime, we welcome the Mayor’s initiative to increase the number of taxis available late at night, and his commitment to the provision of more night buses through Transport for London. We will cooperate with Transport for London in exploring ways in which late night transport provision to the Square could be improved.

Other measures include reviewing, with the police and the entertainment industry, the scope for improving the management of clubs leading up to the terminal hour. The aim would be for people to leave in smaller groups, and probably in a more sober state, thus easing some of the pressure on the Square during the early hours of the morning.





A clean and safe environment

Working around the clock

With so many people passing through it at all hours of day and night, Leicester Square is phenomenally difficult – and indeed costly to keep clean and safe. Nevertheless, we continue to upgrade the services to meet the ever increasing challenge. To date, we have increased the provision for clearing litter in the gardens, initiated an upgrading of the litter bins and are in the process of ordering a new, more powerful, street cleansing machine to improve the quality of cleansing in the area. In the future, we will coordinate commercial waste collections to specific times. Our wardens will work with businesses and residents to make sure that everybody knows exactly when to leave their rubbish out.

Over and above that, as part of our Civic Renewal commitment, we are commencing a coordinated programme of clearing flyposting and graffiti, and are gradually overhauling our street furniture to minimise problems in the future, either by using different materials, or “stippling” furniture with a paint that makes flyposting difficult.

Together with encouraging business owners to take greater responsibility for keeping the areas around their premises clean, we are already taking significant steps to make Leicester Square a cleaner place.

In the future, as part of our Civic Renewal Commitment, our new cleansing and refuse collection contract will provide locally tailored services which closer fit the specific needs of distinctive communities. We will ensure continuous service improvement by providing clear incentives to the contractor to develop and innovate services throughout the life of the contract. Specifically, the following key elements will be included:

- Beat based sweeping
- mix of specified sweeping frequencies and ‘output cleanliness’ measures
- intensive janitorial services for areas of greatest need
- dedicated anti-flyposting and graffiti removal service

noise Noise is a regular feature of any public space. In Leicester Square, there are residents, many restaurants, and a large number of people continually passing through. The presence of buskers is of particular concern and rather than being a welcome part of the atmosphere, buskers can prove to be a noise nuisance particularly when using amplification and a threat to pedestrian safety. We will consider bringing

this under control by designating the Square as a place where buskers must be licensed. To begin with, we could consider a pilot scheme, as suggested by the LSA, offering licenses only for buskers working around restaurants which specifically ask for them to be there, or those contributing to special events. We would not want to allow buskers to use any form of amplification. This approach is key to addressing the unwelcome and upsetting level of noise which can destroy the peaceful atmosphere of the Square. In addition, we will consider reducing ambient noise from a range of sources including traffic, air conditioning equipment, external loudspeakers from premises and crowd noise.

policing Many initiatives will go a long way to making the Square a safer and more welcoming environment. These include a stronger approach to keeping the Square clean, a change in attitude to the use of the Square, our actions on street lighting, and the proposals we have for dealing with licenses. In addition, if only by virtue of the sheer numbers of people using it, the Square will always require a strong and visible police presence. We have been pressing for more police in central London and will continue to do so. We recognise that the Government’s proposals for the recruitment of police auxiliaries might increase the police presence in central London in the longer term, but our concern is for the more immediate future of Leicester Square.

We have been discussing the policing of the Square with the Metropolitan Police, and we welcome the introduction of a permanent night shift, giving us a level of continuity that has not been present before. We have also been pressing for the Metropolitan Police to designate Leicester Square as a “priority posting” once again. This would guarantee a police presence for the Square at all times, so that should an officer return to the station for any reason, they would be covered automatically by another. The introduction and upgrading of the Eagle Eye van, contributed to by the Leicester Square Association, will go a long way to help matters, by providing both a mobile CCTV presence and a base in the Square from which officers can take statements and deal with enquiries.

For the Police, one of the greatest pressures is having to deal with people who are under the influence of alcohol. Over seven hundred alcohol-related incidents occur in the West End every year, many of them in and around Leicester



Square. While the problem emanates from drinking establishments, people wandering around – often drunk – and carrying bottles or glasses full of drink, pose a real threat to safety in this already highly pressured environment. To deal with this problem, we intend to work with the Police to curb street drinking in the public spaces of the Square and in the streets leading off it. Under the Criminal Justice and Police Act, 2001, we can designate the area so as to give Police the power to seize cans and bottles of alcohol if necessary.

wardens and CCTV There is also a role for a permanent, regular, uniformed City Council presence. Working in close cooperation with the Police, we have already established this in the Square. Working with local businesses, we propose to build this presence into a dedicated team of uniformed wardens operating twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It is important to emphasise that although the wardens will be reassuring to visitors, they will not be a replacement for the Police, nor will they overnight put an end to all anti-social behaviour. What they will do is act as a distinctive, on the spot City Council presence, coordinating our services on the ground. If someone is needed to deal with the management of the Square, a warden will be there. They will deal with the problems of litter, noise, faulty lighting or cracked paving, busking or illegal street trading. Wardens will monitor the outside of premises day and night, oversee the way in which vehicles use the Square, deal with safety problems, and be on hand to help in emergencies - for example by speeding access for ambulances should someone be taken ill.

The work of the wardens will be supported by the West End CCTV scheme – a key Civic Renewal commitment, which has been developed in cooperation with the Police and local businesses. The scheme will cover the Square and will operate from the Trocadero, commencing this summer. The repeated references to the scheme throughout this document show just how crucial the substantial investment already made by the Council is to the transformation of the West End. The CCTV scheme will allow both the Council and the Police to monitor the public space of the Square and it will offer an invaluable source of evidence. In addition to this fundamental use, it will also be used to pinpoint issues for the wardens, and to support them in their attendance at any incidents.

Together with the infrastructure for the CCTV scheme, a radio link system for the wardens has been installed, with a view to offering a platform for other radio operations. We propose the development of a radio link scheme with businesses, connecting them directly to the CCTV control room, and then to our wardens, and the police.

More than that, as demonstrated throughout this document, the CCTV scheme will be an integral part of the day to day management of the area: controlling access, managing bollards and barriers, monitoring vehicle use, observing the operation of tables and chairs, and at all times keeping in constant contact with the wardens on the street.

Management

An area approach

We recognise that much can be done by more effective management of Leicester Square, and have taken a number of steps towards this end. We have a multi-disciplinary project group for the West End. This group, concentrating its early activity on Leicester Square, has developed an approach which coordinates all Council activity in the area.

In the future, our warden service will offer day to day management supervision of the Square. We propose to place the warden service under the direction of a Leicester Square manager, who would share the same reception as the CCTV control team at the Trocadero to offer face-to-face contact with residents and businesses

As part of our Civic Renewal commitment, we offer a “one stop” point of contact to key organisations, and an established day to day dialogue with the Leicester Square Association (including both business and resident membership), the Police and the Piccadilly Circus Partnership. Council representatives attend the Leicester Square Association committee meetings and the Piccadilly Circus Partnership Board meetings, sit together with the Police and others on the Community Safety Forum, conduct joint inspections of the Square with all three of these organisations, and liaise regularly with them over licensing and planning matters.

Management continued

We hope that in the near future, with funding support through the Cross River Partnership, we will be able to establish a monthly round table with these organisations, and perhaps other residents and businesses too. These meetings would be chaired by the Leicester Square Association, and would provide a means by which issues of local management may be addressed, and the progress of the plan discussed.

We maintain good working relationships with key societies and associations with a less direct but still close interest in the Square, such as the Westminster Society, the Soho Society, and the Chinese Community Association – and of course there is a key role for our own Central Area Forum. We are working with the Cross River Partnership in engaging the local community and establishing improved management arrangements for the Square. Significant support is being secured from Cross River Partnership, using London Development Agency single regeneration budget.

We also maintain good working links with interested organisations such as the Entertainment Forum, the Westminster Property Owners Association, and the Central London Partnership, and with London wide organisations, such as the Greater London Authority and the London Film Commission. We recognise that all these organisations will have an interest in the future of Leicester Square, and in light of this, we propose regular seminars hosted by local businesses for these key players, involving different themes within the action plan and a discussion of the progress in implementing the vision.



The Consultation Process

Contact Our aim is to agree a final version of this action plan by the end of April, 2002, and to publish it so that everyone is clear about our intentions and our commitment. So that we can do that, we are distributing this draft widely in order to gather as many views as possible on the proposals within it. Please send us your comments, by 15 March, 2002 by post to:

Director of Standards
Leicester Square Team
Westminster City Council
FREEPOST LON17652
LONDON
SW1E 6YY

or by e-mail to: leicestersquare@westminster.gov.uk

You can also attend the exhibition which will be held at the Odeon Leicester Square, 23-27 Leicester Square, on the 17th and 19th of February, in the Westminster Reference Library Located in St Martin's Lane on the 20th and 22nd of February. There you will be able to see images of the Square, have the opportunity to talk directly to City Council staff about the proposals or submit your written comments. You might also want to attend the public meeting at the Odeon West End, 39-41 Leicester Square on the 20th of February at 2pm

In addition to these opportunities, we will be arranging meetings with a number of key organisations, such as the Leicester Square Association, the Police, the Piccadilly Circus Partnership, the Soho Society, the Westminster Society, the Chinese Community Association and the Greater London Authority. We will also be holding seminars for those with particular interests – for example those involved in the film industry. This document is also available in large print format and on audiotape, and a sign language translator for the public meeting can be made available on request. For more information about this programme of meetings, please contact Rafal Chomik, on 020 7641 2261 or e-mail rchomik@westminster.gov.uk



Timetable

Set out below is a suggested timetable for action, based upon the proposals in this draft action plan.

Period	Action
Already completed, underway, or to be completed before the end of the consultation period on the draft action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draft planning guidance for the Square • planning brief for the north west of the Square • planning brief for the north east of the Square • programme of repair to lighting • regular joint inspections with the LSA and the Police • scheme of fixing lights to properties around the Square • get fountain working • re-turfing worn out grassed areas • tree lopping • programme of cleaning and upgrading statues and monuments • interim surfacing works • parking discount scheme for theatre-goers and cinema-goers • mobile pissoirs in two locations at weekends • special screenings of animated films produced by local children • strict enforcement against breaches of tables and chairs licences • increased provision for clearing litter in the gardens • upgrading litter bins • new, more powerful street cleansing machine • coordinate commercial waste collections to specific time zones already • require occupiers to keep clean the space outside their premises • coordinated programme of flyposting and graffiti removal • introduce a uniformed City Council presence • radio link system for wardens • multi-disciplinary project group targeted on Leicester Square • one-stop point of contact for key organisations • City Council attendance at LSA committee and PCP board meetings and community safety forum • regular seminars with interested organisations
April to June, 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular trading standards inspections of ticket vendors • scheme to licence busking • make portrait artists scheme permanent • public art facilitator/lighting consultant • use licensing powers to press for larger venues to break down into smaller parts • encourage late-night venues with waiter service, and discourage alcohol-led activities • review funfair in 2002 • seek changes in the training of door supervisors • amend rules of management to cover queuing and behaviour outside premises • introduce temporary parking barriers during some evenings along Whitcomb Street • use planning powers to discourage new nightclubs and take-aways • noise nuisance review • monthly round table with key organisations
July to September, 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designate the square as an area of High Duty and High Amenity • coordinate activity of utility companies • bring together management of access with new CCTV scheme • scheme for charities to manage planter boxes • extend licenses for tables and chairs later into the evening • voluntary agreement where films with a U or PG certificate are available in the Square on any given evening • set lower capacity limits for venues • gather detailed evidence of licensing breaches or poor management • establish a 24-hour warden scheme • bring in to operation the CCTV scheme • Leicester Square manager
October to December, 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • completing scheme of fixing lights to properties • disabled/parent and toddler access to toilets scheme with local businesses • public transport discount scheme for family theatre and cinema-goers
January to March, 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • open up a vista through trees from north to south • discuss options for introducing new street furniture • proactive programme of events, including more family-orientated events • work with LTB in establishing strong image of Leicester Square with potential visitors • work to improve routes in tourist guidebooks • introduce new arrangements for vehicle access • develop scheme for taxi collection from venues at night • change traffic entry and exit arrangements along Leicester Place and Leicester Street • replace entrance barriers with bollards • introduce scheme for control of street drinking
April to June, 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attractiveness and security of smaller side streets • better use of signs • create two disabled parking bays open air • "tasters" for upcoming shows • introduce scheme for tables and chairs around the centre of the Square • open gardens later into the evening • establish considerate business schemes
July to September, 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear the streetscapes of clutter • move handprints to gardens • set designated parking areas • encourage improvements to building frontages • pilot scheme for a "chill out" period
October to December, 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinforce identity of ticket booth • radio link scheme for businesses
January to March, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review pedestrian safety at Cranbourn St/Charing Cross Road junction
Timetable subject to further discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • re-surfacing (subject to further consultation, costs, and programming of works) • new ground level public toilet facilities into new developments in the area* • a new entrance to the Leicester Square underground station* <p>*subject to this being provided as part of a new development</p>