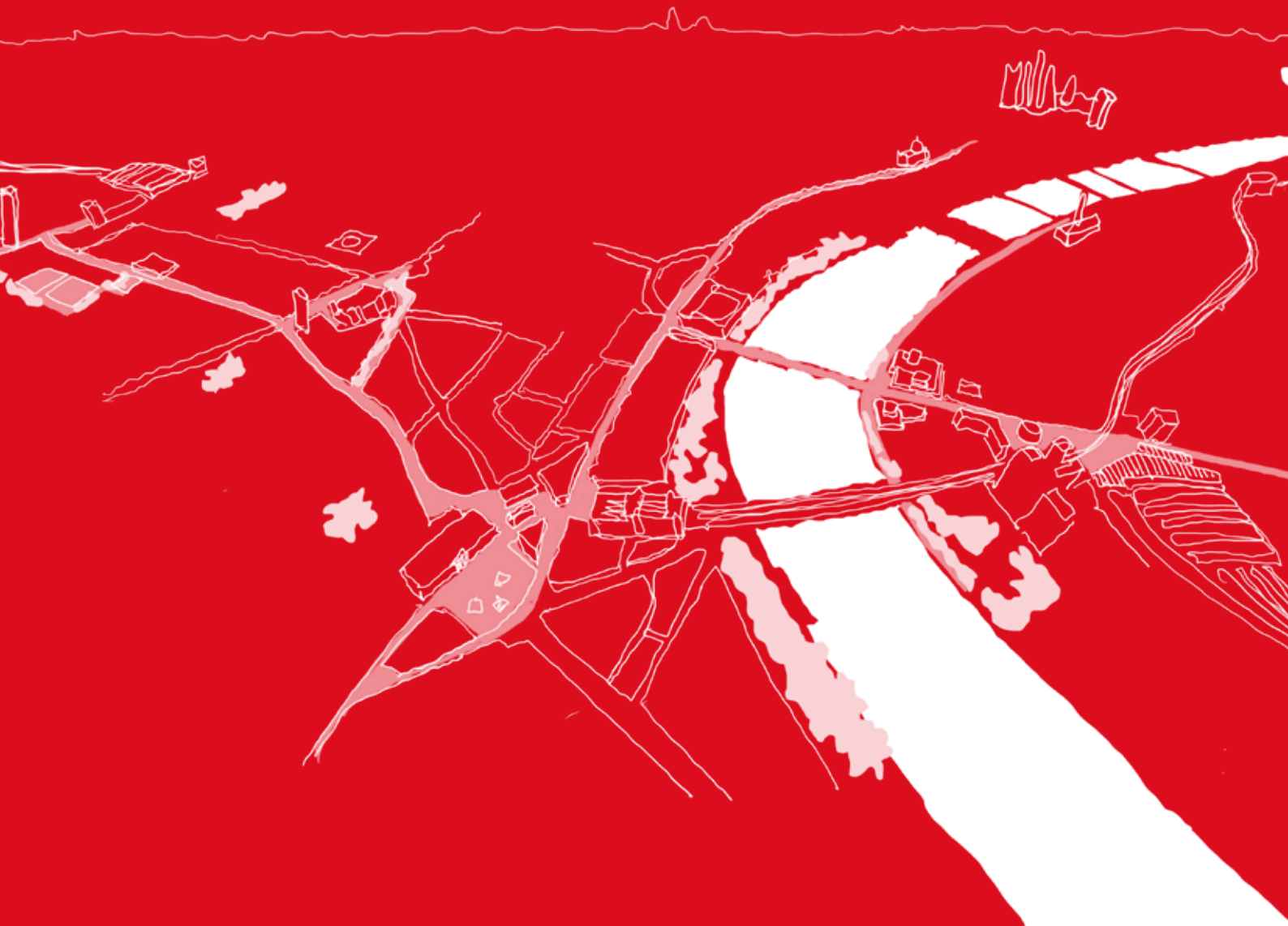


ARUP

LONDON ALIVE

Ideas and strategies for
London's Future Public Realm



“London Alive” is a collection of Arup’s ideas for the future of public realm in central London - through recovery from Covid-19 and beyond.

While this study focuses on London, the designs draw from examples across the world, and the lessons learned can be applied to cities globally.

October 2021

ARUP

Supported by:



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www.arup.com
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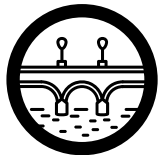


Fitzrovia WORKSPACE CAMPUS

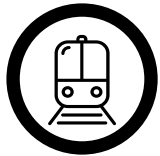
Executive Summary

As central London emerges from the last 18 months, the public realm challenges - those pre-dating the pandemic and those arising from the persistent declines in activity - continue to linger. The role of the public realm in short-term recovery is critical to attract back workers and visitors that sustain central London's economy. Yet, the pandemic has also given pause for a moment of reflection and creativity, allowing an opportunity for a more forward thinking vision for the future of London.

In this document, we pose ideas for what this future might look like, using four of London's great places - its bridges, stations, high streets, and neighbourhoods - to offer strategies for change and help us collectively think about what spaces and places we should prioritise. We link overall vision with the achievable, short-term interventions that can create a lasting positive impact.



Bridges : Waterloo
A Bridge to Dwell



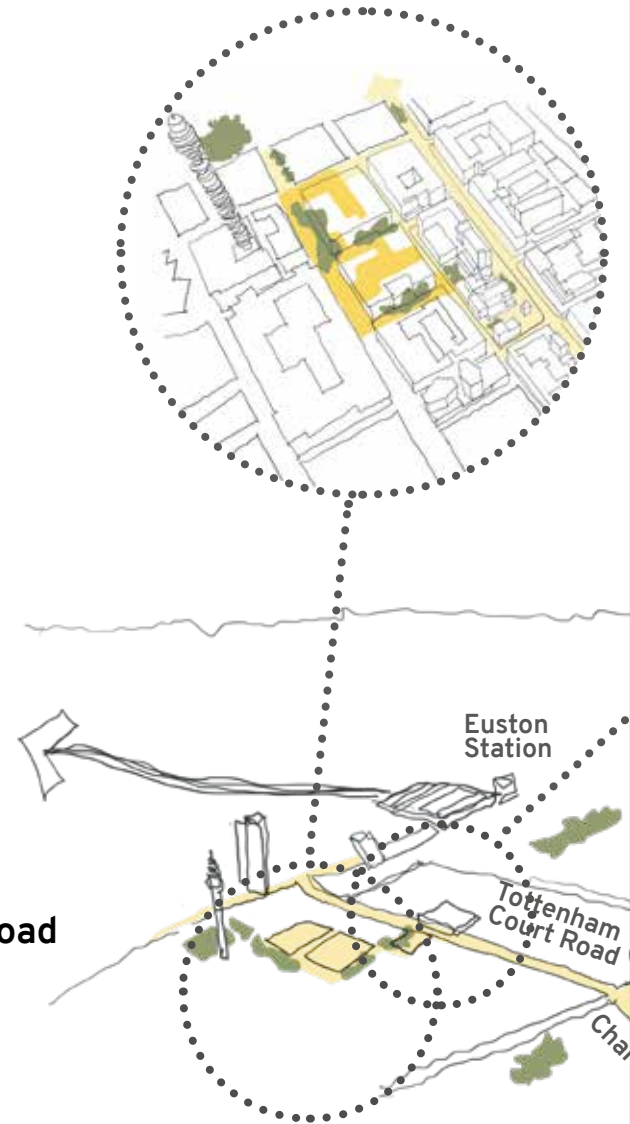
Stations : Charing Cross
A Cultural Foyer



Shopping Streets : Tottenham Court Road
An Entrepreneurial Street



Business Neighbourhoods : Fitzrovia
Workspace Campus

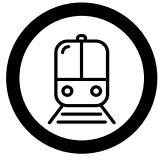


We see this document as an attempt to frame the conversation, engage those already working on London's future, and call for ideas and actions that can bolster the city through the Covid-19 recovery, and beyond.



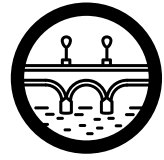
TCR

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL STREET



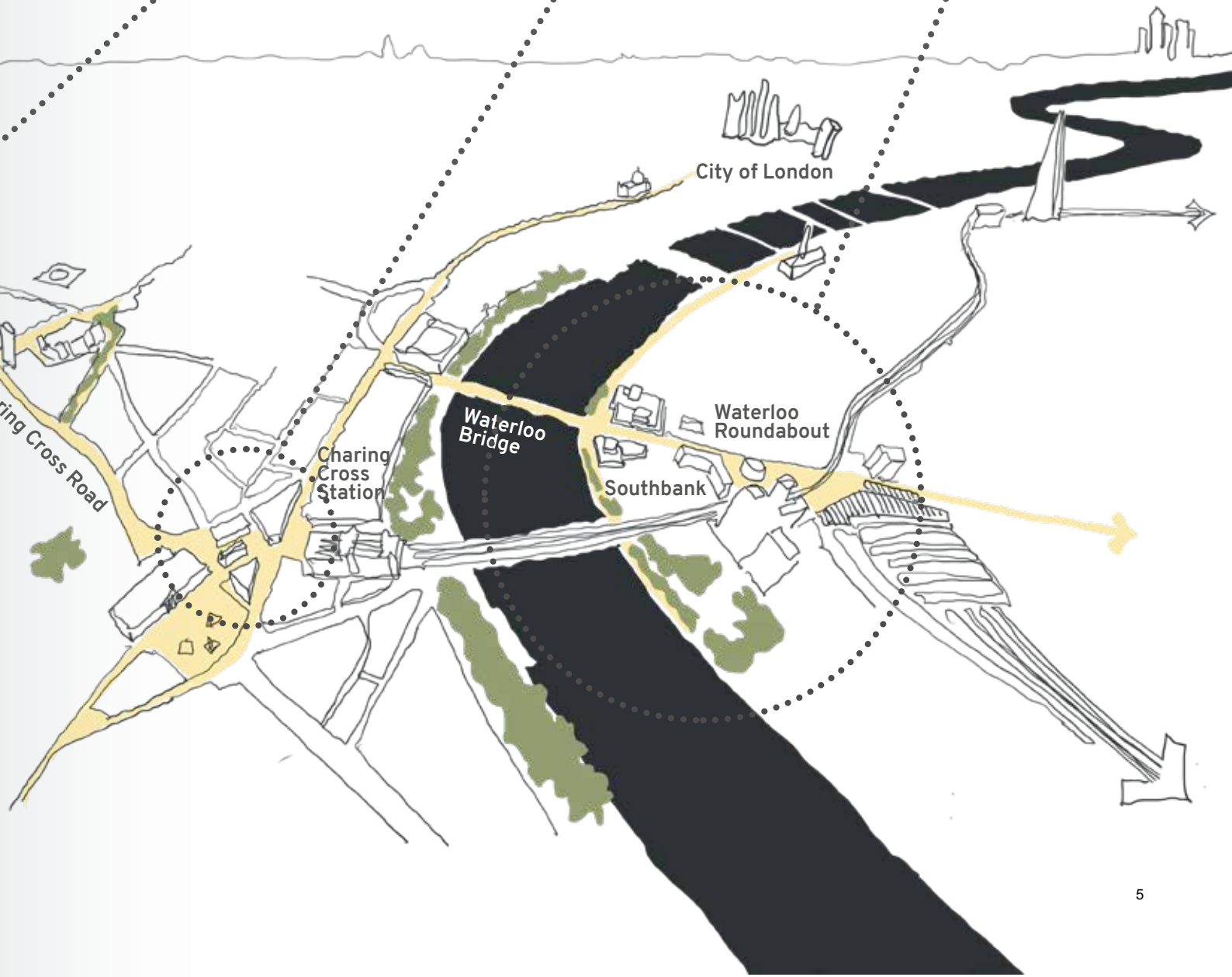
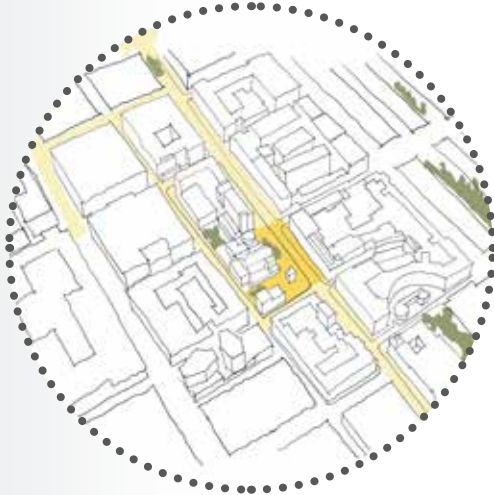
Charing Cross

A CULTURAL FOYER



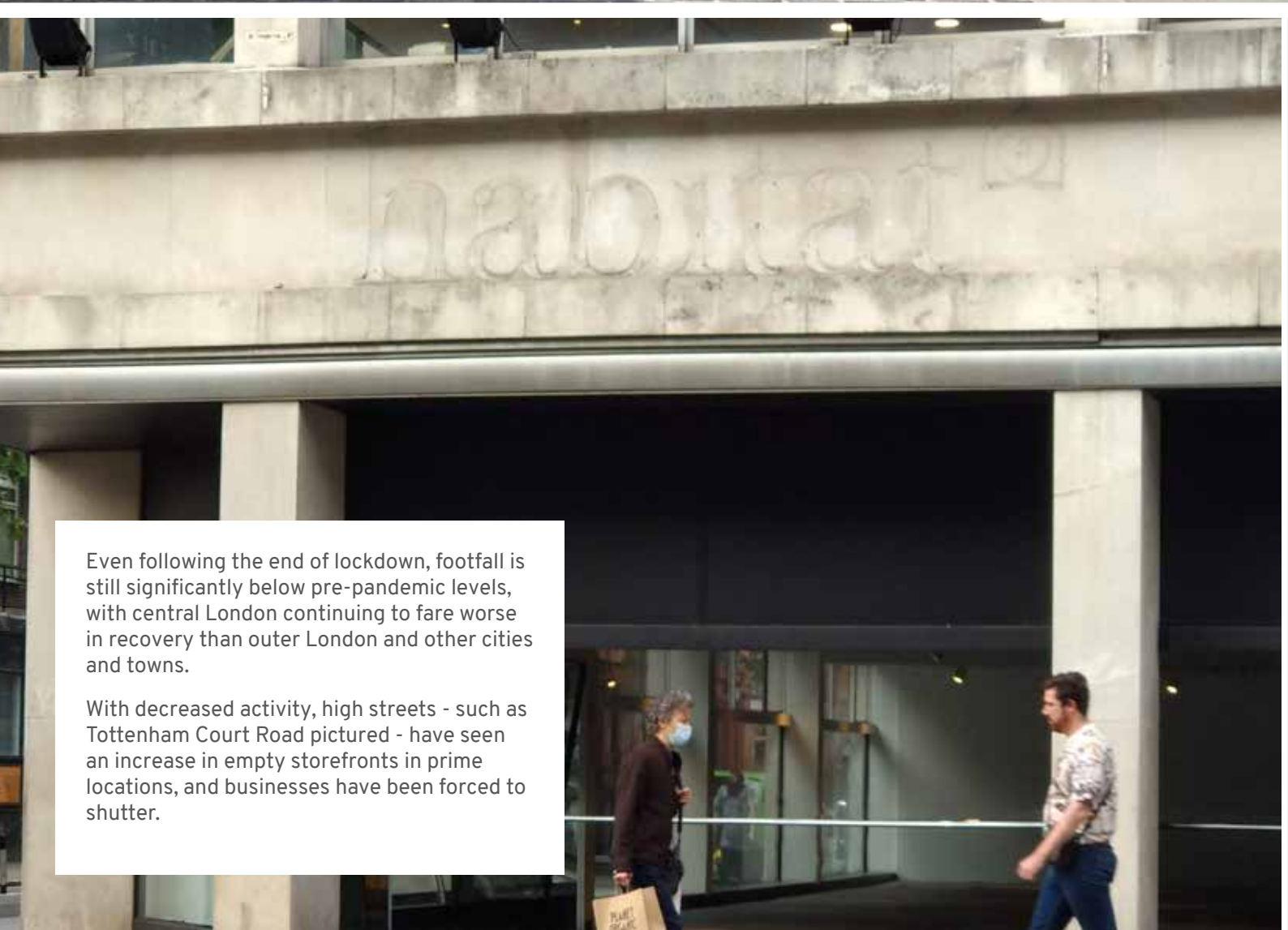
Waterloo

A BRIDGE TO DWELL



In Soho, the pedestrianisation of streets for outdoor dining has helped reactivate the neighbourhood following lockdown, attracting visitors and workers. The successes, as well as new tensions, arising from responses from the pandemic offer lessons to help shape the future of public realm in central London.

Image source: The Evening Standard



Even following the end of lockdown, footfall is still significantly below pre-pandemic levels, with central London continuing to fare worse in recovery than outer London and other cities and towns.

With decreased activity, high streets - such as Tottenham Court Road pictured - have seen an increase in empty storefronts in prime locations, and businesses have been forced to shutter.

Introduction

What has happened? The Covid-19 pandemic has brought transformational change to the spaces of the city. Lockdowns and restrictions have significantly curtailed activity in central London, and footfall is only beginning to recover. These new dynamics have brought new challenges to central London – including pressures on businesses and jobs – and highlighted the importance on the speed of recovery to the vitality of the city.

What is the opportunity? Yet, the pandemic has given London a chance to pause and reimagine what it can become, both in the immediate recovery and in the longer term going forwards. As the city emerges from lockdown, we ask ourselves: What are the elements of central London that we want back? What are those that we want to leave behind? And what is the London we want in the future?

Why now? Now is a critical window to rethink the public spaces of the city. Dramatic changes have happened to how people work, shop, and live, and few are keen to return to the congestion and cramped spaces that used to characterise parts of the city. The constraints of the pandemic have unleashed innovative and flexible thinking. Places like Paris and New York have committed to dozens of open streets for pedestrian use and a greener, more walkable public realm to revive their downtowns. Born from necessity, the current momentum and creativity can help us envision a brighter future for the city.

What next? Achieving a greener, more inclusive London will require bold vision coupled with achievable short-term action. While many significant public realm investments are under way, the need for immediate intervention means that an approach with tactical, low-cost interventions – deployed across the city at scale – can attract people back into the city, unlock value to speed recovery, and build the case for permanent improvements. There is a role for everyone – from local authorities and BIDs to landowners and institutions – in envisioning, and implementing, the future of London.

Call to action. “London Alive” is Arup’s strategic thinking around the recovery and future of central London. This document proposes a vision for what central London can look like in the future – a city that celebrates its public spaces, elevates the pedestrian experience, and links together the city from north to south and east to west, through reimagining its future bridges, stations, shopping streets, and business neighbourhoods.

A moment of change

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR CITY AND WHAT DO WE DO NEXT?

Noise and congestion near station areas, growing retail vacancies on high streets, severance across the river, and poor quality of place in neighbourhoods have been persistent issues in central London long before the pandemic. Nevertheless, **Covid-19 has disrupted the balance of the city, its economy, and its public spaces.** The pandemic has led to shifting trends in how people live, work, and spend time, with significant - and potentially long-term - implications on London's public realm:

- 1 Working from home will remain in some capacity post-recovery.**
Recent surveys show that most office workers are keen to continue some form of hybrid working post-recovery, decreasing the number of workers commuting to central London¹.
- 2 Tourism will not rebound to pre-pandemic levels for two or three more years.**
International tourism will take longer to rebound than domestic tourism, with segments expected to reach 2019 levels in 2024 and 2023, respectively².
- 3 Retailers continue to face increased pressure in competition with online shopping.**
In-person purchases in central London were 60% below pre-pandemic level for apparel and food³.
- 4 Arts and culture institutions are at risk of permanent loss.**
By December 2020, 28,000 arts culture and recreation workforce jobs had been lost across London⁴.

As London emerges from lockdown, old and new challenges merge and foster new tensions. While the pandemic temporarily alleviated certain previous issues, such as reducing congestion in overburdened corridors, it exacerbated others, such as increasing storefront vacancies.

Meanwhile, trends such as Brexit, climate adaptation, and digitisation have the potential to disrupt how central London operates as a business centre and as a place for people and culture. This moment provides an opportunity to take stock of the role of central London in the context of Covid-19 recovery and broader trends, to reemphasise the city's role as a global city centre.

While restrictions lift, balancing the need for the return of workers and visitors, with a plan for addressing long-term challenges, will require thoughtful rationalisation and considered interventions in London's great public places.

¹London First. "Pandemic leads to significant work-from-home shift, but office still needed." (January 2021).


²Tourism Economics (2020) *Travel & Tourism Cities COVID-19: pandemic impacts in Europe.*

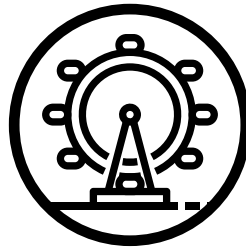
³Arup (2021) *The economic future of the Central Activities Zone.*

⁴GLA (2020) *COVID-19: Labour Market Round-Up Dec 2020.*

Covid-19 Impacts

The effects from the pandemic are not over. Even as lockdown has lifted, footfall in central London are still half their pre-pandemic levels. The reduction in workers and visitors has had a direct impact on viability of retail, leisure, and arts and culture sectors. In turn, the potential losses in those sectors impact on the attractiveness of central London as a place to visit and work, which – if not addressed – could create a cycle of decline.

 **38%**
Decrease in footfall
in Central London
(August 2021)



Decrease in visitors coming
to Central London



Reluctancy to return to the office
and change in working patterns

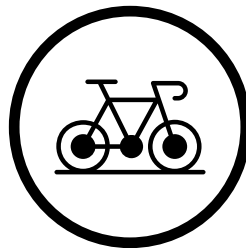
 **14%**
Vacancy rate on
Oxford Street
(compared to 2.6%
over last 15 years)



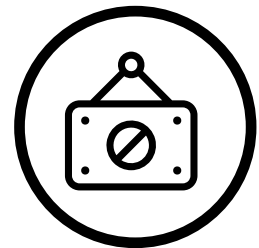
Drop in footfall and less spending



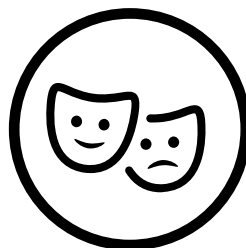
Need for outdoor spaces to socialise
and enjoy the city safely



Need for better active travel infrastructure



Closure of businesses. Empty,
inactive ground floors



Decrease in visitors coming to Central
London Impacts on the entertainment
and culture sector

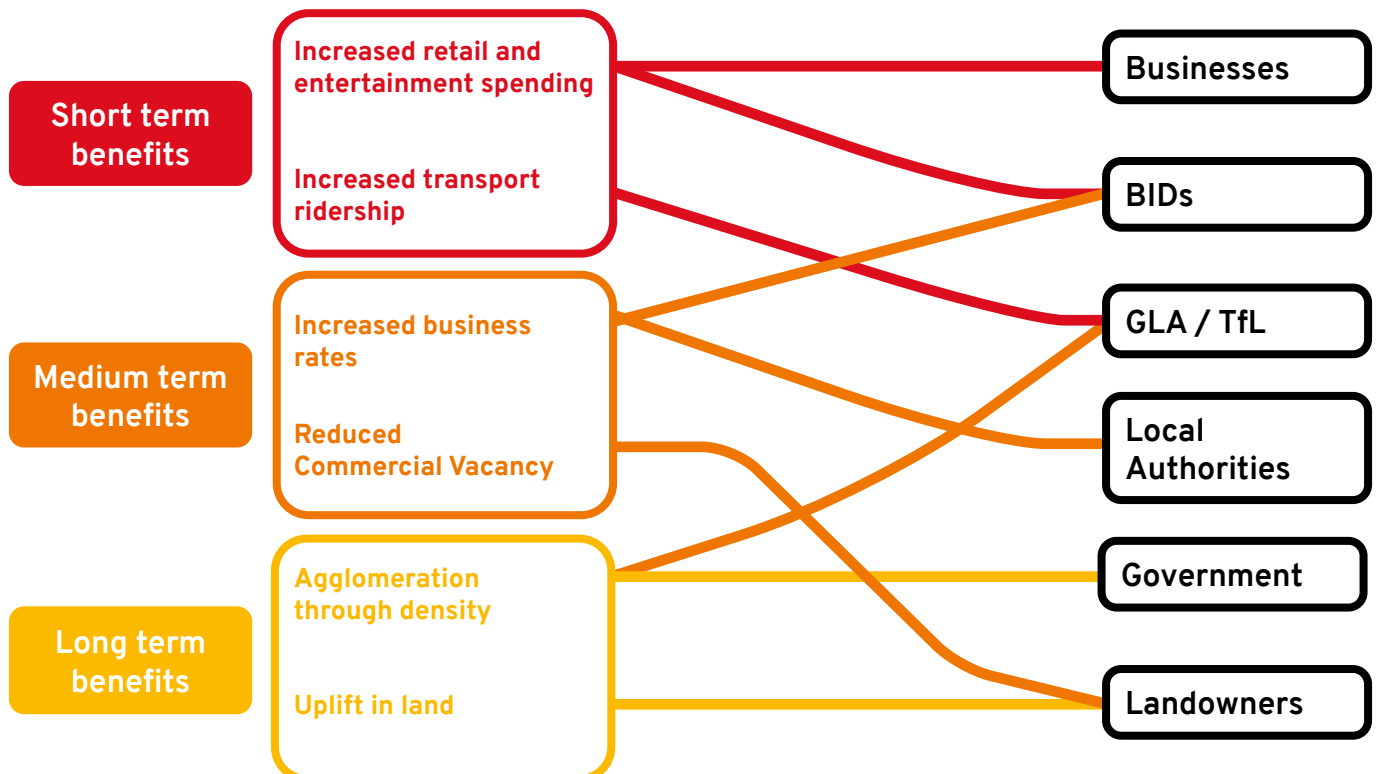
Why does public realm matter?

THE VALUE OF PUBLIC REALM INVESTMENT

Public spaces can play a key role in building a future London that is more inclusive, green, and vibrant. In the short term, public realm improvements can attract workers and visitors back into central London, increase dwell time, and encourage spending to speed economic recovery. In the longer term, increased footfall can help curb storefront vacancy, increase business rates, and contribute to uplift in land values. Interventions can also encourage active travel, leading to environmental and health benefits, and create a sense of place, identity, and community. The impacts of public realm investments can accrue to a range of public and private beneficiaries. **By engaging these stakeholders to capture and recycle this value, short-term public realm interventions can set the stage for funding larger-scale investments.**

Across the world, cities are recognising the value of public realm interventions as part of short-term recovery and long-term strategy. Pilots developed by **New York City's Meatpacking Business Improvement District** are being made permanent to enhance space for pedestrians and outdoor events. In **Paris**, the city has plans to turn **Champs-Elysees** into an "extraordinary garden."

In **London**, local governments are bringing forward investment to aid in recovery. A number of key projects are in planning or construction stages in the West End. The City of Westminster developed the **Oxford Street District Framework**, which will see accelerated delivery of temporary measures to support post-pandemic recovery – such as footway enhancements and concept lighting – alongside transformational projects, such as the pedestrianisation of Oxford Circus. Similarly, the TfL Streetspace Programme has allocated a further £100 million for public and active transport interventions to London boroughs for allocation in the second half of 2021. These are but a few of myriad ways local government and its partners are working to address challenges faced by central London today.





New York City's Meatpacking District is making permanent road closures to allow space for pedestrians to enjoy outdoor performances and exhibitions. This has been decided after a year of testing road closures as part of the Open Streets programme developed by the Meatpacking Business Improvement District.

Image credits: Iri Greco/BrakeThrough



Paris has plans to transform Champs-Élysées into 'extraordinary garden'. Following extensive campaigning for a major redesign of the avenue and its surroundings, a £225m-scheme has been approved by the Mayor to introduce measures such as: reducing space for vehicles by half, turning roads into pedestrian and green areas, and creating tunnels of trees to improve air quality.

Image credits: An image from the architectural firm PCA-Stream showing the planned changes to the Champs-Élysées area. Photograph: PCA-Stream



The area around Oxford Circus is to be transformed into two pedestrianised piazzas as a way to address air quality, pedestrian congestion and traffic issues. The scheme will include improvements to public spaces, as well as additional planting and seating and is expected to improve access to the station and to increase pedestrian priority.

Image source: An artists impression of Oxford Circus in London with the western piazza, new access into the London Underground. Photograph: Westminster City Council/PA

Priorities for the future

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL LONDON?

In order to attract workers and visitors back in London for short term economic recovery, and create a greener, more attractive, and more vibrant London in the long term, we understand the following priorities for the city's public realm.

- 1 Active Key Nodes**
Curate spaces around key existing **nodes and landmarks** to create signature attractions
- 2 Support Arts and Entertainment**
Provide spaces to support revival of **entertainment and cultural activities** (indoor and outdoor)
- 3 Rethink Office Neighbourhoods**
Re-configure spaces around offices to encourage workers to return and **support local businesses**
- 4 Enhance Walkability**
Promote **active travel** improvements, including pedestrian infrastructure such as quietways and improved junctions
- 5 Activate Storefronts**
Re-activate the groundfloors and vacant shop frontages
- 6 Curate Programming**
Define a **programme of themed events** to spark interest and increase footfall
- 7 Create Social Value**
Ensure public realm contributes to an **inclusive economy**, supporting wider social outcomes.

LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE PANDEMIC

In London, local government and partners have developed agile responses to adapt spaces to changing health, social and economic circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. Widening pavements, new bicycle lanes, and 'streeteries' for outdoor dining have been implemented in response to the immediate requirements of the pandemic. The rapid deployment of these interventions offer many lessons for the future of public realm investments:

COLLABORATION

Many local authorities, BIDs, and other stakeholders worked in closer partnerships than ever before to rapidly respond to Covid-19 restrictions while supporting businesses and residents. Closer communication allowed stakeholders to coordinate efforts and pool resources more effectively.

SPEED

London is known for thoughtful large-scale projects, yet long-term efforts can get tangled up in over-planning and shifting priorities. The pandemic necessitated speed – from streamlined permitting to quickly deployed bicycle lanes – that demonstrated the upside of fast-tracking projects to overcome inertia.

CREATIVITY

Stakeholders tested new models, incentives, and policies to encourage action. From reducing business rates for pop-ups in underutilised storefronts, to designing new permits for outdoor dining typologies, thinking outside the box has proved instrumental.

PILOTING

Many pedestrianisation projects, decades in the making, became realities during the pandemic and exposed the strengths of piloting projects. Instead of years of developing business cases, pilots demonstrated their own tangible value.

TRIAL AND ERROR

Not all efforts deployed during the pandemic were successful. In some neighbourhoods, residents chafed at new bicycle lanes, communities demanded more engagement. However, the process of testing, including failing, surfaced interventions that worked and ones that didn't..

London Alive

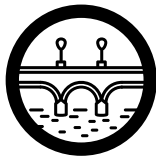
IDEAS FOR SOME OF LONDON'S GREAT PLACES

In response to this moment of change, we put forward ideas on London's public realm of the future.

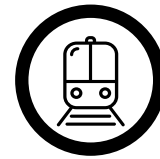
Looking at four types of places that Londoners use - bridges, stations, shopping streets, and commercial neighbourhoods - we pose the questions: *How can London's bridges become spaces for people to dwell? How can our commuter hubs adapt and evolve? How can we revive challenged high streets? How can businesses positively shape their neighbourhoods as workers return to the office?*

We use examples of iconic places - Waterloo, Charing Cross, Tottenham Court Road, and our home base of Fitzrovia - to inspire ideas and strategies for the kinds of public realm interventions that can create transformational change with tangible, short-term wins.

This document represents an attempt to start conversation and spark ideas, and serve as a basis for discussion and involvement of the myriad local stakeholders that work towards making a better London.



BRIDGES
WATERLOO



STATIONS
CHARING CROSS



**HOW CAN LONDON'S BRIDGES
BECOME SPACES FOR PEOPLE?**



**HOW CAN OUR COMMUTER
HUBS ADAPT AND EVOLVE?**



SHOPPING STREETS
TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD



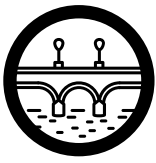
**HOW CAN WE REVIVE THESE
CHALLENGED PLACES?**



BUSINESS NEIGHBOURHOODS
FITZROVIA



**HOW CAN BUSINESSES POSITIVELY
SHAPE THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS?**



Bridges: Waterloo

HOW CAN LONDON'S BRIDGES BECOME SPACES FOR PEOPLE?

Issues:

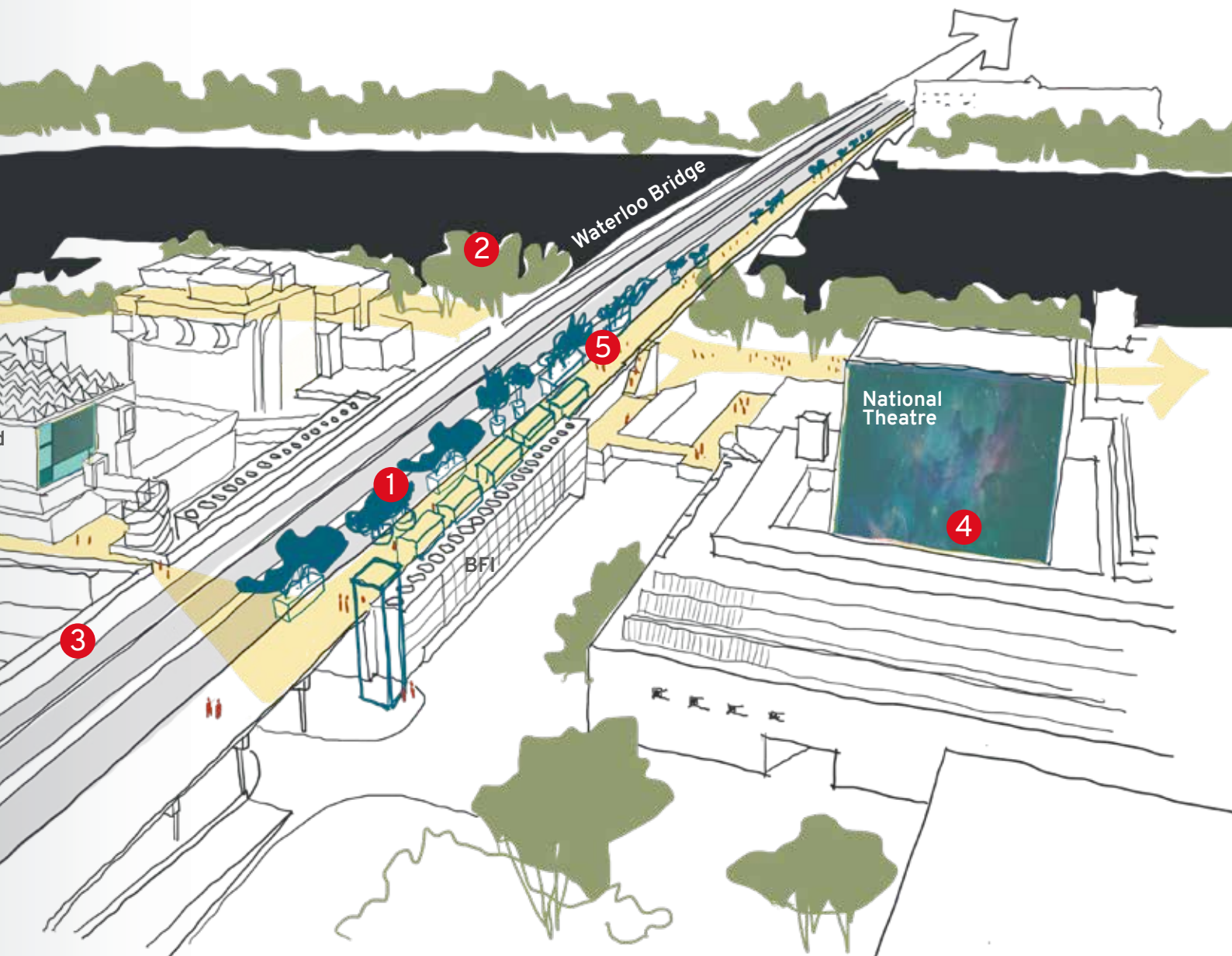
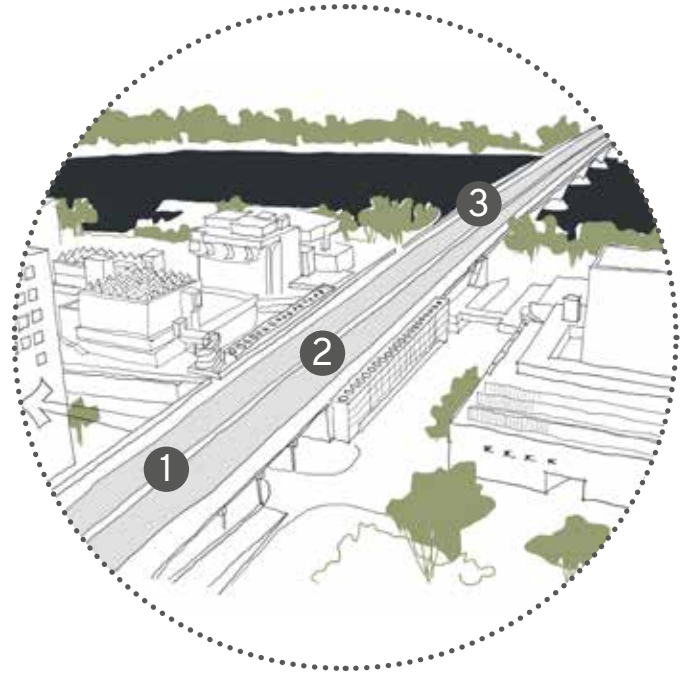
- 1 Car-dominated with poor quality of pedestrian spaces; a lack of legibility of threshold between bridge and surrounding areas and stations.
- 2 Lack of quality retail or food & beverage offer that inspires people to spend time.
- 3 Lack of spaces to dwell along the bridge, including due to safety concerns.

Opportunities:

A BRIDGE TO DWELL

- 1 **Activated.** Pop-up food stalls and market.
- 2 **A greener infrastructure.** The beginning of Cross Rail for Walkers.
- 3 **People, not cars.** Wider pavement for pedestrians and safer cycling infrastructure.
- 4 **Arts and culture.** Integrated strategies on pavement and Southbank buildings.
- 5 **A revived Thames riverfront.** Improved access and connection to Southbank.



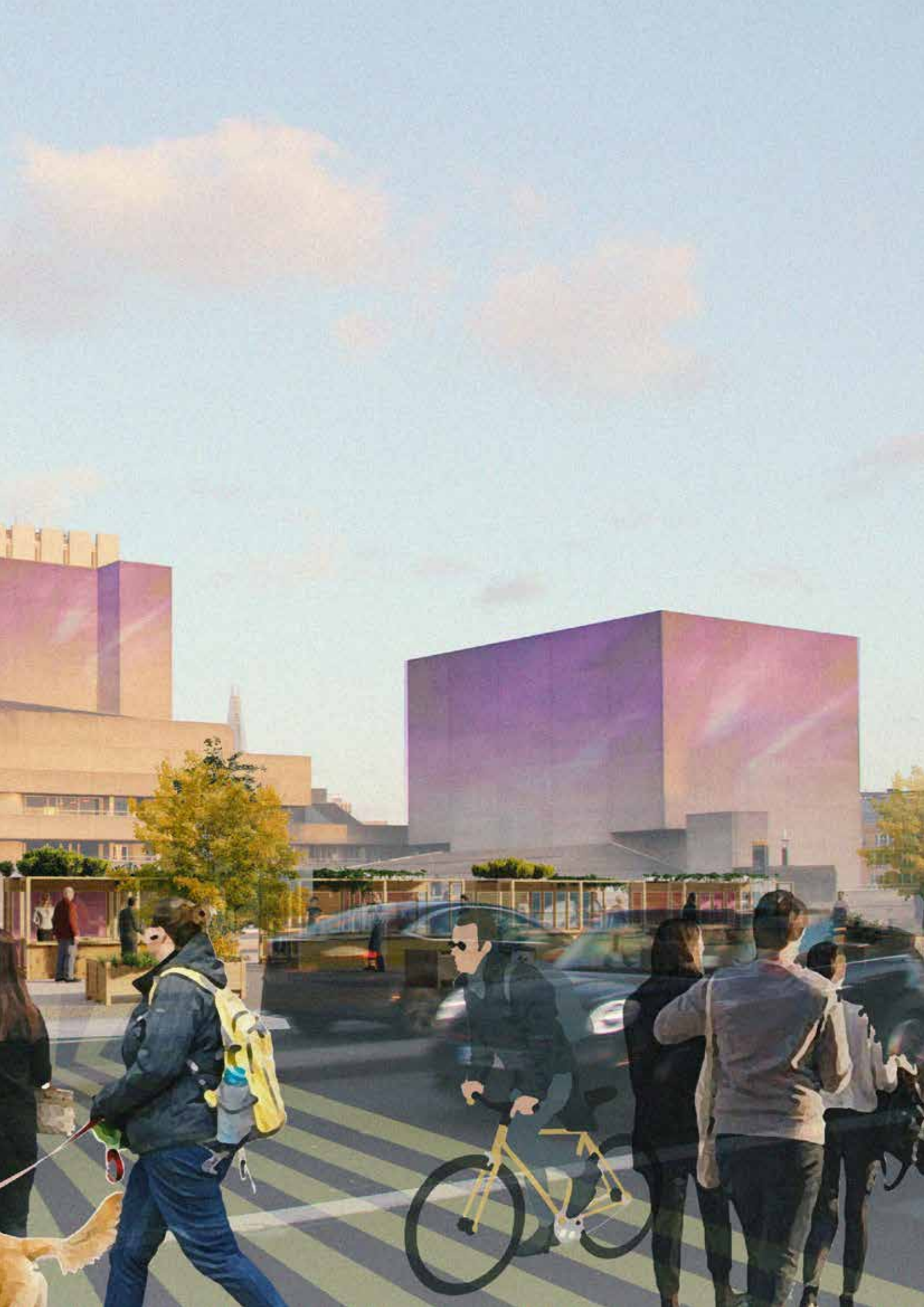


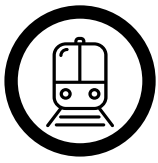


Bridges: Waterloo

A BRIDGE TO DWELL







Stations: Charing Cross

HOW CAN OUR COMMUTER HUBS ADAPT AND EVOLVE?

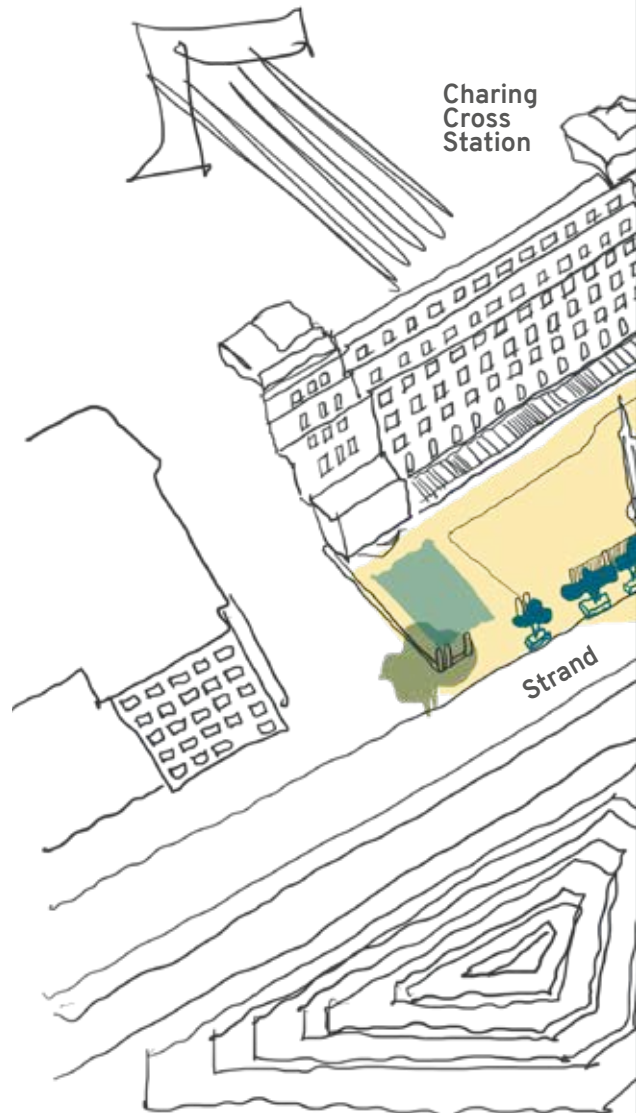
Issues:

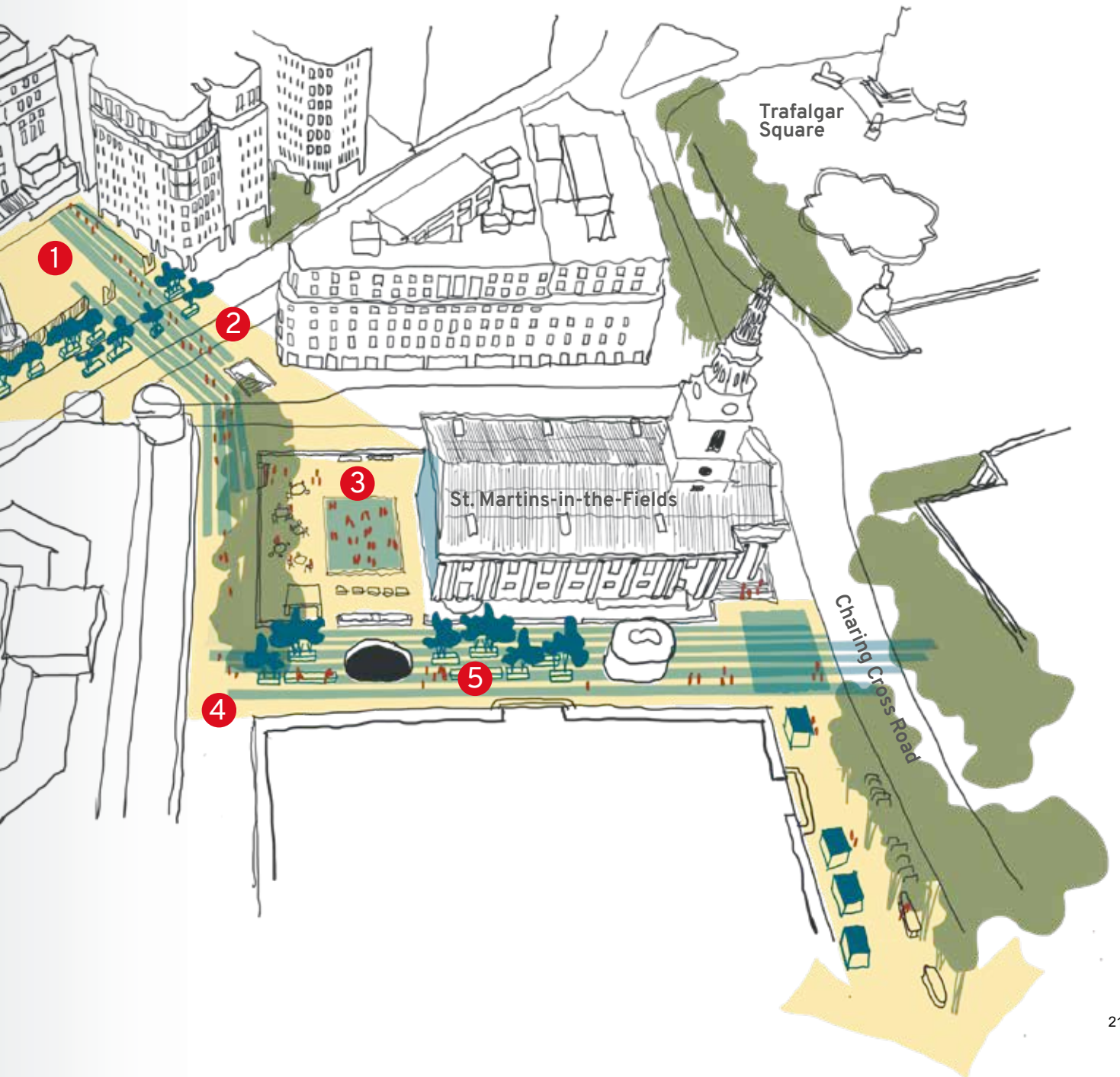
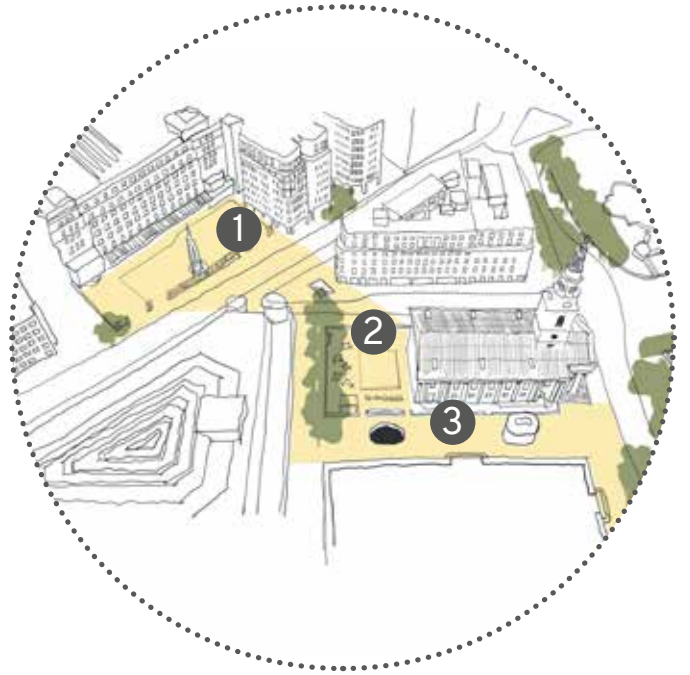
- 1 Poor spatial legibility and lack of space for flow of pedestrians.
- 2 Lack of comfortable spaces to meet and dwell.
- 3 Underused threshold for visitors entering into London; absence of a “front door” for the city.

Opportunities:

A CULTURAL FOYER

- 1 **Promoting Living Stations Principles:** Incorporating future mobility, inclusive growth, and healthy communities.
- 2 **Visual connectivity and improved safety.**
- 3 **Cultural overlaps.** Collaboration in integrating art intervention and cultural events.
- 4 **Public space networks.** Enhancing the threshold that connects to Central London.
- 5 **Biodiversity corridors.** Green pockets and resting areas.







Stations: Charing Cross

A CULTURAL FOYER











Shopping Streets: TCR

HOW CAN WE REVIVE THESE CHALLENGES PLACES?

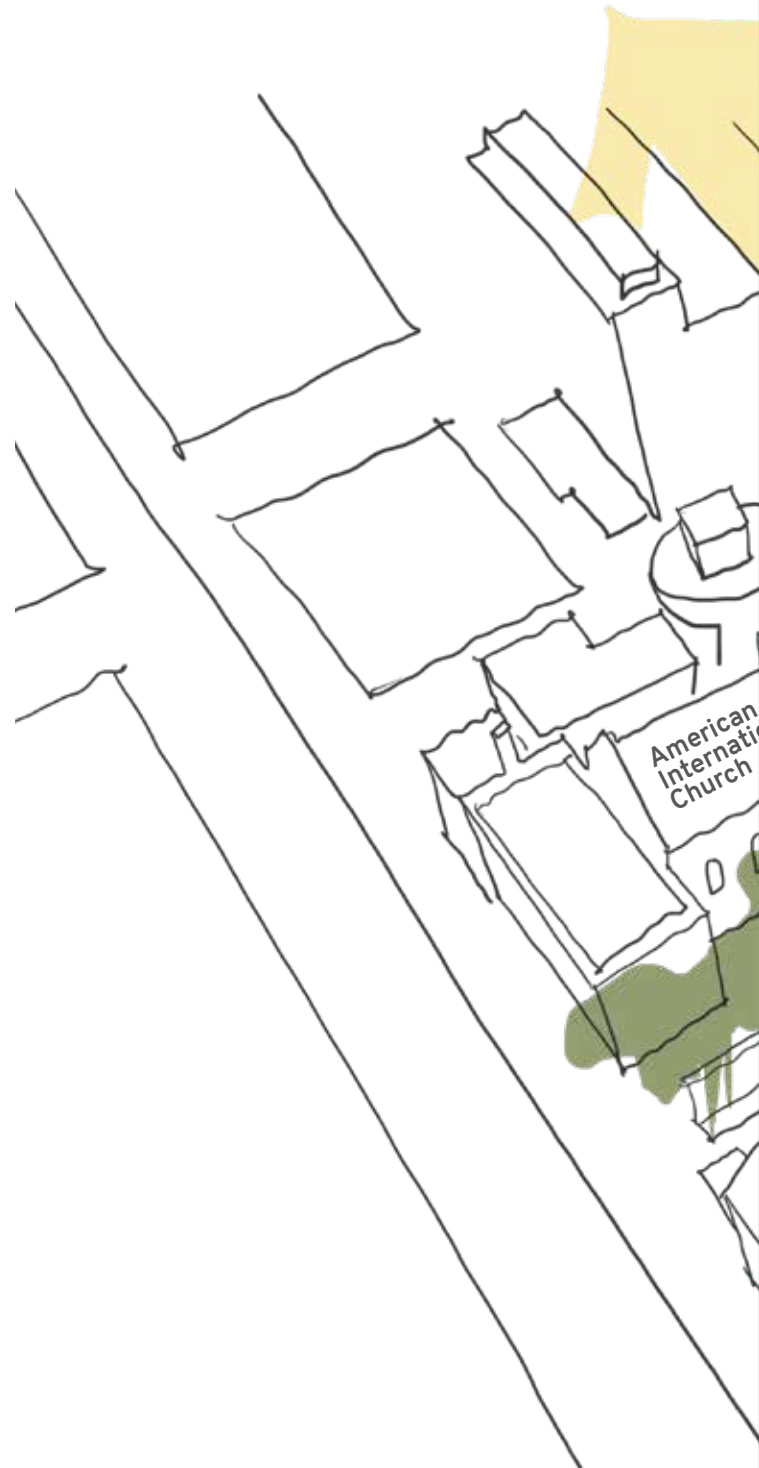
Issues:

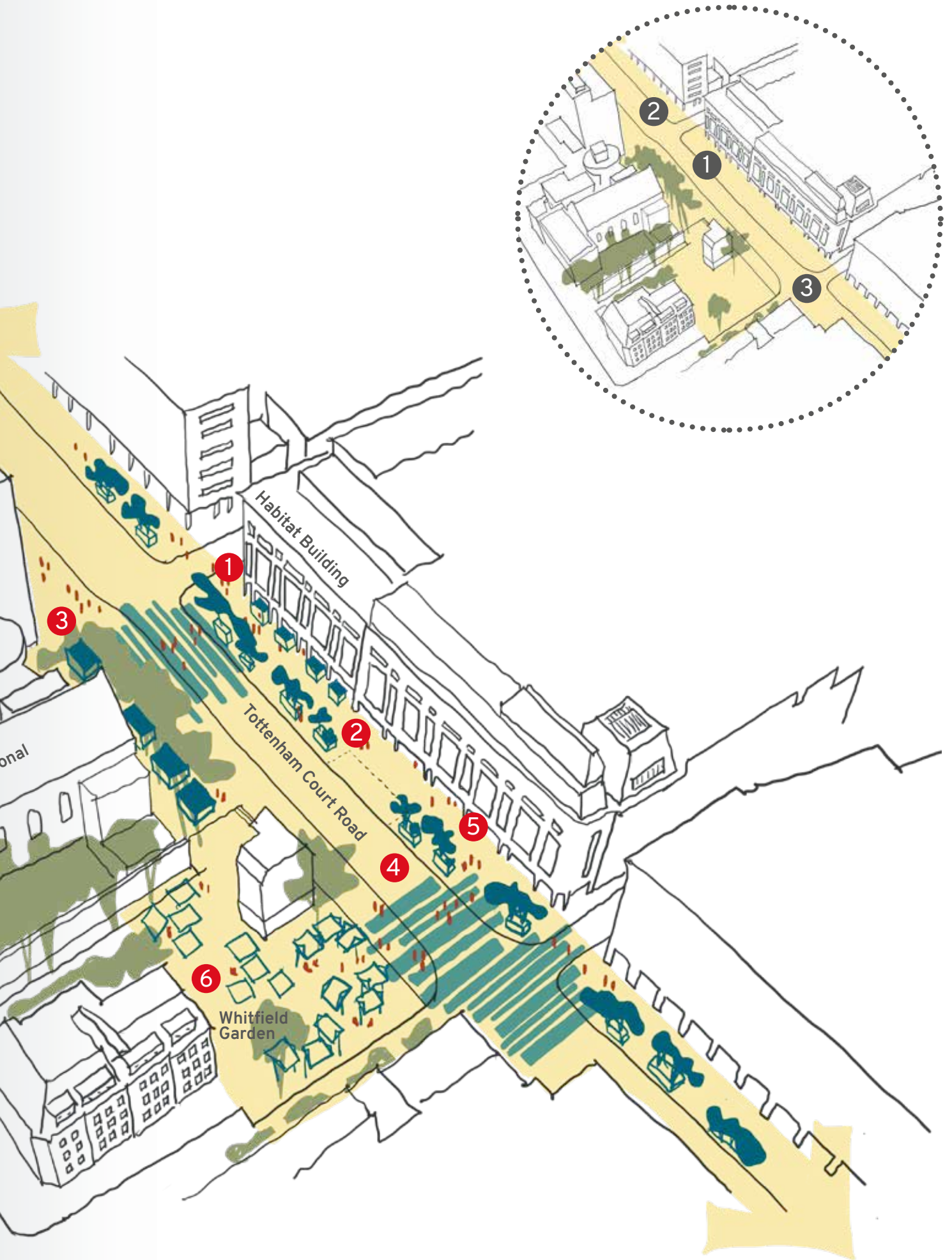
- 1 Vacant shopfronts as a result of declining footfall and store closures.
- 2 Lack of vibrancy and activity.
- 3 Lack of seating furniture and green pockets along the street to beckon shoppers and visitors to dwell.

Opportunities:

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL STREET

- 1 **Retail challenges.** Re-activating shop fronts for local artists and makers use.
- 2 **Retail innovations.** Re-thinking traditional retail.
- 3 **Temporary uses.** Refreshed pop-up food market.
- 4 **Promoting walking and cycling.** Making it safer and more attractive experience with art interventions on the pavement.
- 5 **More green!** Green pockets, planters and seating furniture along TCR.
- 6 **Places to stay.** Pocket parks with seating and sheltered areas to eat out.







Shopping Streets: TCR

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL STREET







Business Neighbourhoods: Fitzrovia

HOW CAN BUSINESSES POSITIVELY SHAPE THEIR NEIGHBOURHOODS?

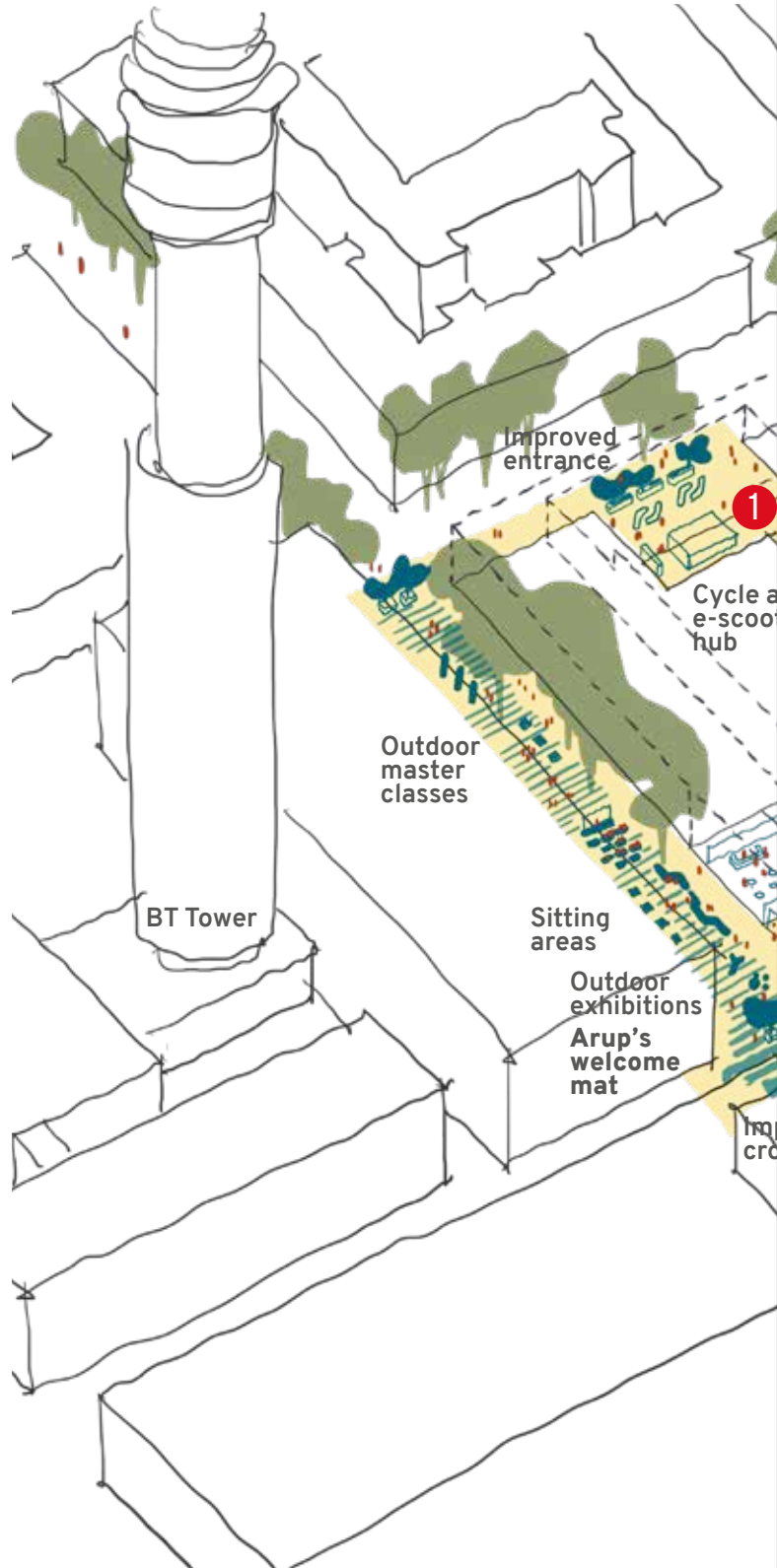
Issues:

- 1 Reluctance of staff to return to offices
- 2 Lack of safe and comfortable open spaces for outdoor working and social interaction
- 3 Lack of suitable and safe active travel infrastructure
- 4 Drop in footfall and impact on surrounding local businesses

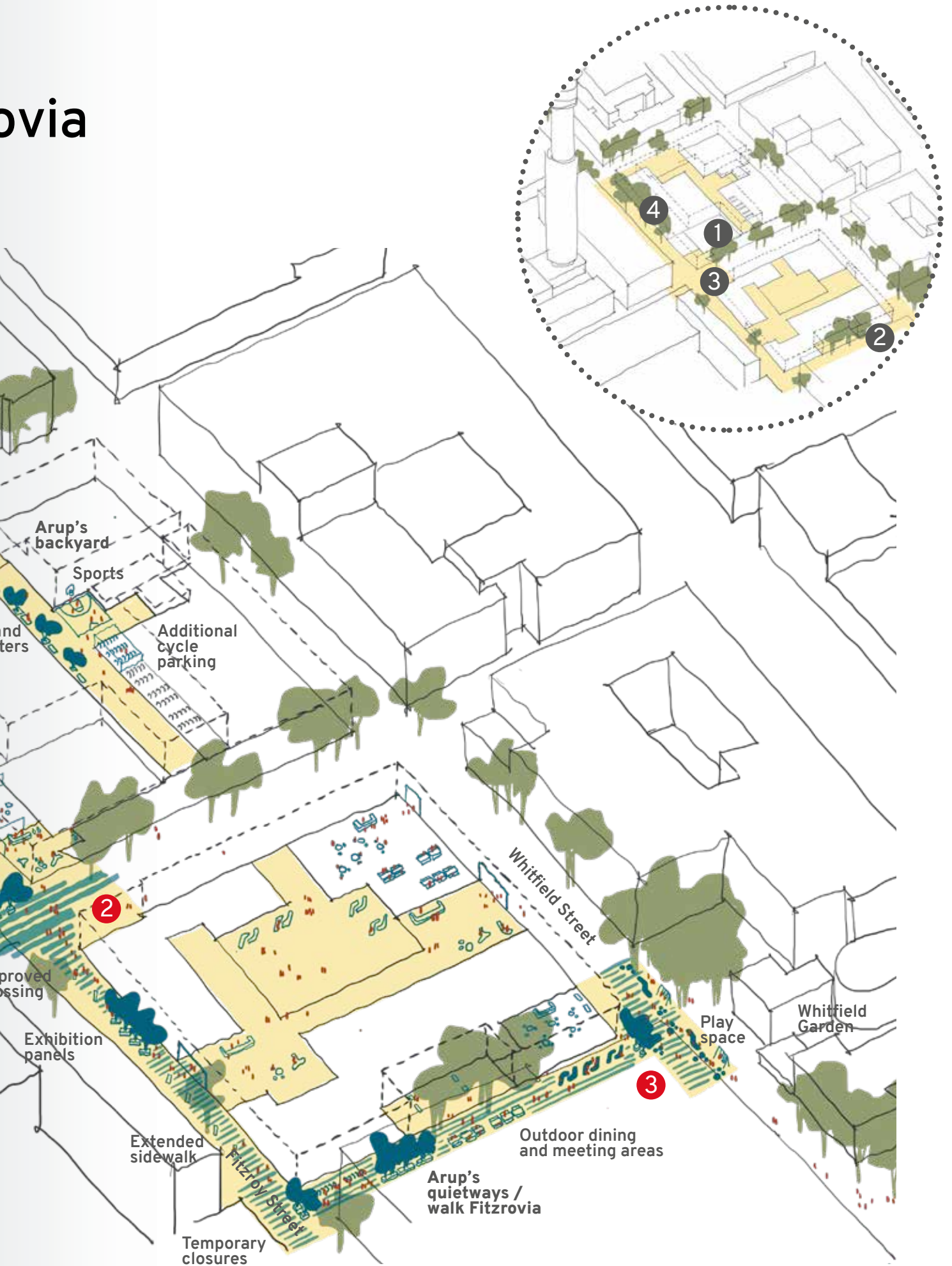
Opportunities:

WORKSPACE CAMPUS

- 1 **Support and encourage workers returning to the office with:** Active travel and cycle infrastructure; Experiential and social activities; Flexible working, including outdoor meeting spaces.
- 2 **Create a 'neighbourhood' feel around the office:** Foster a creative community and district; Enhance existing and create new partnerships and collaborations with businesses, academia, hospitality sectors.
- 3 **Contribute to the recovery of business neighbourhoods and wider London:** Build on existing successful urban interventions and contribution e with art interventions on the pavement.



ovia





Business Neighbourhoods: Fitzro

WORKSPACE CAMPUS



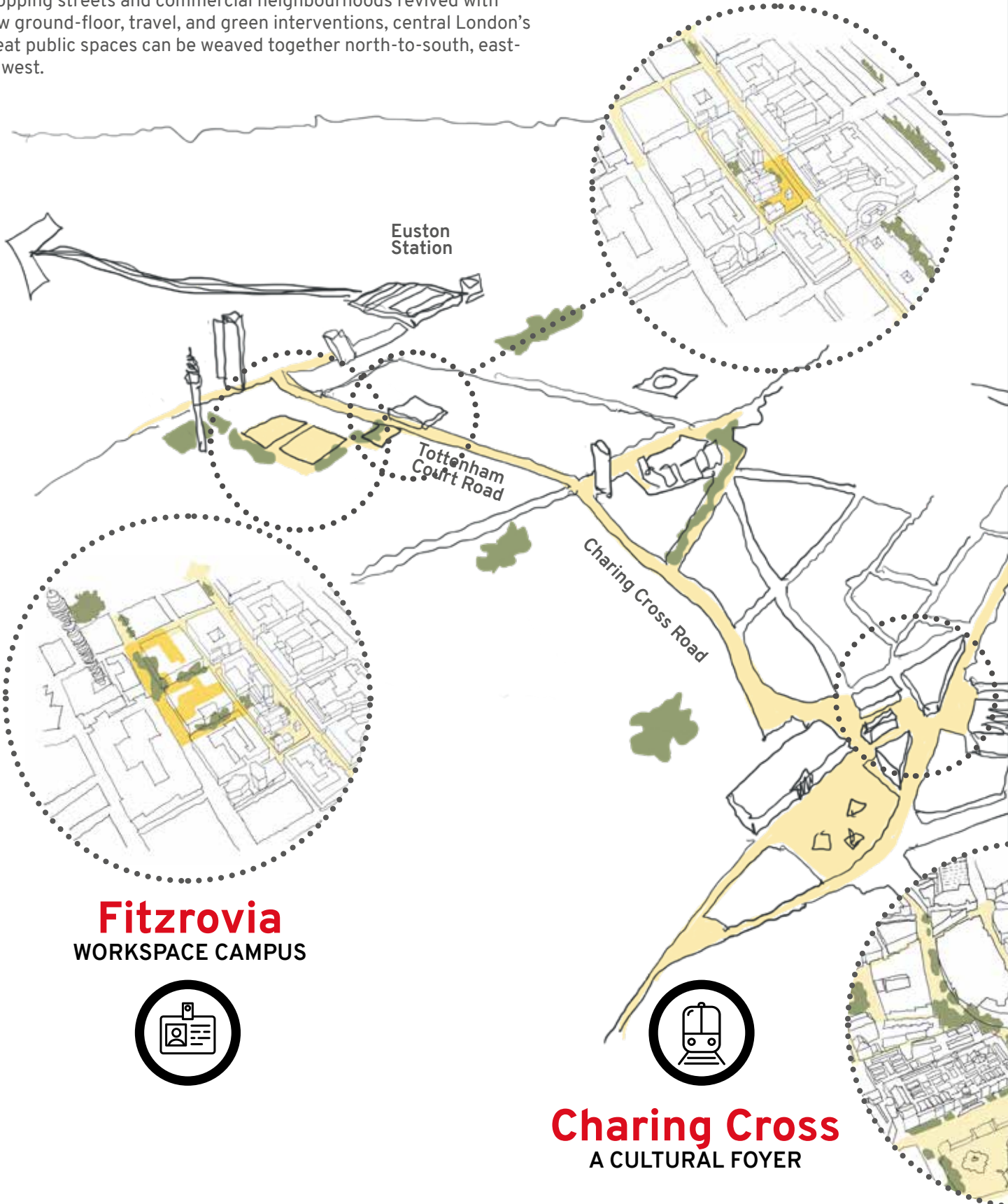
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Combining interventions across neighbourhoods and typologies can lead to transformational change across London's public realm. With bridges that invite connection across the rivers as Cross Rail for Walkers, stations that act as a true front door to the city, and shopping streets and commercial neighbourhoods revived with new ground-floor, travel, and green interventions, central London's great public spaces can be woven together north-to-south, east-to-west.

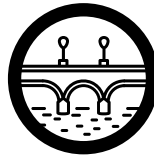
TCR AN ENTREPRENEURIAL STREET



Fitzrovia WORKSPACE CAMPUS



Charing Cross A CULTURAL FOYER



Waterloo

A BRIDGE TO DWELL



Tactical implementation

IDEAS FOR IMMEDIATE INTERVENTIONS

To realise visions of London's future public realm will require bold ambitions coupled with achievable short-term wins. The rapid, tactical approach utilised during lockdown has demonstrated the power of delivering with speed, flexibility, and pilots.

Before the pandemic, Boroughs, BIDs, and local stakeholders have set out compelling cases for investment in their growing and thriving – and in many cases congested and ‘bursting at the seams’ – places. But the uncertainty of the pandemic, along with reduced budgets, have put many plans on hold.

Thus, short-term, tactical interventions - shown in the kit of parts below - can help support the case for longer-term investment programmes while getting stakes in the ground. The ideas proposed here do not preclude existing strategies, rather they recommend an iterative approach that meet immediate needs of places now, using interventions to demonstrate the case and deliverability of the longer-term investment programmes.

Canopies and Shelters



BCN Re.set Urban Circuit, EMBT (Barcelona)



Umbrellas for Pink Floyd's 1977 concert tour, Frei Otto (USA)



2009 Serpentine Pavilion, SANAA (London)

Pop-ups and Market Stalls



Spitalfields Market (London)



The Book Stop Project, William Ti (Phillippines)



Boxpark Wembley (London)



TEMPORARY OVERLAY

Recognising that longer-term plans and strategies may be in strain, these temporary overlay strategies are focussed on immediate impact and can easily be removed to make way for more permanent interventions.



SHORT-TERM TRIAL

Building off existing strategies or longer-term plans, lower-cost tactical interventions are put in place to meet immediate needs and demonstrate potential impact. Think of this as a trial for the longer-term goal.



LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

It is important to keep an eye on the longer-term strategy. Boroughs and BIDs have developed business cases and designs for their places, and the temporary overlay and short-term trials should be used to reinforce the strategic case or demonstrate the deliverability of the long-term projects.

Urban Furniture and Green Pockets



Planters in Regent St., BDP+Urban SF(London)

Art Events and Digital Strategies



Sydney Lights, Opera House (Australia)

Crossings and Pavements



"Les Jumeaux" street artwork, Camille Walala (London)



Tree Courtyard, MAT Office (China)



Central St.Martins (London)



"Superilla" Sant Antoni, Leku Studio (Barcelona)



High Line, James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Piet Oudolf (New York City)



Lumiere Festival (London)



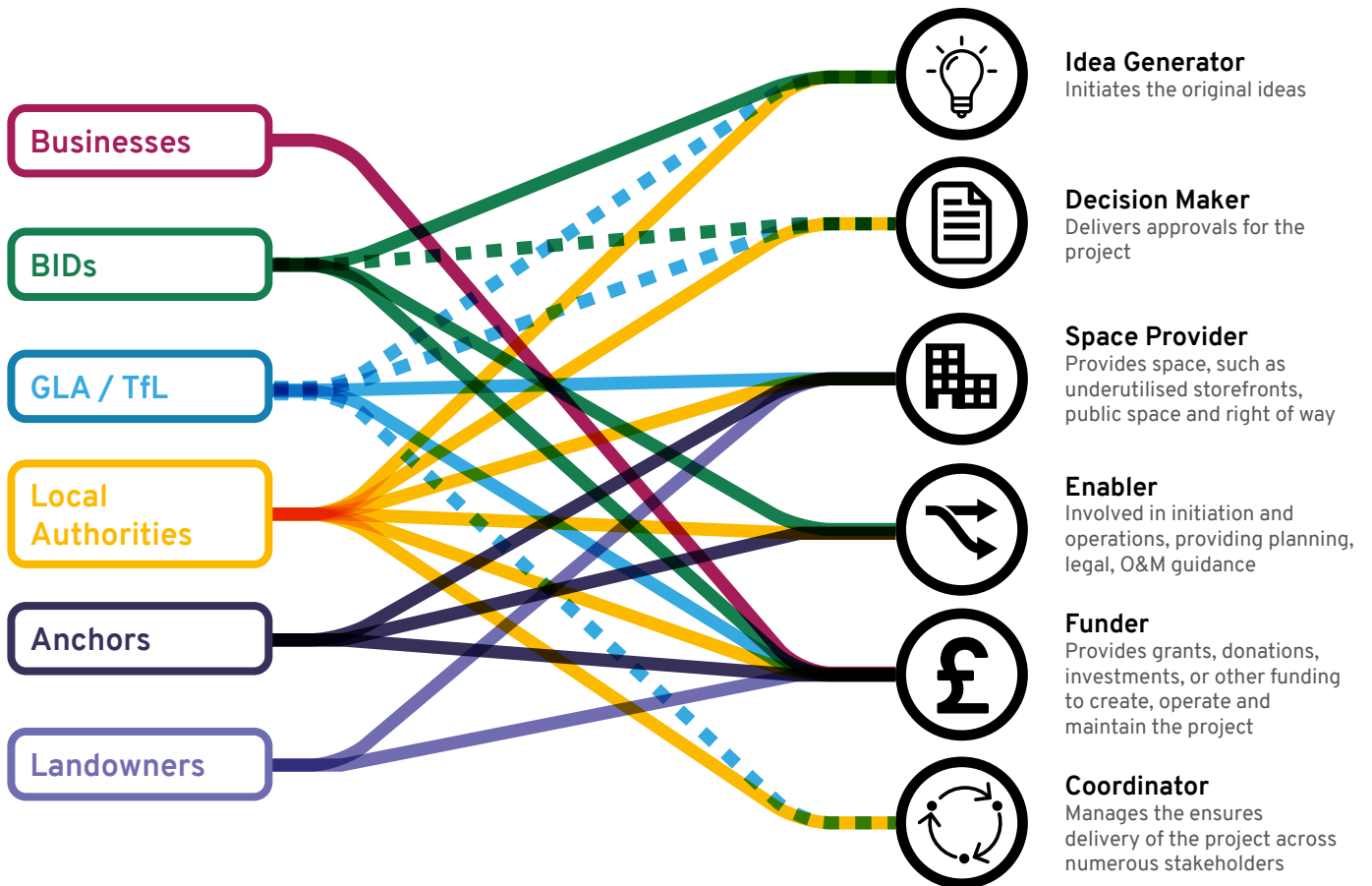
Superkilen Park, Topotek1 + BIG Architects + Superflex (Copenhagen)

Delivery

HOW CAN WE IMPLEMENT THE VISION?

Across central London, and in the four places highlighted specifically, a number of stakeholders have deeply vested interest in the success of the public realm. For local BID's with experience in coordination and funding, to major landowners who can provide space, to local authorities with powers in decision-making, a variety of roles and responsibilities can be divided across delivery models.

Public realm interventions will require the collaboration of myriad local actors, who can play central roles in delivery. Illustratively, there are a number of essential roles required to be filled by local government and its partners:



PRINCIPLES FOR DELIVERY

Regardless of who holds the roles and responsibilities, experience from the successes - and tensions - of delivering tactical public realm interventions during the Covid-19 pandemic, have demonstrated the following principles:

DELIVER SMALL AND LOCALLY

Residents and businesses are often most passionate about the places closest to them, so smaller, local interventions can harness local energy and investment. A broad church of local players --each executing a variety of tactical and feasible projects-- can create energy within the neighbourhood. This happening across the city can generate the critical mass to transform connectivity and the pedestrian experience for all of central London.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Collaboration is key to realising local projects. Partnerships with landowners, universities and cultural institutions, major employers, and other stakeholders with vested interest in the area helps to maximise access and more effectively coordinate capital, resources, and land.

DEVOLVED DECISION-MAKING

While city-wide plans are critical as London emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic, decision-making at the neighbourhood level will help ensure speed, accountability, and ownership of delivery. Moreover, local actors will more deeply understand local context and resources available to foster better decision-making and match-make challenges and opportunities.

KEY ROLE FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The experiences of creative, quick delivery during the pandemic response demonstrated the critical role of the local authority in realising public realm projects. Local authorities hold meaningful levers, from powers related to planning, licensing, policy, enforcement, and incentives, to facilitate public realm improvements.

SEED FUNDING

A pot of seed funding can make possible catalytic, pilot projects that can demonstrate quick success (or quickly prove failure) without committing significant capital or planning time, which will be particularly helpful as many funding sources and stakeholders are facing constraints coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Funding and value

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY

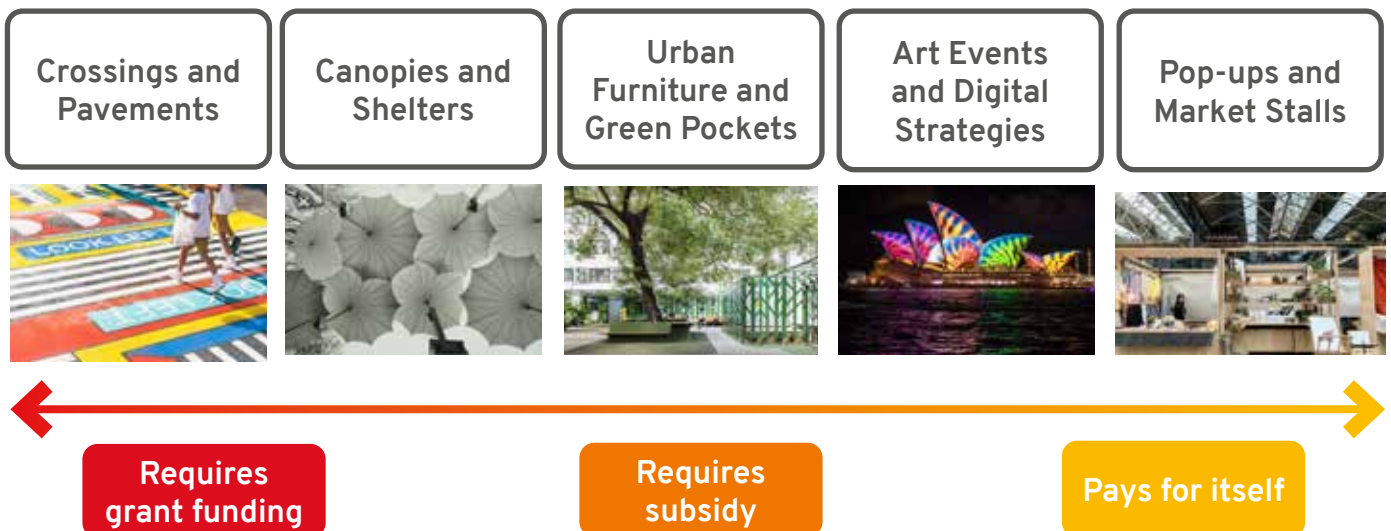
When considering how to fund public realm improvements, investments fall into three suites:

1. Requires grant funding, as a public good: Projects which may deliver good public value but may not be financially feasible for the private sector due to market failures, often rely on public sector funding. Common instances include the provision of public goods that everyone can enjoy, but there is no mechanism for the private sector to provide it. In these instances, where there is a good value-for-money to society, there may be a rationale for the public sector to fund the work. However, as with any prudent public spending, a solid business case should be built which sets out the strategic case for the spending, the economic value for money, the financial affordability, commercial deliverability and manageability.

2. Requires subsidy, with some potential to generate public and private value (directly or indirectly): Some projects generate a degree of revenues or may attract some funding from the private sector, but that may not be sufficient to make the intervention viable. Public-private co-funding can help bridge the gap that neither party can deliver on their own. The onus to demonstrate public benefit and deliverability still exists, but the impact on the public purse is not as great. The trade-off in these interventions is often that they become 'excludable' – or that limits of access due to limited space or fees may mean that it is not open to everyone in the public. This is an important trade-off and consideration in taking this approach.

3. Pays for itself, through private revenue streams: Some projects will be able to be fully-funded by the private sector because it can bring substantial private returns in the market. That is not to say that it may not generate public benefits as well, but substantial private benefits can be captured through fees or rents. This presents a much more affordable option to the local authority, but cannot always be achieved or may have drawbacks with affordability and accessibility to the public.

Elements from the kit of parts fall into a spectrum, though the specific design and location of interventions will also determine its revenue-generating potential.





The South Bank Undercroft, a historic skateboarding space, was funded and reopened after the local community approached Southbank Centre, with restoration of original features and new walls, pavement light panels, and barriers.

Funding: The project was supported by the London Marathon Charitable Trust which donated the first £200,000 and other funds such as Architectural Heritage Fund, topped up with Mayor of London's Good Growth Fund.

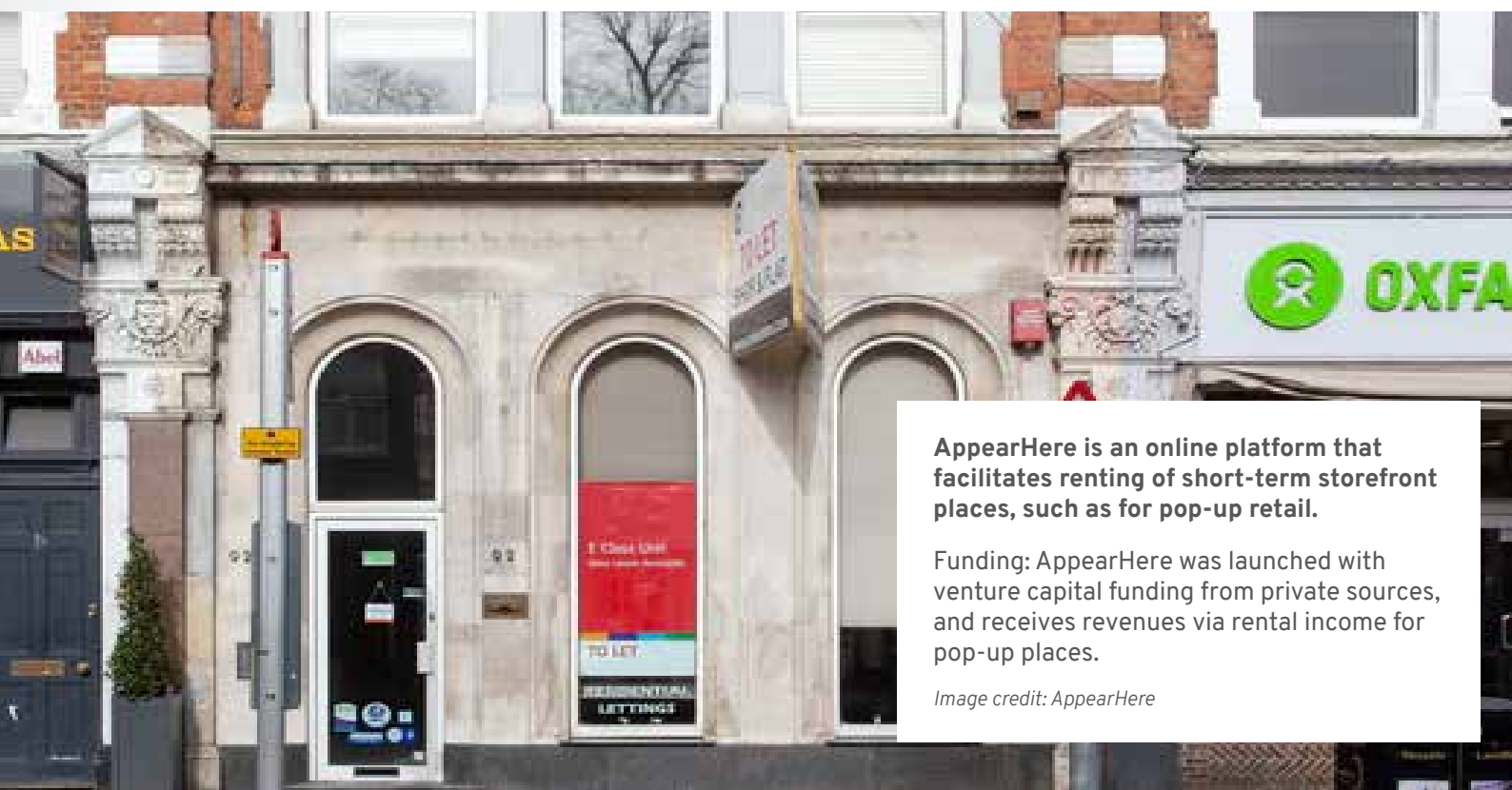
Image credit: NLA



Build Up Hackney was designed and created with participation from local young people, aimed as an inclusive project for the community, with a meadow, integrated seating, and artwork.

Funding: Build Up Hackney was funded by crowd-funding, Wick Award (a local community development organisation), and the Mayor of London.

Image credit: NLA



AppearHere is an online platform that facilitates renting of short-term storefront places, such as for pop-up retail.

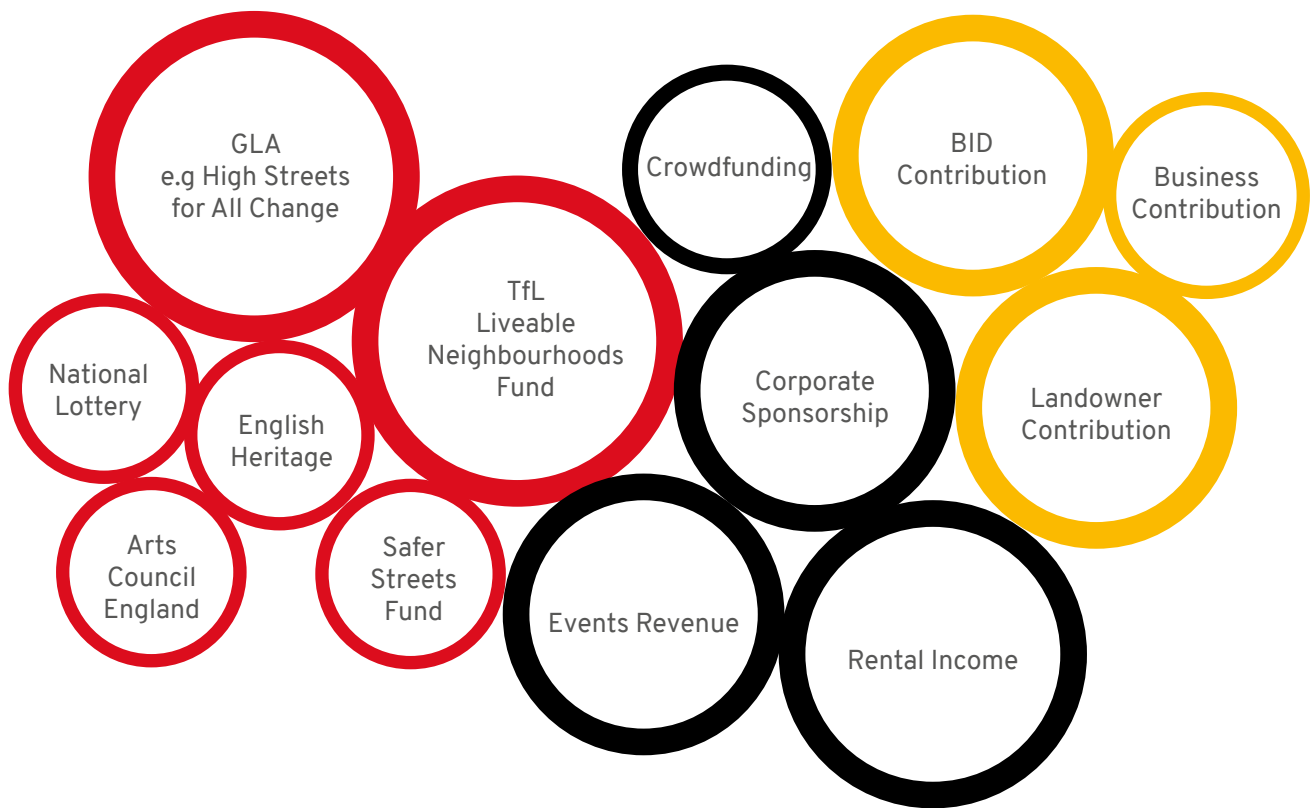
Funding: AppearHere was launched with venture capital funding from private sources, and receives revenues via rental income for pop-up places.

Image credit: AppearHere

WHY SHOULD PRIVATE (AND PUBLIC) ACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC REALM INTERVENTIONS?

Global precedents show that public realm interventions can contribute from 5%-35% increase in footfall. Even a conservative 5-10% increase can lead to 150,000 to 500,000 in additional foot traffic annually in each of the four nodes. Based on typical spending profiles for visitors and workers, this additional foot traffic can potentially generate £5- £10 million near Waterloo, Fitzrovia, and TCR, and £15- £30 million near Charing Cross. Businesses that will benefit - including in retail, food and beverage, and entertainment sectors, can have knock-on effects with increased rent and land values, as well as business rates.

Depending on the ability of the intervention to generate public or private value, public realm investments can draw from a combination of the below sources, including grant funding, earned income, and private contributions.¹



Examples of past funding sources²:

- Grants
- Earned Income
- Private Contribution

¹Source: Living Streets. Pedestrian Pound. 2018
Arup and GLA. The economic future of the Central Activities Zone. 2021.

²Source: Springboard, Southbank BID, O2, Greater London Authority, Arup analysis

WHAT ARE OTHER FUNDING OPTIONS TO EXPLORE?

With existing funding sources facing new constraints in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, more analysis will be needed to design creative strategies to secure funding for the public realm in the future. These might include:



Creating pooled investment fund:

Multiple stakeholders, such as BIDs from neighbouring districts or those with shared interests, can collectively fund investments that benefit the overall vitality of central London. A collective funding method can increase resilience while protecting central London-wide interests.



Launching Environmental Impact Bonds:

In places like Atlanta, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. in the United States, cities have launched environmental impact bonds with the help of philanthropic, business, and community partners to fund green infrastructure projects. While these have been particularly focused on areas such as water management, they may be tied to ancillary benefits related to public and open space.



Deepening partnerships with philanthropy:

The intersection of public space and philanthropy has been growing in many parts of the world. New open spaces, such as New York City's Little Island, have depended heavily on philanthropic contributions. Strengthening of partnerships with charities and philanthropic sector - focused on the ability of the public realm to deliver goals around health, community cohesion, and inclusivity, might open new funding channels.



Exploring longer term changes to rates or value capture:

In the longer term, reform of business rates or public incentives can offer significant sources of funding. HMT, for example, has issued a Call for Evidence in 2020 for a review of the existing business rate system, including potential to implement an online sales tax. Potential capture of these taxes towards a high street transition fund, or for other public realm investments, can be a future goal for local stakeholders.

Next Steps

CALL FOR ACTION AND COLLABORATION

This document aims to spark discussion on **the future of London's public realm**, and pose questions and ideas for what can become of the city's great spaces.

We realise that moving towards a future London will require the collaboration of organisations and Londoners of all background, experiences, and expertise. We invite you to contribute your ideas for what the public realm of London should look like, as part of Covid-19 recovery and beyond.

To submit projects, ideas, and interest in collaboration, please reach out to cities@arup.com.





Using the benefits of tactical interventions, the “Superilles” in Barcelona are re-claiming the public realm from the cars to the people: as greener pockets, spaces to gather, lively streets.

Image source: Archdaily

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