

SEVEN DIALS TRUST REPOSE TO CAMDEN STREET PROPOSALS

Wp ref: 7D/LBC/2022 12 16 Camden proposals

<https://www.sevendialscoventgarden.study/>

In responding to the proposals for works to the streets in Seven Dials, the Seven Dials Trust's fundamental principles are:

1) To protect the unique historic streetscape and layout of Seven Dials including footways of equal width except where engineering requirements necessitate minor variations;

2) To follow the recommendations laid out in the new Seven Dials / Covent Garden Study in respect of materials and that the proposed template (which extends into the Covent Garden CA) should be adopted by both Camden and Westminster in the long term:

https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/?page_id=465

3) That widening of footways must be for the benefit of pedestrians;

4) That kerbs should be retained and all proposals should have granite kerbs;

5) That there should be no annexation of public space for commercial usage;

6) That any al fresco dining should be clearly attached to specific, food-led and ground floor premises who will have the responsibility to ensure there is no obstruction and to manage noise and any anti-social behaviour:

https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/?page_id=6899

7) That planters are inappropriate in the context of Seven Dials' hard urban streetscape and are another form of street clutter. Greening should follow the tradition of window boxes, and as agreed, tree clusters and should not have the potential to obscure the view of the Sundial Pillar;

8) That the particular characteristics of high density mixed use streets inform all proposals so that the needs of upper floor users, whether residents or other users are taken into account.

9) The Trust is guided by the Seven Dials-Covent Garden Study:

https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/?page_id=285

Camden's Introduction.

As the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport wrote in the previous edition of the Study, *"Its aim is to set out a coherent approach for the maintenance and enhancement of complex historic areas, as an example for others to follow. It deals with the problems facing an historic area with a high level of economic activity."*

Seven Dials is one of England's key conservation areas. In addition to the unique layout, Seven Dials is composed of high density mixed use streets with many residents as well as the high level of economic activity referred to by the Secretary of State. The updated Study aims to balance the needs of all

stakeholders and provide a long term vision for improvements of buildings in private ownership and public spaces between in Council ownership.

The 2015 Public Realm Strategy did not follow on from the 1998 Renaissance Study or respects the principles above, neither was it subject of any public consultation. Its 'conceptual principles' (based on a make believe 'village') would be liable to turn a historic area into a form of branded theme park.

Camden's Introduction to the current proposals refers to '... a set of conceptual principles to aid in the delivery of a new public realm'. Seven Dials does not need **a new public realm**. The Introduction refers to '*exciting opportunities...*' and '*... the temporary schemes have also served as a good test to longer term opportunities.*' These temporary schemes were intended to support hospitality during the pandemic and now that the West End and Covent Garden are swiftly becoming as they were pre pandemic this rationale no longer applies.

Earlham Street East

The Proposals: Narrow carriageway on south side to create a very much wider footway on north side, but that in two zones. A traditional footway adjacent to the buildings and a strip of tables and chairs in what was the north side of the carriageway, but in footway materials and pads in granite (as Earlham Street West). Overall, a 'lop sided' composition. The existing paving materials appear to be lost rather than re-used. The colouration of the setted part of the street appears to be different to the established palette in the area.

The Trust rejects this proposal and would like to see wider footways on both sides with, if required by and licensed to individual premises, bistro strips on the relevant building face.

Note: bistro strips are rows of tables with two chairs adjacent to the facades (e.g. Mercer Street & Covent Garden Hotels, 6 below).

Monmouth Street South

The Proposals are similar to those for Earlham Street East, with a lop-sided feel to the paving. The public space containing seating and planting appears to be an odd disposition of trees and equipment. This needs further understanding of whether tree pits and good growing conditions are possible where trees are proposed. Is it a cluster with some meaning and part of a strategy for tree disposition or random planting? The placement of seating does not appear to be planned with any analysis of desire lines or movement patterns. This proposal raises the issue of people congregating and anti-social behaviour. The colouration of the setted part of the street appears to be different to the

established palette in the area. The reasoning for the exceptionally narrow ‘throat’ as the ‘Gateway to Seven Dials’ seems counter intuitive.

The Trust rejects this proposal and would like to see wider footways on both sides with, if required by and licensed to individual premises, bistro strips on the relevant building face.

Neal Street

The Proposal is another lop-sided composition, but it does eliminate the former chicane arrangement and poor materials. The colouration of the setted part of the street appears to be different to the established palette in the area. This puts dining just off the centre of the highway in an area where there are extensive mixed uses in the upper floors. Trees are lost in the northern part of the street, which restores its urban feeling. The upgrading of materials to those more in keeping with ‘Streets for All’ advice is welcomed, as is the removal of the old slalom. But each new bollard needs to earn its place in the street. In this case the narrow 7D bollard on NAL sockets could be used to prevent footway parking. A detached margin of tables and chairs creates conflict between serving staff and through pedestrians and acoustic analysis demonstrates that location near the centreline of the streets causes more annoyance to occupiers of upper floors than a ‘bistro strip’ of a table and 2 chairs in front of the shopfront with suitable warnings for long cane users.

The Trust rejects this proposal and would like to see wider footways on both sides with, if required by and licensed to individual premises, bistro strips on the relevant building face.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STREETS NOT IN CURRENT PROPOSAL

<p>The Dials</p>	<p>https://sevendialscovetgarden.study/?page_id=483 Study suggested maintenance of the perimeter and the ‘cartwheel’ but substitution of granite setts in the same pattern and module as the 100 x 200 concrete pavers are looking tired and new, granite setts would rejuvenate the space. The tree stock will need maintenance and replacement when it gets out of scale. One is at that stage. The 7th location would mask the Sundial Recommendation: The Trust would like to see the upgrading of the Dial segments to granite and the trees to keep the correct scale.</p>
<p>Earlham Street West</p>	<p>Regarded as model – wider footways, some areas in stronger materials to make service ‘pads’. The</p>

	<p>carriageway ribbon is narrow but almost central. Bias given to sunnier side. Slightly unbalanced where the run of pitches is located. The link to Shaftesbury Avenue more balanced, but the recent tree introduction is neither a cluster at the end nor what is established around the Dial. In time they will mask the view to the Dial. The attached photograph shows the daily reality of the parking on footways by delivery vehicles.</p> <p>Recommendation: The Trust would like the recently planted trees on the north footway removed as they will obscure the vista to the Sundial Pillar. They might be re-planted elsewhere as a cluster.</p>
Mercer Street	<p>Although a street of lesser importance, the two parts do lead the eye to the Dial and its Column and are 2/7 of the composition and should not be left without consideration.</p> <p>Recommendation: That this link is not ignored as it is a basic principle of the study that all seven approaches should have the similar look and feel.</p>
Monmouth Street North	<p>This is a principal North / South route and should be considered as one with the south part and a holistic approach evolved that deals with both parts in a similar way.</p> <p>Recommendation: request that this link is not ignored as it is a basic principle of the Study that all seven approaches should have a similar look and feel.</p>
Trees & Greening	<p>https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/?page_id=531</p> <p>Feedback from staff and consultants at the exhibition suggested that trees are very popular. This is becoming politicised. Historic England's advice for Georgian areas is that trees should be in boulevards (where there is space) squares or occasional incidents. Seven Dials has a street pattern that predates the urban pattern that this advice was intended for, but it has been the consensus that the Dial should have a circus of trees and at the junctions with Shaftesbury Avenue there can be clusters at the transition point of Neal's composition to the perimeter roads.</p> <p>The Dial trees need to be managed and in time replaced</p>

	<p>the keep the scale appropriate. There are some streets where clusters at the junctions are not inappropriate and will not mask the vista to the Dial and its column. Window boxes and green walls are the preferred means of greening.</p> <p>Recommendation: Seven Dials is a hard urban area which should not be ‘prettied up’ by random tree planting or by on-street planters. Clusters are the acceptable compromise to introduce trees (in good growing conditions) at the entry points as are window boxes. Knight’s London (1842) refers to Seven Dials as ‘...the hanging Gardens of Babylon’.</p>
<p>Tables and chairs in the street</p>	<p>The purpose of the street is access and movement, and the principles of the Highways Acts need to be remembered (that it is movement without let or hindrance that is key). Obstructions should be carefully placed by the appropriate authority bearing in mind equality legislation and in respect of trading activities, the licensing objectives to avoid nuisance from licensable activities.</p> <p>All of the streets in Seven Dials have a substantial residential population in the upper floors of premises. Al fresco dining and drinking creates the potential for disturbance particularly at night. Acoustic tests (see attachment) demonstrate the additional levels of noise created by placing tables and chairs away from the premises’ frontages – given the narrow, funnelling effect of our streets.</p> <p>https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/?page_id=6899</p> <p>Recommendation: reject the options for detached al fresco food and beverage areas and opt for wider footways and bistro strips on the building face, but only after safety equipment and pedestrian comfort is accommodated. Discourage enclosures and strips reserved for serving staff that reduce footway space for pedestrians.</p>

Appendix 1 FOOTWAY PARKING

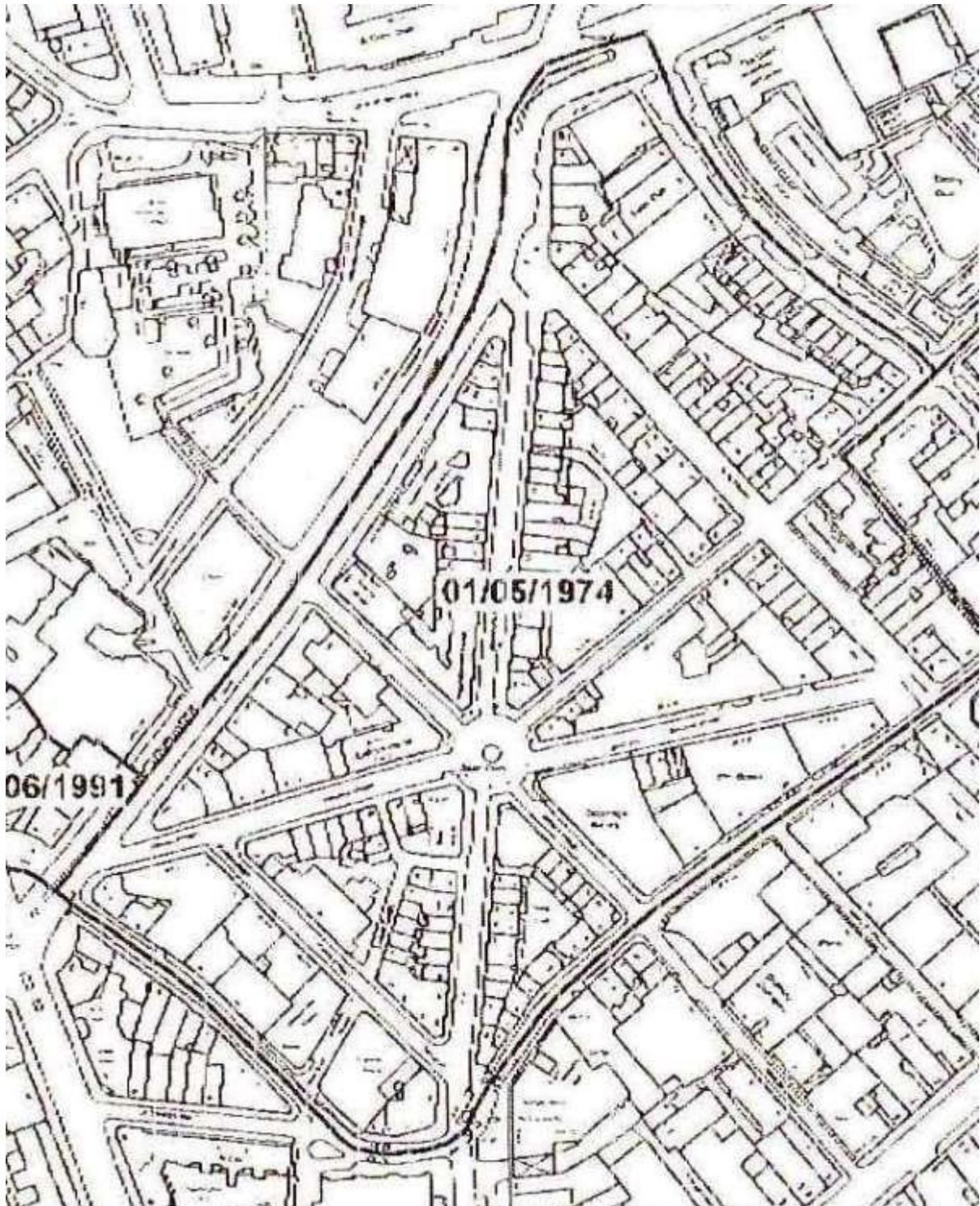


Earlam Street West footway parking.

There is little point in relying on non-existent enforcement and facts need to be confronted. The Trust proposes that the narrow Seven Dials bollard be installed on NAL sockets, at the minimum distance to prevent the above from occurring. They also serve the purpose of denoting 'Seven Dials' and as with street furniture in the past, are decorative. Given the increased pedestrian flows from the Elisabeth Line it is essential that footway widening serves to accommodate pedestrians and not parking, planters and al fresco dining.

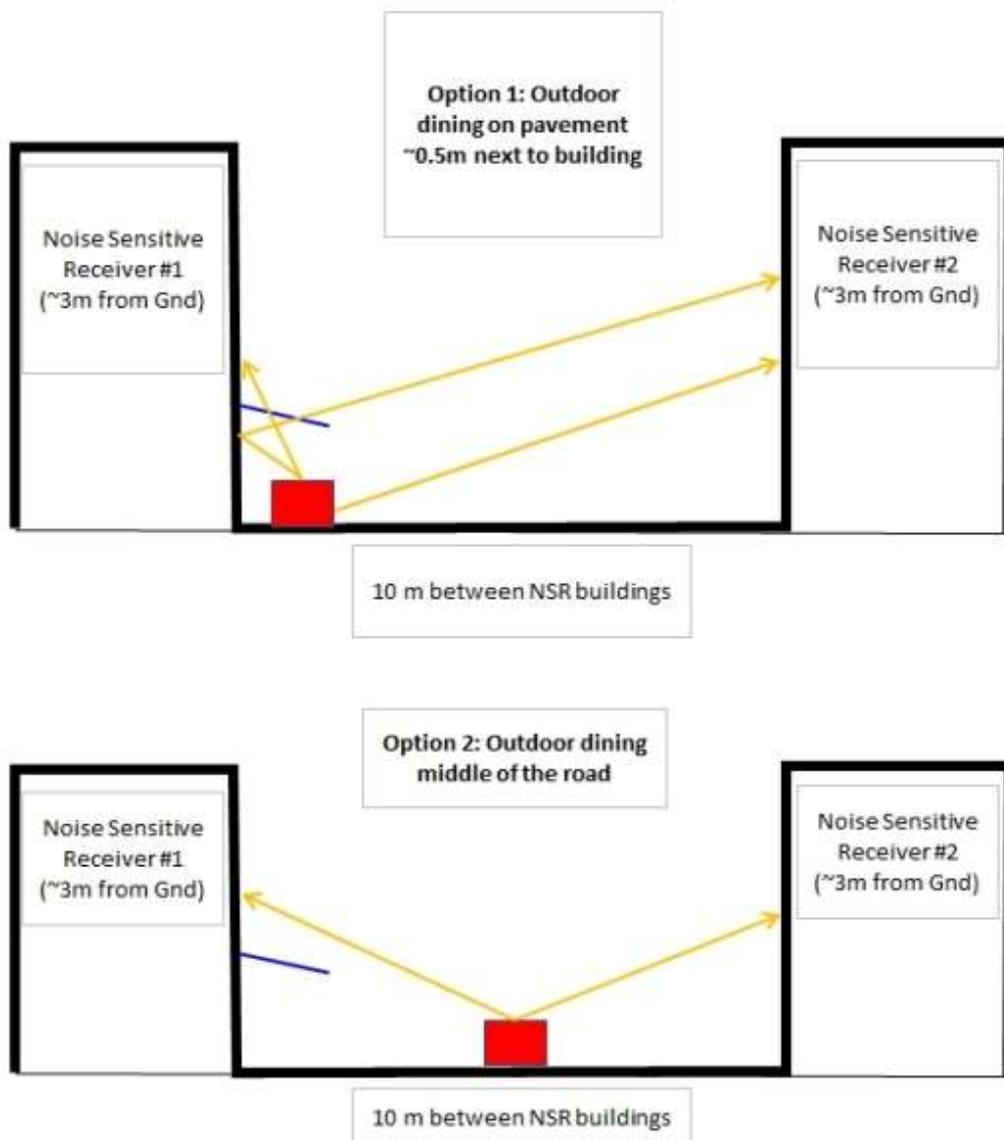
APPENDIX 2 FOOTWAYS & CARRIAGEWAYS

As far as can be seen from past maps the streets had equal width footways on both sides.



APPENDIX 3 EATING & SEATING

As can be seen from below, bistro strips with awnings above minimise noise to upper floor users, whilst seating further out maximises noise in high density mixed use streets. It is the Trust's view that in such high density mixed use streets bistro strips assist hospitality venues and minimise nuisance to upper floor users and that noise calculations should be made in advance of any new al fresco to ensure that WHO and other noise standards are adhered to.



https://sevendialscoventgarden.study/?page_id=6899

The link above leads to an Excel spreadsheet showing how noise levels can be calculated. Any al fresco dining should be clearly attached to specific, food-led and ground floor premises who will have the responsibility to ensure there is no obstruction and to manage noise and any anti-social behaviour.