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INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out the design strategy for the creation of a major public space at Strand Aldwych and the establishment of a "global-scale creative and thinking quarter" in the heart of London.

It identifies the key aspects that will help to realise the vision set out in prior interactions between the Council, stakeholders and partners. It then proposes a strategy towards the realisation of the project goals.

The paper provides an analysis of the site in the context of its surroundings to set out development principles. It puts forward the delivery strategy of the project introducing two parallel processes - public realm design and place branding. This paper focusses on the public realm design strategy while a separate paper addresses the place branding process.

A shortlist of design consultants being considered for the design of the public space is introduced and future action points in design development are laid out.

It is expected that the Joint Project Board will review the paper with the following objectives:

- agree the development principles for the project
- agree the shortlist of design consultants
- consider their nominee for design consultation (if any) and advice WCC.

It concludes by putting forward next steps and establishes future action points.

A. DESIGN BASIS

This section sets out the context for the proposed public space at the Aldwych.

In order to carry out effective and substantive revitalisation in and around Strand Aldwych, it is important to understand its role within the context the wider area and structure.

In this section of the report, the proposed public space in Strand Aldwych is analysed in the wider context to set out key design drivers. The purpose is to ensure that this project is well integrated with its surroundings while capitalising on key connections and movements in and around the area to contribute to its economic, cultural and institutional enhancement.

The diagram alongside demonstrates the location of Strand Aldwych in the context of cultural and entertainment nodes in the wider area and highlights strategic connections that will integrate this area with the wider cultural and entertainment network in the surroundings.



Strategic position of Strand-Aldwych

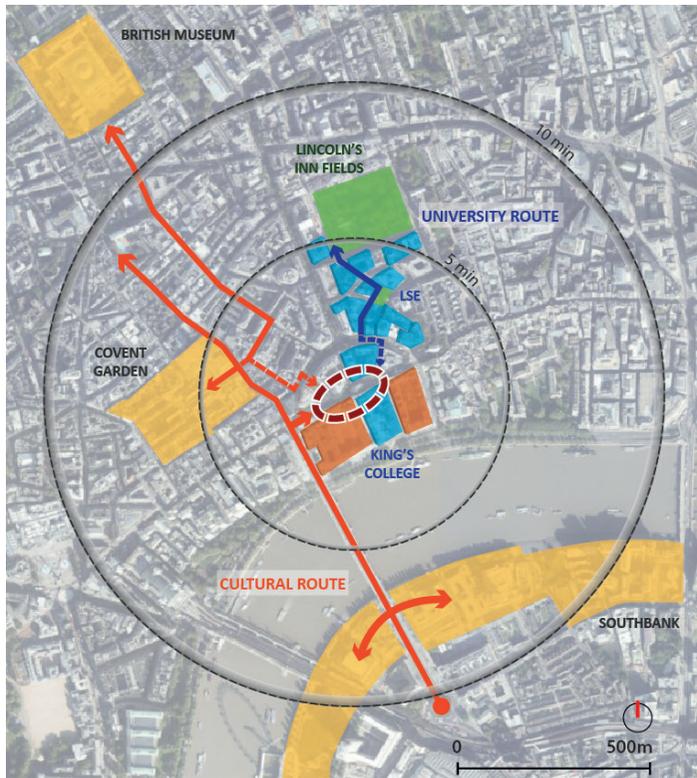
1.0 Design Vision

The Aldwych is home to a variety of institutions and venues that greatly enhance the educational, cultural, entertainment and economic potential of London. Together, they have the potential to form an unparalleled cluster of complementary uses that are connected by programmatic partnerships around the arts, culture, education, research and performance. The current conditions around the gyratory, however, have a severing effect on the urban fabric around the area and fail to maximise its potential as a world class cluster of institutions and cultural nodes.

The proposal to introduce a public space on the Strand stems from the intent to create a cohesive strategy which integrates the area with the surrounding context and promotes strong movement, connectivity and enterprise. The importance of this space and its character is rooted in its relevance to the wider context area. This, coupled with a cohesive movement strategy that enhances N-S connectivity will ensure the successful delivery of a world class public space in the heart of London which enhances through movement in the area while providing a successful destination for people to “learn, contemplate, discuss, comingle, play and rest together”.

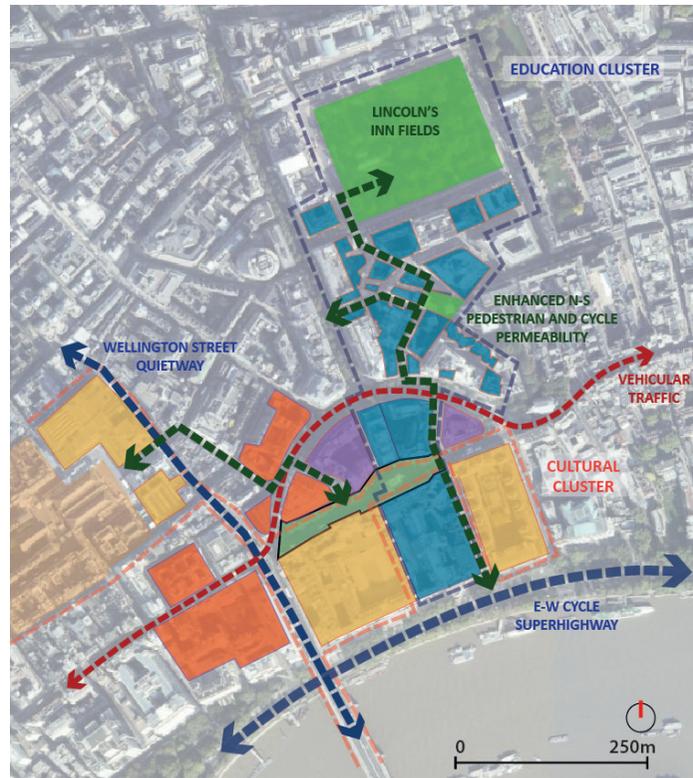
The delivery of a transformational public space such as the one proposed on Strand-Aldwych requires an understanding of the context it sits in. It also provides the opportunity to overcome existing challenges of connectivity and movement and to create an integrated urban strategy for the area.

The diagrams below illustrate our understanding of the relevance of the public space proposed in the context of the surrounding area. They form the basis of the design guidelines for this area and result in establishing the design drivers shown in the diagram overleaf.



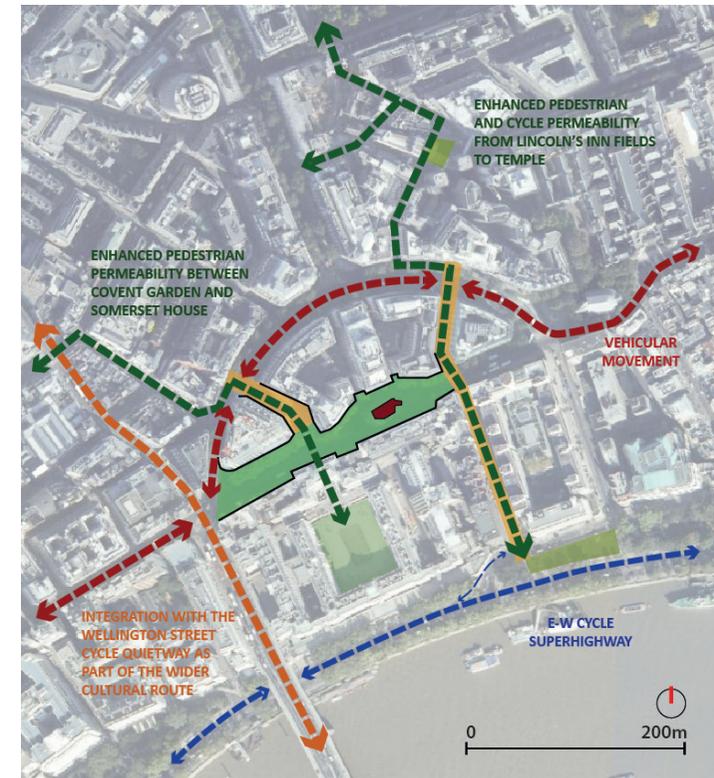
Wider Context

This diagram demonstrates the potential of the area to integrate with a wider Cultural Route and University Route. Strengthening these connections will greatly contribute to the culture of the space and create a destination within a wider framework.



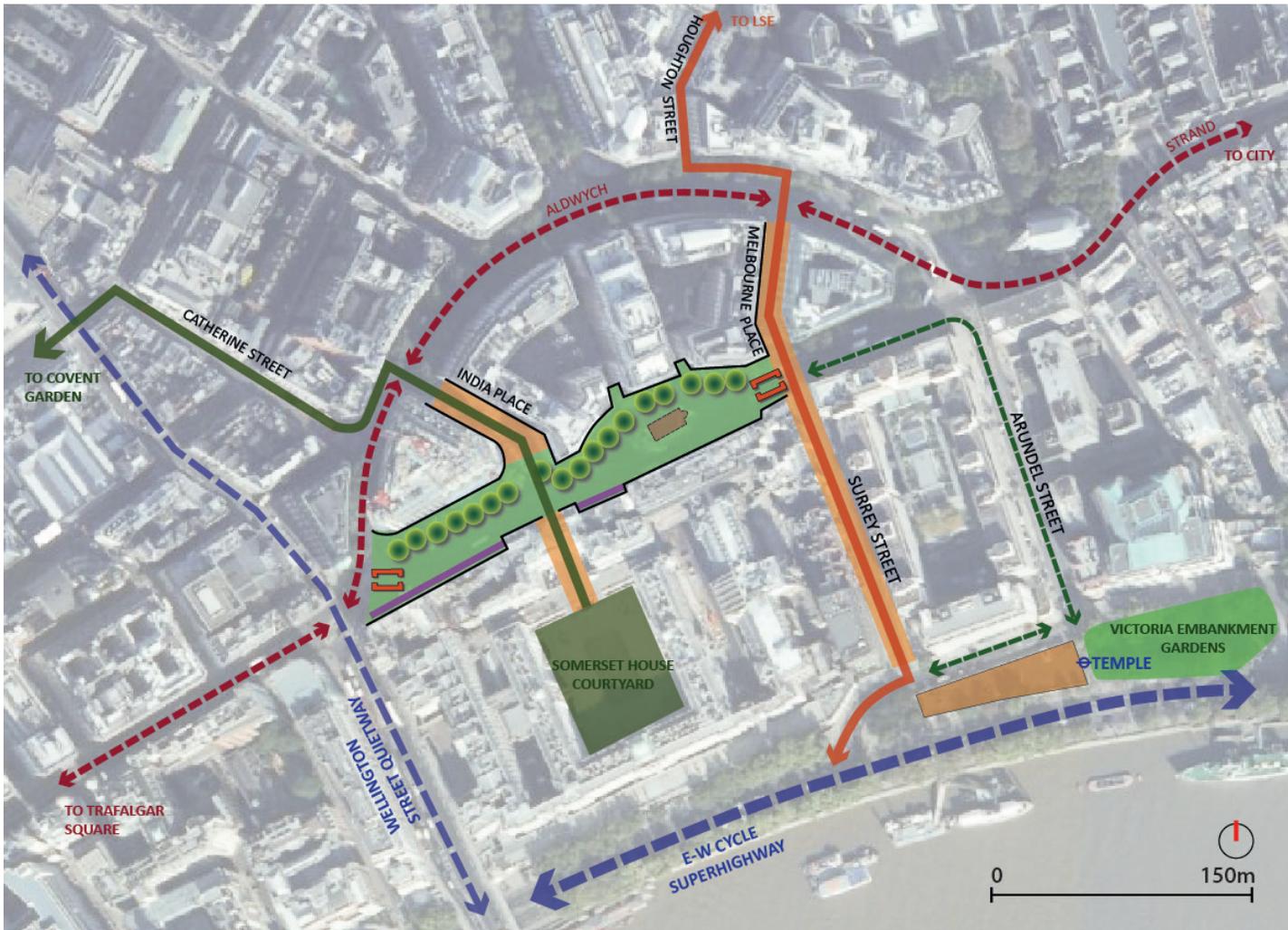
Key Movement Corridors

This diagram illustrates the the key movement corridors that will contribute to the use and movement around the space. Strengthening these connections and enhancing pedestrian and cycle movement along them will be part of the public realm strategy.



Design Principles

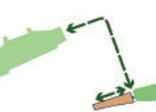
This diagram illustrates the strategy for the public space and its surroundings to ensure that it effectively integrates with the surroundings. The strategy for Strand Aldwych will address the design for the public space and the strengthening of movement corridors through effective design and signage.



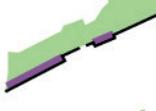
Design Drivers

- 

Creating a strong movement corridor from Temple Station/E-W Cycle Superhighway through LSE Campus via Aldwych to strengthen N-S connectivity.
- 

Strengthening pedestrian connections between Somerset House and Covent Garden via India Place
- 

Potential improvement of Embankment roof terrace to anchor the public realm strategy to the South. Improving pedestrian connectivity along Arundel Street
- 

Gateway and sense of arrival into the space from Strand
- 

Retention and potential upgrade of active frontage along the south of the space
- 

Retention of existing trees and integration into the design for the public space
- 

Integration and celebration of St. Mary Le Strand as a central architectural element in the design for the space

2.0 Identity

In order to arrive at an agreed vision for the identity of the space, design interviews are being conducted with the various stakeholder groups. It is intended that the findings of these interviews will inform the design brief for the public space at Aldwych.

As part of previous engagement with the stakeholders, some precedent spaces were identified

as being aspirational. The next section provides an analysis of two of the main precedent spaces and attempts to find attributes and characteristics that contribute to their success. It is intended that the findings from this process will form the basis of the vision for the space at Strand Aldwych.

The identity of Strand Aldwych will find its roots in

the rich mix of uses in the area and the expertise in various fields including art, culture, research, entertainment and education. The following stage of work will be focused around developing the design brief with stakeholders. The design process will also be set up to allow for design reviews with the stakeholder groups to ensure that change in the area responds to the requirements of the varied user groups.



BRITISH MUSEUM

ENHANCED PEDESTRIAN PERMEABILITY FROM SOMERSET HOUSE TO COVENT GARDEN THROUGH THE SPACE

WELLINGTON STREET QUIETWAY

COVENT GARDEN

LINCOLN INN'S FIELDS

INTEGRATION WITH LSE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY AND CYCLE SUPERHIGHWAY TO ENHANCE N-S PERMEABILITY THROUGH THE EDUCATIONAL QUARTER

STRAND

TEMPLE

E-W CYCLE SUPERHIGHWAY

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

VICTORIA EMBANKMENT GARDENS

INTEGRATION WITH WELLINGTON STREET QUIETWAY TO CONNECT TO SOUTHBANK

SOUTH BANK

3.0 Precedent Study

Previous meetings and workshops have put forward various precedent areas in the context of Strand Aldwych. This section analyses two of these precedent areas with comparable characteristics and draws lessons from their execution and delivery.

QUARTIER DES SPECTACLES MONTREAL

Quartier Des Spectacles offers a case study in the delivery of a cultural district through design, policy and place branding.

Situated in downtown Montréal, this is an area of the city where, by policy making and public-private-civic enterprise, cultural and creative activities have been nurtured. Today, the Quartier has 80 cultural venues, 40 festivals, 30 performance venues, and is home to 450 cultural businesses and organisations providing more than 7,000 culture-related jobs. A significant amount of free public programming attracts more locals and visitors to the Quartier.

The following are the key characteristics of Quartier Des Spectacles:

- Its identity builds upon builds on a 100-year history of culture and entertainment in this part of the city.
- With theatres and educational institutes dating back to the 1800s through to the creation of the Montreal Jazz Festival in 1980, a deliberate approach for the creation of an entertainment district was initiated in 2002.
- The goal was not to create a neighbourhood from scratch but to give an existing district a name and showcase its cultural distinctiveness.
- The process for the delivery of Quartier Des

Spectacles is exemplar of a successful partnership between the government and the private sector. The government committed to funding construction work in the Place Des Arts area following which, the Quarties Des Spectacles Partnership gained its mandate to promote the destination and manage and programme its public spaces.

- The key to the success of this area has been the shared vision, agreed early on by the stakeholders and partners towards maintaining mixed use in the area, nurturing businesses and individuals who create, revitalising public space and the development of new cultural venues.
- The vision has been implemented through urban design which is sensitive to the rich site history, creation of cultural spaces and venues and the deliberate design of an identity through lighting, signage and web design.

Key lessons:

QDSP provides the following key lessons for the design and development strategy around Strand Aldwych:

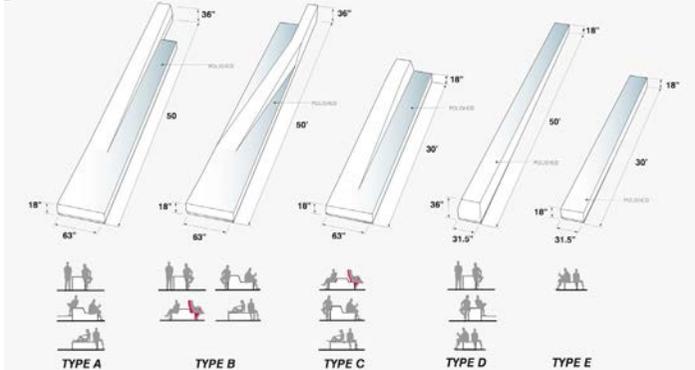
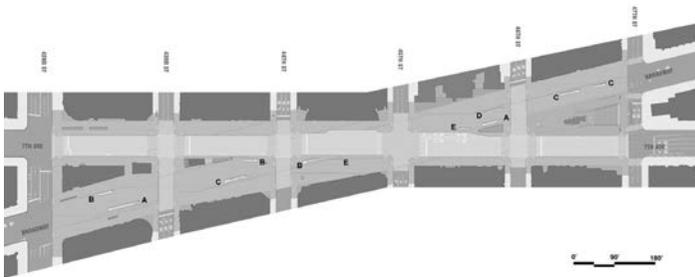
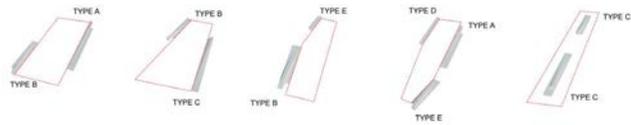
- The importance of **creating a shared vision** between stakeholders and partners and establishing common goals at the early stages of the project.
- Creation of **flexible public spaces** such as Place Des Arts that allow for a variety of functions and showcase the brand of the area through lighting and design elements.
- Complementing the public realm design with a **robust place branding strategy** that sets out the mechanism for governance, management and curation of the district to assert its identity.



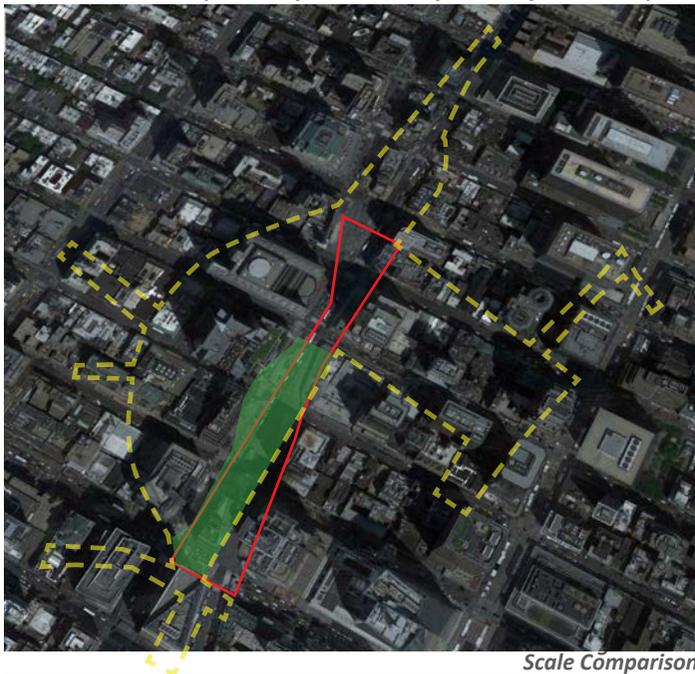
Use of light as a branding element at QDSP



Scale Comparison



Site plan and flexible street furniture for Times Square



Scale Comparison

TIMES SQUARE NEW YORK

The redesign of Times Square in New York was initiated by the "Green Light for Midtown" movement, which allowed a feasibility test for closing Broadway to vehicular movement on Times Square and for 6th and 7th Avenues carrying more traffic. The resulting space was pedestrianised with temporary materials. This idea was made more permanent in 2010 with the appointment of Snohetta as the design firm to realise the pedestrianisation of Times Square.

The objectives behind the 2010 design programme for Times Square were three fold:

- To upgrade crucial utility infrastructure
- To provide event infrastructure for new and expanded public events
- To make permanent the temporary improvements that the City piloted in 2009

These were driven by the need to significantly upgrade the public realm in the heart of one of the busiest cities in the world. An area which has been an icon for entertainment, commerce and culture, Times Square suffered from being overrun by traffic and not living up to its potential. The Snohetta led design initiative of 2010 addresses the heart of the Times Square theatre district, and is bounded by Broadway and 7th Avenue between 42nd and 47th streets. The proposal creates an integrated and iconic multi-functional public space that reflects the best of Times Square and New York City.

The key characteristics of the public space at Times Square are as below:

- Creation of uncluttered pedestrian zones that complement the surrounding architectural "walls" and create an outdoor room in the heart of

Manhattan. A minimal approach to design elements so as to create a clear and simple ground surface made of pre-cast concrete pavers creates an understated backdrop to the excitement of Times Square above.

- Creation of flexible seating options in the space by creating an array of street furniture that allows varied use and encourages pedestrians to pause while directing movement through the space.
- While the physical design strategy has been successful in achieving the design objectives set out by the Green Light movement, site visits to Times Square have demonstrated weaknesses in the programming and use of the space which can seem chaotic.

Key lessons:

The redesign of Times Square provides the following key lessons for the design and development strategy around Strand Aldwych:

- The effectiveness of **robust movement strategy** as the basis of public realm design in complicated urban scenarios and busy spaces
- Creating clusters of **versatile design elements** to encourage users to pause in the space while using **strong paving patterns** to emphasise movement corridors
- Use of **neutral materials and colours** to create a foreground for activity in the area and effectively showcasing it. Use of light to add interest.
- Importance of a robust programming, curation, maintenance, governance and management strategy to complement the physical design of an urban public space

