

Putting the spotlight on

Leicester Square

Your Square
Your choice



City of Westminster

Foreword

Sir Simon Milton Leader Westminster City Council

When I became Leader in 2000, I made a commitment to improving Leicester Square. Since then, the council launched its first successful action plan for this renowned West End location. It has always been a long-term aspiration to see Leicester Square transformed into a world class space that will be memorable for visitors and loved by Londoners.

Working closely with our partners, Heart of London and the Leicester Square Association, we are now closer than ever to making these collective aims for the area a reality. The new concept design illustrated in this document will reinstate Leicester Square as one of London's must see destinations and, we hope, a place to rendezvous with friends, relax and enjoy some of the best entertainment the West End has to offer.

It is therefore vital we hear your views on these concept designs for Leicester Square. I urge you all to respond to this consultation letting us know what you think, so you can help to shape Leicester Square for the next 25 years.

Sarah Porter Chief Executive Heart of London Business Alliance

One of the original and still fundamental foundations of the Heart of London Business Alliance has been the premise of working in real partnership with others, on leading edge projects which will change the landscape of our area. The Leicester Square Action Plan is an embodiment of this collective ambition.

Through the close working relationships we have nurtured with property owners in and around Leicester Square, we are intrinsically committed and involved in this project, helping to provide a robust funding mechanism which will allow this vision we all share for Leicester Square to become a reality. The inspirational ideas contained in this document will ensure our businesses benefit from being situated in a world class Square – a space transformed into a genuinely international destination, cementing its reputation as the UK's home of entertainment.

Delaney Gordon Chair Leicester Square Association

Having lived in, worked in and loved Leicester Square for many years I am very proud to be associated with it in my role as Chair of the Leicester Square Association.

When I see it being beamed around the world showcasing the best that world cinema has to offer, watch movie stars work the crowds, or seeing people meet up with each other, taking time out of their busy days to stop and relax in the gardens, then I know these proposals will only encourage these activities, which can only be a good thing for the Square.

Most Londoners love their city and I would like to see a Square that Londoners are proud of and the rest of the world wants to visit. Having been closely involved with the development of the design, I am very enthused and believe it's achievable. The Leicester Square Association is passionate about the Square and we are very keen to see these plans implemented to help secure its future as a key London destination.

Vision

To re-establish Leicester Square as the home of cinema in the UK, and the entertainment gateway to the West End. To make Leicester Square a vibrant London landmark and the West End's principal meeting place where people can relax, sit, watch and enjoy.

Leicester Square is one of London's most recognised locations. It is a world famous landmark, and is visited by millions of people every year. The Square also hosts numerous film premieres as well as acting as backdrop to cultural and theatrical events. In this sense it is unique.

Leicester Square has a green garden at its heart which is surrounded by hard landscaping and nine side streets where pedestrians have priority. There is no other square in London that has the same credentials, and probably very few in the world!

A redesign to reinvigorate the Square in line with its stature and international reputation would ensure the Square's long-term future and meet the expectations of visitors, investors and businesses as a world-class destination.

In 2001 Westminster City Council consulted local residents and the business community on Leicester Square Action Plan.

This was later adopted as council policy. Since the adoption of the action plan, there has been a significant improvement in the general management of the area, which now warrants further capital investment in the public realm. The action plan made a long term commitment to physically transform the hard and green landscape of the Square

and its nine side streets, which for the purpose of this scheme we have termed the 'City Block'. Since the Heart of London Business Alliance was formed in 2004, its members have been very keen to see Leicester Square enhanced to live up to its international reputation so it truly becomes a world class landmark destination. The Leicester Square Association has also long championed for improvements to the Square. Together our collective clear vision for the area is:

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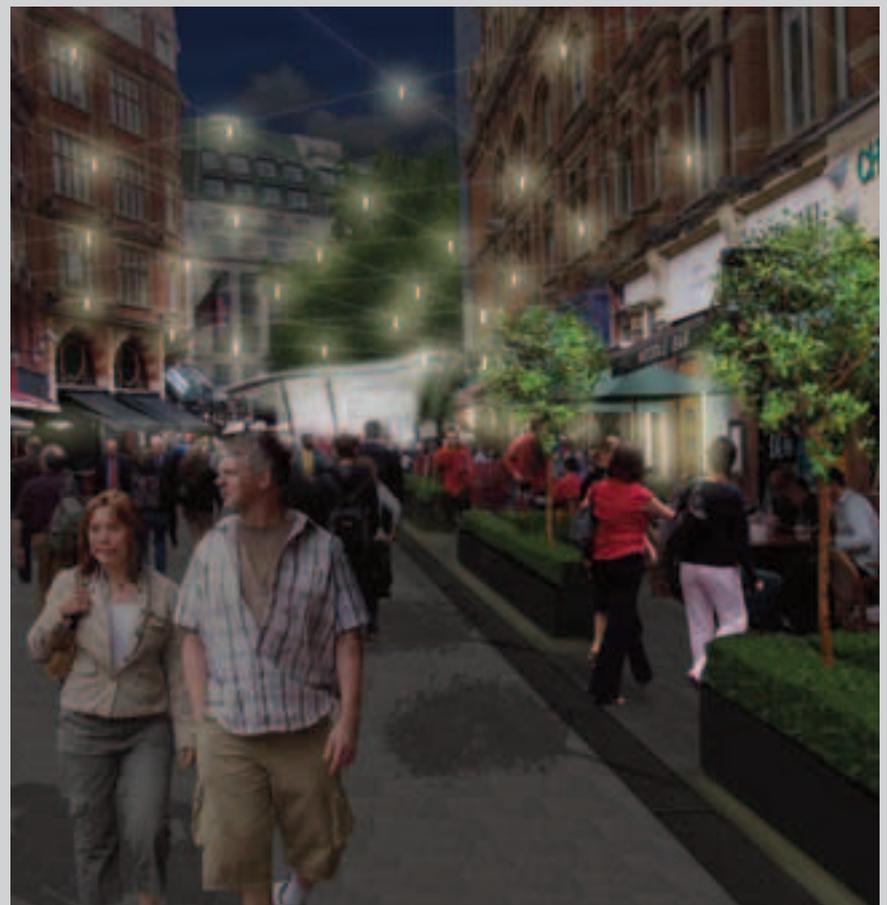
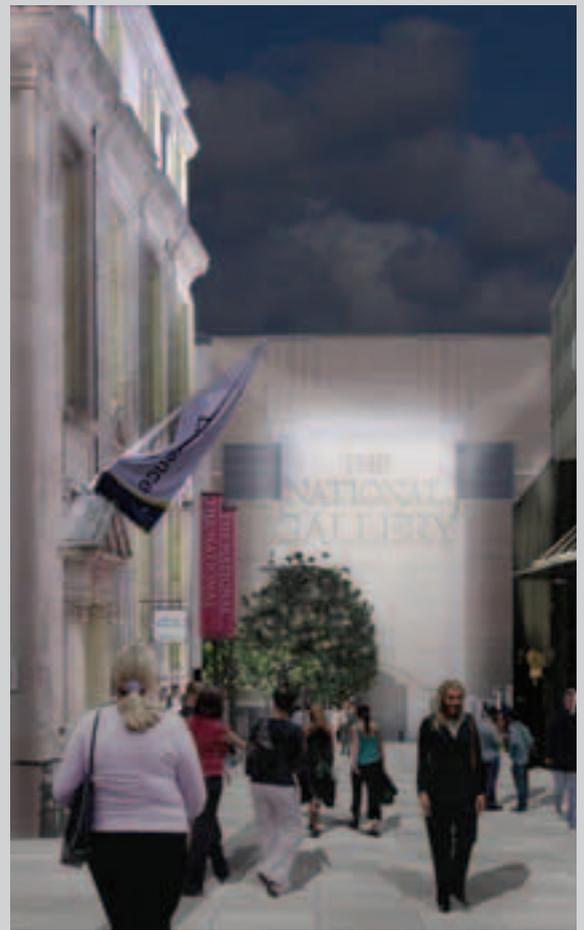
Westminster City Council held a landscape design competition in June 2007. We received seven submissions from award winning international landscape architects. The council along with the Heart of London and the Leicester Square Association, selected the practice Burns+Nice, in conjunction with DPA Lighting, to develop the landscape and lighting concept for the area. Stakeholders and council officers were all invited to a design workshop in July 2007. Since then, the council has met regularly with the Heart of London Stakeholders Group and the Leicester Square Association to ensure

our collective aims to create a world class destination are achieved.

This consultation document reveals the proposed concept designs for Leicester Square, for your consideration and comment. The intention is to ensure that the design works well with the important existing historic features of the Square, such as the Shakespeare statue and fountain, but also to introduce some unique and exciting design features that you will not find in other public squares in the UK.

As well as the new design we have other aspirations for Leicester Square that we would like to introduce; features like a flexible seating system so that people can arrange how they want to sit in the gardens. We are also keen to encourage premises to provide more al fresco dining that will complement the new look of the Square, especially in some of the quieter side streets to help to animate these spaces further.

We will also be seeking expressions of interest from internationally renowned architects to design an iconic and exciting new building to replace the existing ticket booth on the south side of the Square.





- 1** Swiss Court gateway: New location of Swiss Glockenspiel. New tree planting with informal seating and granite paving. Any street furniture will be contemporary yet simple in appearance and style.
- 2** Lighting up the Sainsbury's Wing of the National Gallery: We intend to work closely with the National Gallery on improving the pedestrian route between Trafalgar Square and Leicester Square, and linking the two spaces by animating this under-utilised walkway.
- 3** Irving Street: More greening and planting will be introduced into the side streets where there is an al fresco dining offer to help to soften their appearance. Planters will be made from similar smooth granite to compliment the granite paved streets.
- 4** Irving Street: A series of white decorative lighting schemes will be encouraged on some side streets where al fresco dining is on offer. The bases of the planters will also be lit to delineate the streets.

Design rationale

The physical improvements to Leicester Square will fulfil a number of the council's One City targets. The new design will transform the appearance of the whole 'City Block'.

The solution will be functional and accommodate the range of demands; it will be robust and hardwearing, to ensure longevity; it will be innovative and cutting edge but will work with some of the Square's notable historic features; and we hope it will be award winning too!

Gardens

The Shakespeare statue and fountain are the physical and visual centrepiece of the garden scheme. The architectural style of the fountain is the reference point for some of the new design elements within the Square. For example, the proposed 'ribbon' seating makes reference to the fountain in terms of colour, material and form. The introduction of new water elements will ensure that the fountain has a greater impact and allow for more interaction with public. White lighting will strengthen the interplay of water and its presence at night. The lighting will be responsive so the fountain can take on different appearances for events and premieres.

Fixed street furniture will be minimal, with the grass, enhanced planting and the existing perimeter trees providing a green oasis in which visitors can relax. The raised edges around the fountain will also be lit at night and will offer an opportunity for informal seating. A bespoke flexible seating design will allow users to create their own social seating arrangements. Storage space for the flexible seating will be below ground. The pathways will maintain their diagonal arrangement to reflect the main pedestrian flows, but will be subtly realigned to radiate out from the centre, drawing the eye to the Shakespeare statue and fountain. The removal of visual and physical obstructions from the gardens will allow the public to make better use of the space available. The four listed busts will remain at the entrances and will be lit with white light at night. We are proposing to remove the central tree on the southwest corner of the gardens. This is to provide much needed light and moisture to the grass and the space as a whole.

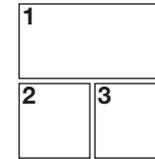
Work is continuing on the design of the bronze railings and gates. The design will be contemporary yet simple in style.

The Square

The 'ribbon' seating around the edge of the gardens overlooking the four terraces provides a new opportunity for seating never seen before in the Square, and reinforces the definition of the green space. The ribbon is undulating in form and white in colour, and the use of lighting under the seating will emphasise its unique shape. It will integrate the terraces with the gardens, creating better use of the pedestrian space and will help make Leicester Square the new West End 'meeting place'. Between the 'ribbon' and the new contemporary railings will be undulating yew hedges and distinctive contemporary white and green planting, to complement the overall theme.

The gateways to the gardens will have retractable bronze railings that will be contemporary yet simple in their design. They will allow the gardens to be closed off at night and for events if required. The bronze railing around the perimeter of the gardens will be another integral design feature that will differentiate the Square from others in London. The 'ribbon' will be framed by a dark granite surface.

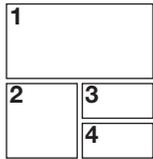
The terraces will be freed of any unnecessary street clutter. The new Leicester Square 'street furniture family' will be contemporary and simple in its design. The terraces, like the gardens, will be paved in a palette of smooth granite setts and slabs. Smaller setts are proposed for the corners to cope with the stresses of vehicle turning manoeuvres. The lighting of the terraces will be from the buildings. Lighting levels will be flexible to accommodate the different needs of the Square at different times of the evening and night. Decorative lighting will be a white light solution, which will be both sophisticated and timeless, emphasising the importance and status of the Square.



- 1 Cross section illustrating the gardens and ribbon.
- 2 Gardens during the day: Most of the existing street furniture will be removed from the gardens, providing a clutter free environment that will allow for great movement around the space. A flexible seating solution is being considered for the gardens.
- 3 Gardens at night: New smooth granite pathways will be almost flush with the grassed areas to allow for greater movement and accessibility. The fountain will be lit with white light. The fountain will take on a new dimension, with the addition of a water feature at the base of the structure that will allow for greater interaction by the public.







- 1** West Terrace: New smooth granite paving. The 'ribbon' provides another opportunity to relax and enjoy the Square, and the dialogue between social gatherings and the al fresco dining work very well in further animating these spaces.
- 2** Cranbourn Street gateway: New trees will be planted along the street. Decorative pea lighting will light the tree canopy at night and add a magical feel to the street. Lighting spanning the entrance to the gateway will be seen from a distance, and will give a real sense of arrival when approaching the Square.
- 3** Northeast corner: Smooth granite paving along all the terraces. The white and green contemporary planting, between the 'ribbon' seating and the new bronze railings, makes reference to the green space of the gardens and, the form and colour of the fountain and ribbon.
- 4** East terrace at night: Ambient lighting will illuminate the 'ribbon' at night, giving the illusion that the seating is suspended off the ground. The new glass canopies over the existing toilet entrances will also be lit at night to make them more recognisable.

Side street gateways

The nine side streets are the 'gateways' into the Square. Their treatment is a key aspect of the design solution. The appearance of these streets will be the start of the Leicester Square experience, and they will be paved in smooth granite. Like the rest of the Square, visual and physical obstructions will be minimised or re-aligned. Each gateway entrance marking the perimeter of the 'city block' will have a white granite 'ribbon' design to mirror the style of the ribbon seating on the terraces. Some of the side streets will have opportunities for public art projects. It is proposed that these commissions be rotated, like the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, to provide another unique facet to the Square. More plants will be introduced into the side streets alongside the alfresco dining; planters will be used to delineate the dining pitches and will be maintained by the Heart of London and the council. The functional lighting of these streets will be the same as the terraces; mounted on buildings and flexible. The decorative white lighting scheme for these streets will be a new feature and will improve legibility and way-finding, making the Square easily identifiable from the surrounding areas.

Linking Trafalgar Square and Leicester Square, and enhancing the pedestrian route from the Sainsbury's Wing of the National Gallery via St Martin's Street, is a key aspiration of the scheme. The use of lighting, paving and the eventual roll out of Transport for London and the council's Legible London scheme (currently being piloted in Bond Street), as well as the National Gallery's aspirations for a café on Orange Street, will certainly help to make this a principal walking route.

Toilets

As part of the redesign the toilets will be completely refurbished. Part of the old male toilet will become storage space for the flexible seating from the gardens when it is not in use, as well as for events equipment. Both existing entrances will have new architectural canopies that will be lit at night helping to make the toilets more recognisable.

New additions

Iconic building

An iconic new building on the south side of the Square will replace the existing ticket booth, the design of which will be subject to a separate architectural brief. The brief will be issued in early 2008, and the final landscape and lighting design will help to influence its architectural design. It is proposed that the new building will contain the existing ticket booth but will also potentially house a café. It will have a bandstand style performance space overlooking the south quadrant of the gardens, as well as a disabled toilet. The performance space will be multifunctional; it will be used for events and premieres, as well as by the café to provide further alfresco dining for the Square when not in use. It will also be the focus of an arts and culture community programme, which the council along with Heart of London want to develop. It is hoped that this will add further buzz and atmosphere to the Square.

Events and premieres

Events and premieres are one of the unique selling points of Leicester Square, attracting huge media attention and large crowds. Sometimes the general appearance of the Square whilst premieres are set up and dismantled detracts from its ambience. A management plan for small, medium and large scale premieres and events will be developed.

Events infrastructure such as power and broadband points to help reduce the amount of events equipment required and provide a more flexible events space, is being proposed.

Street trading and portrait artists

As part of the wider street trading review by the council, Leicester Square has been included in the pilot scheme. Generally stakeholders and residents would like to see some form of street trading remain as long as it has a purpose, and the commodities or services sold enhance the visitor experience as opposed to detracting from it. The kiosk design is also important and should complement the new design for the Square and surrounding streets.

Due to the ribbon seating surrounding the four sides of the gardens, it is likely the portrait artists would need to be relocated. The idea would be to disperse the artists evenly around the Square, gardens and side streets to further animate these spaces.



- 1 Functional lighting:** The functional lighting scheme for the Square and side streets will be flexible, allowing for greater lighting levels at different times of the evening. All functional lighting in the Square and streets will be wall mounted at 18 to 20 metres allowing for greater range.
- 2 Premieres:** Illustrating how the gardens provide a flexible premiere space by connecting the east and west terraces. White search lights and laser beams will be used during premieres to add to the cinematic atmosphere of the Square. They can also be used as a way-finding lighting solution, to help navigate people to the Square from other areas in the West End.



Garden opening hours

Stakeholders have expressed their desire to extend the garden opening hours to midnight every night. The decorative lighting design for the gardens will compliment the new opening hours and provide a magical experience after dusk.

Ducting

Underground ducting for all statutory utility services, and ideally for events infrastructure, is being proposed for all streets and terraces. This will minimise the need for statutory services (utilities) to dig up the paving for repair work, and help to reduce the amount of events equipment and numbers of vehicles in the Square. Generally this approach to large public realm improvements has not been adopted in London, but in other world class cities this infrastructure has proved advantageous. Leicester Square could be the blue print for other squares and schemes across the country, and be used as an example to convince utilities of the benefits of ducted solutions; namely a reduction in long term maintenance and repair costs.

Swiss Glockenspiel

The Glockenspiel that was presented to the City of Westminster in 1985 from the people of Switzerland and the people of Liechtenstien as a symbol of everlasting friendship and unity. It is currently housed on the front of the existing Swiss Centre overlooking the Square. In February 2006 the council's Planning Committee granted consent to relocate it on to Swiss Court. The Swiss Canton situated at the gateway entrance to the Square will remain in its current location.

Extension of scheme

We will be extending the scheme out to the junction of Cranbourn Street where it meets St Martin's Cross to connect the two schemes (St Martin's Cross and Long Acre). This is also to provide an improved pedestrian space outside Leicester Square tube station entrance, particularly on the west side of Charing Cross Road. We are also considering a complementary decorative lighting scheme for Charing Cross Road from Cranbourn Street to Trafalgar Square, to add an extra sparkle to the atmosphere on the street between London's two principal Squares.

Developments

We hope that these proposals will encourage property owners to bring forward their maintenance and refurbishment programmes for their own properties, particularly with the 2012 Olympics in mind.

Where appropriate, and subject to the council's policies, redevelopment could be considered where existing structures fail to contribute positively to the space. Early implementation should be encouraged so public realm works and refurbishments are completed together. Heart of London will also be encouraged to facilitate discussions in upgrading the retail offer of the frontages to complement the new look Square.

Pop up toilets

A number of sites around the Square are notable 'wet spots'. We are proposing to install pop up toilets, similar to the one at Cambridge Circus. These facilities should help to reduce this type of anti-social behaviour in the area, helping to keep the area clean and hygienic.

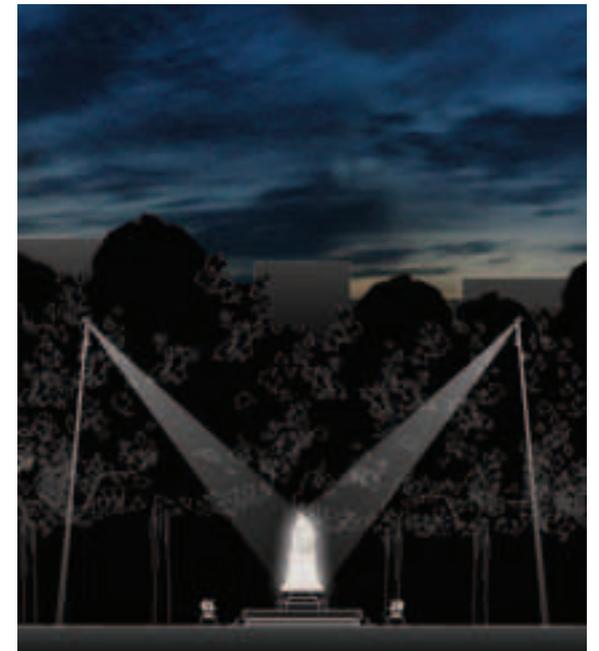
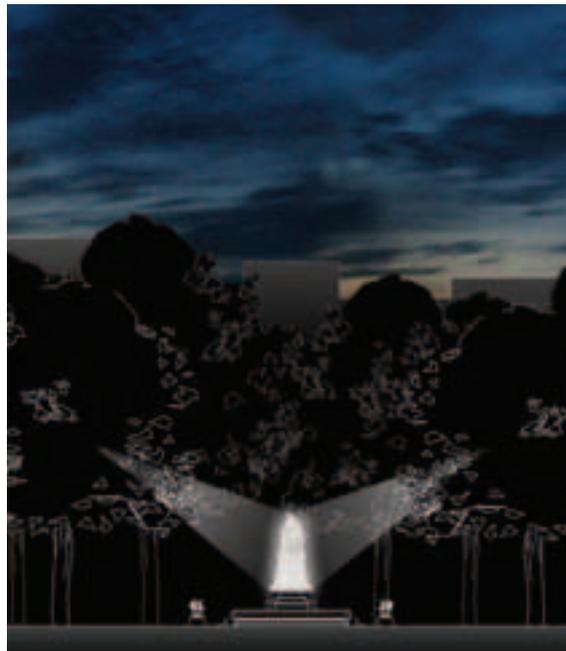
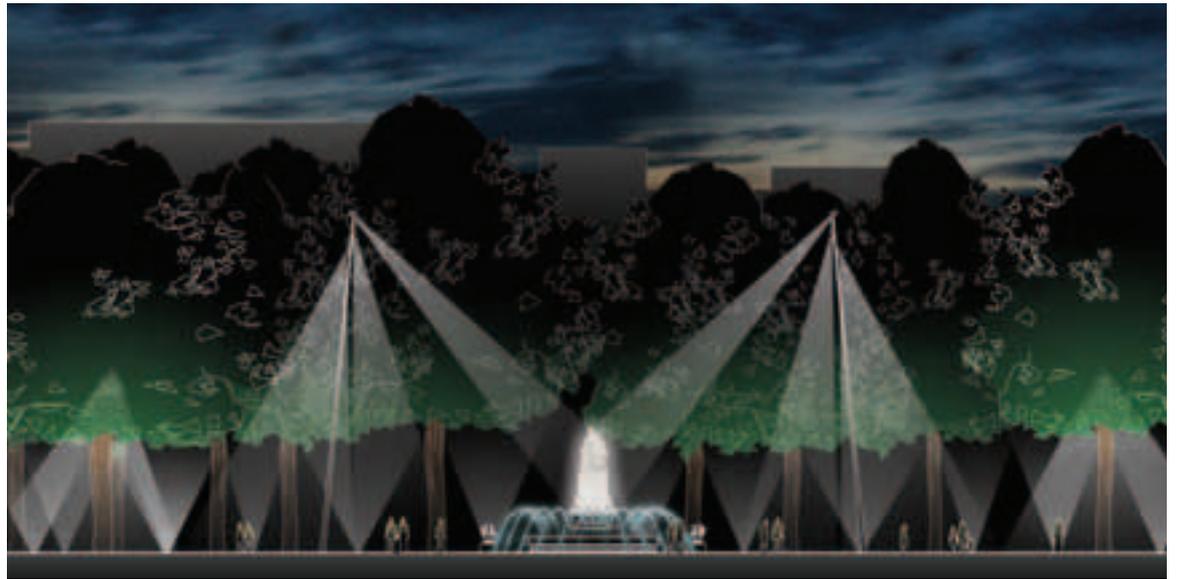
Traffic management

The council, Heart of London and Leicester Square Association are in broad agreement that the Square should become an increasingly friendly space for pedestrians. As part of this consultation, a change in delivery times will be canvassed. Our long term aspirations would be to prohibit all deliveries from the Square, and work with local developers and landowners to provide a shared service delivery point or depot. Stock would then be delivered by palletted goods trolleys to premises around the Square.

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1 Garden lighting: Two lighting solutions are currently being considered for the gardens. Both are white light solutions. One utilises the central and perimeter trees, the other proposes the installation of four iconic columns (centre) and the perimeter trees at the garden entrances. Both solutions advocate uplighters to light the canopies of the perimeter trees.

2 Garden after closure: Two lighting solutions either using the existing central trees or new iconic columns are being proposed. After the gardens close at night, only the Shakespeare statue and fountain will be lit at night. This will help to make the Square and gardens feel atmospheric, but will also help to protect the structure from vandals.



Delivery

Management plans

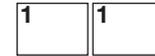
The key to the success of any public realm improvement is to ensure that the design solution is both manageable and easy to maintain. The council, Heart of London, and the emergency services, in consultation with Burns+Nice and DPA Lighting, will devise a Leicester Square Management Plan for the entire 'City Block'. This management plan will ensure that the design is maintained to a high standard, and will act as a reference point for the council contractors and the Heart of London, who provide a range of additional operational services over and above those of the council. The agreed management plan will commit both organisations to maintain the Square, gardens and its nine side streets to exceptional standards.

Scheme delivery programme

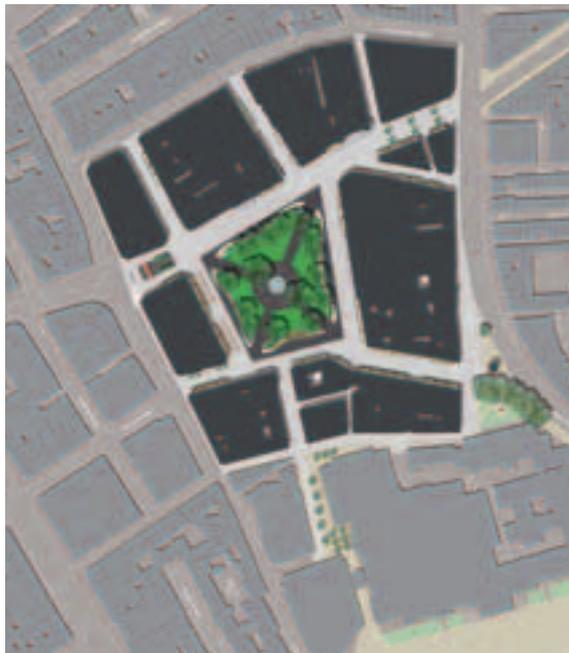
Subject to consultation with stakeholders, local residents and businesses, the council and the Heart of London are aiming to commence the implementation of the scheme in April 2008.

It will be implemented through a phased programme to ensure the least amount of disruption to the area. It is envisaged that the development will be completed within three and half years, in time for the London 2012 Olympics.

The council will project manage the delivery of the scheme from detailed design through to implementation and completion. We will meet regularly with the Heart of London, the Leicester Square Association, the residents and wider West End stakeholders to update on the progress of the scheme and listen to feedback.



- 1 Leicester Square: Day and night plan of the 'City Block'. The scheme has been extended to include Cranbourn Street to the junction of St Martin's Cross, the entrance to Irving Street from Charing Cross Road, as well as St Martin's Street leading down towards Trafalgar Square.



We want to hear from you

This is an exciting time for Leicester Square and the West End. This investment will invigorate the area and re-establish its status as one of the world's most recognisable destinations.

The council and its partners want to hear from you. This is your chance to let us know what you think of the new design we are proposing for Leicester Square and its nine side streets.

**Consultation will close on Friday
29th February 2008.**

- 01** Do you feel the overall landscape design solution for the Square, gardens and nine side streets is a dramatic improvement? Yes No
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- 02** Would you like to see more well managed and quality al fresco dining in the Square and side streets? Yes No
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- 03** Do you think it's a good idea to link Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square, and promote a new pedestrian route between the two Squares via St Martin's Street towards the National Gallery and Sainsbury Wing? Yes No
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- 04** Would you like to see the opening times of the gardens extended to midnight? Yes No
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- 05** Whilst removing one of the central trees will help the grass recovery rate, would you be happy with further tree removal? Yes No
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- 06** Would you be supportive of a cultural and community events programme? Yes No
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- 07** Would you like to see a reduction in the level of vehicles entering the Square and the side streets ie reduction in delivery times, taxi pick up/drop off etc Yes No
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- 08** Are you supportive of a lighting solution that is flexible in terms of lighting levels at different times and for different purposes? Yes No
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- 09** Do you think a dedicated Leicester Square Management Plan is the right approach to ensuring the quality of experience and longevity of the scheme? Yes No

10 Other comments:

For further information please contact Roger Austin, Leicester Square Project Manager on 020 7641 7061 or raustin@westminster.gov.uk

You can also download this document and respond online by logging on to www.westminster.gov.uk/LeicesterSquare or you can write to us at: West End Team, Westminster City Hall, FREEPOST LON17652, LONDON SW1E 6QY. If you require this document in an alternative format please contact the West End Team on 020 7641 7061 or via email: leicestersquare@westminster.gov.uk

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Heart of London Business Alliance
The Business Improvement District



LEICESTER SQUARE
ASSOCIATION