FLEET STREET QUARTER

DRAFT

PUBLIC REALM SCOPING REPORT

Gensler

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INTRODUCTION

The Fleet Street Quarter BID (FSQ BID) is preparing for its second Business Improvement District term covering 2027–2032, with the re-balloting process taking place in Q1 2027. Building on the success of the 'Era of Change' Public Realm Strategy, prepared by Gensler and launched in 2023, the FSQ BID commissioned this Public Realm Scoping Study to inform and support the development of its next proposal.

Fleet Street Quarter is undergoing a sustained period of change, with several public realm initiatives and development-led interventions already transforming streets and spaces across the area. Programmes led by the Fleet Street Quarter BID and the City of London, alongside recently completed and consented developments, are delivering incremental improvements to key routes, junctions, and public spaces. These include enhancements to primary corridors, the activation of courts and lanes, and the creation of new or upgraded civic spaces. In particular, the Transforming Fleet Street project has the potential to reshape movement patterns across the district by rerouting eastbound traffic and rebalancing priorities at key junctions such as Ludgate Circus. These changes could create opportunities to enhance pedestrian priority and significantly improve the quality and experience of the public realm. While this activity is building positive momentum, it remains varied in approach and delivery, with opportunities to better coordinate and amplify its impact.

Gensler has been closely involved in shaping the vision for the Quarter through the Era of Change strategy (2023), which established a comprehensive framework for the future of the public realm. The strategy identified eleven priority projects, several of which are already progressing, including the Transforming Fleet Street initiative, improvements to Fleet Street Courts and Lanes (including Gough Square), and interventions around Holborn Viaduct. More broadly, the work identified key spatial typologies and a series of targeted interventions to improve connectivity, strengthen identity, and support a more active and engaging urban environment. It set out an ambition to reposition Fleet Street Quarter as a more vibrant, inclusive, and people-focused destination.

Building on both this strategic foundation and the momentum of ongoing initiatives, this report provides a focused public realm scoping study to guide the next phase of delivery. It responds to the need for a more coordinated and layered approach, aligning existing and emerging interventions within a coherent framework that enhances environmental quality, legibility, and user experience across the Quarter.

The study focuses on three interconnected areas of intervention:

- **Site-wide Seating and Greening Strategy** – Establishing a consistent base layer of seating, planting, and greening interventions to improve comfort, biodiversity, and visual quality across Fleet Street Quarter.
- **Ludgate Circus** – Exploring opportunities to rebalance this key gateway and junction from a movement-dominated space into a more legible, attractive, and pedestrian-focused place, particularly in the context of the wider Transforming Fleet Street programme.
- **Chancery Lane** – Examining the role of this historic north–south spine and identifying opportunities to strengthen its identity, enhance arrival experiences, and improve connections with the surrounding network of courts and lanes.

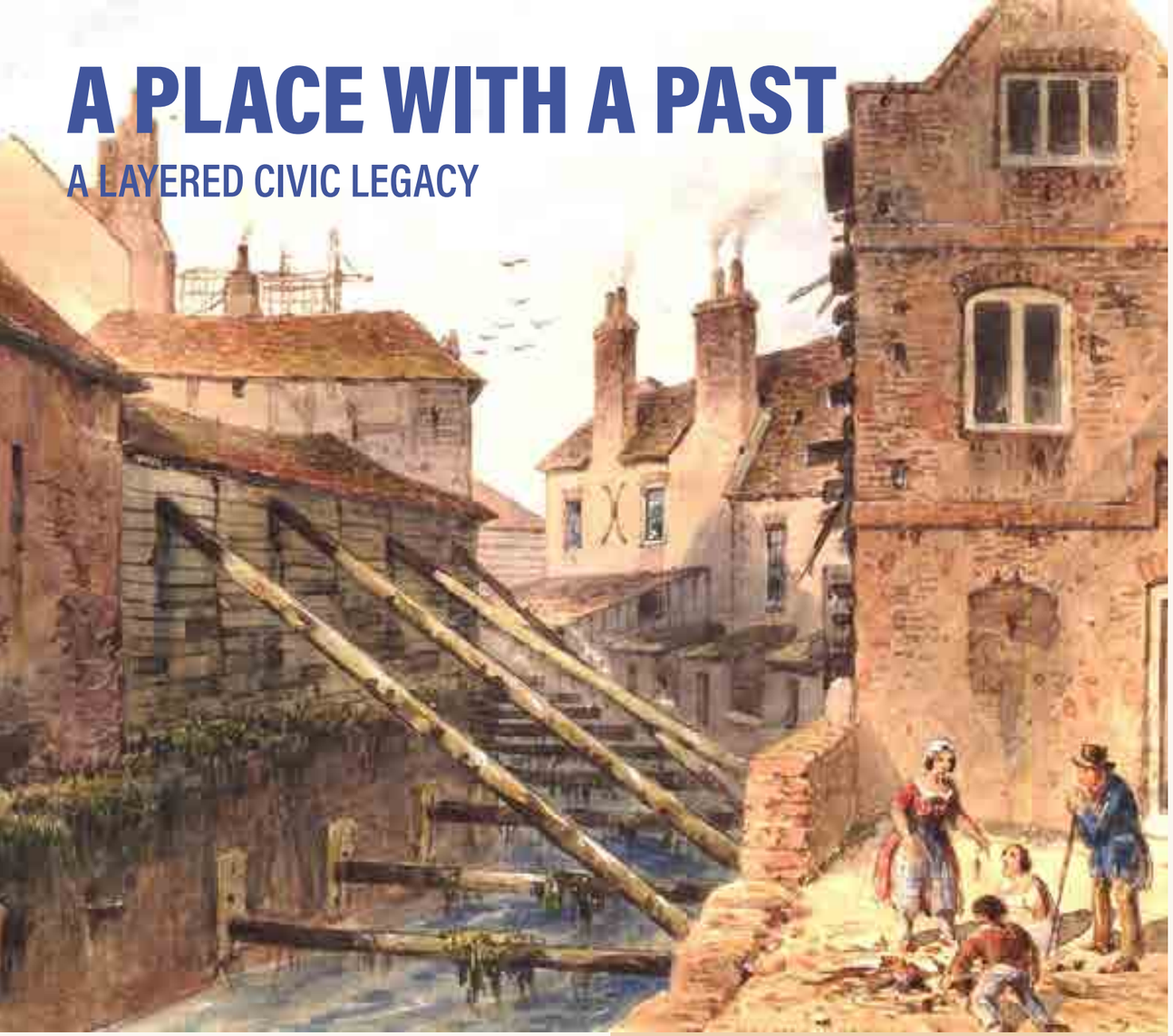
These outputs will support decision-making and provide a robust, evidence-based foundation for inclusion in the BID's 2027–2032 Proposal, ensuring that future investment responds to the scale of growth in the area while helping to create a more accessible, attractive, and vibrant urban environment.

01
CONTEXT REVIEW



A PLACE WITH A PAST

A LAYERED CIVIC LEGACY



A watercolour view of Fleet Ditch by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd

Fleet Street has long been a corridor of movement, exchange, and influence at the heart of London. Its origins as a thoroughfare trace back to the Roman period, and there is evidence that a route led west from Ludgate by 200 AD. Running alongside the now-hidden River Fleet, the street developed as a vital commercial spine, shaped by trade, law, and communication.

By the medieval period, Fleet Street became closely associated with the legal profession, positioned between the City and the Inns of Court. This identity was reinforced through the growth of institutions and chambers, embedding a culture of knowledge, discourse, and governance that continues to define the area today.

Fleet Street has long been a corridor of movement, exchange, and influence at the heart of London. Its origins trace back to the Roman period, forming part of the route connecting the City of London to Westminster. Running alongside the now-hidden River Fleet, the street developed as a vital commercial spine, shaped by trade, law, and communication.

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From the 16th century onwards, Fleet Street evolved into the centre of Britain's printing and publishing industry. By the 19th and 20th centuries, it had become synonymous with journalism, housing the headquarters of major national newspapers. The street operated as a 24-hour ecosystem—alive with reporters, printers, delivery vehicles, and the constant circulation of information—earning its reputation as the symbolic home of the British press.

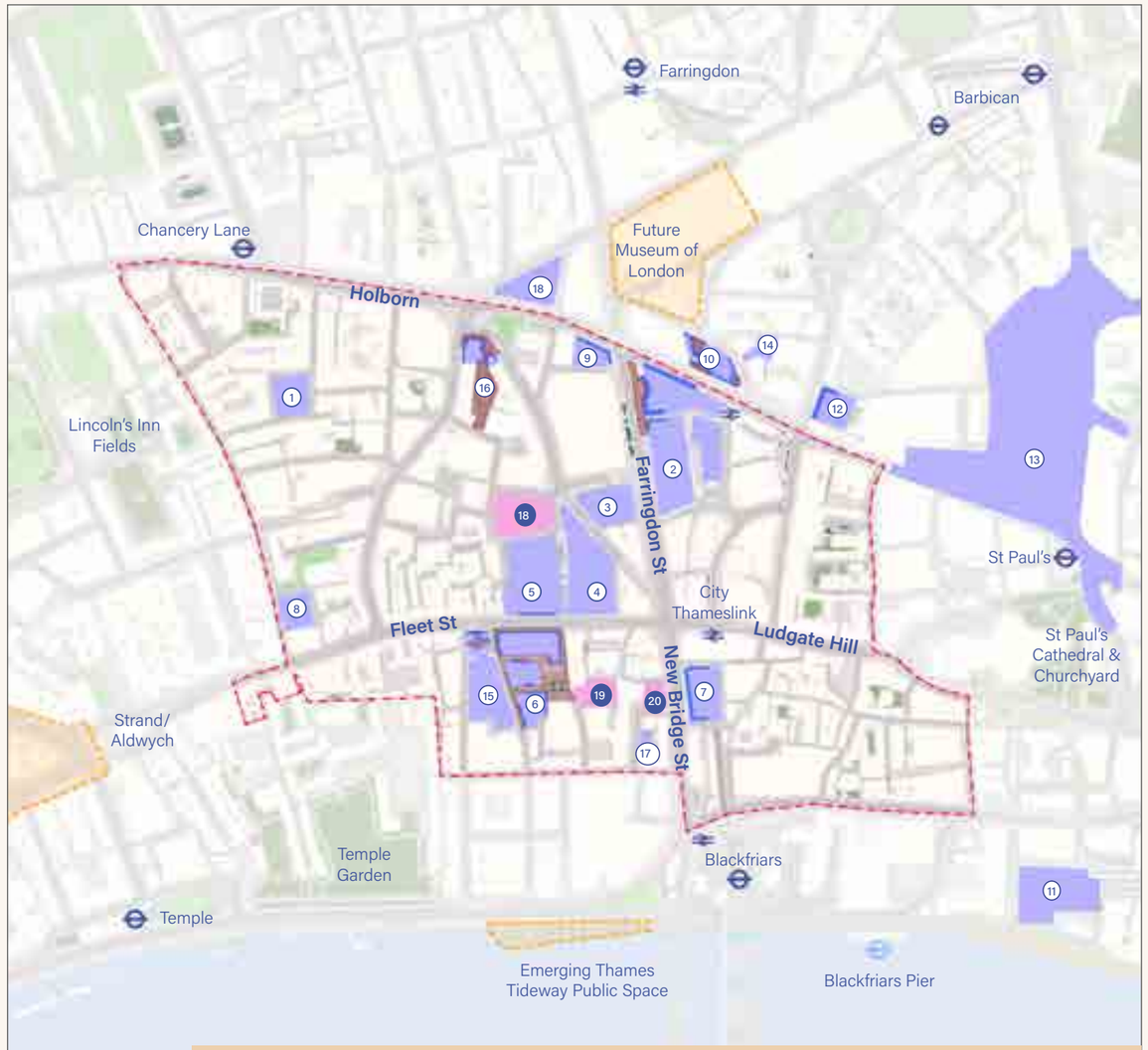
The late 20th century brought significant change. Advances in printing technology and shifting economic conditions led to the relocation of the newspaper industry, leaving behind a legacy of robust buildings and a strong cultural identity, but a diminished sense of daily activity.

Crowds gather at Daily Express Building, 1932



EMERGING DEVELOPMENT

UNDER DEVELOPMENT



Recently constructed development & development under construction within and neighbouring FSQ

Fleet Street Quarter is undergoing a sustained period of change, with a significant number of developments recently completed or currently under construction. These schemes are delivering new and refurbished commercial floorspace, alongside enhanced active frontage, streetscape improvements and public realm that strengthen pedestrian movement and connectivity. At the same time, major surrounding public realm initiatives, including Strand Aldwych, emerging Thames Tideway public spaces, and the future London Museum at Smithfield, are reinforcing a wider shift towards a more pedestrian-focused and activated city centre.

- Under Development
- Due to be Developed
- Emerging Public Realm Works
- New or Improved Active Frontage
- Major Development/ Public Realm Initiative Neighbouring FSQ

UNDER DEVELOPMENT

1. 100 Fetter Lane (2025-Completed)
2. 14-21 Holborn Viaduct
3. 1 Stonecutter St (2025)
4. 120 Fleet St (on hold)
5. Peterborough Court & Daniel House (2025)
6. Salisbury Square Development
7. 100 New Bridge Street (2026)
8. 5 Chancery Lane
9. City Temple
10. 65 Holborn Viaduct
11. Millenium Bridge House (2025)
12. 20 Giltspur Street (2026)
13. St Paul's Gyratory
14. Snow Hill Police Station (Completed)
15. 65 Fleet Street
16. Thavies Inn House
17. 9 Bridewell Place
18. 40 Holborn Viaduct

DUE TO BE DEVELOPED

15. Hill House
16. Fleet House
17. St Brides House

KEY PROJECTS

6 SALISBURY SQUARE DEVELOPMENT



2 14-21 HOLBORN VIADUCT



13 ST PAUL'S GYRATORY



10 65 HOLBORN VIADUCT



15 65 FLEET STREET



4 THAVIES INN HOUSE

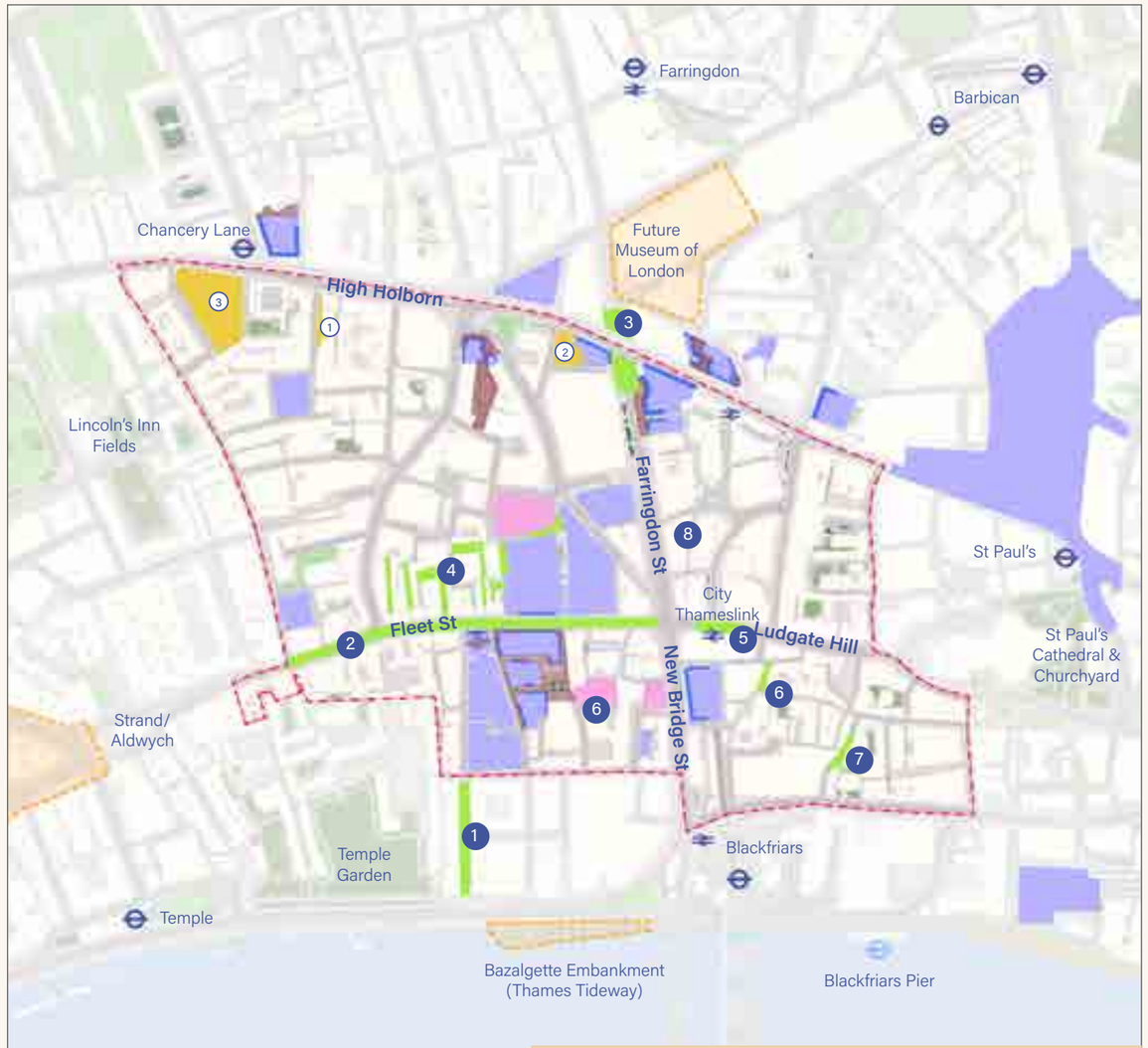


15 HILL HOUSE



EMERGING DEVELOPMENT

FSQ AREA PROGRAMME PROJECTS



Recently consented development within and neighbouring FSQ

Alongside the wider development pipeline, a number of live planning applications continue to shape the future character of the Fleet Street Quarter, bringing forward new commercial floorspace, improved building frontages and opportunities for enhanced connectivity throughout the area. These proposals are complemented by a series of transformative public realm initiatives both within and surrounding the Quarter. Together, these projects are creating a more pedestrian-friendly, greener and culturally vibrant environment, improving accessibility, increasing dwell time and strengthening links between key destinations.

- Under Development
- Due to be Developed
- Emerging Public Realm Works
- New or Improved Active Frontage
- Major Development/ Public Realm Initiative Neighbouring FSQ
- Live Planning Applications
- FSQ Area Programme Projects

RECENTLY CONSENTED

1. Temple Avenue
2. Transforming Fleet Street
3. Holborn Viaduct Lighting
4. Fleet St Lanes & Courts
5. Ludgate Peds Crossing
6. Ludgate Broadway
7. St Andrews Hill

LIVE PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1. 36-41 Furnival Street
2. Morley House
3. 319-325 High Holborn, 326-332 High Holborn, 26 Southampton Buildings, 44 Southampton Buildings

2 MORLEY HOUSE





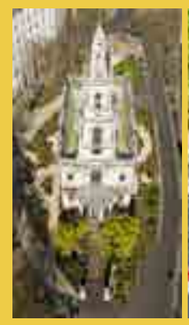
3 SOUTHAMPTON BUILDINGS





NEIGHBOURING PUBLIC REALM INITIATIVES

STRAND ALDWYCH







FUTURE MUSEUM OF LONDON







BAZALGETTE EMBANKMENT (THAMES TIDEWAY)





BUILDING ON MOMENTUM

ONGOING INITIATIVES

Alongside public realm improvements delivered through development, a series of coordinated initiatives are underway across Fleet Street Quarter to enhance the quality, accessibility, and experience of its streets and spaces. Guided by the Era of Change strategy, these initiatives provide a clear framework for transformation, improving connectivity, public realm quality, biodiversity, and activity across the Quarter, while supporting a more pedestrian-focused and legible environment.

Current initiatives include:

- Transforming Fleet Street
- the Courts and Lanes programme
- Holborn Viaduct improvements
- Temple Avenue improvements
- New pedestrian crossing at Ludgate Hill
- enhancements to Ludgate Broadway and St Andrew's Hill.

TRANSFORMING FLEET STREET

Backed by a £9m commitment from the City of London, the Transforming Fleet Street initiative seeks to improve pedestrian experience and streetscape quality through two design options.

Option 1 restricts eastbound general traffic between Fetter Lane and Ludgate Circus to bus, cycle, taxi and access only, enabling significant footway widening and pedestrian priority. Option 2 retains existing traffic access, with more limited footway widening and streetscape upgrades.

Status: Concept design stage; public consultation on highway and public realm options expected Summer 2026.



Artist's impression of the proposed transformation for Fleet Street / City of London Corporation

FLEET STREET COURTS & LANES IMPROVEMENTS

The Courts and Lanes programme enhances FSQ's network of alleys and passages through greening, lighting, and public realm upgrades.

Interventions at Gough Square and Johnson's Court introduce planting and seating to create more legible, active, and characterful spaces.

Status: Ongoing, public consultation completed.



Proposed public realm improvement to Johnson's Court by BHSLA

HOLBORN VIADUCT LIGHTING

The Holborn Viaduct initiative focuses on a key gateway into the Quarter, with proposals centred on improving safety, lighting, and the overall pedestrian experience, particularly during evening hours. The scheme seeks to transform what is currently a vehicle-dominated and under-performing space into a more welcoming and legible arrival point, enhancing connectivity between key destinations and encouraging greater footfall beyond core working hours.

Status: Detailed design underway; planning to follow; delivery Autumn/Winter.



Artist impression of proposed improvements to Holborn Viaduct/ City of London Corporation

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

GROUNDED IN POLICY & STRATEGIES

The transformation of the Fleet Street Quarter is underpinned by a strong and aligned policy framework at both the City-wide and area-specific level. The emerging City of London Corporation City Plan 2040 and the Fleet Street Area Healthy Streets Plan together establish a clear direction: repositioning Fleet Street from a vehicle-dominated corridor into a people-focused, high-quality urban environment.

City Plan 2040: A Changing Role for Fleet Street

The City Plan 2040 identifies Fleet Street and Ludgate as a Key Area of Change, recognising its strategic role as both a historic spine and a future growth corridor. Policy direction emphasises:

- **Reinforce Fleet Street as a central spine**, supporting a broader mix of uses and extended activity
- **Transform Ludgate Circus from a traffic node into a civic gateway**
- **Prioritise pedestrian movement and public life,** addressing congestion, air quality, and noise
- **Unlock greening and public realm improvements**, while respecting heritage and key views
- **Enhance the setting of St Paul's Cathedral**, improving both everyday and ceremonial experience
- **Leverage development and BID coordination** to deliver a coherent, area-wide vision

Critically, the Plan reframes streets not only as movement corridors but as places in their own right, requiring a better balance between transport function and public life. It explicitly promotes the delivery of area-based Healthy Streets Plans as the mechanism to achieve this shift.

London City Plan 2040



Healthy Streets Plan: **From Movement Corridor to Place**

The Fleet Street Area Healthy Streets Plan translates strategic policy into a spatial and delivery-focused framework. It adopts the Mayor of London's Healthy Streets Approach, which prioritises walking, cycling, and public life over vehicular dominance.

The Healthy Streets Plan provides a clear delivery framework for the Fleet Street Quarter, establishing:

- A shift from **vehicle-dominated streets to people-first environments**
- A **network-based approach**, linking neighbourhoods and spaces
- A focus on **incremental, deliverable interventions** aligned with development
- A strong emphasis on public realm quality, **greening**, and **activation**

The Plan sets out a coordinated programme of interventions, including public realm enhancements, traffic management changes, and greening, aimed at transforming Fleet Street into a more welcoming and vibrant destination. It also aligns closely with broader City initiatives such as the Climate Action Strategy and the ambition to create a more active, 7-day City.

Fleet Street Healthy Street Plan



ECONOMIC TRAJECTORY

PUBLIC REALM AS ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

From Workplace District to Urban Experience

Fleet Street Quarter is one of the most economically productive areas in London, supporting over 100,000 jobs and generating £14.7bn in GVA. However, its public realm remains largely configured around a weekday, office-led economy.

Reading the Gaps: Where Public Realm Falls Short

1. Temporal Imbalance
Despite strong employment growth, activity drops significantly outside working hours. The environment lacks:

- Evening identity
- Weekend programming
- Reasons to linger beyond work

Footfall patterns reveal a clear imbalance:

- Peak activity between 9am–6pm (61%)
- Weekend footfall 42% lower than weekdays
- Yet dwell time is increasing, especially on weekends (+43–57%)

This signals a critical shift:
FSQ is no longer just a place people pass through - it is becoming a place people stay.

This reflects a functional but not experiential public realm.

3. Movement vs. Place
Transport connectivity is strong (especially around Farringdon), yet:

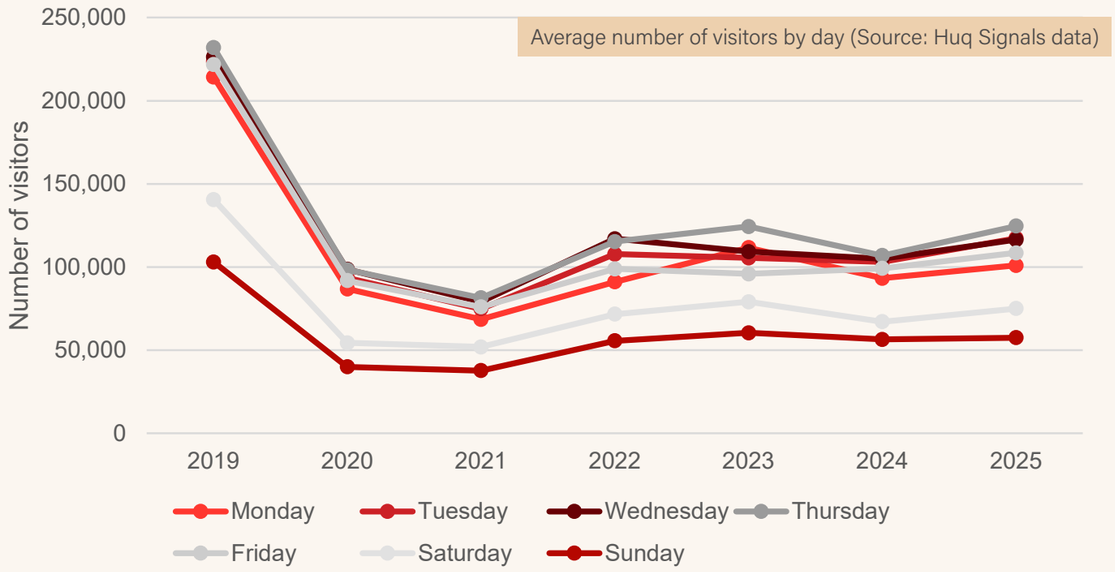
- Streets prioritise movement over pause
- Limited high-quality dwell spaces
- Weak spatial links between key destinations

2. Under-performing Visitor Economy

- 98% of visitors are domestic
- Hospitality and food sectors have declined
- Limited cultural visibility despite strong demand

4. Health & Wellbeing Deficit
Rising health deprivation highlights a gap in:

- Green infrastructure
- Active design
- Restorative urban environments



Opportunities: Public Realm as a Catalyst

1. Extending the Day

Design can rebalance temporal use by:

- Introducing programmable spaces for events and markets
- Enhancing lighting, safety, and night-time identity
- Supporting a cultural and leisure offer beyond office hours

→ Outcome: Transition to a true 7-day economy

2. Designing for Dwell Time

With people already staying longer, the focus shifts to quality of stay:

- Comfortable seating and social spaces
- Weather-protected environments
- Spill-out space for hospitality

→ Outcome: Increased spend, stronger local economy

3. Supporting Emerging Sectors

FSQ's growth in AI, fintech, and innovation sectors requires:

- Informal meeting spaces
- High-quality public environments for collaboration
- A public realm that reflects a forward-looking identity

→ Outcome: Reinforces FSQ as an innovation district

4. Linking Movement to Experience

With major transport nodes nearby, public realm should:

- Capture and retain footfall
- Create legible, attractive pedestrian routes
- Connect key anchors (stations, workplaces, cultural sites)

→ Outcome: Turn transit flows into local activity

5. Healthier Urban Environments

Public realm can directly address wellbeing by:

- Integrating green corridors and planting
- Encouraging walking and cycling
- Providing quieter, restorative spaces

→ Outcome: Supports both workers and residents

PUBLIC REALM AS THE MISSING LAYER

FSQ's economic strength is clear; but its public life is under-realised. Strategic moves for the Fleet Street Quarter public realm focus on:

- Creating a connected network of destinations that links streets, squares, and hidden courtyards into a cohesive experience.
- Activating the ground plane through active frontages, cultural programming, and flexible uses will bring vitality to the area.
- While designing spaces for flexibility ensures they can adapt seamlessly across day and night, weekdays and weekends, and between work and leisure.
- Embedding identity through design will be key - drawing on FSQ's heritage while embracing emerging technology sectors, and expressing this through materials, public art, and cultural storytelling.

02

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION

SPATIAL PERCEPTION

STAKEHOLDER & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

2023 CONSULTATION

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken in 2023, involving a range of local stakeholders including the City of London, Transport for London, local institutions, landowners and developers. This was supported by on-street and online public consultation, carried out simultaneously to understand perceptions of Fleet Street Quarter, including its strengths, challenges, and future ambitions.

CHALLENGES

LIMITED ACTIVATION



Low provision of retail, F&B and cultural uses that create activation and vibrancy.

INSUFFICIENT GREENING



Minimal greening and biodiversity limiting pedestrian comfort and environmental quality.

POOR STREETSCAPE DESIGN



Limited wayfinding and street furniture hindering legibility and pedestrian experience

.

FRAGMENTED IDENTITY



A lack of coherence weakens sense of place.

OPPORTUNITIES & ASPIRATIONS

CONNECTED, PEDESTRIAN-FIRST NETWORK



Strengthen walkability and connect streets, courts and lanes into a cohesive public realm network.

DISTINCTIVE PLACE IDENTITY



Blend heritage and future uses to create a strong, recognisable character.

VIBRANT MIXED-USE DESTINATION



Support activity beyond the working day to create a 24/7 commercial and cultural hub.

SUSTAINABLE AND COLLABORATIVE FUTURE



Deliver greener, high-quality public realm through coordinated, forward-looking approaches.

2025 PRIORITISATION

Findings from stakeholder and public engagement directly informed the Era of Change public realm strategy. A further round of stakeholder engagement in 2025 was undertaken to refine and prioritise a total of eleven public realm initiatives. FSQ additionally undertook a Perception Analysis, which identified the following priorities, the top three of which form the focus area for this report.

- Seating and greening across the FSQ area
- Ludgate Circus
- Chancery Lane
- Holborn Circus
- St Bride's Passage

03 FOCUS AREAS

INTRODUCTION

As the Fleet Street Quarter looks ahead to its next phase, this chapter sets out the key focus areas that will guide the evolution of its public realm. Building on the momentum of recent initiatives; including the transformation of Fleet Street, the activation of courts and lanes, and enhancements at Holborn Viaduct; these priorities respond to both emerging opportunities and ongoing challenges within the Quarter. They reflect a shift towards a more people-centred, inclusive, and experience-led environment that supports a broader mix of uses throughout the day and into the evening.

The focus areas identified;
1. Site-wide greening and seating,
2. Ludgate Circus,
3. Chancery Lane,

represent locations and themes where targeted interventions can deliver the greatest impact.

Together, they aim to strengthen connectivity, improve environmental quality, and create a network of distinctive, high-quality spaces. This chapter outlines how each area can contribute to a more cohesive and resilient public realm, supporting the Quarter's long-term vision as a vibrant, accessible, and characterful part of the City.

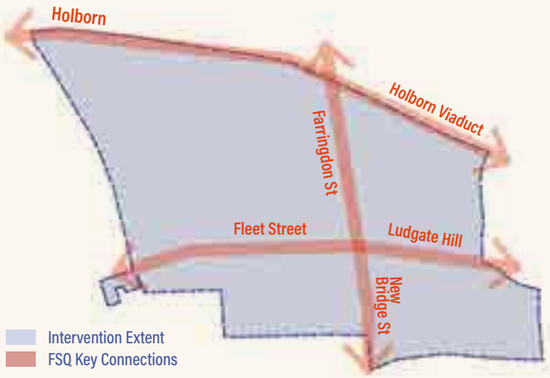
This chapter sets out the priority focus areas that will shape the next phase of public realm improvements across the Fleet Street Quarter. It identifies where targeted investment and design intervention can deliver the greatest impact, building on existing projects while responding to current gaps in connectivity, quality, and activation. For each focus area, the chapter outlines key challenges, opportunities, and a clear direction for change; establishing a framework to guide future design, stakeholder engagement, and delivery.

In doing so, it defines how these areas can contribute to a more cohesive and people-focused network of streets and spaces. It also sets out principles to enhance greening, improve pedestrian experience, support activity, and reinforce local identity, ensuring that individual interventions align with a wider, coordinated vision for the Quarter.



SEATING & GREENING

OVERVIEW



Public realm across Fleet Street Quarter is varied in quality, with a predominance of hardscape and limited greening, seating, and activation across many streets and spaces. While the Quarter contains a rich network of routes, squares, and historic lanes, these do not consistently function as high-quality, people-focused environments.

That said, a number of public realm initiatives are underway, led by the City of London, the Fleet Street Quarter BID, and recent or consented developments. These are beginning to enhance streets and spaces across the Quarter, building momentum for wider change. Considering this alongside the constraints identified, there is a clear opportunity to adopt a layered, site-wide approach to public realm.

At its core, this initiative establishes a consistent greening and seating framework across the Quarter, complemented by targeted, site-specific interventions based on the function of different public realm types. This includes gateways that enhance arrival and identity; green connections that strengthen wayfinding and pedestrian experience; plazas that support dwell, flexibility, and seasonal activation; pocket spaces that provide moments of respite; and lanes and courts that integrate historic storytelling and cultural identity.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Public realm across FSQ remains disjointed, with limited greening and activation, resulting in poor pedestrian and user experiences



Key gateway public realm such as Blackfriars lack activation, identity, and opportunities to dwell



Key connections like Fetter Lane continue to prioritise vehicles



Existing squares like Fleet Place lack seating, greening, and programming to support relaxation and activity



Courts, lanes and alleyways of historic significance are underutilised and can feel unsafe



Poor level change treatment limits accessibility and integration with Neighbouring historic landmarks like St Bride's Church



Recent programmes such as Transforming Fleet Street are beginning to enhance the public realm but remain piecemeal



Recently completed and consented schemes are improving streetscape quality and present an opportunity for a coordinated, site-wide strategy

SEATING & GREENING

CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Fleet Street and the surrounding network of streets form a key corridor within the City connecting major destinations. Despite this strategic role and the presence of important historic and civic assets, the public realm currently offers limited opportunities for seating, greening, and informal use. As a result, the area functions primarily as a movement corridor rather than a comfortable and inviting place to spend time.

This page sets out a clear assessment of the existing constraints to seating and greening, alongside a series of targeted opportunities to introduce a more people-focused, climate-responsive, and place-led public realm. The aim is to create a greener, more sociable street environment that supports both movement and dwell, while reinforcing the identity of this historic part of the City.

Understanding the Existing Conditions

The current public realm is heavily dominated by hard surfaces, with limited tree canopy, planting, or integrated seating. Key arrival points such as Blackfriars, Chancery Lane, and Ludgate Circus lack a strong sense of welcome, with minimal greening or places to pause.

Along Fleet Street and other streets, planting is fragmented and inconsistent, resulting in weak green connections and limited visual cohesion. Opportunities for new tree planting are further constrained in some locations by the presence of extensive underground utilities and infrastructure, limiting the availability of suitable planting zones and reducing the potential for continuous canopy cover.

Spaces that could support activity and dwell, such as are constrained by a lack of greenery and seating, reducing their effectiveness as social or civic spaces. Smaller streets and yards, including Whitefriars Street, Playhouse Yard, and St Andrew's Hill, are often underutilised, with inactive frontages and limited public realm activation.

Level changes, narrow footways, and poorly lit or overlooked routes further reduce accessibility and comfort. In addition, historic assets and passages are not fully integrated into the public realm, missing opportunities to create distinctive, character-rich environments that encourage people to stop and engage with the area.

Unlocking Opportunities

There is a strong opportunity to rebalance the public realm by introducing a coordinated network of greening and seating interventions. Enhancing arrival spaces at key junctions with planting and high-quality seating can create a clearer sense of place and improve first impressions.

Strengthening green connections through continuous planting, street trees, and integrated seating can create a more legible and comfortable pedestrian experience. Smaller spaces and courtscan be activated with greening, flexible seating, and storytelling elements to provide moments of respite and local character.

Upgrading lanes with improved lighting, planting, and cultural activation can increase their visibility, safety, and use. Introducing terraces, level changes, and accessible seating can also help to overcome physical constraints while enhancing visual interest and inclusivity.

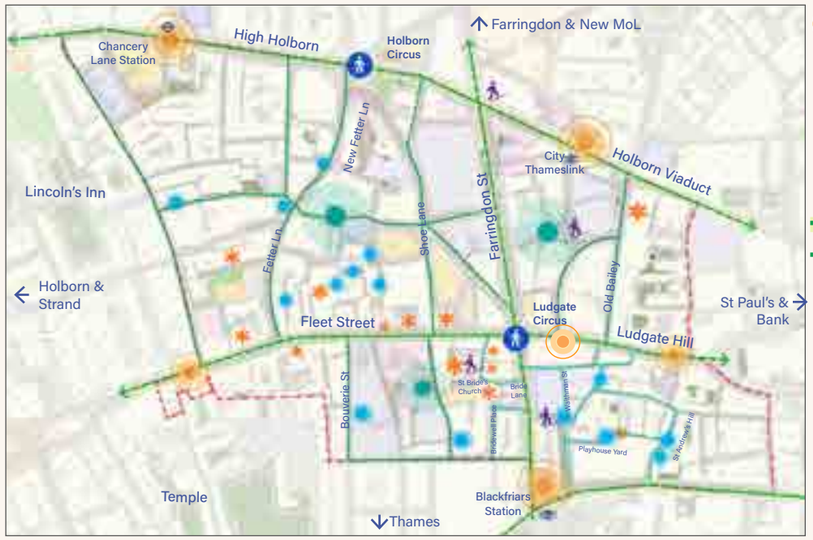
Together, these interventions can transform the area into a greener, more inviting, and more resilient urban environment; one that supports everyday use, encourages people to linger, and better reflects the historic significance and civic role of Fleet Street and its surrounding streets.

KEY CONSTRAINTS



- Arrival spaces at lack identity, greening, and seating to create a strong sense of entry
- Junction public realm is dominated by vehicular movement, creating fragmented, low-quality
- Routes lack continuous planting and clear green connections between key destinations
- Smaller spaces at areas like Waithman Street, Playhouse Yard etc. are fragmented and lack clear function or activation
- Lanes are underutilised, with limited lighting and pedestrian activity
- Level changes and barriers reduce accessibility and weaken connections
- Historic assets and associated passages are not clearly revealed or integrated into the public realm

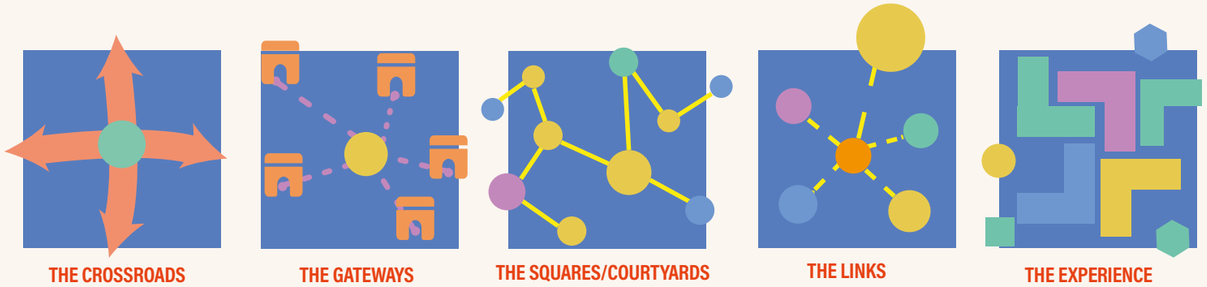
KEY OPPORTUNITIES



- Rebalance arrival spaces to prioritise pedestrians and introduce planting and dwell space
- Create continuous green connections through tree planting, seating and wayfinding
- Enhance squares and adjacent lanes with greening, seating, flexible programming, and historic storytelling to support activation and longer dwell
- Upgrade lanes with improved lighting, historic and cultural activation to increase use and legibility
- Use level changes to introduce terraces, seating and planting, alongside wayfinding to improve accessibility and visual permeability

SEATING & GREENING

2023 PROPOSAL



The 2023 Era of Change report by Gensler established a site-wide framework for public realm across Fleet Street Quarter, structured around five key typologies based on function: crossroads, gateways, squares and courtyards, links, and experience.

For each typology, the report set out targeted interventions responding to specific spatial conditions. Gateway locations, such as Blackfriars, focused on strengthening arrival through improved materiality, planting, seating, lighting, and integrated art. At key crossroads, the Fleet Street transport review explored a series of options to rebalance movement along the primary east–west corridor, including footway widening, reduced vehicular dominance, and improved pedestrian and cycle provision.





Proposed Option 1



Links, squares, and courtyards were addressed through a series of quadrant-based interventions, targeting clusters of streets and spaces to improve connectivity, dwell, and activation. These included upgrading routes through greening, seating, and wayfinding, alongside enhancing squares and courts as places for pause, flexibility, and activity. Interventions such as Pilgrim Street, Waithman Street and Apothecary Street demonstrate this approach, identifying opportunities for pocket parks, improved connections, and integrated cultural and historic activation, with clear consideration of phasing, stakeholders, and delivery complexity.

PUBLIC REALM INITIATIVES & EMERGING DEVELOPMENTS

Since the 2023 Era of Change proposals, a number of public realm initiatives have progressed across Fleet Street Quarter, including Transforming Fleet Street and the Courts and Lanes programme, which are beginning to enhance key routes and the finer-grain network of alleys and passages.

In parallel, emerging and recently completed developments are incrementally reshaping the public realm. Key examples include Salisbury Square, 8–12 New Street, 3–4 Holborn Circus, 120 Fleet Street, and St Bride's House, contributing to improvements across gateways, connections, squares, and lanes.

These changes highlight the need for a coordinated, site-wide approach, ensuring emerging interventions are aligned and integrated as part of a coherent public realm strategy for the Quarter.





SEATING & GREENING

EMERGING IMPROVEMENTS

Emerging development proposals and public realm initiatives across the Fleet Street Quarter are collectively strengthening provision of seating and greening, supporting a more attractive, comfortable, and climate-responsive environment. Schemes within the pipeline are introducing integrated planting, tree provision, and seating at ground level, while wider initiatives such as the Transforming Fleet Street programme and targeted upgrades to courts and lanes, including Gough Square and Johnstons Court, are embedding a more consistent and connected network of green, well-seated spaces that enhance dwell time, pedestrian experience, and overall place quality.

- Emerging Seating & Greening Improvements from Planning Pipeline
- Emerging Greening Improvements from Planning Pipeline
- Current Public Realm Improvement (inc. Seating & Greening) Initiative
- Development Recently Completed
- Development Under Construction
- Recently Consented Development
- Emerging/ Recently Consented Public Realm
- Major Development/ Public Realm Initiative Neighbouring FSQ



Emerging Seating & Greening Initiatives in FSQ

326-330 HIGH HOLBORN



NEW STREET SQUARE



HILL HOUSE



1 FLEET PLACE



120 FLEET STREET



SALISBURY SQUARE





ST BRIDE'S HOUSE



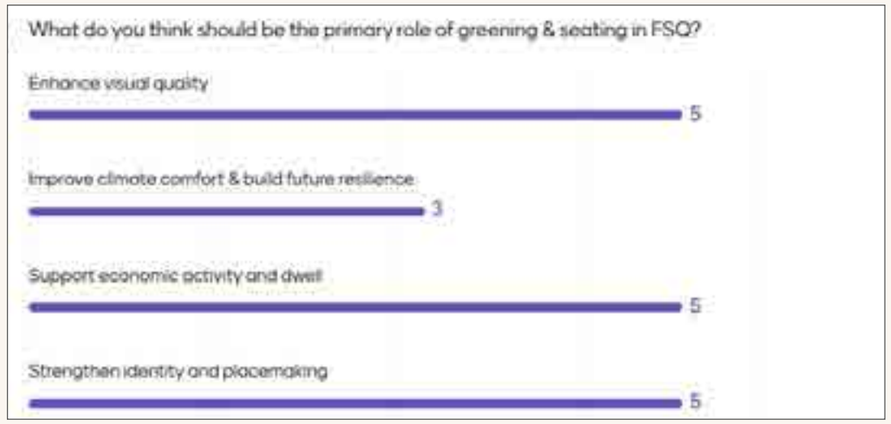


SEATING & GREENING

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

An in-person and digital engagement process was undertaken across the Fleet Street Quarter to gather insights on how seating and greening can enhance the public realm. Using interactive tools and site-based discussions, stakeholders shared views on current challenges, desired character, and opportunities for intervention.

This summary captures a blend of quantitative feedback and qualitative insights. Together, these provide a clear, stakeholder-led vision for how seating and greening can transform FSQ into a more welcoming, vibrant, and resilient urban environment.



A CLEAR DIRECTION: FROM TRANSIT SPACES TO PLACES TO STAY

The consultation reveals a consistent shift in how stakeholders view the role of streets and spaces within FSQ. The dominant preference is for **well-designed, green, and sociable environments** that encourage people to pause and spend time, rather than simply move through. Seating and greening are not seen as purely aesthetic or environmental interventions. Instead, stakeholders view them as multi-functional assets that:

- **Elevate the look and feel of the area**
- **Encourage people to stay, spend time, and support local businesses**
- **Contribute to a distinct identity and sense of place**
- **Deliver long-term environmental benefits**



Desired Identity:
How FSQ Should Feel

Stakeholder input points to a strong emotional and experiential brief. The most prominent themes—*colorful, quality, greener, and calm*—define a clear ambition for a people-focused and inclusive public realm.

Core Themes

Vibrant & Sociable
Seating and green spaces are seen as enablers of activity and interaction. There is a desire for spaces that feel lively and animated, supporting everything from informal meetings to moments of pause, and extending activity beyond core working hours.

Visually Exciting
Seating and greening should transform the appearance of FSQ, softening the dominance of hard materials and creating a more attractive, human-scale environment that invites people to spend time in the area.

Attracting Economy
Well-designed places to sit and gather can increase dwell time, encouraging footfall, informal meetings, and greater use of local businesses and amenities.

Strengthening Identity
Greening and seating should contribute to a distinct and recognisable character for FSQ, reinforcing its heritage while creating memorable places that people associate with the area.

Climate Comfort
A slightly lower, but still significant, emphasis was placed on improving climate comfort and building future resilience. Embed climate-responsive design, while ensuring it supports everyday usability.

SEATING & GREENING

PROPOSAL

A layered approach has been developed to identify seating and greening priorities across the Fleet Street Quarter, recognising that a significant number of public realm initiatives are already emerging across the area. Rather than proposing isolated interventions, the strategy seeks to build upon existing momentum and establish a more cohesive and connected public realm network across the Quarter.

1. Collating the Current Momentum

The first layer collates current and emerging initiatives, including strategic corridor improvements, civic spaces, pocket spaces, and heritage-led upgrades within courts and lanes. Together, these interventions establish a growing foundation for enhanced pedestrian experience, greening, and public life across the Quarter, while also identifying areas where investment and public realm improvements are already being concentrated.

2. Strengthening the Public Realm Network

Building on this, the second layer identifies strategic opportunities to strengthen the wider network through targeted seating, greening, and public realm enhancements. Responding to the differing function, character, and spatial conditions of the Quarter's public spaces; from civic corridors and gateway spaces to quieter courts and heritage settings; the approach also seeks to transform underused residual areas into pocket spaces that support increased dwell time, pedestrian comfort, and everyday public life through integrated planting, seating, and activation.

Together with emerging and proposed initiatives, these interventions are stitched into a connected framework of green links across the Fleet Street Quarter. Recognising the physical constraints of the City environment, including narrow footways and underground infrastructure, the strategy prioritises lightweight and distributed greening approaches rather than continuous large-scale planting. Through coordinated greening, selective seating, and improved pedestrian comfort along key routes and connections, the approach establishes a more legible, attractive, and cohesive public realm experience across the Quarter.



Current Momentum

- Emerging Development
- Emerging/ Improved Public Realm

Proposed Greening/Seating locations

- Proposed public realm initiatives
- Proposed connections

SEATING & GREENING

PROPOSAL & PRIORITY

01 **Furnival Street**: Enhance Furnival Street as a high-quality arrival route to the new London Tunnels entrance, introducing widened pavements, appropriate planting and subtle lighting to improve legibility, pedestrian comfort, and sense of arrival within the constrained street environment.

02 **Fetter Lane**: Transform the Fetter Lane entrance into a pocket park offering green respite and improved pedestrian comfort, with enhanced crossing connections to Leather Lane and a calmer, more legible public realm experience at this key node.

03 **New Fetter Lane**: Enhance the public realm in front of the Sainsbury's building at the western corner of the New Fetter Lane entrance with increased planting and well-integrated seating, creating a more comfortable and welcoming pedestrian space that encourages pause and informal use, and strengthens this key connection towards the new Museum of London by improving overall pedestrian experience and legibility.

04 **Bride Lane**: Enhance Bride Lane by activating blank frontages and improving wayfinding to Bridewell Centre, Bride Court, and St Bride's Church, creating a more legible, accessible and culturally expressive public realm that strengthens pedestrian experience and celebrates the area's heritage.

05 **Ludgate Circus**: Improve Ludgate Circus by enhancing crossing conditions and introducing additional planting to strengthen pedestrian comfort and greening, with further detailed interventions set out in the dedicated Ludgate Circus chapter.

06 **Thameslink Threshold**: Enhance the public realm opposite the Thameslink Station entrance with increased planting, seating, and improved spatial legibility to create a clearer, more welcoming and comfortable arrival environment for passengers and pedestrians.

07 **Black Friars Ln**: Strengthen the Blackfriars Gateway public realm by introducing enhanced seating and greening to create a more welcoming, comfortable, and well-defined threshold to the Quarter.

08 **Black Friars Ln**: Improve Black Friars Ln by activating the blank wall and enhancing pedestrian legibility towards Playhouse Yard, reinforcing its identity as a historic Shakespearean landmark through art, improved wayfinding, and an engaging public realm experience.

09 **Playhouse Yard**: Transform the Fetter Lane entrance into a pocket park offering green respite and improved pedestrian comfort, with enhanced crossing connections to Leather Lane and a calmer, more legible public realm experience at this key node.

10 **Chancery Lane**: Improve the public realm opposite the Carey Street entrance on Chancery Lane by removing the existing pedestrian refuge bollard to enable new planting and soften the street edge, enhancing pedestrian comfort and greening, with further detail set out in the Chancery Lane chapter.

11 **Quality Court**: Enhance Quality Court off Chancery Lane with additional seating and greening to create a more welcoming, comfortable, and human-scaled pocket space that supports pause and local use, with further detail set out in the Chancery Lane chapter.

12 **Chancery Lane**: Enhance Chancery Lane by reallocating a parking space to introduce a rain garden, delivering sustainable drainage, increased greening, and an improved pedestrian environment that softens the street edge and enhances resilience, with further detail set out in the Chancery Lane chapter.



Playhouse Yard and **Fetter Lane** have been identified as priority locations due to their strong potential to deliver both cultural and spatial impact. Playhouse Yard presents a unique opportunity to capitalise on its Shakespearean heritage, with the nearby historic association offering a compelling basis to reinforce identity, interpretation, and public realm character in a way that celebrates the area's literary significance.

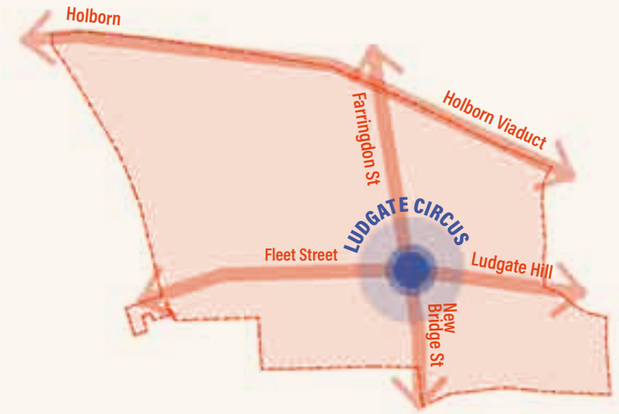
In contrast, Fetter Lane offers a highly strategic intervention point within an underutilised corridor, where the introduction of a pocket park would deliver maximum impact in terms of comfort, greening, and legibility. Together, these sites combine cultural resonance and everyday utility, enabling both a distinctive sense of place and a meaningful improvement to pedestrian experience across a key movement route.

SEATING & GREENING

PROPOSAL VISUALISATION

LUDGATE CIRCUS

EXISTING CONDITION



Ludgate Circus sits at a critical intersection in the east of Fleet Street Quarter, forming a key threshold between St Paul's Cathedral, Fleet Street, Blackfriars and the Thames. Historically a point of convergence at the western edge of the City, it continues to play an important strategic role today, connecting major cultural, commercial and transport destinations, including proximity to City Thameslink and Blackfriars stations.

Despite this, Ludgate Circus functions primarily as a traffic-dominated gyratory, with multiple lanes, turning movements prioritising vehicular flow. Pedestrian routes are fragmented and indirect, with crossings misaligned to desire lines. Level changes and railings further disconnect frontages from the street, reducing accessibility and visual permeability. Ground floor frontages are not fully optimised, with limited activation and weak integration with the street. The public realm is characterised by extensive hardscape, with limited greening, seating or shelter, resulting in a poor-quality environment with little opportunity for dwell.

At the same time, its location at the meeting point of key routes and destinations positions Ludgate Circus as a significant opportunity within the wider Fleet Street Quarter. Emerging change is already evident, including consented retail activation such as a new Farmer J unit at the south-eastern corner and the consented hotel conversion at neighbouring 1 Fleet Street, introducing enhanced frontage and increased activity. Building on this momentum, there is clear potential to rebalance movement in favour of pedestrians, strengthen pedestrian desire lines, and unify the ground plane to improve physical and visual connectivity and legibility. Activating frontages, alongside the introduction of softer materials, planting, seating, and lighting, should be prioritised to enhance comfort, biodiversity, and placemaking.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Ludgate Circus remains a strategically important gateway to St Paul's, Fleet Street, the Thames and the wider City



Yet the junction is heavily dominated by traffic, with high vehicle volumes and multiple turning movements prioritising cars over pedestrians.



Pedestrian crossings are indirect and poorly aligned, resulting in a fragmented journey across the junction.



Frontages are difficult to access and illegible due to existing railings and level changes.



High vacancy rates reduce vibrancy of the circus and limit interaction with the public realm.



The public realm is dominated by hard surfacing, with limited greenery or seating, creating a harsh and transient environment with little opportunity to dwell.

LUDGATE CIRCUS

CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Ludgate Circus is a critical junction at the heart of the City, where multiple routes, land uses, and movement patterns converge. Despite its strategic importance and proximity to key destinations, the space is currently dominated by vehicular movement, resulting in a fragmented and often confusing pedestrian experience.

This page sets out a clear assessment of the site's existing constraints alongside a series of targeted opportunities to rebalance the street environment. The aim is to transform Ludgate Circus into a more legible, accessible, and people-focused place that better supports its role as a gateway and civic space.

Understanding the Existing Conditions

The current layout prioritises traffic flow over pedestrian comfort and safety. Multiple crossing points lack clarity and coherence, creating indirect and sometimes illegible routes for people moving through the space. Changes in level, combined with inactive or underused frontages, further weaken the relationship between the street and surrounding buildings.

The public realm is dominated by hard surfaces, with limited planting, seating, or features that encourage people to dwell. This results in a space that functions primarily as a transit corridor rather than a destination in its own right. In addition, complex underground infrastructure constrains the ability to implement straightforward surface-level improvements.

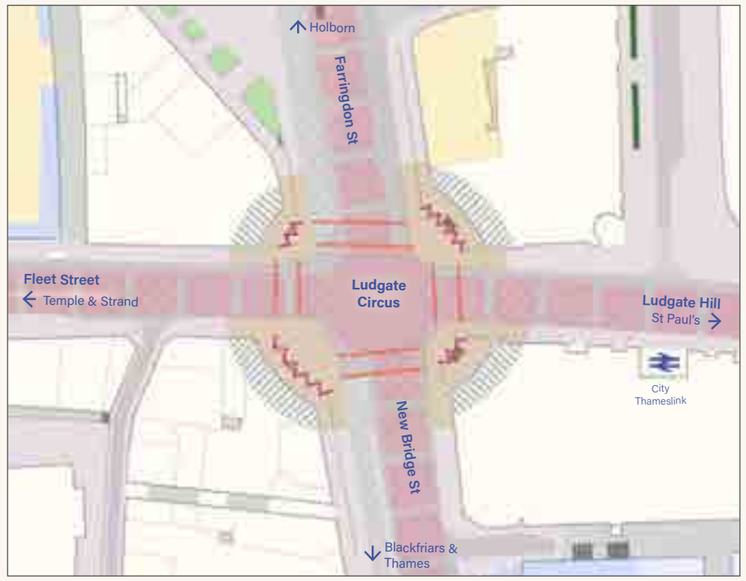
Unlocking Opportunities

Despite these challenges, Ludgate Circus presents significant potential for transformation. By reducing vehicular dominance and strengthening pedestrian priority, the junction can become more intuitive and safer to navigate. Enhancing crossing points and improving wayfinding can better connect surrounding destinations and reinforce the area's identity.

There is also an opportunity to activate ground floor frontages and introduce coordinated public realm improvements, including seating, planting, and lighting. These interventions would support longer dwell times, improve comfort, and contribute to a more vibrant street environment.

Together, these changes can reposition Ludgate Circus as a coherent, accessible, and welcoming urban space; one that balances movement with place and reflects its importance within the wider city context.

KEY CONSTRAINTS



- Dominance of heavy traffic prioritises vehicles and fragments pedestrian routes
- Indistinct crossings create fragmented and illegible pedestrian experience
- Existing railings and level change limits physical and visual accessibility of shop frontages
- Vacant ground floor units hinder street activation
- Dominance of hardscape and limited street furniture and planting create poor quality public realm and discourage dwell
- Complex ownership and underground infrastructure complicates future public realm improvement ambitions

KEY OPPORTUNITIES



- Reduce vehicular dominance
- Strengthen visual prominence of pedestrian crossings to improve legibility and reduce fragmentation
- Reinforce pedestrian desire lines to surrounding districts & landmarks through improved crossings, wayfinding, art
- Remove railings and alleviate level changes to reconnect frontage
- Strengthen frontage through coordinated shopfront design and temporary activation
- Introduce softer materials, seating, street furniture and art to increase dwell and placemaking
- Add trees and planting to improve comfort, biodiversity and microclimate

LUDGATE CIRCUS

2023 PROPOSAL

Gensler's *Era of Change* strategy previously set out a series of interventions to address key constraints at Ludgate Circus. These focused on improving pedestrian movement and crossings, reducing vehicular dominance, widening pavements, and introducing seating and greening. Proposals also included enhancing frontages, signage, and integrating lighting and cultural elements to strengthen identity and legibility as a gateway.

1. Inclusive pedestrian experience through widening pavement, tactile paving, reducing clutter etc.
2. Long-term option diagonal crossing with markings that put Ludgate Circus on the map
3. Allowing for bus, taxi, cycle and access only on Ludgate Hill, allowing for footway widening on all approaches
4. Providing stopping points, resting areas, and additional seating opportunities
5. Upgrading of shop frontages, with a unified design language around signage
6. Innovative sustainable measures of replacing railing with planter dividers
7. Identifying opportunities for street trees
8. Create Identity through Arts/ Culture initiative such as commissioning historic memorialisation of previous obelisks



Artist impression of Ludgate Circus improvements previously proposed by Gensler

The Era of Change transport review tested a series of options for Ludgate Circus, exploring how the junction could evolve from a traffic-dominated environment into a more pedestrian-friendly and legible civic space. Four options were developed, ranging from minimal intervention to transformational change.

1. WIDENED CROSSINGS

- Widened pedestrian crossings on key arms
- No change to signals or junction operation
- No impact on traffic capacity or journey times

2. ENHANCED CROSSINGS

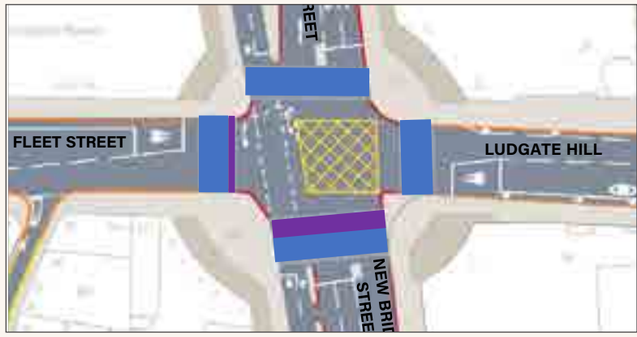
- Further crossing widening plus introduction of a diagonal crossing
- Improved pedestrian permeability and convenience
- Minor impact on traffic, including slight reductions in green time

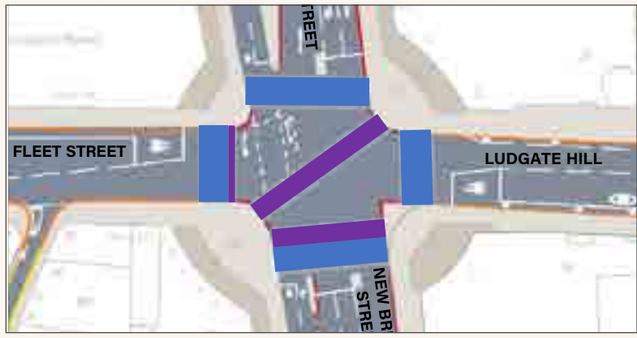
3. BALANCED REALLOCATION

- Single lane approach on all arms
- Significant footway widening and crossings on all sides, including diagonal
- Cycleway reconfiguration and introduction of cycle gates
- Notable impact on traffic capacity and bus journey times
- Requires substantial reduction in motor traffic to operate effectively

4. TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

- Full single-lane junction with extensive footway widening (over 900m²)
- Pedestrian priority on all arms with diagonal crossings
- Reconfigured cycle infrastructure
- Fundamental shift in junction function toward place over movement
- Significant impact on traffic capacity, requiring major traffic reduction and reassignment









LUDGATE CIRCUS

EMERGING IMPROVEMENTS

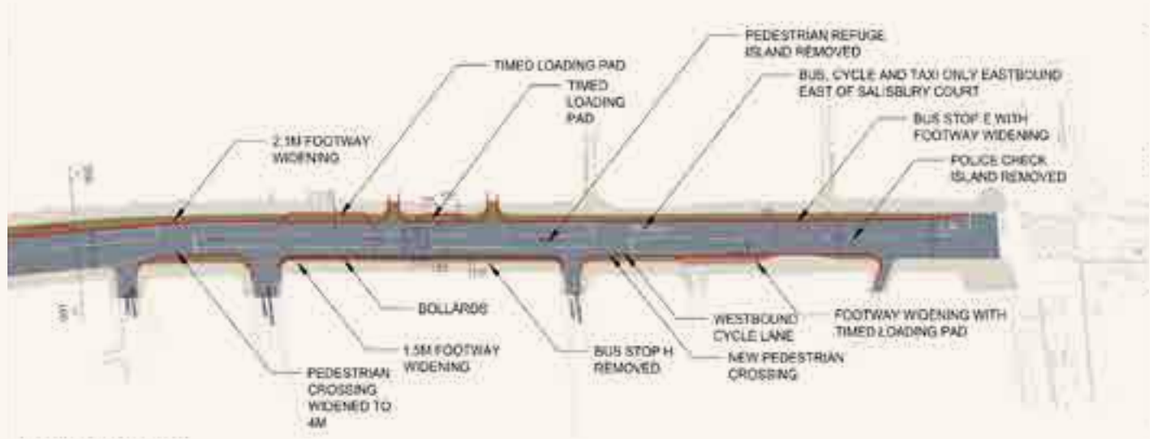
Emerging frontage and public realm improvements in and around Ludgate Circus are shifting the area toward a more active, pedestrian-focused environment. Along Fleet Street, the Transforming Fleet Street programme is driving coordinated upgrades, supported by building-level interventions such as ground floor enhancements at 1 Farringdon Street, alongside new active uses around the junction including the emerging Farmer J branch. Other measures, including early-stage pedestrian crossing improvements on Ludgate Hill will strengthen connections into and out of the junction, helping reposition Ludgate Circus as a more connected, people-oriented space.



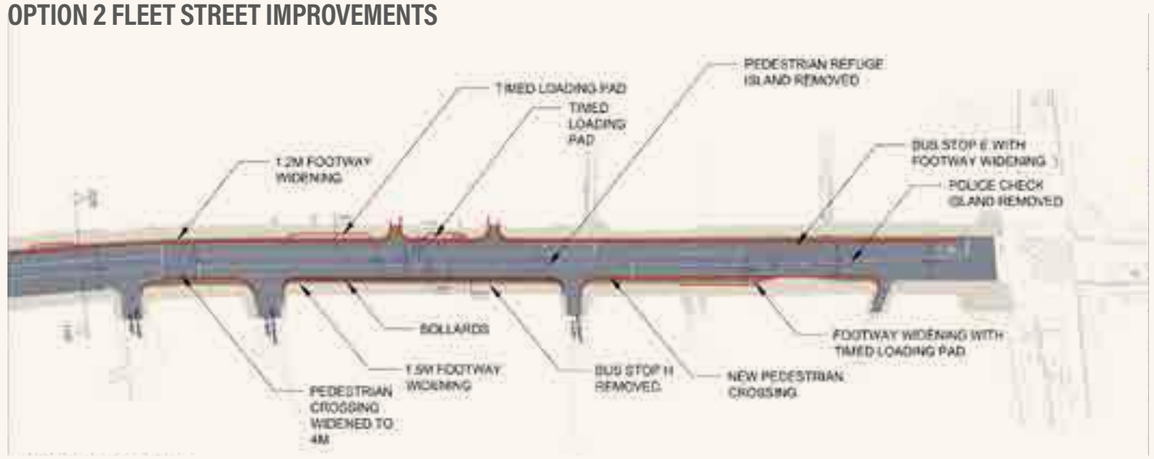
Emerging Public Realm Improvement Initiative
Early-Stage public Realm Improvement Initiative
Development Recently Completed
Development Under Construction
Recently Consented Development
Emerging/ Recently Consented Public Realm

Emerging Public Realm Improvements around Ludgate Circus

OPTION 1 FLEET STREET IMPROVEMENTS



OPTION 2 FLEET STREET IMPROVEMENTS



Under the Transforming Fleet Street programme, two principal options are being explored to reshape the western approach into Ludgate Circus.

Option 1, the most intensive, proposes significant reallocation of carriageway space to pedestrians, including substantial footway widening, new and improved pedestrian crossings, and the removal of existing features such as the police check island. Critically, it introduces traffic restrictions, limiting eastbound movement from Fetter Lane towards Ludgate Circus to buses, cycles, and taxis only. This reduces general traffic pressure at the junction, enabling safer, more direct pedestrian movement and creating opportunities for integrated seating, planting, and a higher-quality public realm along this key approach.

Option 2 takes a lighter-touch approach, retaining existing traffic movements but still delivering targeted public realm improvements. This includes selective footway widening, upgraded crossings, and general decluttering to improve pedestrian comfort and legibility.

LUDGATE CIRCUS

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As part of the Fleet Street Quarter public realm study, stakeholder engagement was undertaken with the City of London and Transport for London (TfL) to explore opportunities for the future of Ludgate Circus and the surrounding Farringdon Road corridor.

Discussions focused on the overall performance and experience of the junction, recognising Ludgate Circus as a critical movement node that has undergone recent upgrades, but still presents significant opportunities for improvement. While interventions to date —such as new pedestrian crossings, cycle infrastructure, and traffic signal changes— have enhanced safety and connectivity, stakeholders recognised a need to move beyond functionality toward a more balanced, place-led approach.

The engagement highlighted a key question:

HOW CAN LUDGATE CIRCUS EVOLVE FROM A TRAFFIC-DOMINATED INTERCHANGE INTO A MORE PEOPLE-FRIENDLY URBAN SPACE?

Rather than focusing solely on seating and greening, stakeholders emphasised a broader set of priorities:

- Improving the **pedestrian experience and spatial quality** of the junction
- Rationalising elements such as r**ailings, signage, and clutter**
- Addressing conflicts between **cyclists, pedestrians, and servicing activity**
- Enhancing the **setting of key arrival points**, particularly around the station



A phased approach is anticipated:

- Short-term: targeted, surface-level improvements (e.g. planting, decluttering, temporary uses)
- Long-term: more fundamental changes to the junction layout, including potential reconsideration of railings, spatial allocation, and integration with surrounding development

Key opportunity areas identified include:

- The potential reuse of disused infrastructure on Farringdon Road for greening or public realm activation
- Enhancements around the station entrance and forecourt, including future use of space currently occupied by temporary installations
- Waithman Street and adjacent routes, where public realm upgrades are already underway
- The interface between Cycleway 6 and pedestrian movement, where safety and comfort remain key concerns

Overall, stakeholders support a comprehensive upgrade of Ludgate Circus, where movement, safety, and place are considered together. The ambition is to transform the junction into a space that not only functions efficiently, but also contributes positively to the wider identity and experience of Fleet Street Quarter.

A COORDINATED PLACE

Ludgate Circus is identified within the City Plan 2040 as a priority area for public realm and junction improvements, including opportunities for increased seating, greening and enhanced pedestrian experience. Currently dominated by railings, fragmented crossings and hard infrastructure, the junction functions primarily as a traffic interchange despite its prominent position between Fleet Street, Blackfriars and St Paul's Cathedral. Introducing integrated planter-seating, rain gardens and widened pedestrian edges would help transform the space into a greener civic gateway while reducing visual clutter and improving comfort for pedestrians.

The proposal strongly aligns with City of London and Transport for London objectives around Healthy Streets, climate resilience and urban greening. Lightweight interventions would provide additional biodiversity, informal seating and sustainable drainage without requiring major reconstruction. By replacing defensive highway infrastructure with landscape-led public realm, the scheme supports wider ambitions to create more walkable, climate-adaptive and people-focused streets across the City.



LUDGATE CIRCUS

PROPOSAL

The proposals for Ludgate Circus adopt a phased approach to public realm enhancement focused on improving pedestrian connectivity, introducing targeted greening, and creating a more welcoming civic gateway into the Fleet Street Quarter. The strategy prioritises deliverable interventions that can incrementally improve the pedestrian experience while supporting wider ambitions associated with the Transforming Fleet Street programme.

Phase 1: Quick Wins & Tactical Enhancements
The initial phase focuses on low-cost, high-impact interventions that improve pedestrian experience and introduce early greening opportunities across the junction environment. Key interventions include:

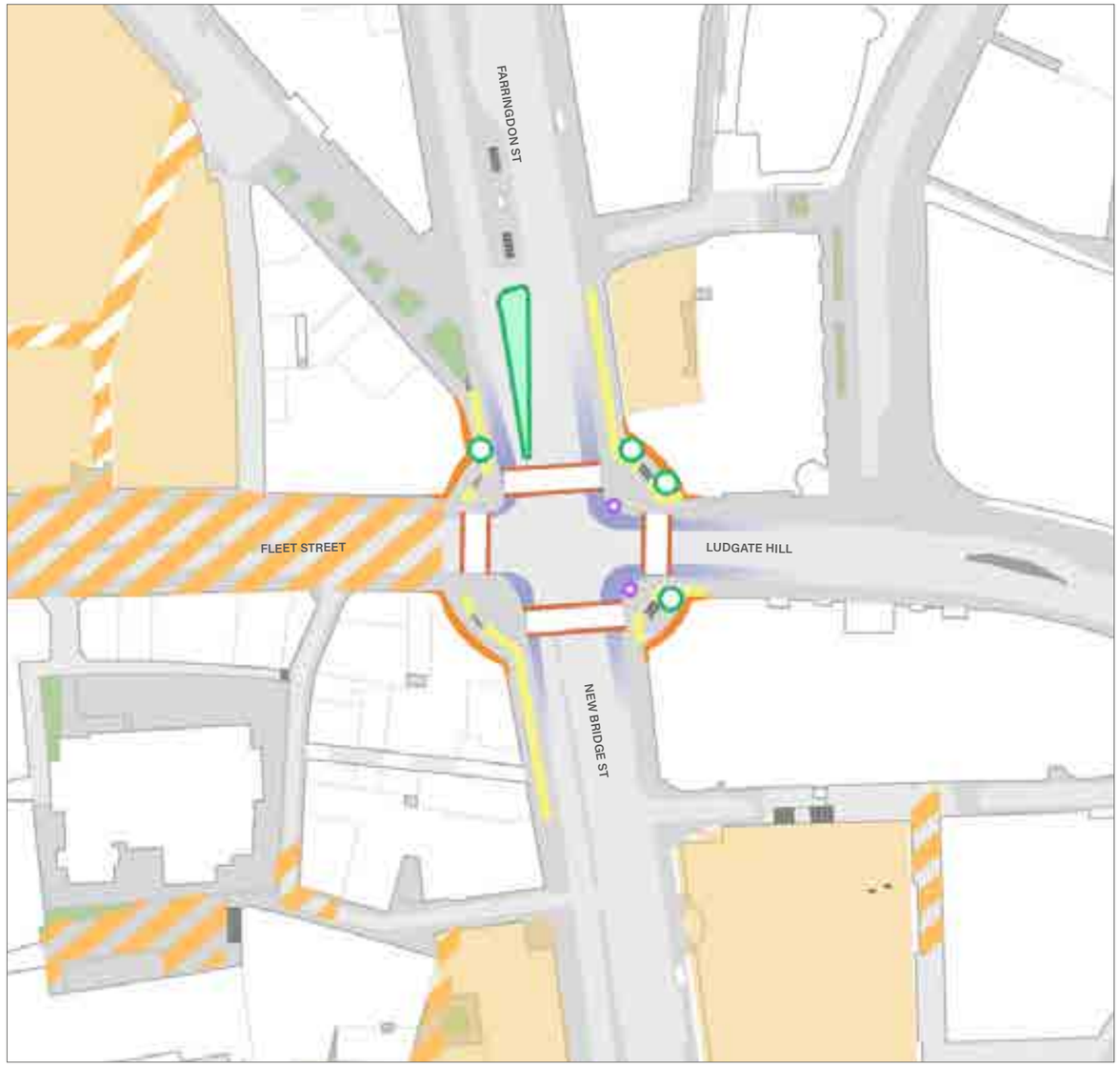
- Planters integrated with existing railings, where appropriate
- Curated shop frontages and awnings

Phase 2: Permanent Public Realm Enhancements
The second phase introduces more permanent streetscape improvements aimed at softening the junction environment and strengthening the quality of the public realm. Key interventions include:

- Partial rationalisation of railings and replacement of railings with planter edges, low retaining walls, and seating ledges
- Widening of crossing & road infrastructure move

Phase 3: Long-Term Streetscape Improvements
The final phase focuses on larger-scale landscape and public realm interventions that further reinforce Ludgate Circus as a greener and more pedestrian-focused gateway space. Key interventions include:

- Targeted pavement widening opportunities around the junction
- Opportunity to introduce creating wayfinding & sculptural marker
- Conversion of former underground toilets into rain gardens/SuDS



Current Momentum

- Emerging Development
- Emerging/ Improved Public Realm

Phase 1 Interventions

- Phase 1 planters
- Shop front strategy

Phase 2 Interventions

- Phase 2 planters & railings improvement
- Widening of crossing

Phase 3 Interventions

- Pavement widening opportunity
- Proposal of Rain Garden
- Opportunity for creative wayfinding & marker

LUDGATE CIRCUS

CASE STUDIES

Marylebone Flyover Rain Gardens: Reimagining disused underground toilets as climate infrastructure

At the heart of the City of London, the disused public toilets beneath Ludgate Circus present an opportunity to transform redundant infrastructure into a resilient piece of public realm. Inspired by the success of the **Marylebone Flyover SuDS** scheme delivered by Transport for London, the proposal would convert the vacant subterranean spaces into a series of rain gardens and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), helping manage stormwater while improving biodiversity and the pedestrian experience.

The concept follows the same principles used at the Marylebone Flyover, where former subway ramps and underpasses were transformed into porous rain gardens capable of capturing runoff from over 3,500m^2 of surrounding highway surface. The project demonstrated how obsolete transport infrastructure can be repurposed to reduce flood risk, slow water entering combined sewers, and support climate adaptation in dense urban areas.

The scheme would deliver multiple benefits:

- Reduction in surface water flooding during extreme rainfall events
- Increased biodiversity and urban greening in a highly constrained city-centre location
- Improved water quality through natural filtration before discharge
- Activation of redundant infrastructure without major excavation
- Enhanced public realm and climate resilience at a key gateway into the City



Marylebone Flyover SuDS

Hatton Garden Greening Programme: Reimagining highway infrastructure through light-touch urban interventions

At the heart of the City of London, Ludgate Circus remains dominated by guard railings, hard paving and fragmented pedestrian space despite occupying one of the capital's most important civic gateways between Fleet Street, St Paul's Cathedral and Blackfriars. Inspired by the Hatton Garden Greening Programme, the proposal would introduce a series of integrated planter-seating interventions to soften the junction, improve pedestrian experience and transform the character of the streetscape through light-touch public realm improvements.

The concept follows similar principles to the Hatton Garden scheme, where planting and integrated landscape infrastructure were used to humanise a dense commercial environment with limited available public space. Rather than relying on major reconstruction, the project demonstrated how strategically placed planters, seating and greening could reduce the visual dominance of highway infrastructure, improve pedestrian comfort and create a greener identity within a highly constrained urban setting.

The scheme would deliver multiple benefits:

- Improved pedestrian experience and comfort at a key City junction
- Improved aesthetic experience through introducing planting
- Increased urban greening and biodiversity in a hard landscaped environment
- Introduction of informal seating and dwell space within the City's public realm network
- Creation of a more welcoming civic gateway connecting Fleet Street, Ludgate Hill and St Paul's



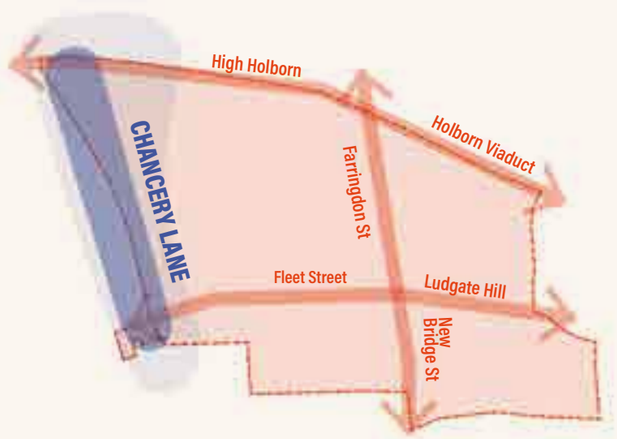
Hatton Garden Greening

LUDGATE CIRCUS

PROPOSAL VISUALISATION

CHANCERY LANE

EXISTING CONDITION



Chancery Lane is one of Fleet Street Quarter's most historically significant streets, forming the spine of London's legal district. Named after the historic Court of Chancery, it remains closely associated with the Inns of Court and continues today as a key location for legal practice.

It plays an important strategic role as a primary north–south connector, linking High Holborn to Fleet Street and the wider Quarter, and providing access to a network of courts and lanes that define the area's historic character.

Despite this, the area underperforms as a place. Traffic dominance along High Holborn, inactive frontages, and a lack of greening and seating limit its quality and legibility. The historic significance of Chancery Lane is not clearly expressed, and opportunities to connect people to its heritage and surrounding destinations remain underutilised.

These challenges present clear opportunities to rebalance movement, improve arrival points, activate frontages, and introduce greening and seating to enhance the public realm.

The ambition is to reinforce Chancery Lane as a distinctive historic spine within Fleet Street Quarter, where one is transported from the intensity of High Holborn and Fleet Street into a sequence of quiet, reflective spaces that celebrate its unique character and heritage.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Chancery Lane is a primary north–south route within London's legal and historic quarter, linking Fleet Street and High Holborn; Fleet Street benefits from traffic restrictions while High Holborn remains vehicle-dominated.



Retail is concentrated at the northern and southern ends of the street, though ground floor activation is not fully optimised.



Along the central section of the street, institutional buildings and legal offices create long stretches of blank edges.



Greening and street furniture is limited, which hinders opportunities to dwell.



It provides access to courts and alleys linking to significant landmarks and areas, such as Lincoln's Inn, the Royal Courts of Justice and Holborn.



Recent and consented developments (e.g. 326–330 High Holborn) are transforming the area and offer opportunities to strengthen connections.

CHANCERY LANE

CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Chancery Lane is a historic north–south corridor that connects key destinations across Midtown, linking High Holborn to Fleet Street and the wider City. Despite its strong heritage identity and strategic location, the street currently functions primarily as a movement corridor, with limited opportunities for people to pause, interact, or engage with its surroundings.

This page outlines the existing constraints that limit the street's performance, alongside a set of opportunities to reimagine Chancery Lane as a more balanced, people-focused environment. The vision is to enhance its role not only as a connector, but as a destination that reflects its historic significance and supports a more vibrant street life.

Understanding the Existing Conditions

Chancery Lane sits within a dense and historically significant part of central London, characterised by a mix of legal institutions, offices, and smaller commercial uses. The street benefits from strong connectivity, linking key routes such as Fleet Street and High Holborn, and experiences steady pedestrian movement throughout the day. Its historic fabric, including narrow plots and listed buildings, contributes to a distinctive sense of place, but also constrains opportunities for spatial expansion and intervention.

Public realm conditions are generally functional but lack quality and consistency. The street is heavily hardscaped, with limited greening, minimal seating, and few opportunities for people to dwell. Footways can feel narrow and cluttered in places, particularly at peak times, while vehicular movement continues to dominate the central carriageway. Despite its heritage significance and central location, there is limited activation at ground level, and the public realm does not fully capitalise on its character or potential as a more people-focused, legible, and inviting environment.

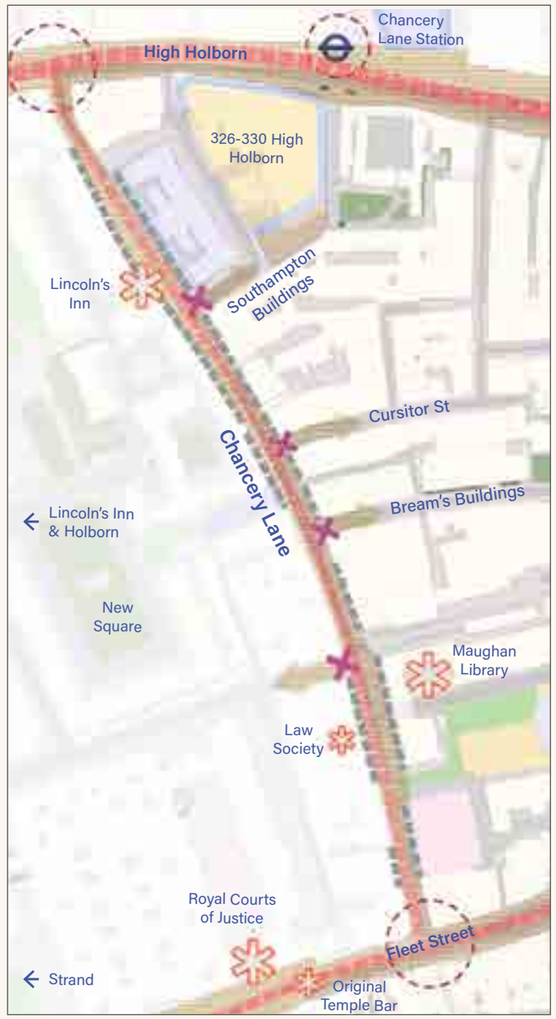
Unlocking Opportunities

Chancery Lane has strong potential to evolve into a more attractive and engaging urban corridor. By improving pedestrian experience, the street can become more comfortable and accessible for all users. Enhancing crossings and widening footways—particularly at key junctions—will help create a clearer and more legible movement network.

There is an opportunity to introduce new green infrastructure, seating, and small-scale public spaces along the route, transforming underused areas into places for pause and interaction. Strengthening ground floor activation, can help bring energy and vitality to the street.

Embedding storytelling and wayfinding into the public realm can celebrate the area's historic significance, while better connections to surrounding destinations will reinforce its role within the broader urban fabric. Together, these interventions can reposition Chancery Lane as a distinctive, lively, and people-centred corridor that balances movement with place.

KEY CONSTRAINTS



- Constrain pedestrian movement and reduce comfort. Lack of greening, seating and space to dwell
- Poor arrival experiences at Chancery Lane station and original Temple Bar location lack legibility and identity
- Limited active frontage due to dominance of office use reduces street life along the corridor
- Historic significance not well expressed along the street
- Weak connections to neighbouring landmarks and areaS

KEY OPPORTUNITIES



- Widen pedestrian routes along High Holborn. Additional planting and greening along Chancery lane
- Create legible, high-quality gateways at northern and southern ends of street
- Strengthen retail, F&B activation at junction with High Holborn and Fleet Street
- Convert bays, parts of footway and neighbouring streets and alleyways into parklets and small green spaces to increase dwell
- Embed historic storytelling to express significance of Chancery Lane
- Strengthen connection and wayfinding to neighbouring landmarks and destinations
- Cultural programming & temporary pedestrianisation to extend activity beyond working hours

CHANCERY LANE

2023 PROPOSAL

Previous proposals for Chancery Lane in Gensler's 2023 document were structured around three key intervention areas, responding to its role as a north–south connector within Fleet Street Quarter. The three intervention areas are proposed below:



1. Lane Improvements
Along the street itself, proposals focused on building on existing traffic restrictions to prioritise pedestrians. This included widening footways, introducing temporary parklets with seating and planting, and enabling seasonal activation through lighting and occasional closures. The aim was to enhance pedestrian experience while unlocking opportunities for greening and dwell within a constrained streetscape.

2. Station Upgrades (Northern Gateway)
At the northern end, interventions centred on improving the arrival experience at Chancery Lane station. Proposals included upgrades to materiality, enhanced wayfinding into the Quarter, and opportunities to widen pavements to accommodate planting, seating, and clearer pedestrian movement.

3. Temple Bar (Southern Gateway)
At the southern end, the historic location of Temple Bar was identified as a key gateway into Fleet Street Quarter. Proposals focused on strengthening its identity through material upgrades, greening, and seating, alongside integrating it into a wider historic route that reconnects to St Paul's. Cultural and commemorative interventions were also explored to reinforce its historic significance.



Artist impression of Temple Gateway previously proposed by Gensler

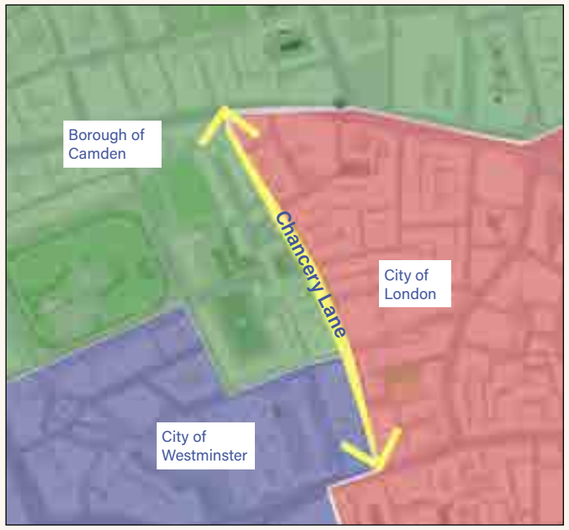
A COORDINATED PLACE

Chancery Lane sits at a uniquely complex junction within central London, spanning the administrative boundaries of Camden, the City of London, and the City of Westminster. This fragmented governance context means that any public realm strategy cannot be approached in isolation or defined by a single authority's priorities. Instead, it requires a coordinated, cross-borough vision that aligns spatial, social, environmental, and economic objectives.

Positioned between key destinations and character areas within Holborn and beyond, Chancery Lane functions as both a connector and a place in its own right. However, its current condition reflects the legacy of piecemeal interventions, traffic dominance, and inconsistent public realm quality across borough boundaries. To unlock its full potential, a unified strategy must reconcile differing policy frameworks, while also responding to adjacent priorities from neighbouring authorities.



Bringing together the Camden Local Plan, Holborn Vision SPD, Westminster City Plan, and the Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood programme, a consistent set of strategic priorities emerges for Chancery Lane and its wider street network. While each document operates at a different scale (policy, spatial vision, transport intervention, borough strategy), they converge around a shared direction for central London streets.



Here are the key considerations from the several policy document mentioned:

1. Re-prioritising Streets for People First
Across all four frameworks, there is a clear and non-negotiable shift away from vehicle dominance toward people-led streets. This is most explicitly driven by the Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood, but strongly reinforced through transport and health policies in both borough plans.

2. Public Realm as Social and Civic Infrastructure
All plans emphasise that streets must do more than move people; they must support daily life and community.

- Provision of seating, dwell space, and informal gathering areas
- Support for families, local communities, and workers
- Integration of play, rest, and social interaction into street design

3. Embedding Inclusivity, Safety, and Equity
There is a strong cross-policy focus on designing for everyone, particularly underrepresented or vulnerable groups.

- Safe and welcoming environments, including night-time safety
- Step-free, accessible, and intuitive public realm
- Representation of local diversity and culture

4. Supporting a Diverse and Resilient Local Economy
The plans recognise changing economic patterns in central London (hybrid working, retail shifts).

- Encouraging active frontages and flexible ground floor uses
- Supporting spill-out activity and street-based commerce
- Increasing footfall and dwell time

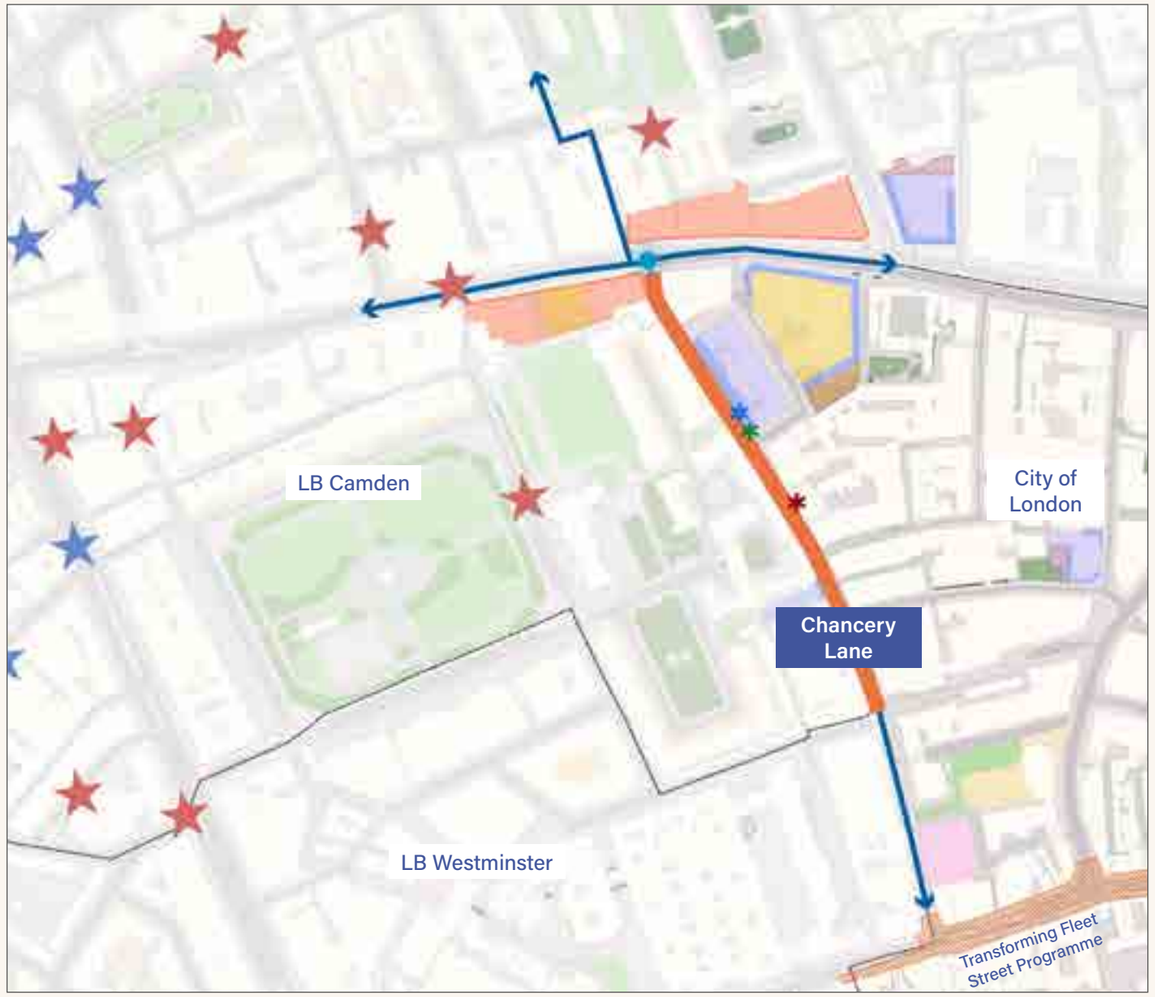
7. Respecting and Revealing Historic Character
Chancery Lane sits within a highly sensitive historic context.

- Protection and enhancement of heritage assets and conservation areas
- Reinforcing local identity and distinctiveness
- Using materials and design to reflect historic grain





High Holborn Proposal, Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood Project



The map highlights the significant number of interventions and public realm improvements already underway across Holborn to enhance the pedestrian experience, creating a more connected, accessible, and people-focused environment. The cumulative impact of these initiatives is substantial, establishing strong momentum for wider area transformation. This should be carried forward into the FSQ BID area, with Chancery Lane acting as the key threshold and opportunity to extend and reinforce these pedestrian improvements seamlessly across the wider district.

- Chancery Lane Traffic Order
- Emerging Parking Bay Changes
- Emerging Public Realm Improvement Initiative
- Development Recently Completed
- Development Under Construction
- Recently Consented Development
- Emerging/ Recently Consented Public Realm
- Borough Boundary

Holborn Vision SPD

- New/Enhanced Pedestrian Route
- Local Center
- Primary Frontage

Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood Plan

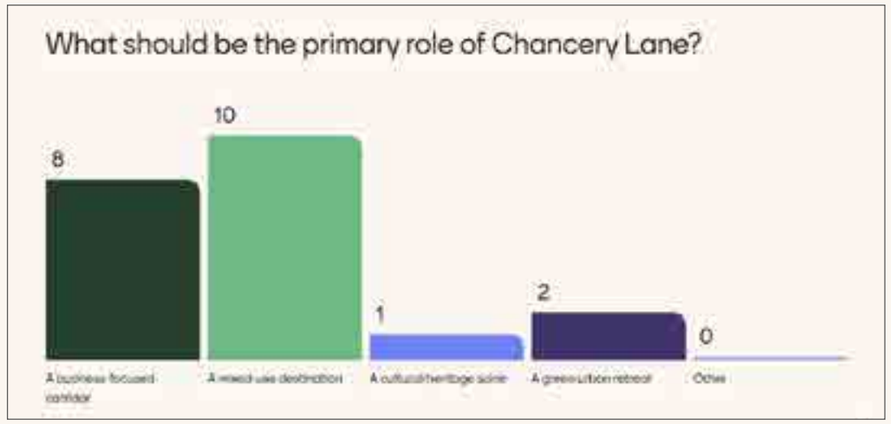
- Starter Projects
- Major Projects

CHANCERY LANE

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

On 28 April 2026, an in-person engagement session was held with the Chancery Lane stakeholder group to gather targeted insights on the future role, character, and priorities for the area. Using interactive polling and open-response formats, participants were invited to share their views on vision, identity, key challenges, and potential interventions.

The following summary captures the results of this session, reflecting a combination of quantitative responses and qualitative feedback. Together, these insights provide a clear, stakeholder-led perspective on how Chancery Lane could evolve into a more vibrant, inclusive, and resilient destination.



A CLEAR DIRECTION: FROM CORRIDOR TO DESTINATION

The consultation reveals a strong and consistent shift in how stakeholders perceive the future of Chancery Lane. The dominant preference is for a **mixed-use destination**, significantly outweighing the idea of maintaining a purely business-focused corridor. Chancery Lane's future lies in becoming a **layered urban environment**:

- **Economic anchor**: retaining business relevance
- **Social destination**: welcoming, inclusive, active
- **Environmental upgrade**: greener, healthier
- **Cultural platform**: events, identity, activation



Desired Identity:
How the Place Should Feel

The word cloud highlights a strong emotional and experiential brief. The most prominent terms—*welcoming, vibrant, greener, safe, and destination*—collectively define a people-first vision.

Core Themes

Welcoming & Inclusive
The emphasis on "welcoming," alongside terms like inclusive, accessible, and pleasant, signals a need to break down perceived exclusivity. Chancery Lane is currently seen as formal and inward-facing; the aspiration is for a place that invites a broader demographic.

Vibrant & Active
Words such as vibrant, active, sociable, and "a place to gather" point to a desire for energy and dwell time, particularly beyond traditional office hours. This reinforces the shift toward a destination economy.

Green & Sustainable
"Greener" emerges as one of the strongest signals. This is not just aesthetic but reflects a demand for environmental performance, climate resilience, and wellbeing.

Safe & Comfortable
Safety appears repeatedly, both explicitly and implicitly. This includes not only crime reduction but also perceived safety through lighting, activity, and design quality.

CHANCERY LANE

PROPOSAL

The proposals for Chancery Lane adopt a layered approach to public realm enhancement focused on strengthening connectivity, introducing targeted greening and dwell opportunities, and reinforcing the street's unique historic identity. The strategy prioritises lightweight, deliverable interventions that can be implemented incrementally while supporting wider ambitions emerging through the Holborn Liveable Neighbourhood programme and surrounding public realm initiatives.

The proposals reinforce Chancery Lane as a key pedestrian route connecting High Holborn, Lincoln's Inn, Fleet Street, and the wider legal quarter.

01 **Celebrate the historic gateway into Chancery Lane** through creative signage, art, and gateway structures that reflect the area's rich legal and institutional heritage, reinforcing its identity as a key civic threshold.

02 **Reallocate an existing parking bay opposite Old Square to create a rain garden with integrated seating,** establishing a welcoming dwell space and resilient green infrastructure connection towards Lincoln's Inn to the west.

03 **Introduce historic wayfinding** and interpretation elements that celebrate the heritage of Chancery Lane while strengthening pedestrian connections westwards into Lincoln's Inn and surrounding cultural destinations.

04 **Enhance greening and seating within Quality Court** to create a more attractive and comfortable pedestrian environment, encouraging pause, social interaction, and improved biodiversity.

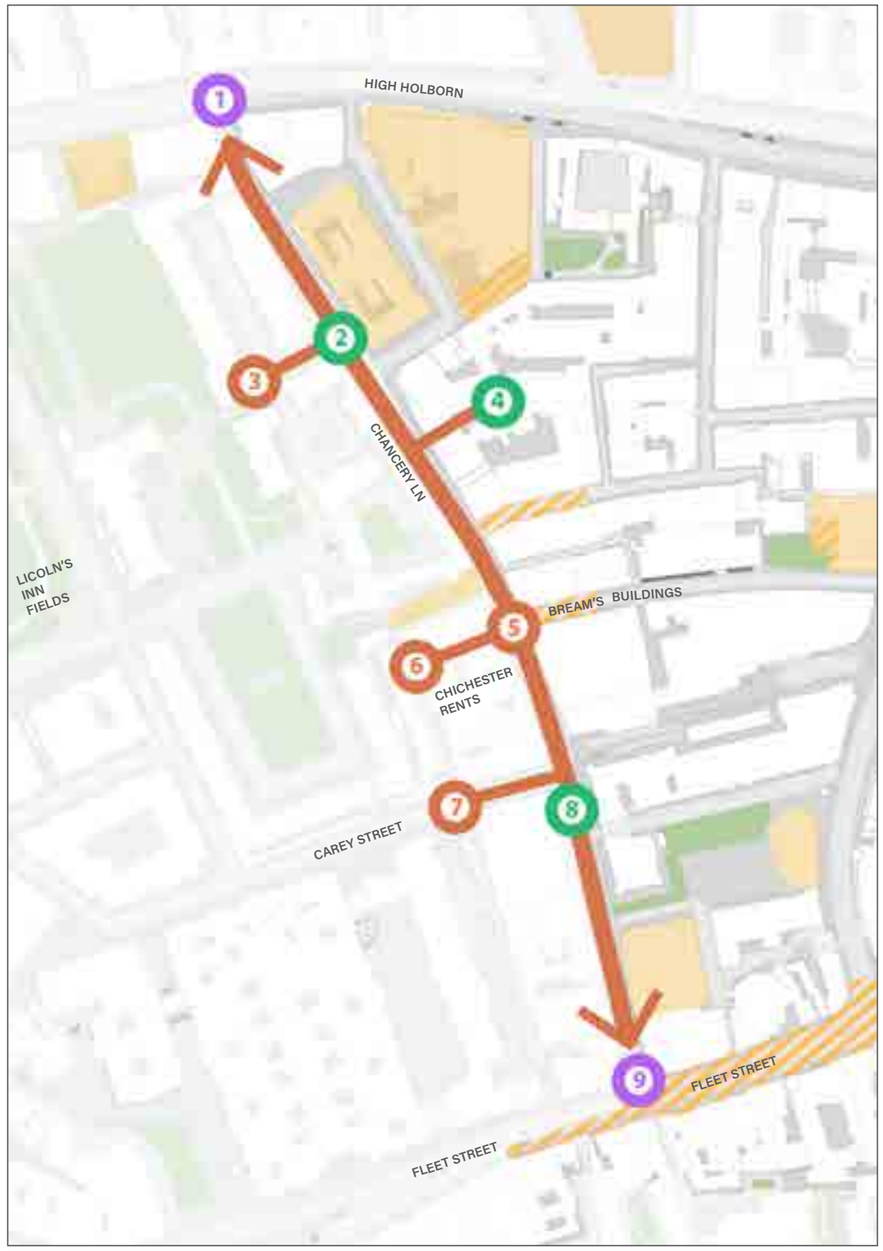
05 **Deliver a raised table crossing between Bream's Buildings and Chichester Rents** to prioritise pedestrian movement, improve accessibility, and create a safer and more seamless crossing experience.

06 **Introduce additional heritage-led wayfinding elements** along Chancery Lane to reinforce its historic identity and improve legibility and connectivity towards western routes and destinations.

07 **Create heritage and cultural wayfinding interventions** that position Chancery Lane as a key pedestrian corridor linking nearby cultural assets and green pocket parks across the wider area.

08 **Enhance the public realm opposite the Carey Street entrance on Chancery Lane** by removing the existing pedestrian refuge bollard to enable new planting of a rain garden and soften the street edge, improving pedestrian comfort, greening, and visual quality.

09 **Celebrate the southern gateway into Chancery Lane** through creative signage, art, and gateway structures that highlight the area's legal history and strengthen the sense of arrival from Fleet Street.



Current Momentum

- Emerging Development
- Emerging/ Improved Public Realm

Proposed Interventions

- Green Interventions
- Threshold Activation Intervention
- Legibility & Infrastructure Intervention

Together, these interventions establish a coherent framework for incremental enhancement, improving the experience, identity, and functionality of Chancery Lane while supporting wider public realm ambitions across Holborn and the Fleet Street Quarter.

CHANCERY LANE

PROPOSAL VISUALISATION

04

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A TRANSFORMATIVE RESPONSE

This Public Realm Scoping Study establishes a coordinated framework for the next phase of transformation across Fleet Street Quarter, building on the ambitions of the 'Era of Change' strategy and the momentum of ongoing public realm and development-led initiatives. Through its focus on greening and seating improvements, the enhancement of Ludgate Circus, and the strengthening of Chancery Lane, the study identifies a series of strategic priorities to support a more connected, accessible, and people-focused urban environment. The following key findings summarise the principal opportunities and recommendations that will help inform the FSQ BID's 2027–2032 Proposal and guide future investment across the Quarter.



1. COORDINATED PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK

Evolving the public realm framework through a clear and cohesive approach that aligns existing and future interventions across Fleet Street Quarter, ensuring individual projects contribute to a connected, legible, and high-quality public realm vision. Ongoing coordination between interventions delivered by the BID, the City of London, landowners, and developers, enabling projects to contribute to a unified long-term vision that aligns investment priorities. Acting as a flexible strategic foundation, it should continue to evolve over time, guiding future improvements and shaping a connected, high-quality, and recognisable public realm across the Quarter.

2.DELIVER QUICK WINS TO CONTINUE MOMENTUM

Prioritise a series of targeted short-term interventions, including seating, greening, lighting, wayfinding, and activation improvements, that can be implemented efficiently and visibly across the Quarter. These early actions will help improve the everyday experience of streets and spaces, demonstrate positive change at a local level, and build confidence among stakeholders, occupiers, and visitors in the wider transformation programme. Quick wins also provide opportunities to test approaches, support meanwhile activation, and establish an immediate sense of progress while longer-term projects are developed and delivered.

3. MAINTAIN A LONG-TERM AMBITIOUS VISION

The study reinforces the need to maintain a bold and aspirational long-term vision for Fleet Street Quarter that guides decision-making and future investment over time. This vision is particularly important for key gateway locations such as Ludgate Circus, where long-term transformation opportunities may only be realised when the right conditions are in place, including potential changes to traffic movement and priority. Retaining this long-term ambition will ensure that short-term interventions contribute to, rather than dilute, a wider transformational agenda.

4. STRENGTHEN IDENTITY THROUGH PLACE-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

Focus investment and design attention on key locations such as Ludgate Circus and Chancery Lane to create distinctive and memorable places that reinforce the character and identity of Fleet Street Quarter. Tailored interventions should respond to the unique historic, cultural, and spatial qualities of each location, improving arrival experiences, enhancing connectivity between streets and lanes, and creating stronger gateways into the Quarter. By developing a more recognisable sense of place, these interventions can help support footfall, encourage activity, and strengthen the overall perception of Fleet Street Quarter as a cohesive destination.

5. SUPPORT A MORE PEOPLE-CENTRED QUARTER

Embed public realm principles that prioritise pedestrians, accessibility, greening, comfort, safety, and activation in direct response to the businesses' chosen priorities for Fleet Street Quarter. These principles should guide future interventions to create a more inclusive and experience-led urban environment. Interventions should support healthier and more sustainable patterns of movement, encourage longer dwell times, and provide spaces that are attractive and welcoming throughout the day and evening. A stronger focus on people-centred design will help ensure Fleet Street Quarter functions not only as a place of work, but also as a vibrant destination for visitors, residents, and the wider community.

AMBITION

BUILDING MOMENTUM, DELIVERING PLACE

In support of the FSQ BID's next term proposal, the interventions identified in this study establish a structured pathway towards a long-term ambition of positioning Fleet Street Quarter as a more attractive, distinctive, and people-focused destination. By aligning short-term improvements with a coordinated framework and a sustained vision for key places across the area, the interventions build momentum for change while ensuring that each step contributes to a coherent and evolving public realm strategy. In doing so, they support the wider transformation of the BID into a vibrant, accessible, and high-quality destination for workers, visitors, and residents alike.



FLEET STREET QUARTER

Gensler