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# SEVEN DIALS

A PLACE & A JOURNEY

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Public Realm Strategy, September 2015

LD&DESIGN

Robert Bevan



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# INTRODUCTION





# 1.1 OVERVIEW

The Seven Dials area sits at the fulcrum of some of London's most popular neighbourhoods – Soho and Chinatown to the west, Holborn and Bloomsbury to the north, and Covent Garden to the south and east, functioning both as an important connective piece of townscape and as part of the niche retail and dining experience of the wider Covent Garden area. It provides an eclectic mix of over two hundred shops, restaurants and bars, five theatres, two hotels and an established residential population. The area has an urban village feel, characterised by a fine grain mix of uses, human scale streets, festival bunting and individual touches such as colourful pot plants and occasional benches.

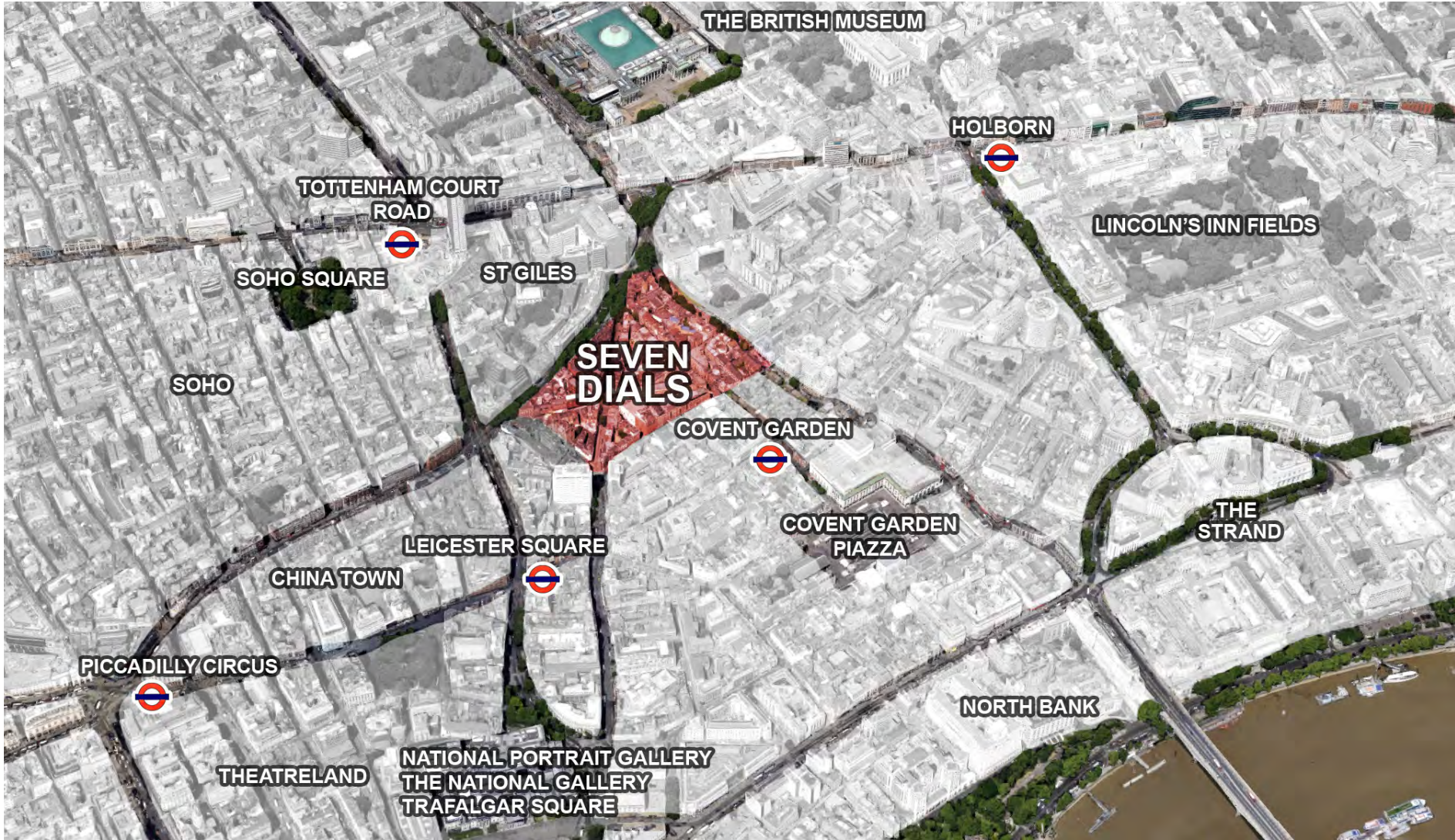
Seven Dials, which was laid out by Thomas Neale in the early 1690s to attract fashionable aristocrats to live and work, is the most complete surviving piece of Late-Stuart townscape in London. It is a unique set-piece, with its planned 'Rond Pont' - radial, seven street layout virtually unchanged for 300 years. An architectural landmark - The Sundial Pillar, was built as the centrepiece, with six sundial faces (the seventh being the column itself). The area is characterised by the survival of many fine small houses on the original 1690s plots and substantial early 19th century warehouses mostly built for the brewery trade. The area has a rich and colourful history. Its first inhabitants were lawyers and prosperous tradesman, followed by trades such as ironmongers, clock makers and crafts supporting the theatres such as scenery painters and song sheet printers. Over time the cobbled streets became home to the capital's most infamous gin houses and drinking establishments. At one point, a public house was located on every corner of the Dial. By the mid-18th Century, Seven Dials had become a notorious "rookery" (slum) and in 1773 the Sundial Pillar was removed by officials in an attempt to remove the meeting place for the numerous incidents of mob violence. In 1971 Seven Dials, like the rest of Covent Garden, was saved from comprehensive re-development and through the work of the London Borough of Camden and The Seven Dials Trust (formerly The Seven Dials

Monument Charity), has since become a national and international example of the success of economic regeneration through active conservation. Since then, the area has developed into one of London's most fashionable areas for shopping, dining and living.

Whilst the quality of the area's architecture is remarkable, with the exception of Monmouth Street and the new façade lighting and street signage, its public realm is typically incoherent and degraded in contrast. The historic streets provide for one-way vehicular access and on-street parking, generally resulting in relatively fast moving traffic for an area of this nature. Seven Dials is undoubtedly one of the busiest areas in central London, yet pedestrians are typically confined to narrow and crowded pavements.

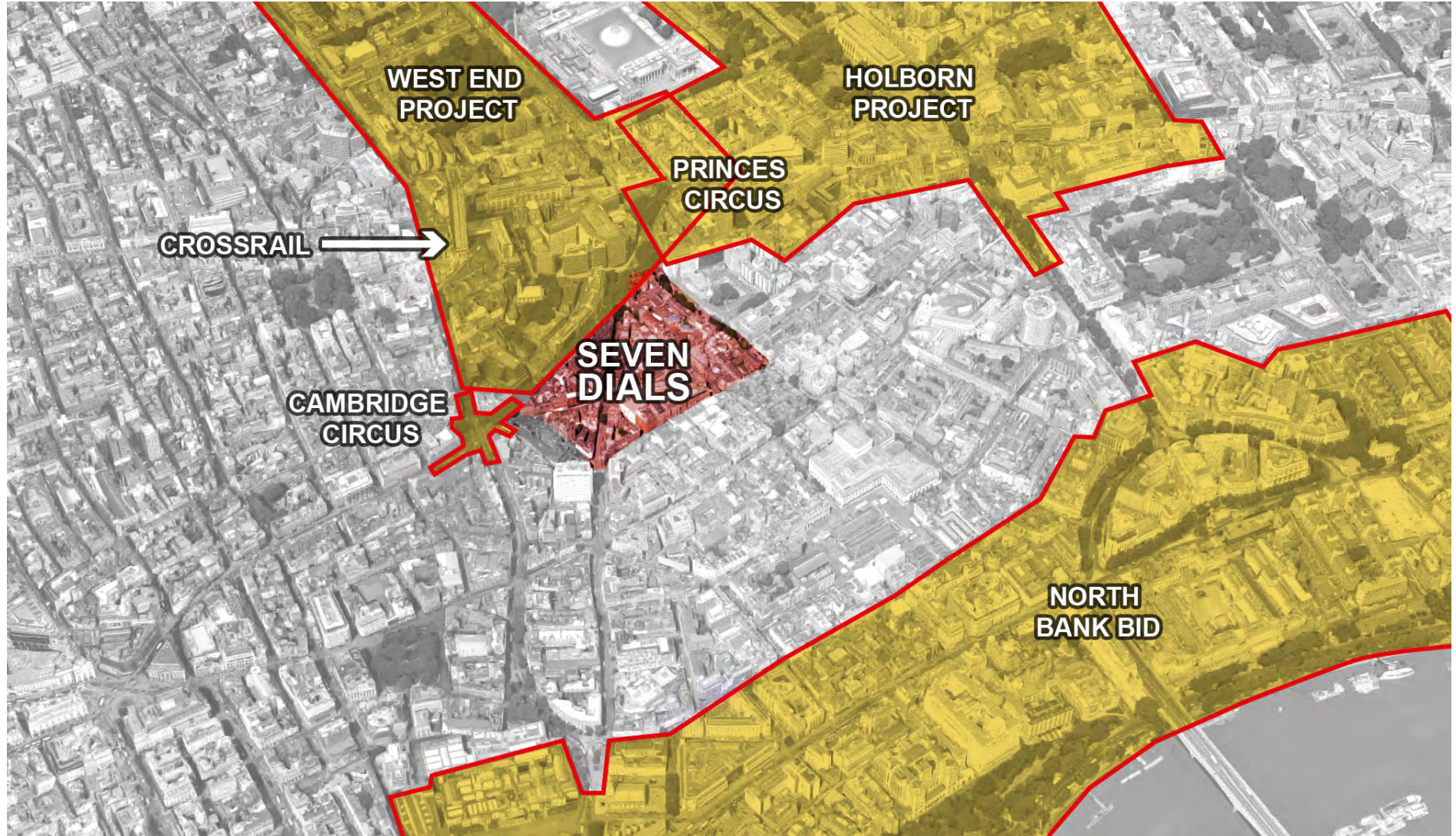
The surrounding areas to the north of Seven Dials are planned for major change. By 2018, the Camden West End Project will have been implemented, seeing significant changes in traffic arrangements and the public realm in areas including Tottenham Court Road (St Giles Circus) and Princes Circus. This, coupled with the delivery of Crossrail at Tottenham Court Road within similar timescales, will create a step-change in pedestrian levels and public realm quality. In addition, The Holborn Public Realm project that removes the one way traffic gyratory and improvements at Cambridge Circus (led by Westminster), will improve the pedestrian environment and connectivity with Seven Dials.

It is in this context that Camden Council commissioned *LDA Design* to lead a high-level design strategy for Seven Dials and more detailed design for Earlham Street West. Developing an area-wide, principles-based design strategy will be an effective means of achieving a joined up public realm design for Earlham Street. Importantly, an overarching strategy will help to ensure a more cohesive design for all present and future initiatives.

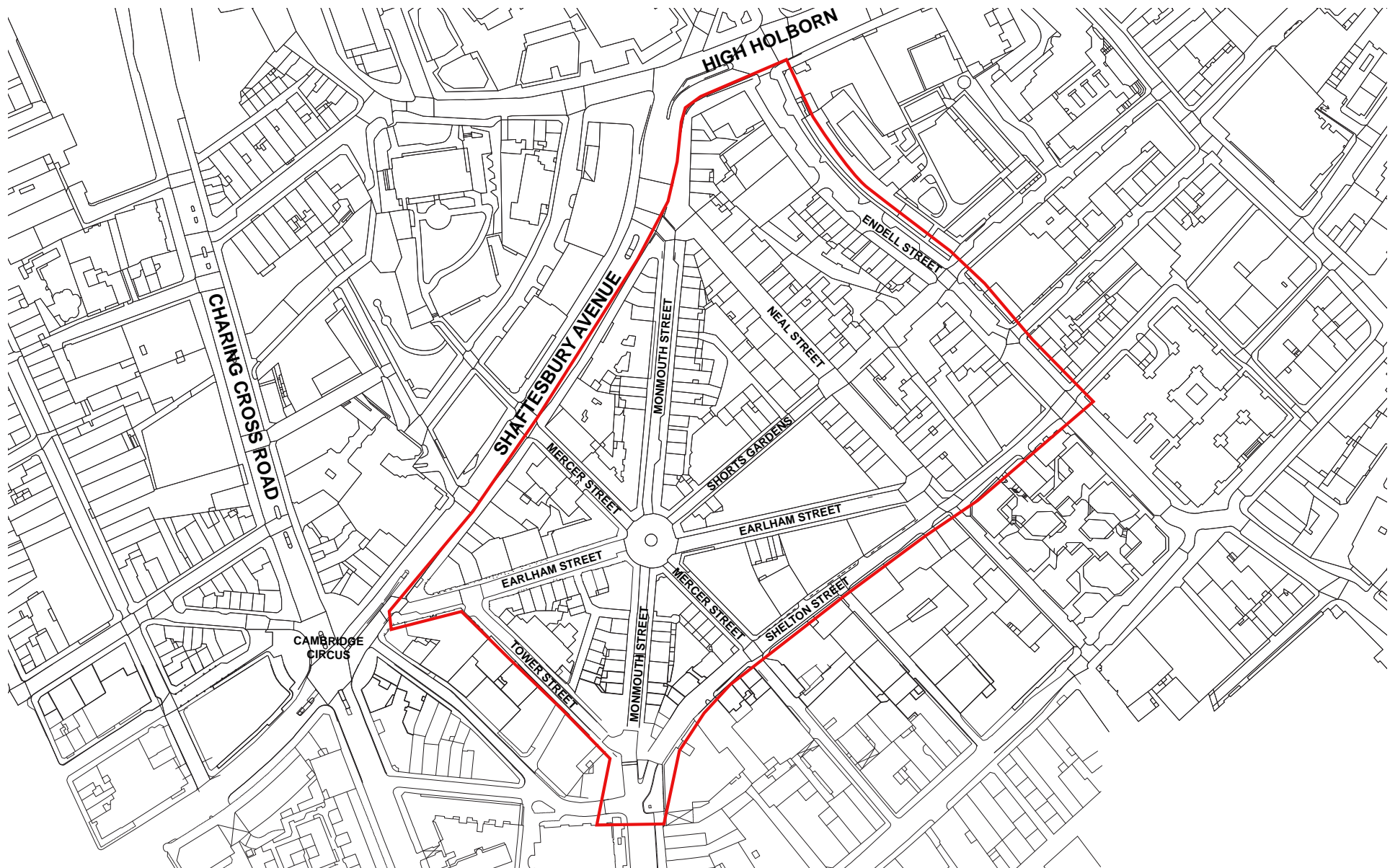


City Context Plan





Regeneration Context Plan



Seven Dials Project Area

# 1.2 SEVEN DIALS PUBLIC REALM

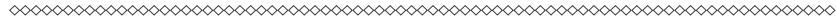
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The Project focuses on a 4.8 hectare area. Shaftesbury Avenue lies on the study boundary to the north, Endell Street to the east, Tower Street to the west and Shelton Street to the south. The project includes the public realm around The Sundial Pillar and the seven streets that radiate from this - Earlham Street east and west, Monmouth Street north and south, Mercer Street east and west and Shorts Gardens. It includes the important connection along Neal Street connecting Long Acre with Shaftesbury Avenue, the courtyards at Neal's Yard and Ching Court, as well as all the pedestrian-only passages in between.

For clarity, 'public realm' is defined as 'the space between buildings'; the streets, pedestrian routes and 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, children's play, exercise, shopping, eating, entertainment; places to work and places to relax. Successful public realm typically comprises streets and spaces with clear roles that can be used comfortably and safely, with well-considered arrangements of paving, lighting, signage, planting and street furniture adding to the identity of the space between the buildings.

Seven Dials' public realm has been the focus of the City's social and public life for a long time. Crucial to the success of the area is an improvement in the quality of the public realm. The site's location, history, mix of uses and architectural capital demand a world-class response. Importantly, the project provides the opportunity to reclaim the streets for people again.

# 1.3 PROJECT TEAM



**CLIENT:**  
(Public Realm, Planning and Transport)

London Borough of Camden

**LEAD CONSULTANT:**  
(Public Realm and Urban Design)

*LDA Design*

**HERITAGE CONSULTANT:**

Robert Bevan

**WORKING GROUP:**

Council Officers, Shaftesbury, The Seven Dials Trust, The Covent Garden Community Association, Councillor Vincent and local residents

The Seven Dials Public Realm Strategy has been developed in co-ordination with the update of the Seven Dials Trust Renaissance Study, currently underway by The Seven Dials Trust. The Strategy also draws on *The Camden Streetscape Design Manual* and *The Westminster Way - Public Realm Strategy* (Supplementary Planning Document, adopted September 2011) due to the fact that the western and southern project boundaries lie along the Westminster Borough Boundary.

# 1.4 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

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The purpose of this document is to set out an overarching strategy for public realm in Seven Dials. The report aims to present the analysis of the area, including key issues and opportunities, and provide feedback from community and stakeholder engagement via the working group. This assessment culminates in the resultant Public Realm Strategy which encompasses seven overarching principles with corresponding rules for each. Following this, the principles are tested to demonstrate potential of place and understand how they could be translated on the ground. It is worth noting that this strategy sets broad principles and rules, however it is not intended to provide a prescriptive catalogue of street furniture elements or paving materials with named suppliers.

It is intended that this document be used as an on-going point of reference to inform all public realm projects going forward. For the avoidance of doubt, the proposals for Earlham Street West, the next planned public realm project, will be described elsewhere.





# ANALYSIS





SEVEN DIALS  
London Borough of Camden

EARLHAM  
STREET WC2  
Formerly Great Earl Street



# 2.1 A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

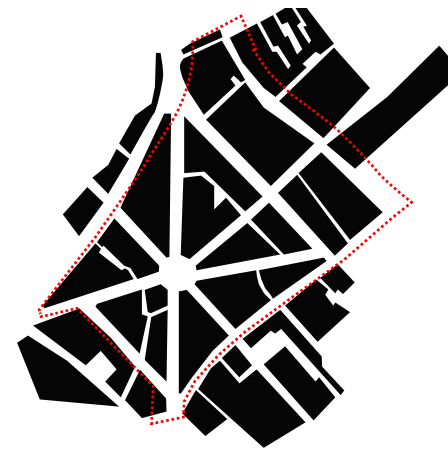
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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the historical analysis is not to provide a full chronological record and inventory of this well-documented area of central London, nor to repeat work already carried out as part of The Renaissance Study and Conservation Area character study. Rather, the aim is to set the context and explore the past in order to elucidate the present condition and inform richer, layered responses to contemporary urban design problems. For instance, the analysis helps us understand the heritage significance of certain elements in the public realm as well as the reasons why some parts of the modern Seven Dials environment appear not to function so successfully. This understanding enables priorities for improvement to be established.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF SEVEN DIALS

Seven Dials is the most complete surviving piece of Late-Stuart townscape in England and has remained relatively unchanged for three hundred years. An analysis of its history provides a fascinating insight into the changing social life of the city. In Seven Dials, perhaps more so than anywhere else, the city's socio-economic evolution can be read through the way in which the design and function of the public realm has changed.

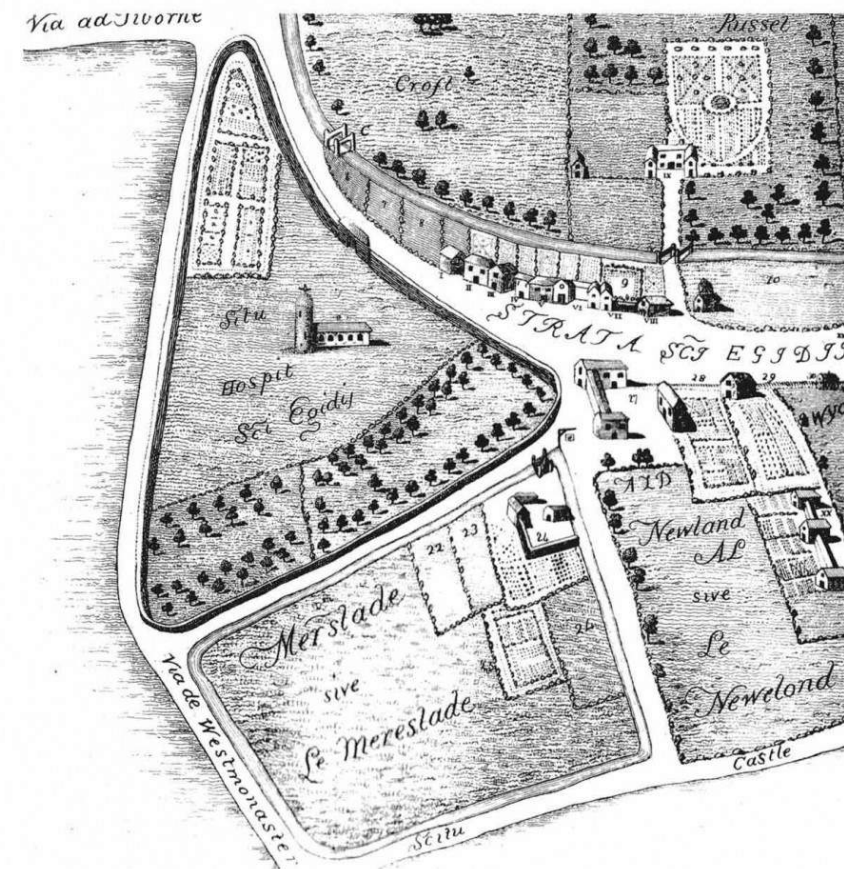


1749



Present day with 1749

The early context to Seven Dials area can be traced back to Roman times when roads led from Londinium, located to the east, along High Holborn/Oxford Street to the north and the Strand to the south. From the 11th century, land to the west of Drury Lane (a route through what was once a Saxon settlement) was used as a garden for the Westminster Abbey estates while the area around the Seven Dials itself was owned by the Hospital of St Giles, a leper hospital founded in 1117 near what is now Centrepoint. The c.1200 map shows St Giles Field south of the hospital prior to development when the St Giles area was marshland with diagonal paths across, which may have influenced the unusual star-shaped Rond-pont design that was subsequently laid out at Seven Dials. The 1720 plan depicts this new radiating plan of streets formed around a small central polygonal circus with a Doric column at the centre surmounted by sundials. This radial layout is rarely seen in British urban design where formally planned developments were typically laid out in the grids, squares, or more rarely, a circus.



Parton's Map of St. Giles Leper Hospital site c.1200

The distinctive layout was masterminded and planned by Thomas Neale, Master of the Mint and entrepreneur. Initially it was not a great commercial success and was not fully built up until 1713. The terraced houses were first occupied by merchants, gentlemen and well-off tradesmen, however it wasn't long before the area started to decline. St Giles to the north had long been an epicentre for disease and Seven Dials soon became part of the dense St Giles rookery (slum), typified by intense poverty, crime and prostitution. The area was full of intense, if often abject, life; an area where theatre scenery was painted, performing animals were trained and two to three families shared a room. Charles Dickens Junior noted the shops selling, "every rarity of pigeon, fowl and rabbit, together with rare birds such as hawks, owls and parrots, love birds and other species native and foreign". It was busy throughout the day and night and Seven Dials became notorious for its links with crime and corruption. In 1773 the central sundial was removed to prevent mobs gathering, which suggests that the area had already changed radically from Neale's vision.

*"Nowhere within  
the reach of  
the West End of London  
can such a glimpse of the  
life of the poorer classes be  
obtained as on a Saturday  
evening at the Dials".*

*(Charles Dickens Junior  
1834)*



1720 Plan



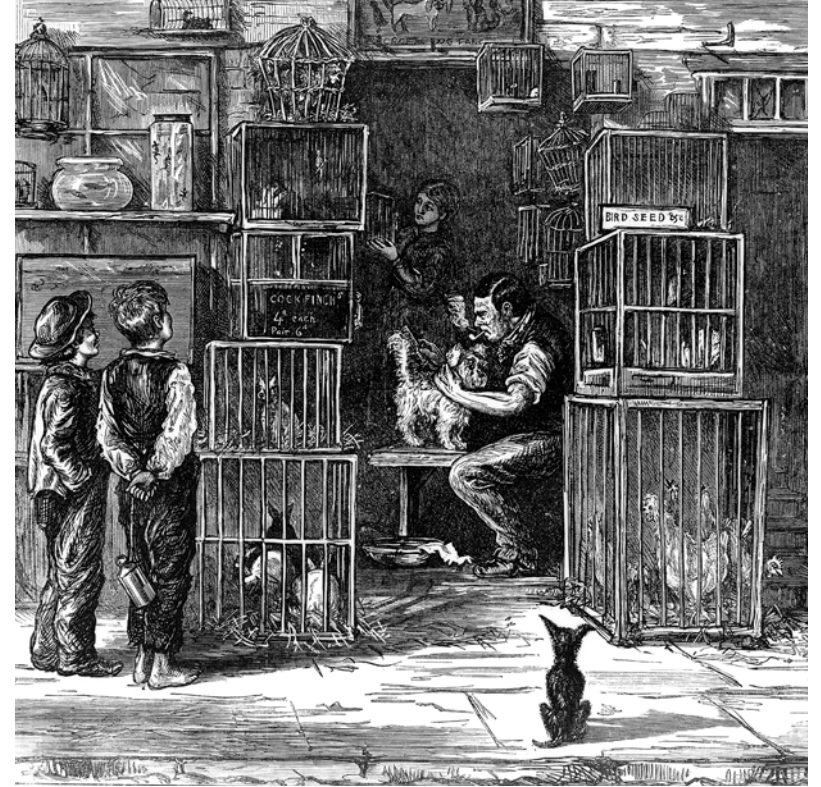
Monmouth Street/Dudley Street (the pre-cursor to Shaftesbury Avenue) – The Heart of Darkness



17th Century - Evident, an intermingling between the carriageway and the pavement



Cruikshank's St Patrick's Day in Seven Dials



Illustrated London News 1874

In the late nineteenth century the area's context changed again with the advent of major roads projects driven through and past the rookeries, in part in an attempt to disperse poverty and crime as well as speed growing traffic. New Oxford Street was aligned to the north of St Giles High Street, while Shaftesbury Avenue (which followed the curve of its precursor Dudley Street) was built to the north-west of Seven Dials and Endell Street to the east. Consequently, the distinctive star-shaped, layout of Seven Dials interacted with a number of other street layouts that also displayed an unusual sequence of angular junctions and circuses. These include the present day Cambridge Circus, St Giles Circus, Princes Circus and Upper St Martin's Lane at Long Acre. Always a complex area to navigate (part of its contemporary charm) the interaction with the Victorian era roads provided as many barriers and edges as new connections.

The severance of Seven Dials from the area around St Giles church was exacerbated following Second World War Two bombing, when the area around St Giles church was redeveloped in a way that ruptured the legible routes that once existed. The 1720 map shows Mercer Street (formerly White Lion Street) providing a strong direct link across Shaftesbury Avenue (at the time called Monmouth Street) to Phoenix Street and the St Giles Church. This pedestrian connection was lost through the re-development that closed the access from New Compton Street to Old Compton Street. This was further compounded by development at Centrepoint, which obliterated St Giles Circus. The cumulative effect of major road building and post-war development has created a significant barrier to pedestrian movement across Shaftesbury Avenue and High Holborn.



1871 Ordnance Survey Plan



1880 Traffic is increasing and the monument has been removed



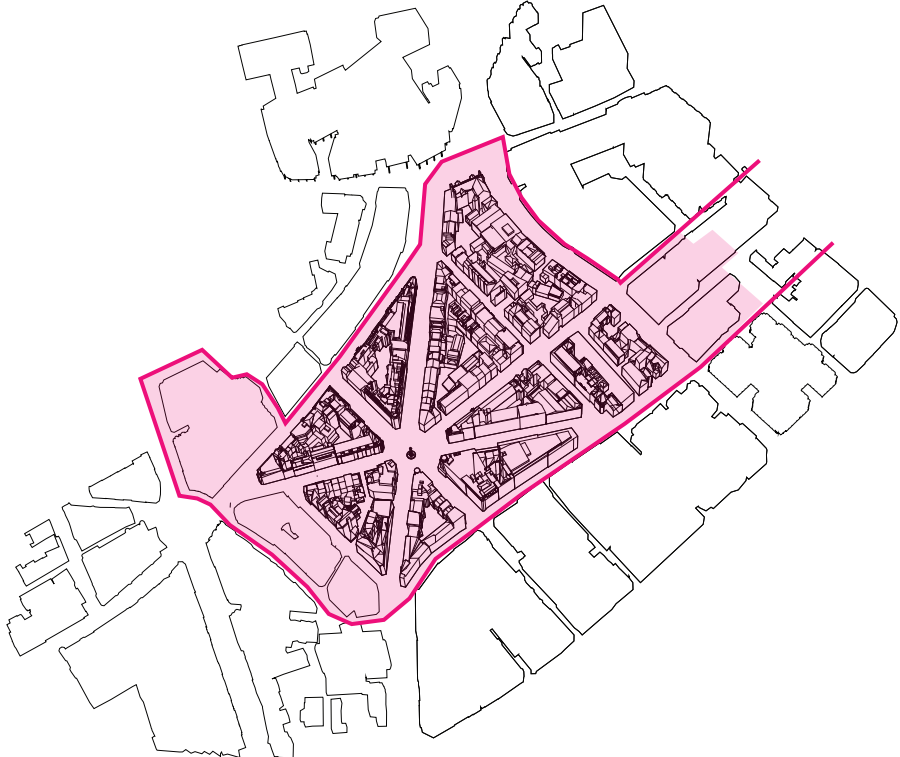
1894 – Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road

In addition to the loss of the historic desire line along Mercer Street across Shaftesbury Avenue to St Giles and Tottenham Court Road, the design of redevelopments has resulted in a number of blank facades and inactive frontages, such as at The Mercer Hotel and Earlham House on Mercer Street. Such an environment discourages pedestrian movements and over time has effectively removed street life.

The character of the area again changed dramatically once more following a decision in 1965 by the Covent Garden Market Authority to remove their flower, fruit and vegetable market to Nine Elms. Following this, plans were prepared by the Greater London Council (GLC) for the comprehensive redevelopment of the area which threatened to significantly compromise the character of Seven Dials, along with the wider Covent Garden area. The proposals received intense public opposition and the plans were subsequently rejected. This preservation was a victory for grassroots activism and a pivotal moment for the conservation movement in the UK. The future was then guided instead by the Covent Garden Action Area Plan (1978) with the GLC itself responsible for developing many of the sites in the area with mixed-use schemes. At the same time, over 200 buildings were listed and Seven Dials Conservation Area was given 'Outstanding Status' by the Secretary of State. The Seven Dials Renaissance Study led by The Seven Dials Trust (formerly the Seven Dials Monument Charity) headed a campaign to replace the Sundial Pillar, which was reinstated with a replica in 1989, marking a key point in the regeneration of the area.

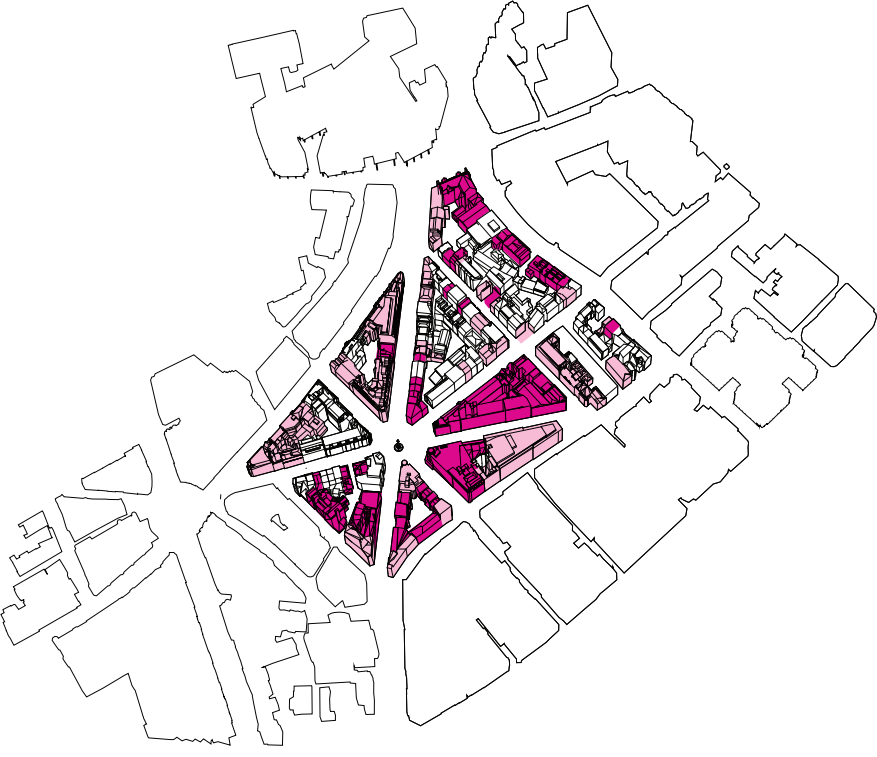


**HERITAGE ASSETS**



Conservation Area

- Conservation Area
- Sub Area 1



Listed Buildings

- Statutory Listed Building
- Unlisted Buildings Making a Positive Contribution to the Conservation Area

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HISTORY FOR THE PUBLIC REALM

The importance and significance of Seven Dials in historical terms is undisputed but the historical analysis starts to shed light on the reasons behind why some areas are failing in terms of pedestrian connections and activity. This, along with the analysis of the contemporary area, raises important questions for the strategy to consider and provides useful cues as to the elements to reinforce and issues to address. These include the following:

- The importance of the distinctive rond-pont layout and central Sundial Pillar. How should the design and layout of the public realm reinforce these?
- The intermingling of the carriageway and the pavement, and the way people use it, is part of the character and history of Seven Dials. This is evidenced through archive photographs of the area. With the advent of the motorcar, pedestrian dominance has been eroded over time. How can the new public realm reinstate pedestrian priority?
- The evolution of major roads like Shaftesbury Avenue and the related, inappropriate post-war re-development have had a significant effect on legibility and pedestrian connections to and from Seven Dials. How can the public realm strategy start to re-connect these areas and related regeneration projects in the wider area?
- Historically, the line between the interior life and street life of Seven Dials has always been blurred: Shop activity was once typically been played out on the streets as well as indoors. A 1905 image of Earlham Street depicts deep awnings, street traders with their barrows, and commercial activity on the street itself. The Public Realm strategy should recognise the historical importance of this pattern of activity and understand what this character means for the future uses in the area. How, for instance, can the knowledge gained from the historical research inform the future function and identity of the market stalls on Earlham Street? How can the legacy of the flexibility of the public realm in facilitating street life be recognised in the strategy?
- Historically, the centre line of the carriageway was the centre line of the street, as depicted in archive photographs. This has eroded over time. Should this relationship be reinstated where possible?



Earlam Street in 1905

# 2.2 WHAT MAKES SEVEN DIALS SPECIAL

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Seven Dials is a unique and special area. The identity of Seven Dials is derived from its appearance, meaning and significance based on a number of different factors such as use, character, history, architecture and public realm. It is also formed by people's mental maps of the area and their overall impressions and experience, gathered through workshops and anecdotal feedback. During the engagement sessions with the Working Group the distinctive and rich layering that makes Seven Dials special was discussed and collectively agreed. This understanding aids the formation of principles to strengthen the positive identity of the area through the public realm.



An architectural icon – The Sundial Pillar



Human scale streets



Fine grain mix of uses



Fine architecture



High quality shop fronts



A richness of detailing



Discovery and delight



Varying personalities



Personalisation of the street



A village feel



A place for celebration



A timeless elegance



An individuality



Its people

## 2.3 THE PUBLIC REALM - IN CONTRAST

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The public realm has been assessed in terms of its role and identity, its quality, and its usage. This also includes an appraisal of paving, furniture, lighting, planting and trees, taking into account how these components reinforce or detract from the street scene. During the engagement workshops the overall identity of the public realm and the existing issues that need to be addressed were discussed. It was agreed (with a few notable exceptions) that the overall impression of the public realm in Seven Dials detracts from the special qualities of the area. The public realm does not provide a setting that is appropriate to the significance and special quality of the area. However, it was agreed that there are discrete areas and components of the public realm that function much better in comparison and reinforce a more positive identity. These include Neal's Yard, Ching Court, Monmouth Street (aside from the existing construction and maintenance issues), and the bespoke façade lighting, bollards and street name plates, that incorporate the Golden Hind - the historic emblem of the Parish of St Giles.



Weak arrival identity – traffic and infrastructure



Physical and visual barriers



Inactive frontages on important streets



Dominated by parking



Obstructed alleyways



Back alleyways providing important linkages





Lack of cycle parking



Street clutter



An array of materials



Road markings insensitive



Flyposting



Incongruous market stalls

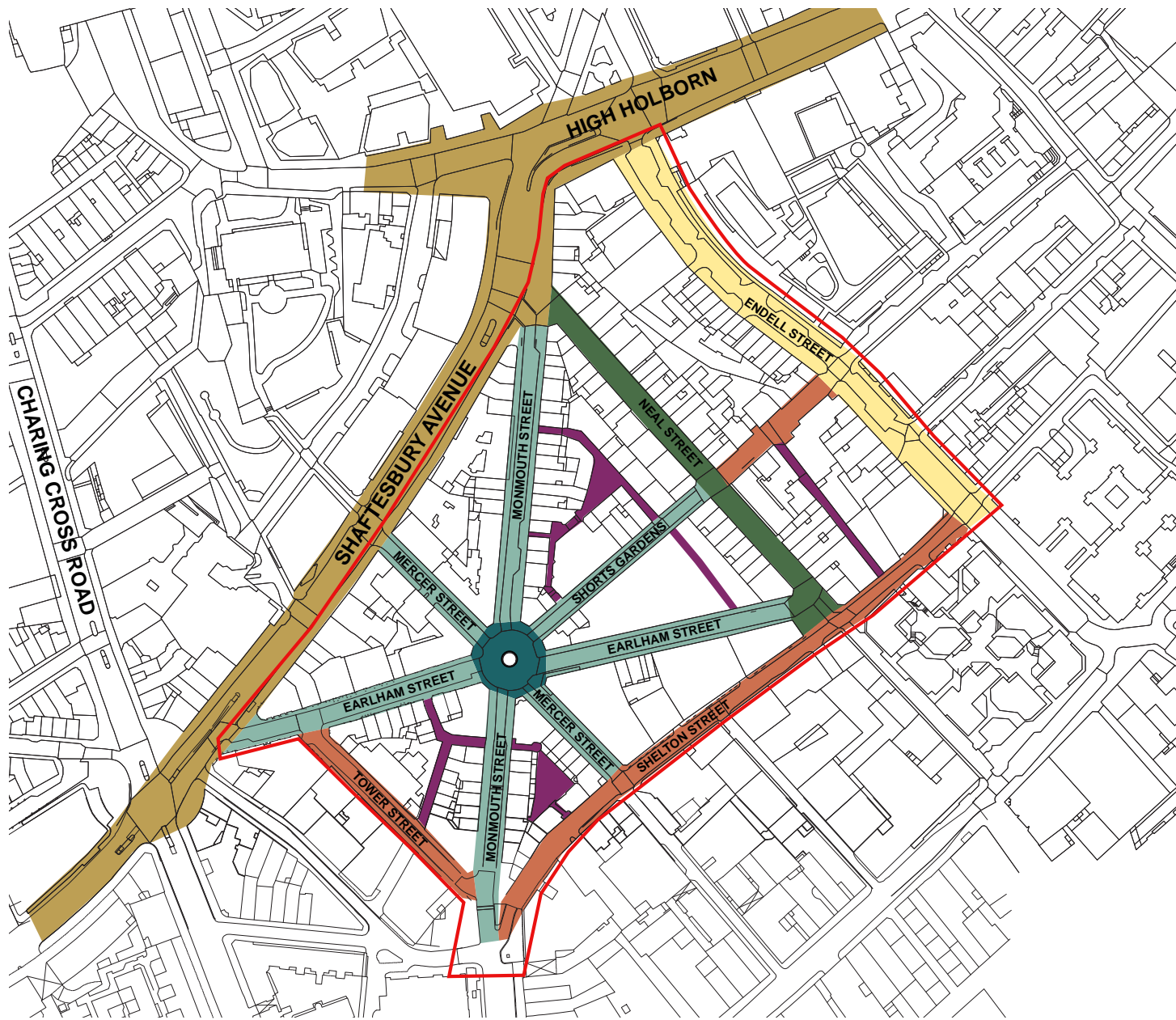
## 2.4 URBAN MORPHOLOGY

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Seven Dials sits within a web of circuses, star-shaped junctions, traditional streets and internal courtyards that lend much of Covent Garden a particular morphological character and complexity that is cherished. The history of Seven Dials has provided a unique and distinctive urban form from which it derives much of its character and charm. Many of the streets still contain buildings from the 17th to 19th centuries. The cumulative effect is a relatively cohesive townscape with streets that are tightly enclosed and operate at a human-scale. With the exception of sections of Mercer Street, frontages that line the seven key streets typically generate activity and add visual interest, further reinforcing the attractiveness of the area.

There are no formal open spaces in the area but significant informal urban spaces occur in the form of yards, passages and street junctions. For instance, at the rear of Neal Street, Shorts Gardens, Monmouth Street is Neal's Yard; a courtyard area that has developed into a wholefood and complementary medicine centre which also serves as a well-used small public open space. Ching Court also provides a welcome oasis of calm, a triangular courtyard at the rear Mercer Street, Shelton Street and Monmouth Street. This contrasts strongly with Neal's Yard. At the junction of Neal Street, Earlham Street and Shelton Street the street widens to form a broad paved area in front of the Seven Dials Warehouse, again providing an incidental space used for occasional events.

A number of existing street and public space typologies have been identified in the area. These are categorised according to their collective function, scale, identity and use. This provides a useful assessment in order to develop a consistent approach for streets and spaces of the same typology in order to provide visual unity and strengthen the identity of Seven Dials.



**STREET TYPOLOGIES**

- The Sundial Pillar
- Seven Dials Streets
- Neal Street
- Endell Street
- Other Surrounding Streets
- Courtyards & Passages
- Shaftesbury Avenue / High Holborn



Monmouth Street North



Monmouth Street South



Earlham Street West



Earlam Street East



Mercer Street North





Mercer Street South



Shorts Garden



Neal Street



Endell Street



Tower Street



walk-in  
backrub

14

SCHOOL OF NATURAL  
HEALTH & BEAUTY  
WILD  
FOOD  
CAFE

NEAL'S YARD REMEDIES  
Ethical Organic Health & Beauty

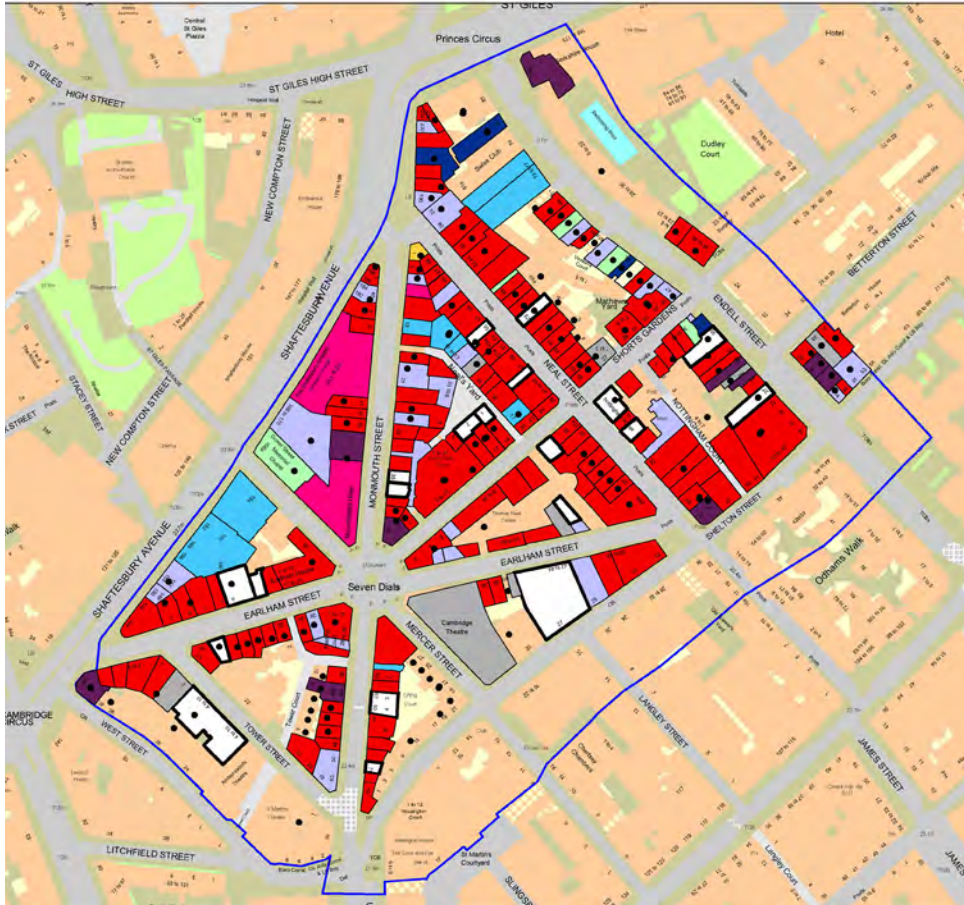
Neal's Yard  
Welcome

Neal's Yard



Shaftesbury Avenue

# 2.5 LAND USE



- Residential
- Shops (A1)
- Financial and professional services (A2)
- Restaurants and cafés (A3)
- Drinking establishments (A4)
- Hot food takeaways (A5)
- Business (B1)
- Hotels and hostels (C1)
- Dwellinghouses (C3)
- Non-residential institution (D1)
- Sui generis (SG)



# 2.6 THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

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Seven Dials is undoubtedly one of the most popular areas in central London. Within a five minute walk the area is served by three of the busiest London Underground stations - Covent Garden, Leicester Square and Tottenham Court Road. On a typical Saturday, approximately one hundred and seventy thousand people collectively exit these stations. These numbers are also set to rise substantially with the advent of Crossrail serving Tottenham Court Road bringing an estimated 250% increase in passengers. The West End Project and Holborn Project are also likely to increase footfall in the area particularly around the junction of Shaftesbury Avenue and High Holborn due to the pedestrianisation of Gower Street. In addition, large numbers of people are drawn to the museums and galleries that surround the area. The United Kingdom's top two visitor attractions, The British Museum and The National Gallery, are located within a short walk. Seven Dials attracts very high levels of footfall both during the day and night time, with peaks on a weekend and around lunchtime and early evening.

The area functions both as a through-route as well as a destination, therefore pedestrian movement patterns reflect this. Key through-routes include the following:

- Neal Street connects Shaftesbury Avenue and High Holborn at Princes Circus with Long Acre, Covent Garden Piazza and The Strand.
- Monmouth Street connects Shaftesbury Avenue and High Holborn at Princes Circus with St Martins Lane, Trafalgar Square and Charing Cross
- Earlham Street connects Shaftesbury Avenue, Cambridge Circus and Piccadilly Circus with Long Acre, Great Queen Street and Kingsway

The wider pedestrian approach to Seven Dials is often fraught and difficult to navigate. Key routes are typically severed by over-sized streets and busy vehicular traffic, pedestrian crossings are often two stage and guardrails block principle desire lines, for instance at High Holborn and Shaftesbury Avenue. Legibility to and from Seven Dials with key areas such as St Giles, Tottenham Court Road and Holborn is very poor. Blank facades and apparent dead end routes, such as at the Phoenix Garden, discourage pedestrian connectivity. The identity of the approach spaces that serve to integrate Seven Dials with its surroundings, are also typically poor and do not aid orientation. Such approach spaces include Cambridge Circus and Earlham Street, the junction of Monmouth Street and Neal Street and Upper St Martins Lane. Whilst Seven Dials area is considered as a single neighbourhood there is great variance in the function and appearance of approach spaces and streets and the visitor often stumbles into the area. It is only once the visitor is within one of the seven streets that visual cues such as festival bunting, special shop frontages and glimpsed views of the Sundial Pillar indicate that the visitor has indeed arrived in a special area. The prominence of The Sundial Pillar aids legibility, yet the seven streets radiating from it have a similar relationship and scale which reportedly often confuses the visitor in respect of their orientation within the area. The discovery of hidden delights such as Neal's Yard and Ching Court add to the rich pedestrian experience and provide a welcome contrast to the busier areas. This sense of discovery is a cherished attribute of Seven Dials.



Wider Context Connections

*“The stranger  
who finds himself in the  
dials for the first time...  
at the entrance of seven  
obscure passages, uncertain  
which to take, will see enough  
around him to keep his  
curiosity awake for  
no inconsiderable  
time...”*

*Dickens, in “Sketches by Boz”*



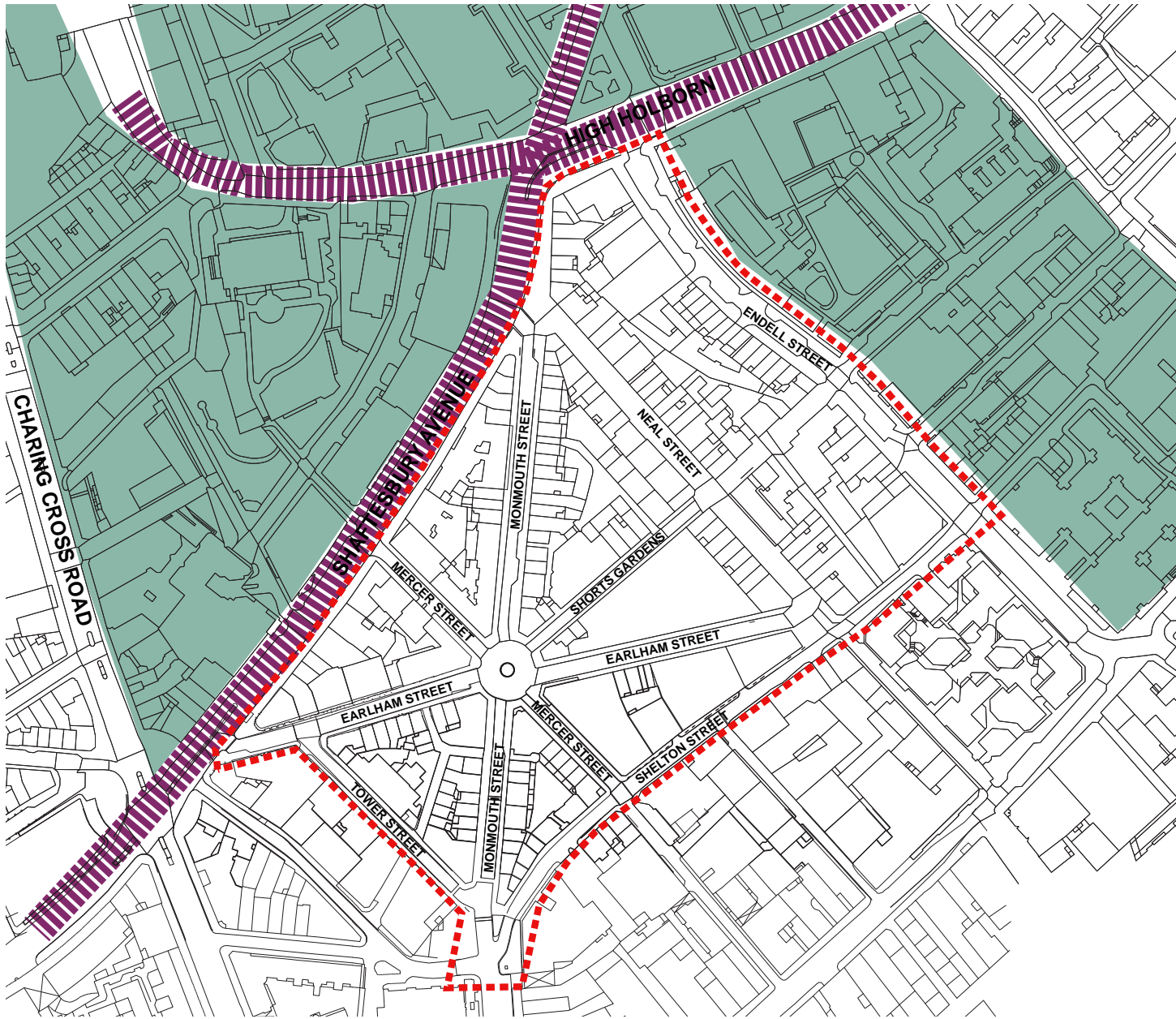
Weak Arrival Identity - Traffic and Clutter





Weak Arrival Identity - Oversized Streets

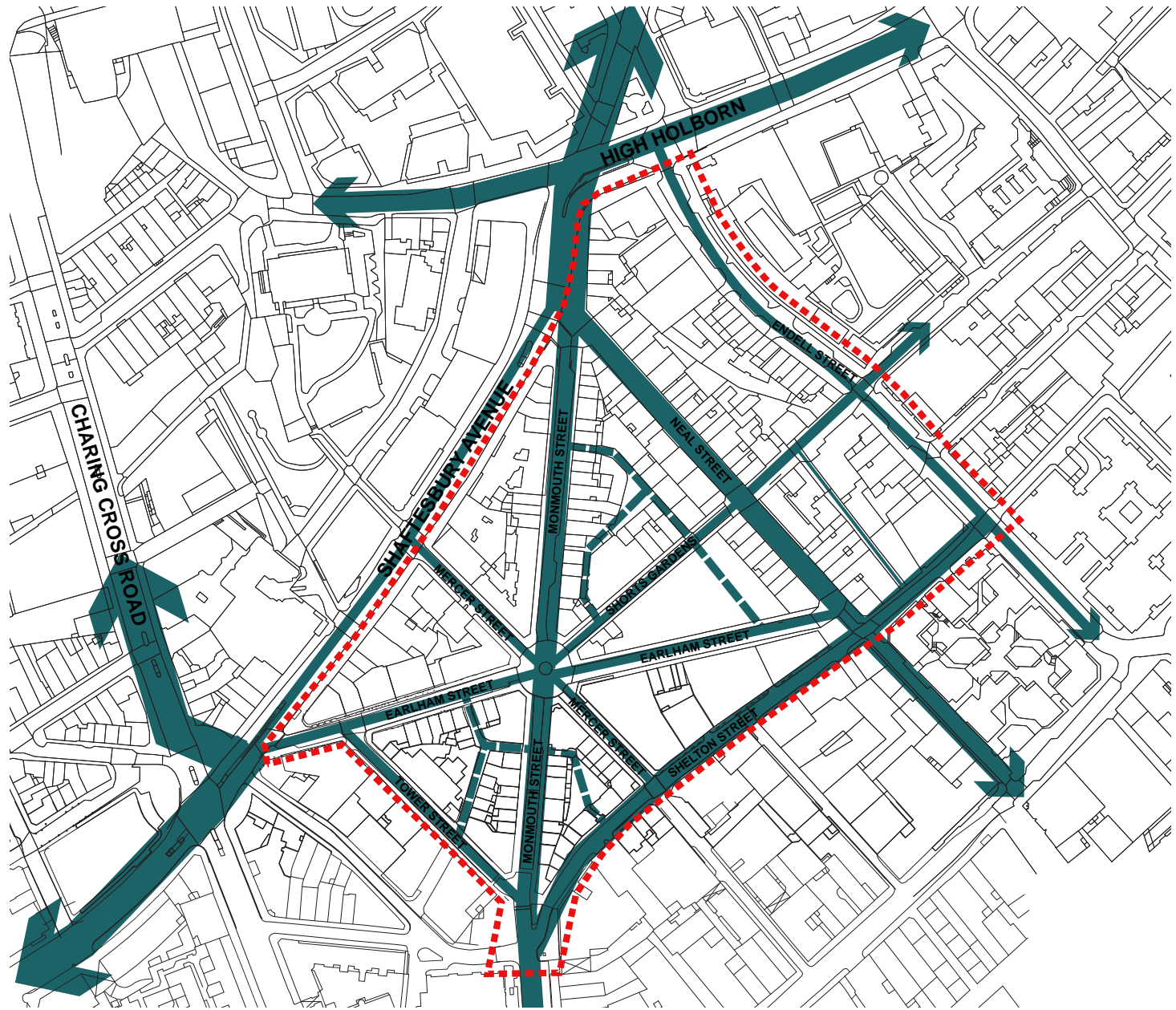


Poor linkages to important onward destinations








**EXISTING BARRIERS**

-  Pedestrian Barriers
-  Weak Legibility

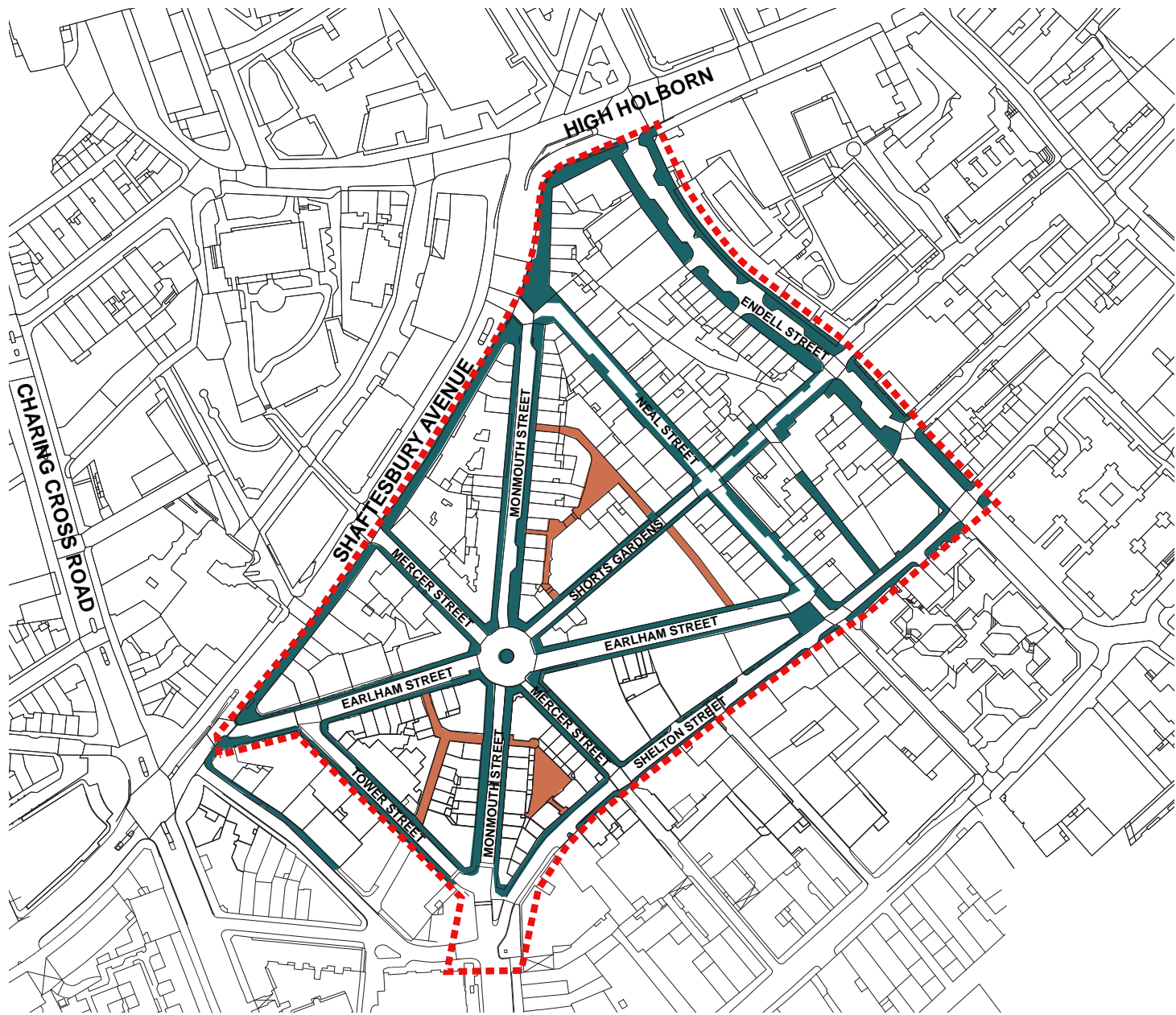


**PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT - INTENSITY OF USAGE**

-  Very Busy Route
-  Busy Route
-  Less Busy Route
-  Courtyards & Passages
-  Alleyway

The plan has been derived from qualitative 'site' assessment of pedestrian flows, because quantitative pedestrian flow data was unavailable for the whole area.





**EXISTING FOOTWAYS**

- Pavement
- Courtyard & Passageways

This plan denotes the physical space available for pedestrians

Within Seven Dials pedestrians are typically not prioritised. The tight enclosure of streets typically causes large numbers of pedestrians to be confined to narrow and crowded pavements by virtue of high kerbs or long rows of bollards (such as along Neal Street). This obstruction is further compounded by various street furniture items such as bollards and litter bins, along with further items from the shops such as signage and tables and chairs. Cycle parking in some places is also poorly positioned in relation to pedestrian desire lines. As a result pedestrians often tend to walk within the carriageway. Several instances of illegal loading activity were reported by the Working Group which mostly involved vehicles parked across pedestrian crossings or mounting footways; this was despite loading provision being available nearby. In addition, pedestrians are often channelled down narrow pavements because of long rows of tightly parked cars, motorbikes or market stalls (such as on Earlham Street).

This does not facilitate a natural meandering between shops that is typical for an area of this nature. In some areas, there is a greater level of inferred pedestrian priority by virtue of setts in the carriageway, such as on Monmouth Street, that blurs the boundary between vehicles and pedestrians. In addition, flush surfaces, such as that around the Sundial Pillar itself, form effectively shared spaces where pedestrians routinely take ownership of the space. People cross the street frequently to access the seating steps and large numbers routinely spill out and assemble around The Cambridge Theatre.

## **STREET FURNITURE**

The existing street furniture within Seven Dials comprises litter bins, bollards, wall mounted lanterns, lighting columns, cycle stands, traffic signage and the Legible London monolith signage. Over the years the Seven Dials Trust and partners have developed a 'Seven Dials' range of street

furniture. This incorporates the historic emblem of the ancient Parish of St. Giles, the Golden Hind, to provide interest and some historical context. This range comprises a Seven Dials bollard, litter bin and wall-mounted lantern. The recently installed street name plates also incorporate the signature Golden Hind. Therefore, the existing public realm comprises a combination of the Seven Dials furniture that provides a collective identity along with older furniture of varying styles.

Within the study area there are currently in excess of 340 bollards and of these, seven different design styles are depicted. The bollards are typically provided at a close spacing to prevent vehicles parking in prohibited areas such as shop fronts and obstructing pedestrian only areas. They also prevent excessive loading onto the cellars that typically lie underneath pavement level. The Working Group agreed that a balanced approach should be taken to bollards and selective rationalisation was appropriate in certain areas to improve pedestrian movement and de-clutter. It was felt that the existing Seven Dials bollard provided a positive contribution to place making, however the low quality timber bollards on Neal Street and Shorts Gardens and stainless steel bollards demanded review. It was also agreed that there was the potential to explore a slimmer version of the Seven Dials bollard where larger numbers were required in rows, such as on Neal Street.

An on-going project to celebrate individuals, companies and institutions that have made a contribution to Seven Dials is currently underway known as The People's and Street History plaques. Over one hundred and twenty potential plaques have been identified and twenty one have been shortlisted for implementation. The first plaque to Brian Epstein, of Beatles fame, was unveiled in 2010 by Cilla Black. The design of the plaques relates to the street name plates (designed by Trustee Paul Draper). It is intended that each street extending off the Dials will also have its own street history plaque with a linked QR code for further information.



Seven Dials Bollard



Seven Dials Litter Bin



Seven Dials Litter Lantern & Signage



Legible London Monolith Signage



Varying styles of street furniture - e.g. bollards



## **PLACES TO STOP & REST**

Given the large number of people and the cluster of leisure and entertainment uses in the area, (such as shops, restaurants and theatres) there is surprisingly very little public seating. There is only one 'public' place to rest - on the steps to the monument, yet this is relatively small given the number of people and is located at the centre of a traffic island. It is a good place to stop and people watch. The market on Earlham Street selling street food (amongst other things) has no designated seating to make a hot food stop pleasant and relaxing. Seating is typically provided in the day by the retailers in the form of benches, which reinforces an urban village feel, yet often feels private and not publically accessible. There is also a cluster of seating in Neal's Yard, however again this feels private. The potential option of incorporating the Golden Hind emblem on any new seating would help denote a more public environment, opposed to private feel. Given the large number of residential dwellings throughout the area, there is also a potential conflict with promoting areas for people to sit and gather during night-time hours. Residents reported that existing night-time disruptions include parked up rickshaws playing music, open drug dealing and groups congregating and running with dogs throughout the night. The approach to seating in the area therefore needs sensitive consideration.

## **SEVEN DIALS – A PLACE FOR CELEBRATION AND EVENTS**

Seven Dials has an annual programme of events and celebrations. This ranges from food, shopping and lifestyle events to music, comedy and arts festivals. On a number of occasions the space around the Sundial Pillar has closed to traffic and formed the focus for events. In 2013, the 'Pop up Forest' organised by Camden Council transformed the area with sixty trees to celebrate Car Free Day .



Narrow pavements



Constrained pedestrian movement



Long rows of cars



Only one place to stop and rest



Seating is private not public



Long rows of cars



Pop-up Forest (International Car Free Day 2013)



Urban Pop-up lawn - for the Spring Shopping Event and Spotlight Music, Comedy & Arts Festival

## PAVING

The public realm in Seven Dials comprises a multitude of paving types, such as granite setts, yorkstone pavers, concrete setts and pavers, clay bricks and tarmac, often lying in close proximity. The kerbs are typically granite and the level difference between footway and road is relatively high. Where higher quality materials have been installed, such as the granite setts and yorkstone pavers on Monmouth Street, the design and implementation of painted road markings such as double yellow lines, chevrons, painted zebra crossings and 'look left and right' warnings has not been approached in a manner sensitive to the area and has subsequently compromised the high quality appearance. High contrast concrete tactile pavers have been used at courtesy pedestrian crossings in areas adjacent to natural stone, where a more sensitive treatment such as brass studs may have been more appropriate in this context. Maintenance work undertaken following utilities repairs has inappropriately replaced granite setts with tarmac which has degraded the appearance of the streets, in particular on Monmouth Street. Further to this, where the different coloured setts have been installed on Monmouth Street they are high contrast colours creating a 'busy' patchwork effect that visually detracts from the overall street scene and does not provide a recessive setting for high quality buildings and shop fronts. Overall, there is great variation in paving material choice and alongside variations in street furniture, footway widths, parking arrangements etc. there is a chaotic appearance to some of the streets and an inconsistent identity.



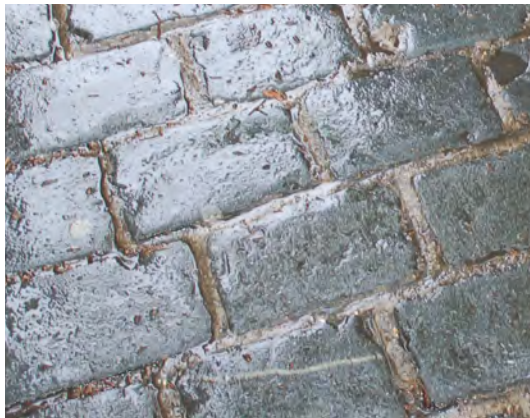
Granite Setts - mixed



Granite Setts



Concrete Slabs



Granite Setts



Yorkstone Slabs



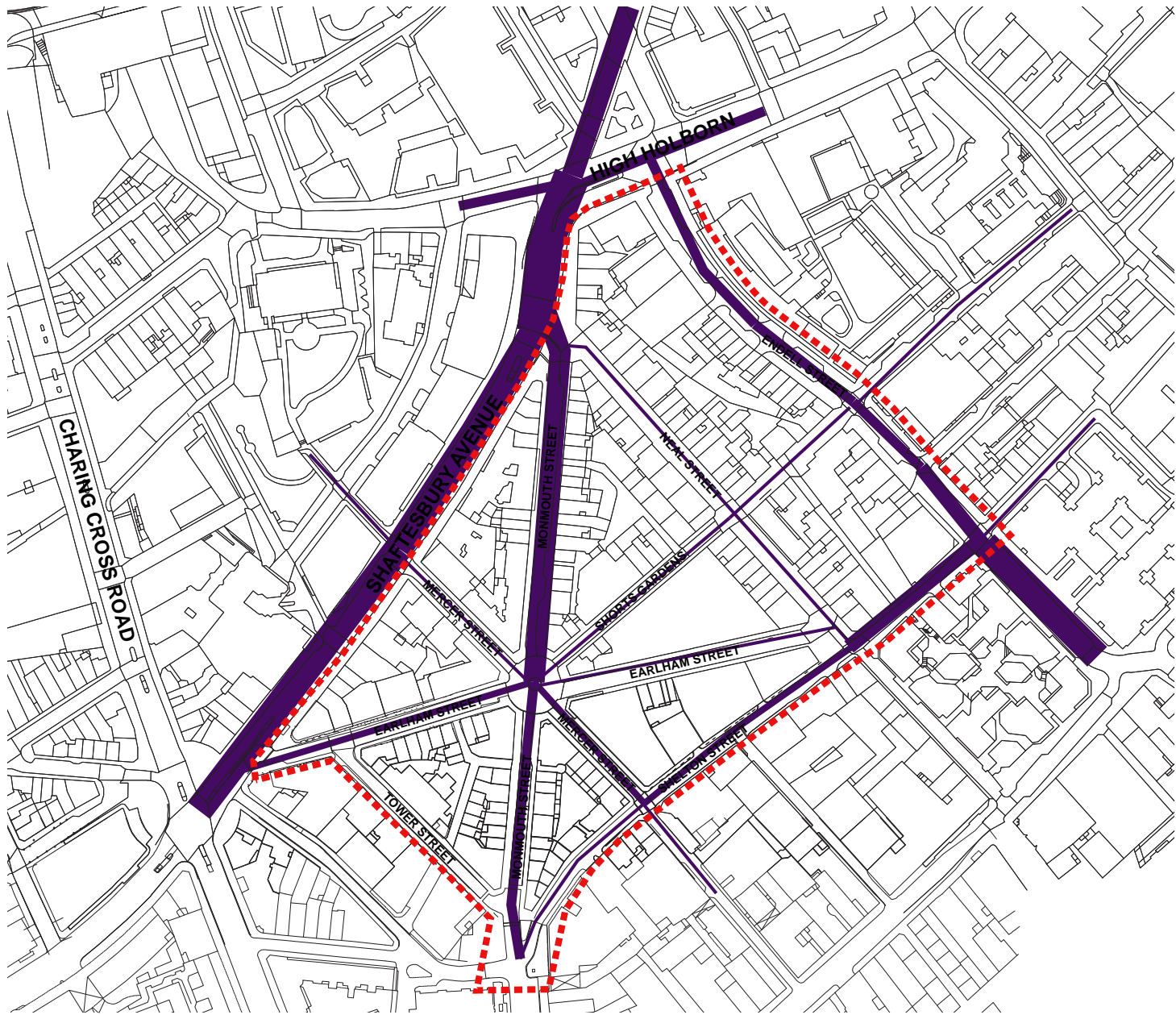
Concrete Setts

# 2.7 THE CYCLIST ENVIRONMENT

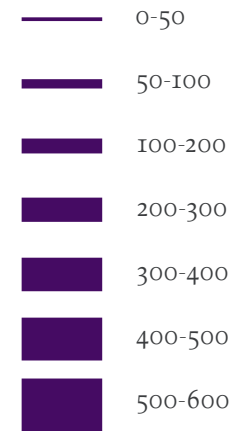
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Cycle movement through the area has been assessed using cycle flow surveys and heat maps showing amalgamated 'Strava' datasets that chart an individual cyclist's movement. The data indicates that Seven Dials forms an important through-route for cyclists in the area; in particular north-south. Monmouth Street (travelling south) provides an alternative route to Charing Cross Road and Shaftesbury Avenue while Endell Street provides a strategic connection north-south with Waterloo Bridge. In addition, it is evident that a large number of people cycle to Seven Dials as a destination and there is insufficient cycle parking. This is evident from the number of cycles regularly locked to posts and guardrails.

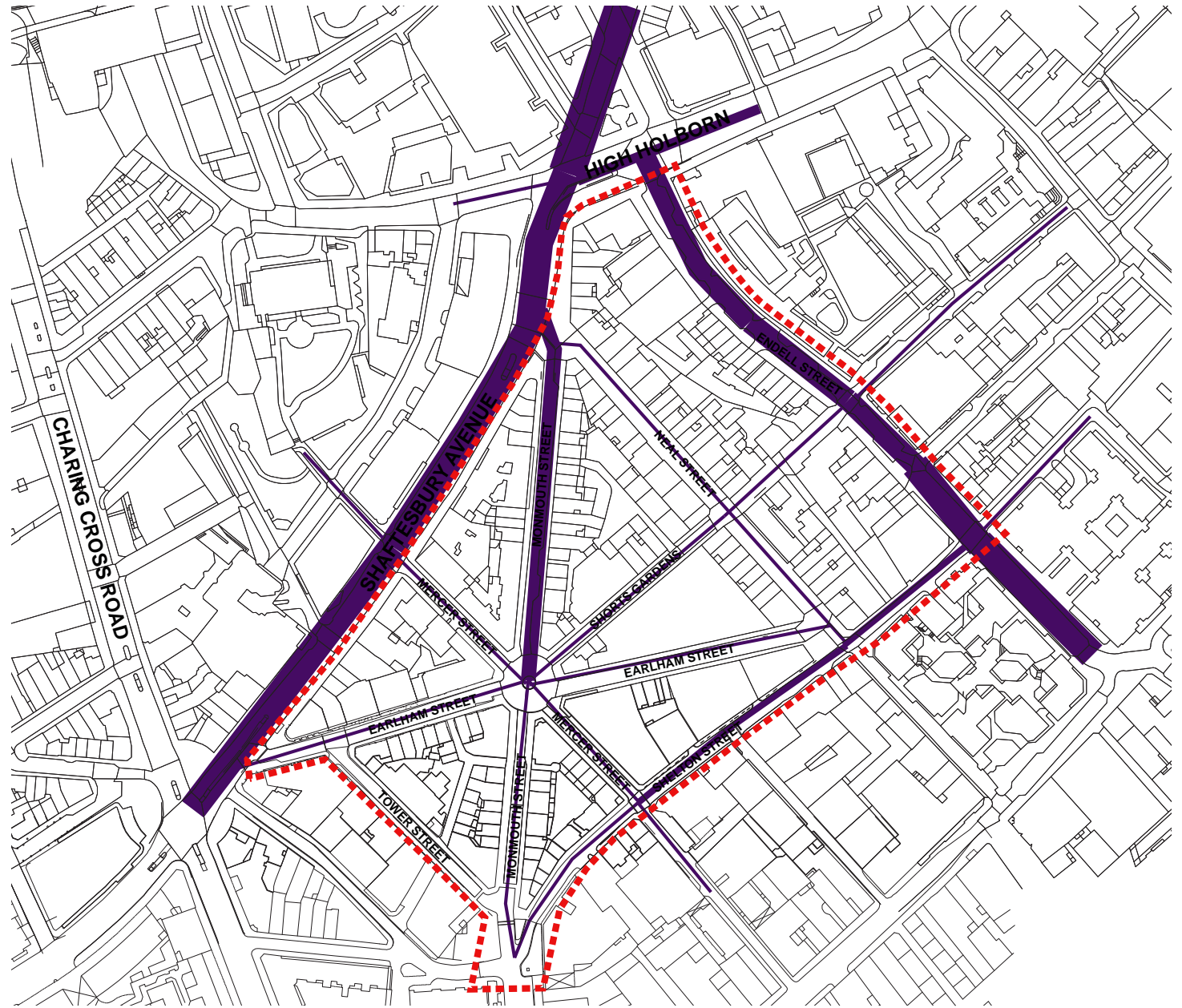
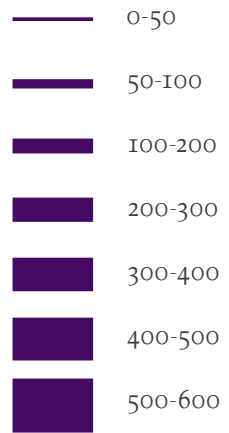


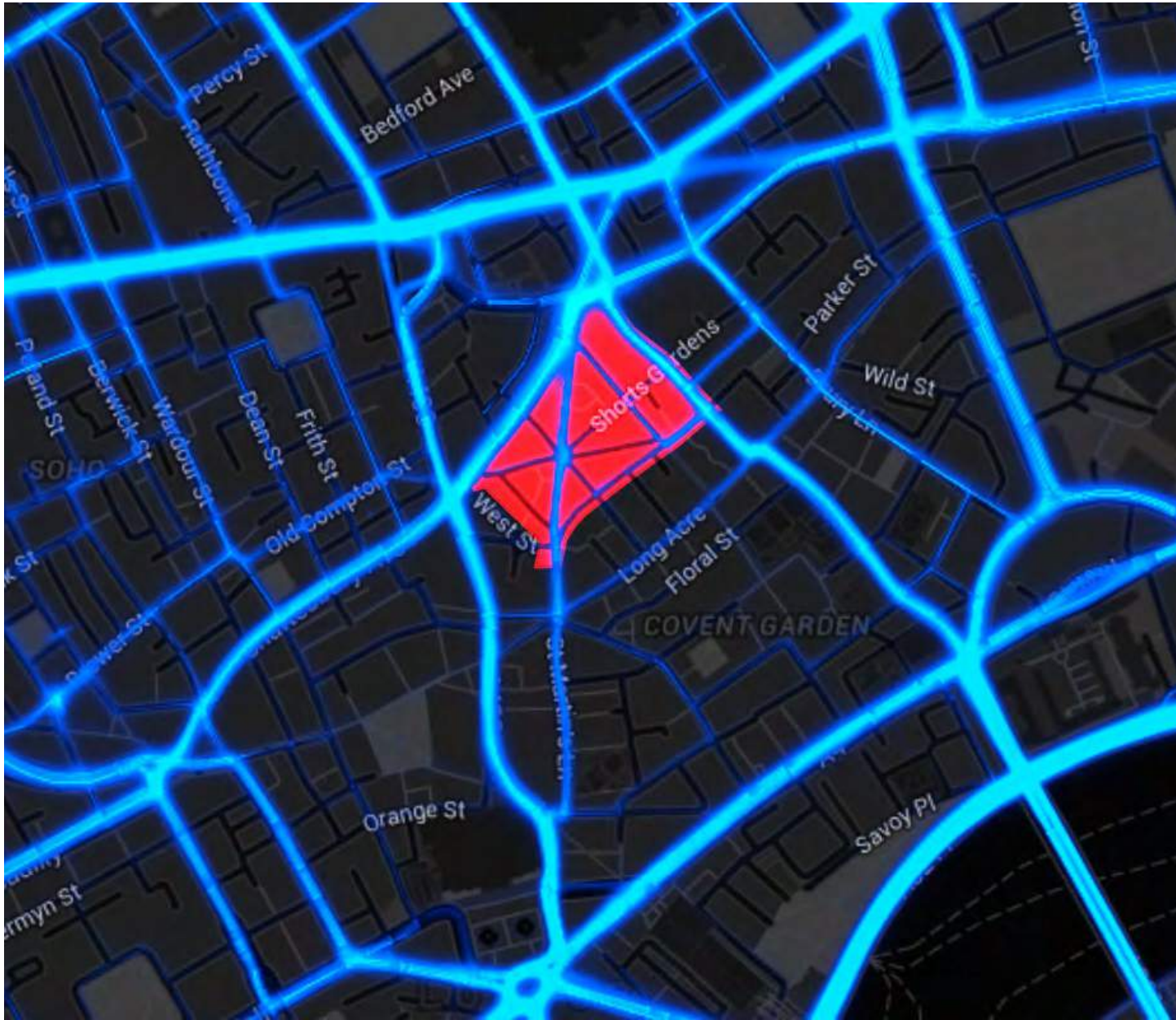


**CYCLE MOVEMENT -  
FLOWS A.M. 08:30 - 09:00**



**CYCLE MOVEMENT -  
FLOWS P.M. 18:00 - 19:00**



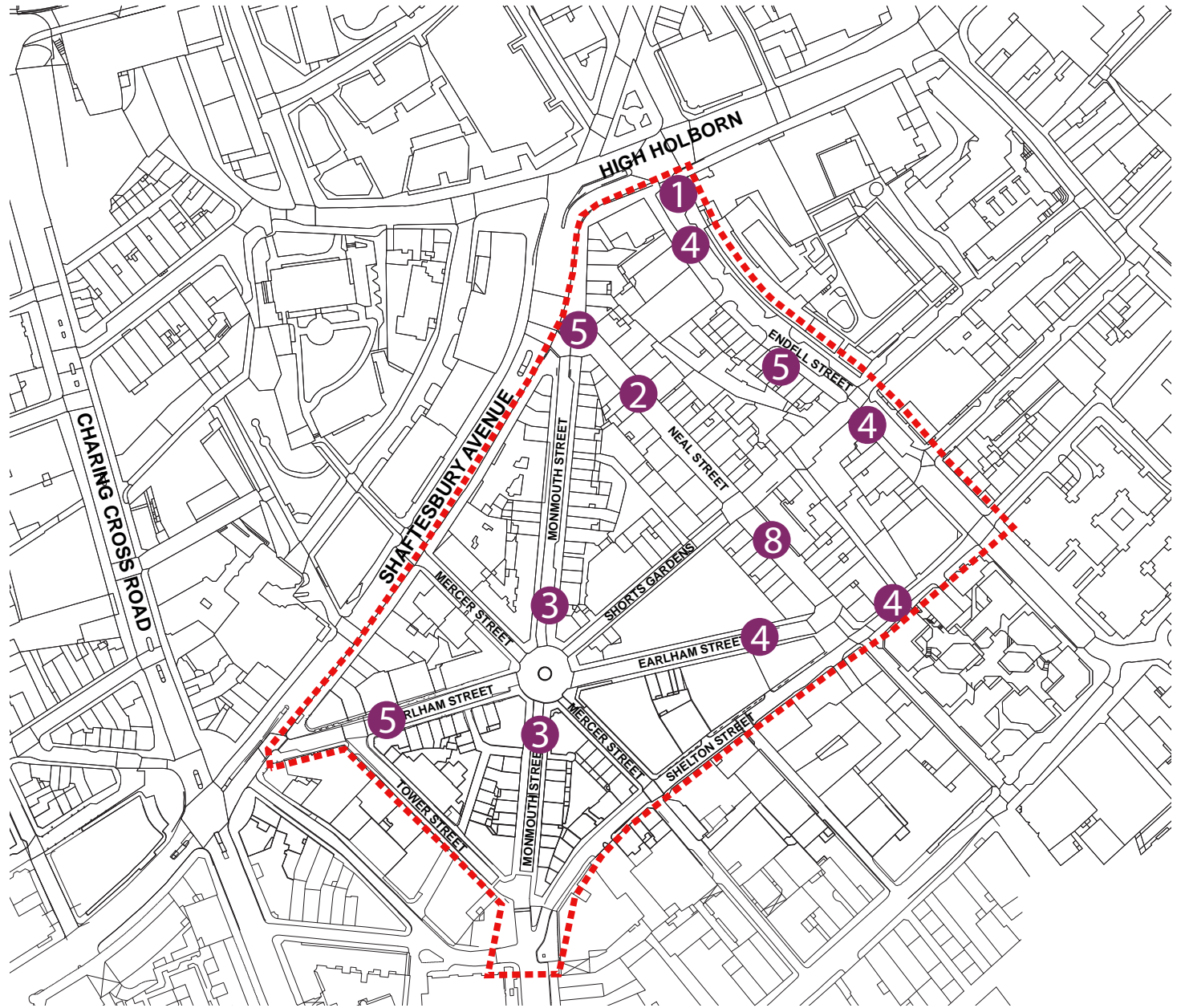


CYCLE MOVEMENT -  
STRAVA

## CYCLE PARKING



Total 48 stands  
Total 96 spaces for bicycles





Lack of sufficient cycle parking

# 2.8 THE VEHICLE ENVIRONMENT

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## STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS

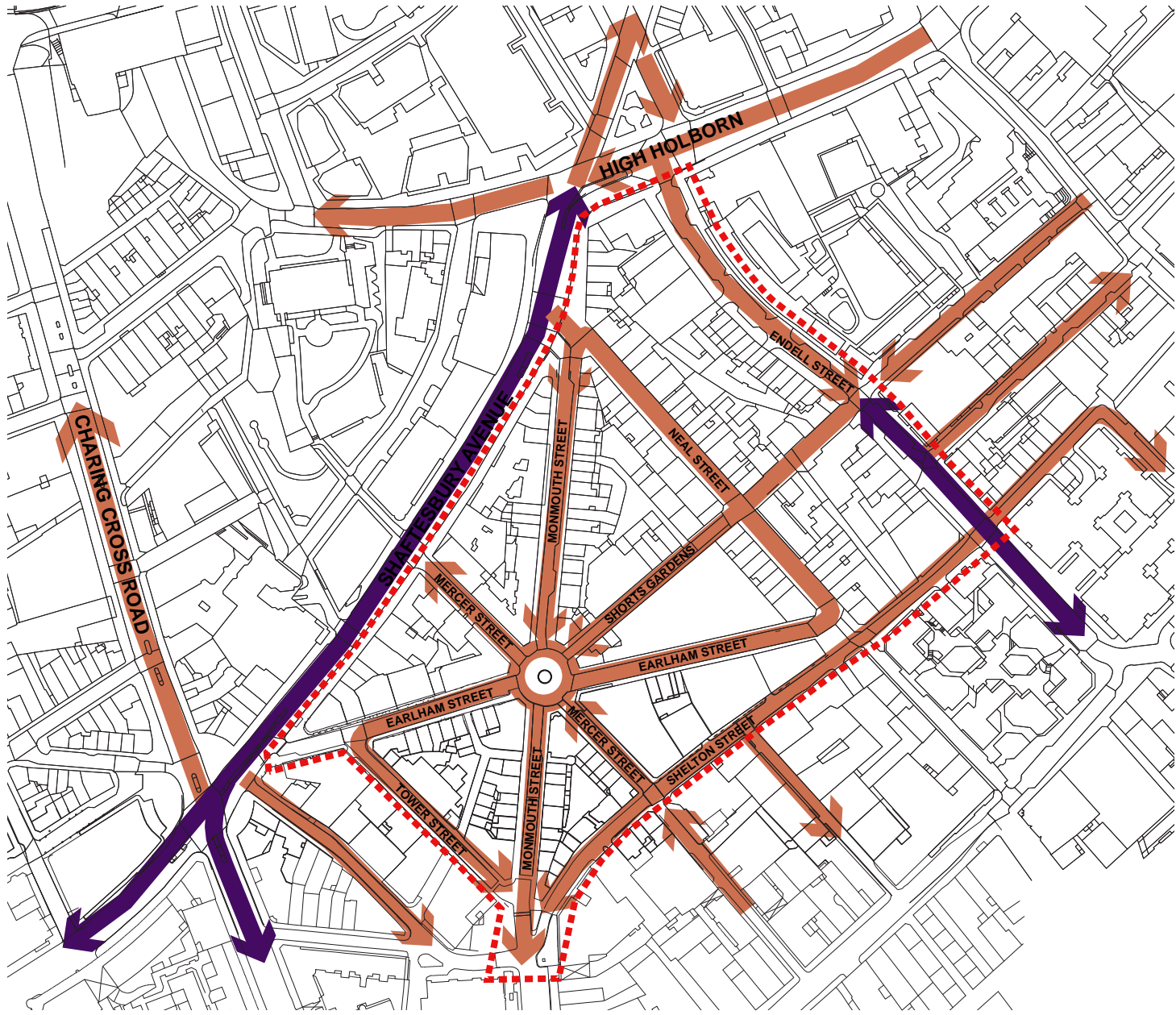
By 2018 The West End Project will transform traffic movements to the immediate north of the study area and will have a number of implications for Seven Dials. Changes include the conversion of Tottenham Court Road to two way operation and dedicated to buses and cyclists only, along with the removal of the one-way gyratory at High Holborn by Princes Circus. General northbound traffic is diverted along Shaftesbury Avenue, through Princes Circus and north along Gower Street before joining Tottenham Court Road via Grafton Way. The traffic modelling predicts a 26% reduction in overall traffic along Shaftesbury Avenue. However, despite this reduction, movement through the Dials does not reduce; although traffic along Monmouth Street is predicted to drop by 5% and traffic along Shelton Street increases by 41%.

In order to ensure that the proposed two-way working of Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street can operate, a new right turn from Charing Cross Road (northbound) into Shaftesbury Avenue is required. As a consequence, Westminster City Council is developing a highway improvement scheme for Cambridge Circus that will include this right turn. The scheme is likely to also include a number of associated public realm improvements including footway widening, diagonal crossings and general de-cluttering that will improve legibility and connections with Seven Dials.

## EXISTING VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

With the exception of Endell Street south, all the streets in the study area are one-way. The roundabout at the Sundial Pillar has seven arms all of which operate in one direction, with three arms heading towards the centre and the four arms heading away. At present Monmouth Street provides a major through-route which can be used by vehicles travelling along Shaftesbury Avenue towards Charing Cross Road to bypass Cambridge Circus. Access to Seven Dials from Shaftesbury Avenue is permitted via Monmouth Street only, with both left and right turns permitted. Alternatively, vehicles are able to exit from High Holborn and travel along Endell Street before turning right into Short's Gardens.

Egress from Seven Dials to Shaftesbury Avenue is permitted via Mercer Street, again with both left and right movements permitted however the left turn is very tight and is difficult to negotiate for larger vehicles without mounting the footway. Vehicles are also able to exit using Tower Street via Earlham Street west. Earlham Street east also heads away from Seven Dials but the permitted movements force vehicles back towards the centre via Neal Street.



**TRAFFIC MOVEMENT**

- ← One Way traffic
- ↔ Two Way Traffic

Traffic surveys demonstrate that there are two predominant vehicular movements in the area which are Mercer Street (south) to Mercer Street (north) and Monmouth Street (north) to Monmouth Street (south) which make up around 30% and 37% of the total movements, respectively. It is reported that Seven Dials at certain times of the day can get congested with traffic, in particular along Mercer Street where vehicles leave Seven Dials at Shaftesbury Avenue. In addition, it was observed that the majority of the traffic using Monmouth Street and Mercer Street is passing through rather than servicing Seven Dials. This is a major issue for the area.

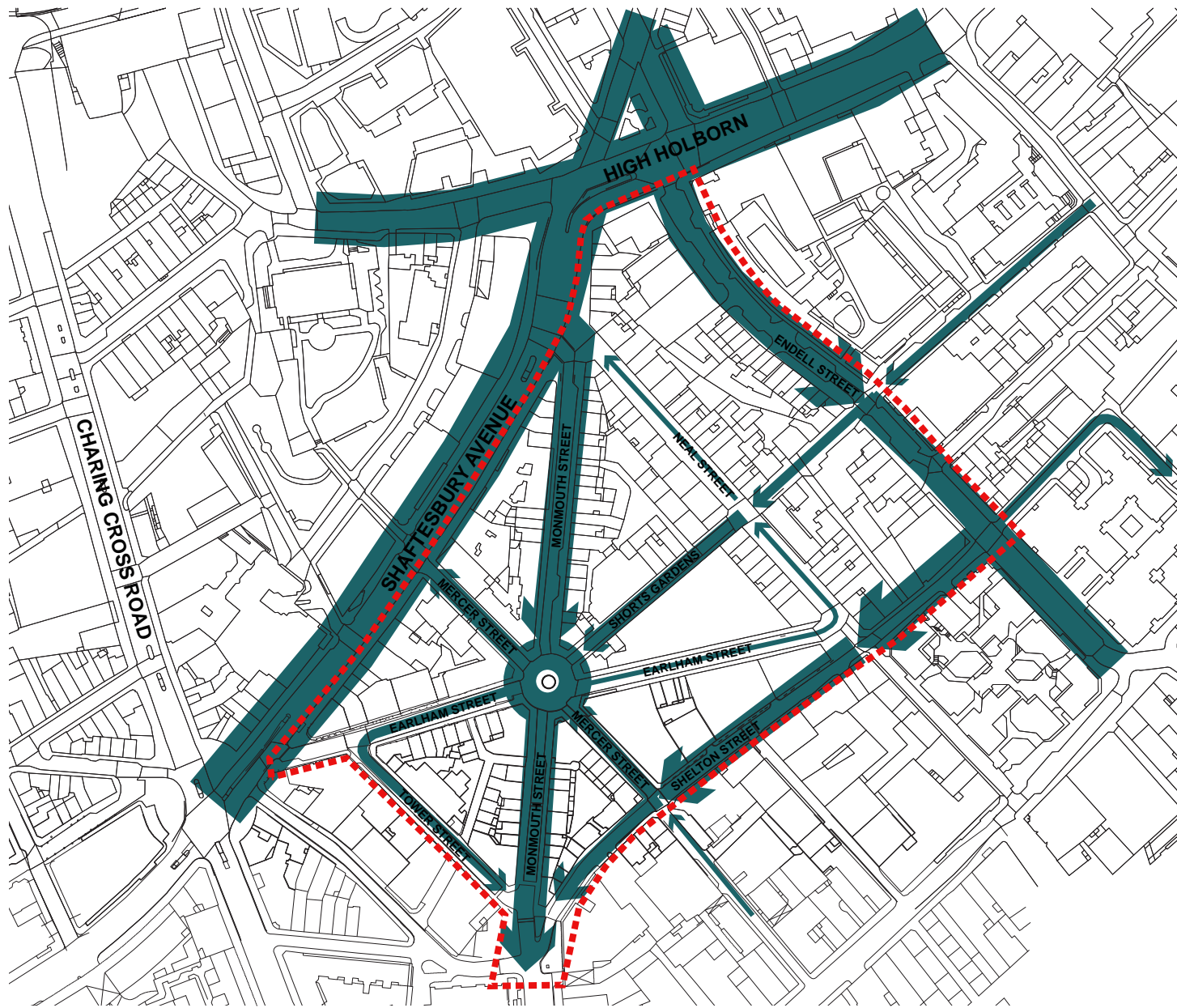
Vehicular speed reportedly varies throughout the area. Narrow streets with high numbers of pedestrians and outdoor seating areas typically act to reduce traffic speed, as is the case along Monmouth Street. Neal Street is reportedly faster, which has been attributed to the visual division between the perceived footway and road created by the bollards. In addition, Mercer Street (south) to Mercer Street (north) movement does not benefit from adequate deflection at the roundabout and so is also generally faster than other movements.

There is a range of parking provision in Seven Dials. It comprises the following:

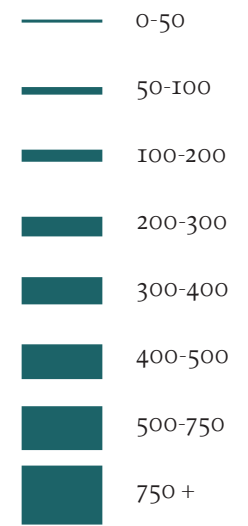
- Loading (Monday to Saturday 08:30 to 18:30, which then reverts to residents or disabled parking)
- Residents
- Disabled
- Designated disabled (specifically for certain residents)
- Traders
- Business Permits (only one bay which is a print shop requiring parking for a van)
- Pay by phone
- Motorcycles
- Cycles

Parking provision was discussed with the Working Group. It was agreed that in order to improve the quality and experience of the public realm on certain streets (such as the seven streets from the Sundial Pillar) some parking provision may need to be relocated or removed (such as Pay by phone bays that are regularly used by visitors to Soho). In addition, parking provision on streets with specific functions, such as the market on Earlham Street, will require review in order to secure the long-term role and success of the street going forwards.

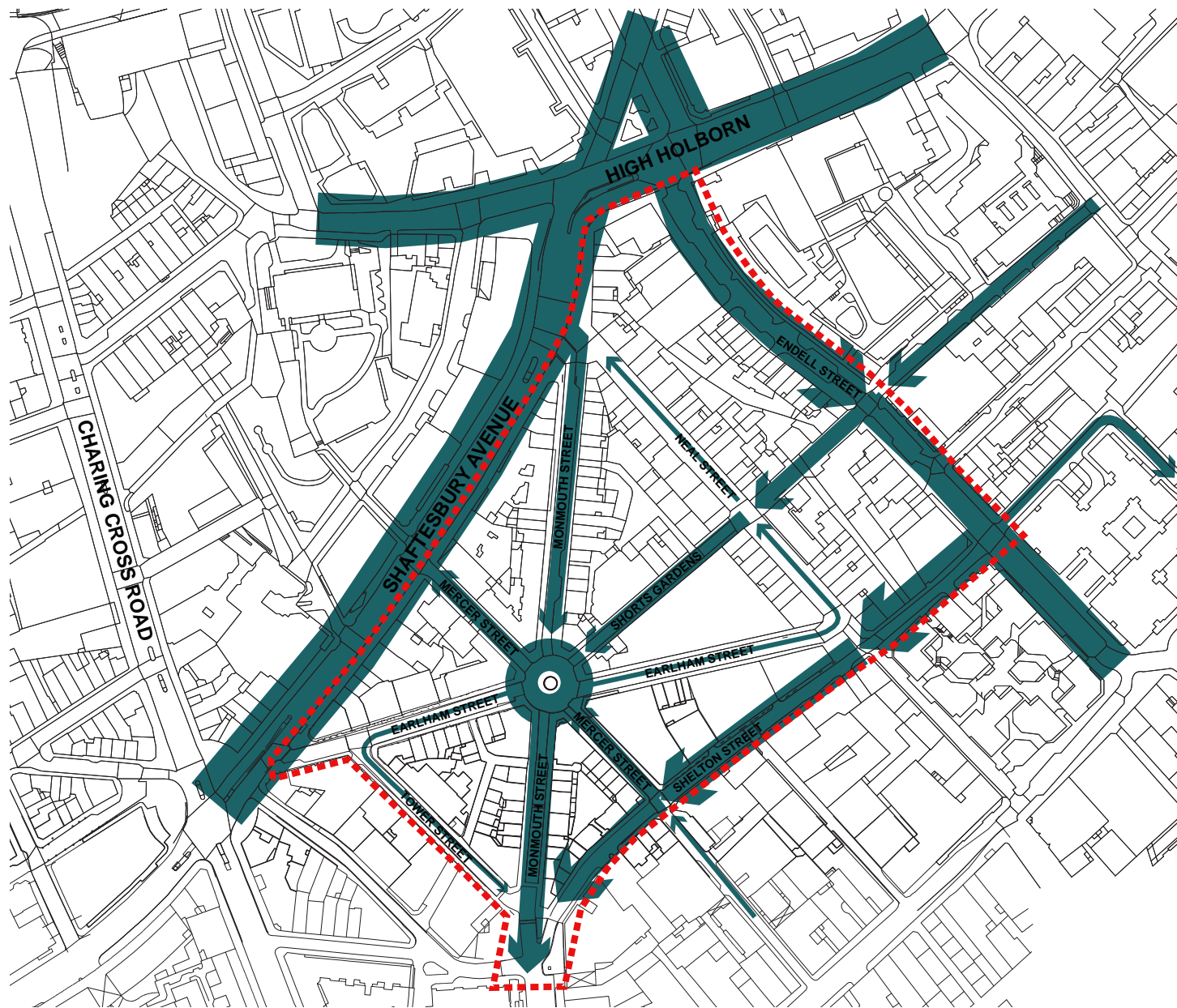
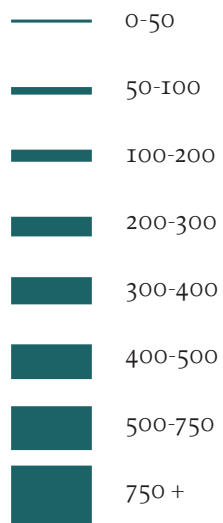


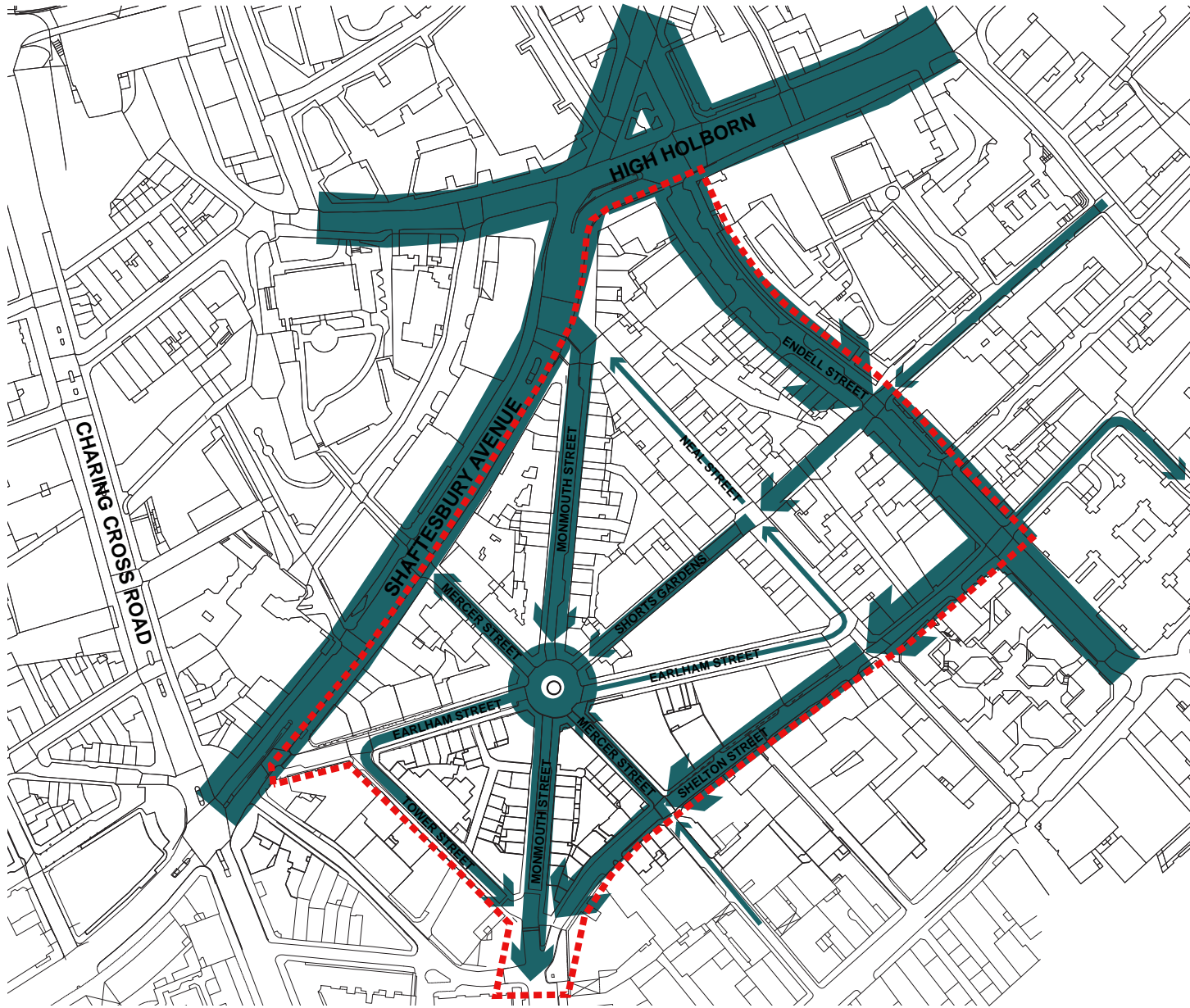


**TRAFFIC FLOWS -  
08:30 - 09:30**

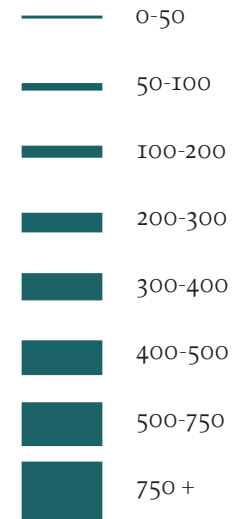


**TRAFFIC FLOWS -  
12:00 - 13:00**





**TRAFFIC FLOWS -  
18:00 - 19:00**



# 2.9 TREES & PLANTING

The Seven Dials area does not contain significant tree planting. With the exception of Monmouth Street, there are no streets off the Sundial Pillar that contain trees. Shelton and Tower Street also have no provision. There are a few notable exceptions, such as the cluster of trees to the west and south of the circular space surrounding the Sundial Pillar and a few specimens to the immediate north and south of this along Monmouth Street. These provide a positive contribution to the street scene and the fairy lighting to the trees around the Pillar create a magical feel to this area at night, although the missing trees to the east of the circus are noticeable. In addition, there is an avenue of smaller trees along Neal Street that are attractive and reinforce a different character to this street.

Alongside the project boundaries there are mature trees running along Shaftesbury Avenue and Endell Street that provide a distinctive character on the approach to Seven Dials from the north, east and west. The large trees along Shaftesbury Avenue provide a striking identity to this street, forming an overhead canopy and a functioning green infrastructure to ameliorate air pollution along this busy trafficked route.

Colourful herbaceous and annual planting in characterful pots and window boxes proliferate in the seven streets to the Sundial Pillar. It is one of the most enduring and charming characters to the area and reinforces the personal urban village feel.



Trees around the Sundial Pillar



Neal's Yard



Monmouth Street South



Trees along Shaftesbury Avenue



Tower Court



Window box planting



Rooftop planting



Characterful pot planting

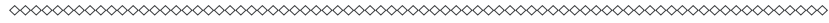




# COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



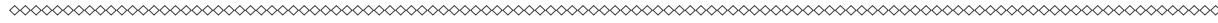
# 3.1 INTRODUCTION



Two workshops were held in the Strategy stage of the project to gather feedback on the key issues and opportunities and the emerging strategy for Seven Dials. Workshops included attendees from The Seven Dials Trust (SDT), Shaftesbury, The Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA) and local residents, as well as Camden Council Officers. Feedback was also received informally from other residents via the CGCA.



# 3.2 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK



The following section describes the purpose of each event and a detailed summary of feedback, which has been incorporated into the Public Realm Strategy.

## ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP 01 - 2ND JULY 2015

The purpose of the first Working Group Session was to provide input into an assessment of the existing strengths and issues pertinent to Seven Dials and what this meant for establishing overarching design principles for the public realm. This work was to inform phase 2 of the project, which related specifically to Earlham Street, and was discussed in more detail at a subsequent workshop.

Accompanying notes following the workshop presentation (by emerging Design Principle):

### APPROACHES

- Mercer Street to Shaftesbury Avenue was considered to be an additional 'Gateway' into Seven Dials, albeit a secondary one. The link provides a key connection with St Giles and Tottenham Court Road, however a route with barriers and poor legibility at present.
- New development at Mercer's Yard to open up internal courtyard between Shelton Street and Long Acre.
- There is a sense that people don't realise that they have entered a special area until they are part way in it.
- Treatment at gateways must be subtle and in-keeping with the Seven Dials character (akin to the bunting currently used for example).
- Potential to do a bit more with paving and detailing to identify gateway and tie it through to provide coherence to the wider area (one example are the road studs used on the Grosvenor Estate).

### STREET TYPOLOGIES

- The importance of Seven Dials being a destination as well as acknowledging there are a number of existing through routes within the street structure for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.
- Common typology throughout the Seven Dials streets, but also differences due to linkages e.g. Earlham Street link to Soho, and Neal Street link to Covent Garden.
- At current there is a large amount of 'dead space' to the rear of key streets which are underperforming. However, there was also a sense of relief to streets in the area that were quieter. It was considered that the quieter areas make Seven Dials interesting (e.g. the industrial feel to Shelton Street), and that there was a value in their quietness.
- Street symmetry was considered a valuable structuring device to form coherent and historically responsive street design. The public realm design for Monmouth Street, for example, does not provide symmetry leading to the dial monument.

### TRAFFIC AND PARKING

- Visually and spatially the streets are dominated by traffic and parked cars.
- There was a sense that Seven Dials history is one of its strengths, but is in conflict with large volumes of traffic.
- High vehicle presence within the area is causing high amounts of pollution affecting residents and users of the area. Once a day Seven Dials becomes noticeably blocked up with traffic along Mercer Street (for approximately 10-15 minutes).
- Suggestion to restrict loading hours in the area as a practical solution.
- At present there are large amounts of parking and vehicular

flow which do not directly serve the Seven Dials area.

- There was an aspiration to discourage large amounts of through traffic and explore alternative methods and devices to achieve this. The option shown in the Seven Dials Trust Renaissance Study of reversing the vehicle flow along Monmouth Street South was mentioned.
- Concern that vehicle flow on Monmouth Street will increase as a result of the West End Project.
- Current bollard arrangement on Neal Street potentially encourages a faster moving vehicular flow.
- Residential parking is a key subject; any relocation would have to be made sensitively and be within a short distance.
- Off peak parking for non-residential use was seen as a concern within the Seven Dials area (people parking and going to Soho at night for example).
- Dense motorcycle parking along Earlham Street West was considered a concentrated physical barrier within the streetscape and an inappropriate location.

#### **PEDESTRIANS**

- Recognition that there is not enough space for pedestrians on any streets in the area. As one of the busiest pedestrian areas in the city there is a high dominance of motor vehicles.
- Suggestion that all streets should have more priority for pedestrians.
- There is a 'pinch-point' outside the theatre, which is quite dangerous for pedestrians.

#### **DWELL SPACE AND STREET LIFE**

- Question whether streetlife was historically localised with local people – discussion that this was not the case after mid-19th Century with the arrival of the bus system, tube and theatres.
- Market stalls within Earlham Street West was considered at current as being incongruous, rental space/ground anchors/ stalls were discussed but short/ mid-range and long range solutions may need to be tabled to work within the existing leaseholder arrangements.
- Market team are refraining from recruiting new traders until the public realm project has been completed.
- Lots of residents in the area which can conflict with opportunities for dwelling in the public realm, especially late at night. It was thought that it would be difficult to identify locations for dwelling away from residents.
- Seating was considered to potentially increase social activity at night in a negative way. Seating which morphed into another form at night was suggested for exploration.
- Suggestion for seating that indicates it is public and therefore invites people to sit down (e.g. using Seven Dials symbol).

### **PHYSICAL CLUTTER**

- General support for removal of road markings throughout the area.
- Use of studs to demarcate market pitches on Earlham Street.

### **GREEN: TREES AND PARKLETS**

- Possible that temporary planters or planting on formal streets may detract from the historical value of the area.

### **CYCLE PARKING**

- There is evidence that more cycle parking is required throughout Seven Dials.
- New parking provision should be at specific locations (e.g. at the gateways to the area), but widespread.

### **ENHANCING THE VILLAGE ATMOSPHERE**

- Recognition that some of Seven Dials key strengths are its history, character and sense of discovery.

## **ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP 02 – 30TH JULY 2015**

The purpose of the second Working Group Session was to share the emerging Public Realm Design Strategy for Seven Dials and gather feedback. The Strategy incorporated feedback from the previous session's discussions and developed a number of principles. Importantly, it expanded on what these specifically meant within the public realm and also how they informed design for Stage 2: Earlham Street.

Accompanying notes following the workshop presentation:

### **VEHICLE MOVEMENT**

- Future vehicle movement within Seven Dials as a result of the West End Project was noted as needing consideration for potential reversals of traffic movement.
- Enforcement of vehicles within Seven Dials was cited as an issue, for example service vehicles parking on the footway along Monmouth Street.
- The removal of paid parking bays was considered to be acceptable where appropriate.
- Consolidation of servicing was promoted with restricted times of morning delivery when Seven Dials has a lower pedestrian footfall.
- There could be an opportunity for more flexible parking, such as loading between 8-11am, and residents / paid parking after 11am.

### **SEVEN DIALS STREETS:**

- Using less conventional markings within the road and pavements, such as brass studs, was considered to be a positive move by all to enhance the street character and minimise visual intrusion. Participants acknowledged that this approach was favoured for Monmouth Street, but was not implemented due to it being outside of Camden's design manual. There are other locations within the Borough where this has since been implemented.
- Street symmetry within the 'Village Streets' was queried as to whether it is historically correct and whether deliverable for all village streets.
- Further refinement for a traditional street section is intended on the village streets e.g. straight raised kerbs, with traditional carriageway and footway materials.
- It was explained that the visual street section information shown (introduced in presentation as 'Testing the Principles') is for testing purposes and to explore the various options for discussion.
- Simple traditional street design that is in keeping with adjacent Westminster was favoured by all; granite setts within the carriageway (low contrast), simple low upstand kerbs and yorkstone within the footways.
- The issue of damaged yorkstone on the footways was highlighted as often being the direct result of heavy vehicles using the area for loading and parked cars and should be considered within the street design.
- It was felt that the village concept should infer an urban village, rather than relating to a countryside village and it was explained that the typologies are defined to group certain categories of street and space.

### **SEVEN DIALS STREET FURNITURE**

- It was agreed that the wooden bollards on Neal Street should be removed provided another solution for inhibiting vehicles parking on the footway was found. The possibility of introducing a slim version of the Seven Dials Bollard in locations such as Neal Street should be explored.
- Potential for a 'Seven Dials' cycle stand was considered. However, thoughts were that recessive cycle stands are often more effective, particularly as they have bikes chained to them most of the time.
- Widening footpaths needs to be considered in relation to cafés and restaurants applying for table and chair permits. Some streets may benefit from this; however it needs to be managed carefully. The ice cream van on Neal Street by Diesel is another example of a negative impact on the public realm.
- Tower Court close to Earlham Street was cited as an opportunity for tables and chairs.
- The management of 'day seating' that disappears at night and potential watering of planting was considered to be possible by Shaftesbury.

### **MISCELLANEOUS:**

- Seven Dials Trust provided an update with regards to the Seven Dials Renaissance Study update work, including the website. *LDA Design* stated that they are happy to collaborate with any consultants to ensure integration of the two pieces of work.
- Early outcomes from the work include the use of traditional materials and kerbs and the Seven Dials palette should relate to Westminster public realm. These objectives are shared with the Seven Dials Design Strategy.





# THE VISION & 7 PRINCIPLES







# 4.1 SEVEN DIALS: A PLACE & A JOURNEY

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The overarching vision for Seven Dials – ‘A Place and a Journey’ acknowledges the dual role of Seven Dials as a destination and neighbourhood in its own right as well as an important connection.

## Place / plas

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**noun**

1. an urban village with an enduring charm;
2. a destination of great architectural and historic value with a unique identity;
3. a neighbourhood planned for people;
4. an area relatively unchanged and continuously occupied for over 300 years;
5. an area or spot, set apart or used for living, working and enjoyment.

## Journey / jurni

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**noun**

1. an act of travelling from one place to another; a trip or voyage;
2. an efficient and attractive route;
3. an opportunity along the route to enjoy the scenery.

The Public Realm Strategy presents seven overarching principles that deliver the aims and objectives identified for the public realm in Seven Dials. These principles have been developed in partnership with the Working Group. Each principle is supported by a number of practical rules that can be applied on the ground. The seven principles are as follows :

**1**

***DISTINCTIVELY  
SEVEN DIALS***  
*– A Timeless  
Individuality*

**2**

***SEVEN DIALS***  
*– An Urban Village*

**3**

***AN INTEGRATED  
VILLAGE***

**4**

***A PLACE THAT  
PUTS PEOPLE  
BEFORE CARS***

5

*LESS IS MORE*

6

*A PUBLIC REALM  
THAT SLEEPS AT  
NIGHT*

7

*A FLEXIBLE  
PUBLIC REALM  
THAT EMBRACES  
CHANGE*





# **DISTINCTIVELY SEVEN DIALS –** *A Timeless Individuality*

**SEVEN DIALS SHOULD FEEL LIKE A SPECIAL AREA IN COVENT GARDEN.**

*It should have a distinctive identity yet also be well integrated with Soho, Covent Garden, St Giles and Holborn .*



**THE PERMANENT PUBLIC REALM SHOULD REINFORCE A TIMELESS AND  
UNDER-STATED ELEGANCE.**

*It should not infer fashion or replica heritage.*



**THE PUBLIC REALM SHOULD SUPPORT THE URBAN VILLAGE ATMOSPHERE.**



**PUBLIC REALM SHOULD HAVE SIMPLICITY AS WELL AS RICHNESS.**



**PUBLIC REALM SHOULD BE INFORMED BY THE HISTORY OF SEVEN DIALS.**



Timeless and understated



An individuality



A simplicity as well as a richness



An urban village atmosphere

### **INFORMED BY THE HISTORY OF SEVEN DIALS**

Such as:

- The monument should be easily visible from the start of each village street
- The historic morphology of circuses and tight angular streets should be respected and enhanced
- Where possible streets should be symmetrical and kerbs straight for simplicity not angled or staggered
- The inside/outside relationship of shops should continue to be encouraged



# SEVEN DIALS -

## *An Urban Village*

### **CELEBRATE THE DIFFERENCES AND CHANGING PACE**

*The busy village streets and areas for congregation versus the network of quieter back streets, passages and courts adds to the charm of the area, the public realm should reinforce these roles.*



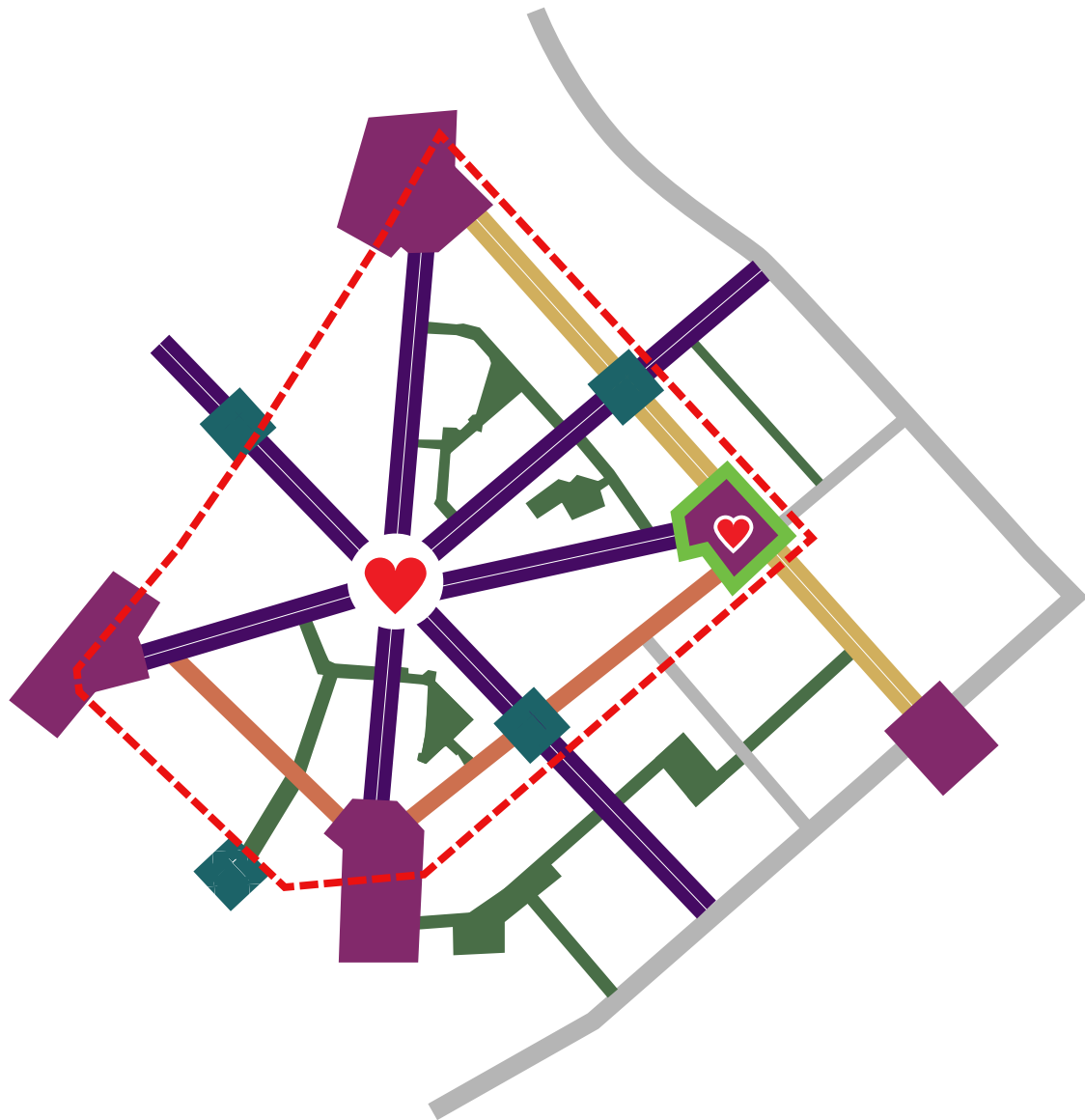
### **A SHARED IDENTITY TO STREETS AND SPACES OF THE SAME TYPOLOGY**

*Seven Dials is an urban village with different streets and spaces having a clear role and identity. For instance, the 'seven village streets' should share design characteristics.*



### **A PLACE AND A JOURNEY**

*Facilitate movement as well as a place to stop*



- - - Seven Dials Village
- Village Approach
- Village Approach (Secondary)
- ♥ Village Square
- Village Green
- Village Streets
- Village High Street
- Village Passages And Courtyards
- Connecting Streets
- Surrounding Streets



# AN INTEGRATED VILLAGE

## **SEVEN DIALS SHOULD BE PART OF AN INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENT ACROSS THE WEST END**

*There should be seamless upgrading between adjacent Westminster and Camden areas and materials used in surrounding areas referenced where appropriate*



## **SEVERED LINKS WITH SURROUNDINGS SHOULD BE REPAIRED AND PHYSICAL AND VISUAL BARRIERS REMOVED**

*This may include improvements along the surrounding roads such as new single-stage pedestrian crossings, removal of guardrails and improved sightlines, as well as regeneration in areas of poor urban design quality. For instance, the comprehensive redevelopment of St Giles and to the east of Endell Street to improve permeability and legibility*



## **LEGIBILITY AND IDENTITY IMPROVED TO REINFORCE CONNECTIONS**

*For instance at the 'village approaches', including the Neal Street/Monmouth Street /Shaftesbury Avenue junction, Earlham Street/ Shaftesbury junction and Upper St Martins Lane*



## **RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES AND VISITORS SHOULD CO-EXIST IN HARMONY**



## **ALL STREET FRONTAGES TO HAVE A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STREET**

*For instance along village streets the frontages should interact with the street if possible.*







# A PLACE THAT PUTS PEOPLE BEFORE CARS

**WHERE ACHIEVABLE, LOCAL VEHICULAR ACCESS ONLY, GREATLY REDUCE OR REMOVE THROUGH TRAFFIC**



**'VILLAGE APPROACHES' SIGNIFY A PEDESTRIAN AREA**

*Vehicles should proceed with caution*



**FACILITATE PEDESTRIAN DOMINATED SPACES, WHILST RESPECTING A TRADITIONAL STREET FORM**

*Where this can be accommodated with the role and function of the street*



**DESIGN SHOULD INFER PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY ACROSS CARRIAGEWAY AS WELL AS PAVEMENTS**

*For instance using granite setts across the carriageway and a lower kerb than standard*



**DRASTICALLY REDUCE VEHICLE SPEEDS THROUGH DESIGN AND MATERIALS CHOICE**

**REALLOCATE SPACE TO CREATE CYCLE PARKING AREAS AT REGULAR INTERVALS  
AND POINTS OF KNOWN DEMAND**



**RE-LOCATION OF RESIDENTS PARKING FROM VILLAGE STREETS,  
WHERE APPROPRIATE**



**INTRODUCE 'POCKET PARKING' - PARKING SHOULD ONLY BE IN CLUSTERS OF  
MAX. 4 CARS ALONG VILLAGE STREETS**



**SERVICING SHOULD BE CONSOLIDATED SO THERE ARE LESS TRIPS AND IT  
SHOULD BE MORNINGS ONLY WHEN STREETS ARE LESS BUSY**



# LESS IS MORE

**THE PERMANENT PUBLIC REALM SHOULD PROVIDE A BACKDROP AND COMPLEMENT, NOT COMPETE**



**A CO-ORDINATED AND RESTRICTED PALETTE OF MATERIALS SHOULD BE USED**

*For instance, on Village Streets only 2 paving materials should be deemed acceptable – granite and yorkstone.*

*No tarmac, concrete, clay pavers etc. should be implemented on these streets*



**REMOVE VISUAL AND PHYSICAL CLUTTER**

*This includes painted road markings, surplus furniture, signage, un-necessary bollards etc. unless in exceptional circumstances and at that point appropriate designs should be explored that are visually less intrusive, such as a slim Seven Dials bollard*



**ALL 7 VILLAGE STREETS SHOULD HAVE SIMILAR DESIGN AND MATERIALS**



**ALL 'VILLAGE APPROACHES' SHOULD HAVE SIMILAR DESIGN AND MATERIALS**



**RESPECT ELEGANCE AND PROPORTION**

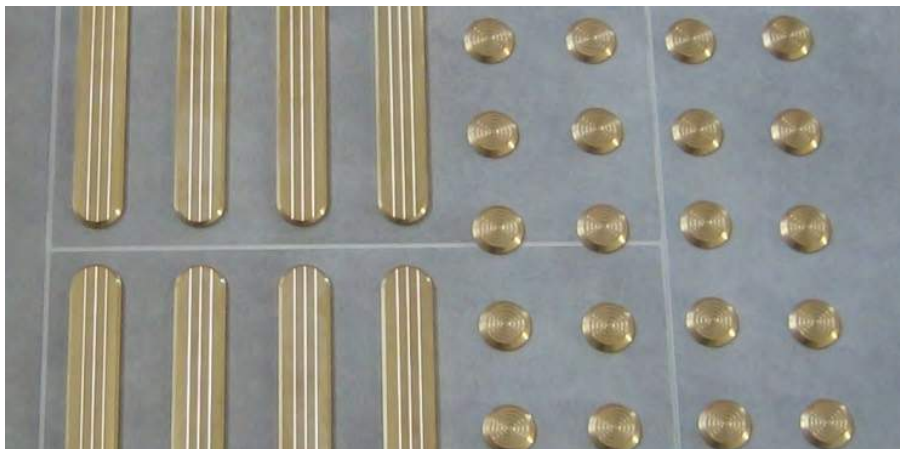
*Village street cross sections should be symmetrical where appropriate (footways a similar width) and should strengthen the relationship with the monument*



A recessive public realm – a subtle blend of granite in the road



A recessive public realm – Seven Dials Studs used to demarcate space



A recessive public realm – studs used for corduroy and blister tactile paving



A thin version of the Seven Dials Bollard



# A PUBLIC REALM THAT SLEEPS AT NIGHT

**INVITE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS WHILST AVOIDING CONFLICTS WITH  
RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES**



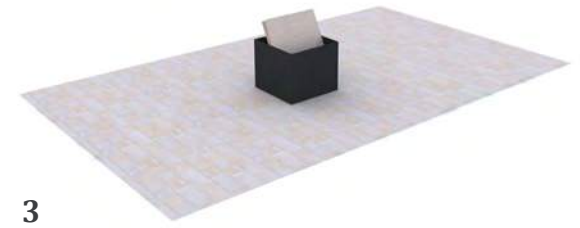
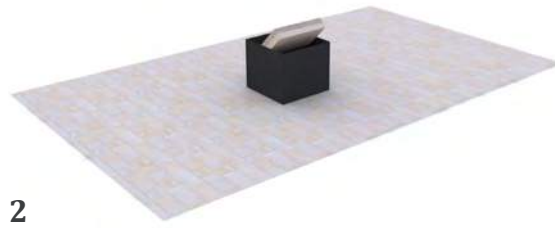
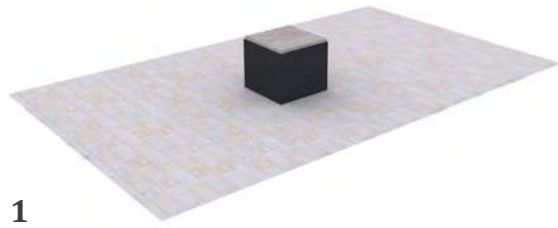
**LOCATE PUBLIC SEATING AREAS TO AVOID CONFLICT**



**EXPLORE SIMPLE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR DAY-TIME SEATING ONLY,  
AT NIGHT DISCOURAGE 'HANG OUT AREAS'**



**MORE SEATING SHOULD FEEL PUBLIC NOT PRIVATE**



**THE DISAPPEARING ACT** - *A timber topped cube seat during the day, a seamless flush paving unit at night.*

*This double act provides usable seating space during the day whilst the top flips to reveal a natural stone paving unit to match the adjacent surface. The whole unit then lowers to finish flush with the paving to ensure no unwanted interaction can occur at night.*



Removable individual seats - root fixed



Removable table and chairs



Removable day bench - root fixed



# A FLEXIBLE PUBLIC REALM THAT EMBRACES CHANGE

**THE PUBLIC REALM SHOULD CELEBRATE THE SPONTANEITY OF  
'POP-UP' PUBLIC REALM**

*The public realm should promote flexibility by providing sufficient space for 'pop up' public realm and appropriate shop overspill*



**SEVEN DIALS SHOULD BE THE FRAME FOR NOT ONLY PERMANENT  
INSTALLATIONS AND EVENTS, BUT FOR MORE SEASONAL AND EVEN DAILY  
EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**





Po-up Forest - for the International Car Free Day



Urban Pop-up lawn - for the Spring Shopping Event and Spotlight Music, Comedy & Arts Festival



Opportunities for parklets (replace parking spaces with temporary public seating and planting, these could be sponsored by local business)

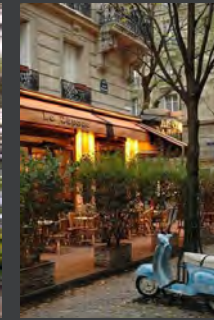


Flexibility for markets, Earlham Street

VILLAGE  
STREETS



FLEXIBILITY  
FOR POP-UP  
USES AND  
MARKETS



INTIMATE  
PASSAGES AND  
COURTYARDS



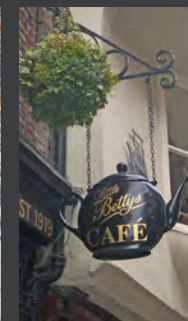
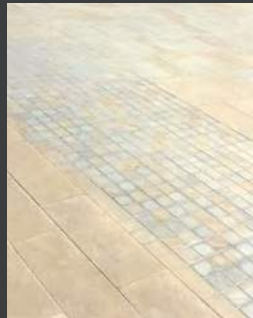
INCIDENTAL  
DAY SEATING



A PERSONAL  
TOUCH-  
DISTINCTIVELY  
SEVEN DIALS



HIGH  
QUALITY  
MATERIALS  
AND  
DETAILING







# TESTING THE PRINCIPLES



# 5.1 INTRODUCTION



This section tests the application of the principles developed to three of the urban village typologies as identified in the Urban Village anatomy diagram. This is in order to understand what the principles actually mean on the ground in terms of reinforcing the role, identity and use of the streets and spaces. The examples include an approach space (at the junction of Neal Street/Monmouth Street), a typical village street (Earlham Street) and the high street (Neal Street). They demonstrate some common design characteristics that could be applied to streets or spaces of the same typology to ensure cohesion and consistency. For the avoidance of doubt, these have been developed to communicate the potential of place and look and feel; they are not fixed proposals and would be subject to further design development and wider consultation. For instance, the detailed layout of vehicular and cycle parking and loading are not depicted.

# 5.2 A TYPICAL ARRIVAL SPACE

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## STUDY LOCATION:

*Arrival space at the junction with Neal Street/Monmouth Street and Shaftesbury Avenue*

### EXISTING

- Poor arrival impression from Princes Circus, Tottenham Court Road and St Giles area
- Overall identity does not reinforce the high quality and special characteristics of Seven Dials
- Pedestrian connections impeded by street furniture, road signage and rubbish, in an area of very high pedestrian footfall
- An array of different paving materials including tarmac, two types of granite setts and concrete setts and pavers.
- In-sensitive painted road markings on the granite setts to Monmouth Street
- Un-even surfaces present trip hazards for pedestrians
- Mature trees provide an attractive green identity and ameliorate air pollution from Shaftesbury Avenue
- Existing tree dead
- Flush kerbs and paving across the carriageway infer pedestrian priority
- Outdoor café and restaurant spaces provide a human scale

### POTENTIAL

- Rationalisation of furniture, such as cycle stands to remove from key pedestrian desire lines
- Simplification of paving, including new high quality natural stone paving, such as yorkstone and granite
- Brass studs used to denote courtesy pedestrian crossing
- Removal of painted road markings, in lieu of area wide traffic management signs (on existing posts)
- Day-time seating only (removed or set flush with the paving at night)
- New feature lighting



**EXISTING**





**POTENTIAL DAY**



**POTENTIAL EVENING**

# 5.3 A TYPICAL VILLAGE STREET

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## STUDY LOCATION:

*Earlham Street West looking Eastwards*

### EXISTING

- A degraded public realm that does not reinforce the special identity of Seven Dials
- Negative visual impact of parked vehicles, in particular when approaching from the Sundial Pillar.
- A continuous row of parked vehicles, motorbikes and bicycles down one side of the street effectively channels pedestrian movement and does not facilitate natural meandering between shops and cafes.
- Design does not infer pedestrian priority across carriageway as well as pavements - the road is tarmac, kerbs are high and pavements narrow in an area of high pedestrian footfall.
- Human scale street with high quality retail frontages
- A haphazard array of paving materials of generally a poor quality including concrete pavers, tarmac, concrete and granite setts and kerbs
- Insensitive painted road markings

### POTENTIAL

- Simplification of paving, including new high quality natural stone paving, such as yorkstone and granite
- Brass studs used to denote courtesy pedestrian crossings
- Removal of painted road markings, in lieu of area wide traffic management signs (on existing posts)
- The urban village character is reinforced by the incorporation of more planted pots and personal touches.
- Lower kerbs, wider pavements and natural stone setts across the carriageway to infer pedestrian priority.

For the avoidance of doubt, cycle parking, loading and vehicular parking are not shown on the visualisation. Further detailed design would be required to provide an accurate representation of these components for each village street.



**EXISTING**



POTENTIAL



# 5.4 THE HIGH STREET

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## STUDY LOCATION:

*Neal Street looking southwards*

### EXISTING

- An important pedestrian connection that links Covent Garden with Holborn and Tottenham Court Road areas.
- A degraded public realm that does not present a high quality first impression and reinforce the special identity of Seven Dials.
- Human scale-street with attractive well-maintained retail frontages.
- A flush, paved surface should infer pedestrian priority - however the continuous row of low quality timber bollards constrains pedestrian movement and creates a visual and physical barrier.
- Bollards required to protect underground cellars and prohibit illegal parking
- Existing paving materials are of poor quality (concrete setts and tarmac) and drainage is un-satisfactory.
- Pockets of street clutter prevail, in the form of bollards, signs, cycle stands and rubbish
- Flyposting is evident
- Attractive trees infer a different character to other Seven Dials streets
- Painted road markings insensitive for a conservation area

### POTENTIAL

- A high quality new identity to provide an attractive setting to the retail frontages and trees
- Removal of street clutter to improve the appearance of the street and remove barriers to pedestrian movement.
- A simple arrangement of high quality natural stone paving to infer pedestrian priority and provide a recessive design.
- Timber bollards replaced with a new slim version of the Seven Dials bollard depicting the Golden Hind emblem.
- New cycle parking at regular intervals, to depict the golden hind emblem.
- Trees maintained to encourage growth



**EXISTING**





**POTENTIAL**





# NEXT STEPS





# 6.1 IMPLEMENTATION

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The Seven Dials Public Realm Strategy reflects a holistic approach and a commitment to renewal of public realm in Seven Dials. Delivering public realm projects in an area of this nature requires intense collaboration, creativity, technical rigour and a logical programme for delivery. It will also be a costly endeavour and partnerships and other mechanisms through the development process will assist this renewal.

The strategy has been led by Camden Council and developed jointly with Shaftesbury, The Seven Dials Trust, The Covent Garden Community Association and local residents. This joint partnership will be essential for any proposals going forward. The strategy will be applied to assist with area wide improvements, transformation of the public realm in association with new developments and through the asset management process. This will ensure planned renewal on a timed life and will secure preferential change through maintenance when no specific project is planned.

To conclude, Seven Dials is undoubtedly an area regarded with much affection by Londoners and tourists alike. It is one of the great architectural set pieces of London. Its location, history and special character demands a world class and exemplary response for any public realm proposals going forward.

