



CONTEXT

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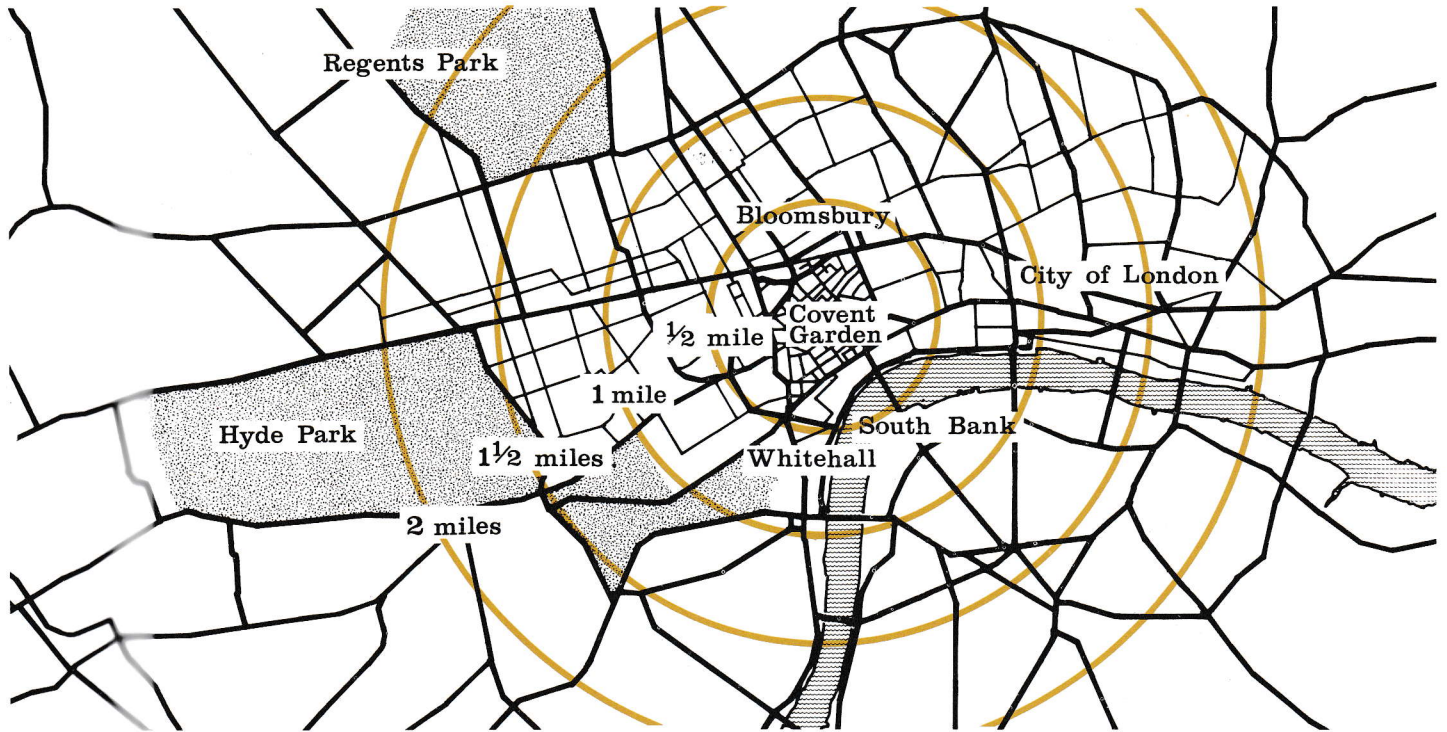
**CONSERVATION &
DEVELOPMENT**

ROADS•

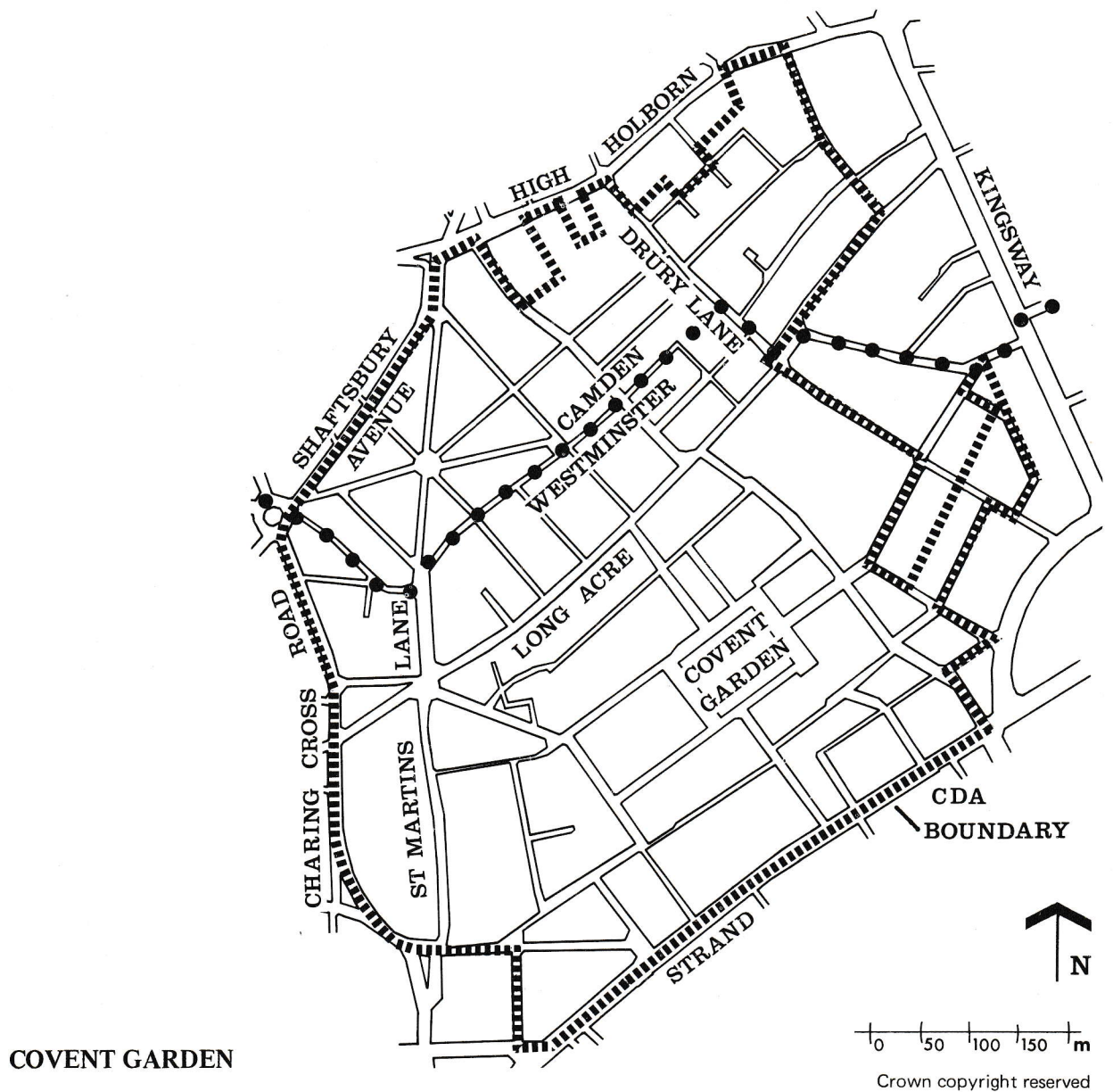
**TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT
MANAGEMENT**

COVENT GARDEN

LOCAL PLAN



LOCATION OF COVENT GARDEN IN CENTRAL LONDON



COVENT GARDEN

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**COVENT GARDEN LOCAL PLAN
Report of Survey**

Discussion Paper No. 6 . Roads·Traffic & Transport Management

This paper discusses the development of a traffic management system for Covent Garden. There are three main sections, dealing with circulation parking, and entertainment traffic. It includes a short section on the roles of the various authorities. Each of the main sections describes the existing situation, the possibilities for a management system, the constraints on its development and summarises the problems and issues raised.

The Covent Garden Development Committee have received this discussion paper, prepared in the light of the Committee's broad statement of Policy Guidelines, by officers of the Covent Garden Team. The Committee will not, however, consider the contents until the comments of the public, and in particular those of the Covent Garden Forum of Representatives have been reported.

Covent Garden Development Team
Greater London Council
June 1974

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*See appendix - to Discussion Paper
No. 1 'Covent Garden Local Plan'.

Introduction

The planning objectives relating to movement given as main proposals in the approved CDA written statement* are:

'... for the implementation of a plan of redevelopment to improve traffic movement, provide free areas and a pedestrian network...'

The Council has since laid down Policy Guidelines* for the area (December 1973) which state, in relation to traffic:

'... once the market has gone, the existing street pattern will be more than sufficient for local needs: management measures could be introduced to inhibit through traffic and provide pedestrian streets where these seem desirable and it should be possible to 'reclaim' some surplus road space for other purposes such as housing or open space'.

Although these statements refer principally to the management of vehicular circulation for the benefit of pedestrians, parking is an important element in any traffic management system and the role of public transport must be considered. This report deals briefly with the issues involved in developing a comprehensive system for all these functions.

The boundary of the CDA is very complex and relates more to the development planning of the area than the problems of traffic management. Thus the area referred to as Covent Garden in this paper is the area within the main road framework of High Holborn, Shaftesbury Avenue, Charing Cross Road, Strand and Kingsway. The issues raised by the problems on the perimeter roads themselves are not discussed in this report, since these problems are a part of the comprehensive planning of the Central London road network. Further, neither the Covent Garden Development Committee nor the Team has executive or planning responsibility for the development of these roads. Much of the planning study effort on the development of the Central London network is being channelled through the Central London Planning Conferences (C.L.P.C) Transport Study Group. The role of C.L.P.C. in Central London planning is dealt with more fully in discussion paper No. 1 'Covent Garden Local Plan'.

The levels of vehicular traffic within Central London have remained fairly constant over the last few years, mainly because the growth has been actively restrained by such things as controlled parking. This report is therefore written against a background of general policies aiming at limiting the impact of traffic.

The stability of the situation also affects the content of the report. Much of the previously published data* on actual measured flows of traffic is still valid and hence will not be repeated in this report. Care should be taken however in referring to data since although the survey data is still relevant the forecasts which assumed a growth in traffic volumes are not.

Thus although brief summaries of existing traffic flow, parking and similar data are included at the beginning of each part of this report the major part of the report discusses the problems raised by desire to improve the existing situation.

2.0 Role of Authorities

It is worth briefly outlining the various authorities' responsibilities for the development of highways and traffic management in an area such as Covent Garden.

The Highway Authority for metropolitan roads, i.e. most of the main traffic routes including those providing the framework for Covent Garden, is the GLC, though much of the responsibility for maintenance is delegated to the Borough Councils on an agency basis. The Highway Authority for all the other local roads, that is most of those discussed in this paper, is the Borough Council. The Highway Authority is responsible for the planning, design, construction and maintenance of its roads which it finances partly from its own resources and partly by grants from the Department of the Environment. The GLC also has a development control function to safeguard the efficiency and future planning of the Highway.

Traffic regulation which in general uses signs rather than construction to control the movement of traffic is the responsibility of the Traffic Authority. This is the GLC for all roads within this area. However, the Borough Council can and does put forward traffic schemes designed for its own local roads and the GLC makes the necessary traffic orders. On-street parking schemes are also dealt with in this way. The Borough Council designs and publicly advertises the scheme, the GLC then receive objections, modifies the scheme in consultation with the Borough and makes the order, which it hands back to the Borough for implementation.

The Secretary of State has responsibility for the making of orders to extinguish vehicular rights of way on roads, at the request of the Local Planning Authority and after consultation with the Highway Authority.

This is very much a simplification of the role of the authorities and is only intended as a general background for Covent Garden.

3.0 Traffic Management

Although all parts of any traffic and transport system are closely interrelated to clarify the points, the paper will discuss the system in three main parts:

1. *Circulation* including vehicular circulation, pedestrian circulation and public transport.
2. *Parking* including residential parking commercial parking and visitors parking, (principally day time).
3. *Entertainment Traffic* dealing with the problems of movement and parking during the evening.

Circulation and parking are obvious headings for discussion of movement systems within any area, but much of Covent Garden's activity takes place during the evening. The problems of movement resulting from this can to a large extent be separated from the daytime issues. In fact it seems likely that the evening entertainment industry will be the largest single generator of vehicular traffic within Covent Garden after the market move, and it is possible that a system relating to evening traffic could of necessity be quite different to that required during the day.

Each of the main parts will start with an analysis of the current situation, suggest possible approaches to the development of a system, assess the constraints, temporary and permanent, on the system applied from outside Covent Garden, and deal with the problems and issues which these raise.

4.0 Circulation

A circulation system for Covent Garden both for pedestrians and vehicles of all types must be developed by the management of the existing roadscape. Thus before putting forward possible approaches to a system and considering the constraints on its development, it is worth outlining how the roadscape operates now, and what controls are available with which to make changes.

4.1 Existing Situation

Pedestrians and vehicles at present have an established network of streets within Covent Garden but between these streets run a series of footpaths and courts which give rise to a much finer network for pedestrians than for vehicles (see figures 1 and 2). The management of the existing vehicle network is as a series of one way and two way streets which allow some through movements and exclude others. It also allows roadscape to be taken up by on-street parking and Market activities.

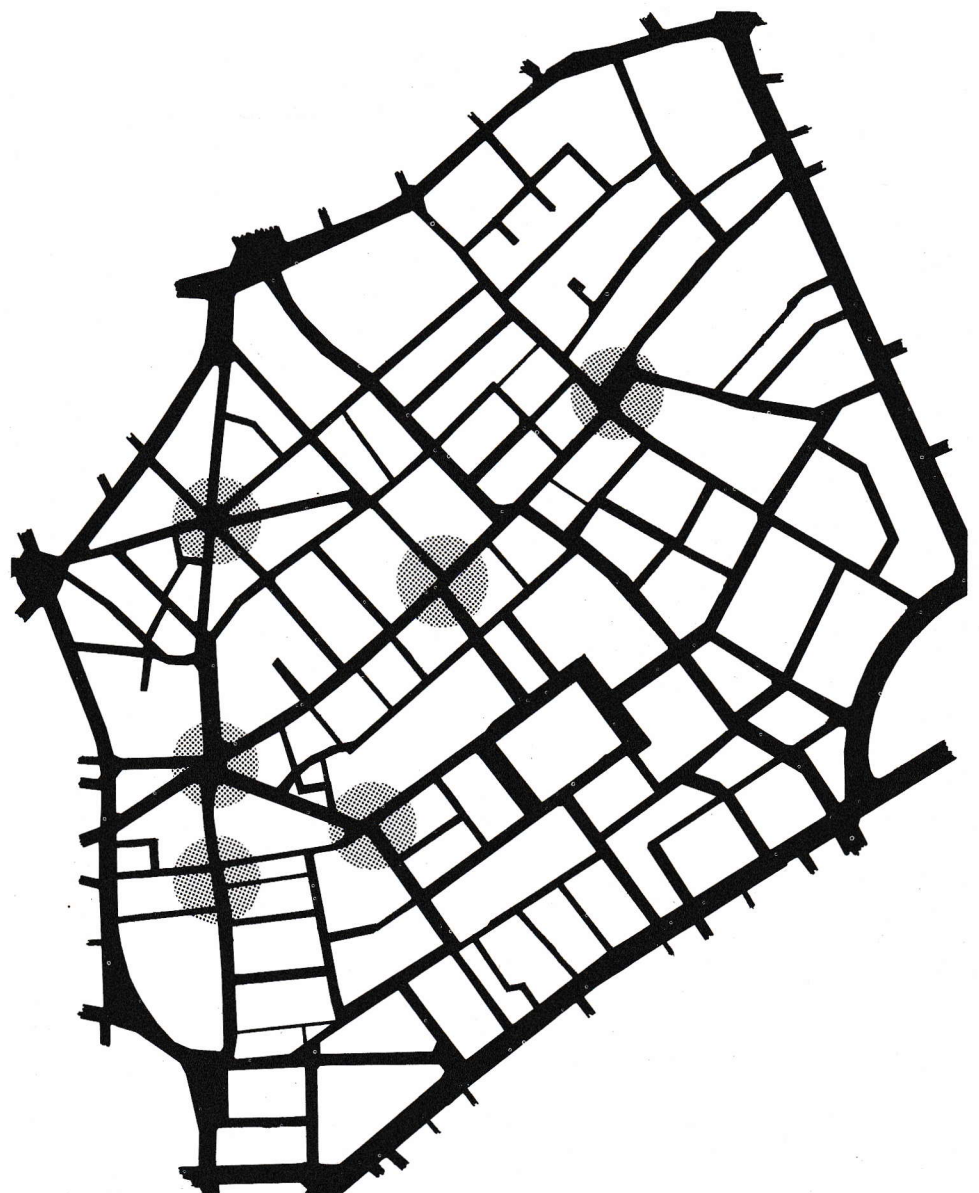


FIGURE 1 EXISTING PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

AREA OF
UNCONTROLLED
PARKING

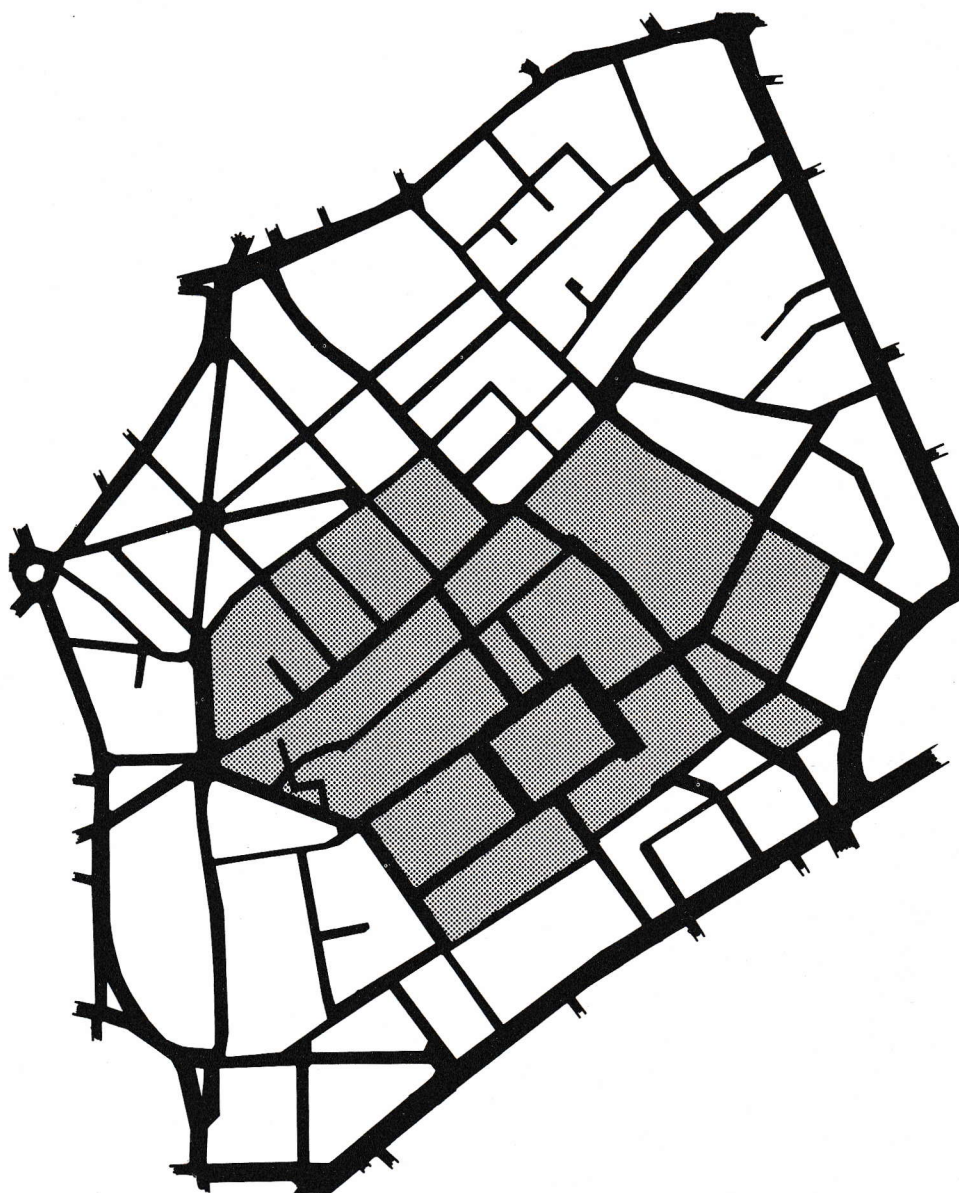


FIGURE 2 EXISTING VEHICLE NETWORK

Figure 3 shows the density of traffic movement in and around Covent Garden during the weekday between 5.00 and 6.00 p.m. In comparison to the flows on the perimeter roads the levels of traffic movement within Covent Garden are quite small, with one exception. The corridor of Monmouth Street, Upper St Martin's Lane and St Martin's Lane is a major through traffic route. In fact this corridor, like Gower Street to the north, has been managed to form the southbound leg of the principle traffic route between Euston Road and Trafalgar Square. It carries, as can be seen in Figure 4, around 1100 vehicles per hour for most of the working day, roughly the same volumes as Charing Cross Road. It cuts through two conservation areas (see figure 5) and produces a major barrier and danger to pedestrians.

There are other minor through routes within the area (see figures 3, 4, 5) Drury Lane and Endell Street, Bow Street, Wellington Street provide a complementary one way system linking the Aldwych with the Museum area to the north. They carry between them about 800 vehicles per hour for most of the working day though by no means all of this is through traffic since they also act as the distributor roads for the eastern half of Covent Garden. Great Queen Street, Long Acre provides a through route between Lincoln's Inn and Leicester Square. Bedford Street is used by some vehicles, many of them taxis, as a by-pass to the north-east corner of Trafalgar Square while

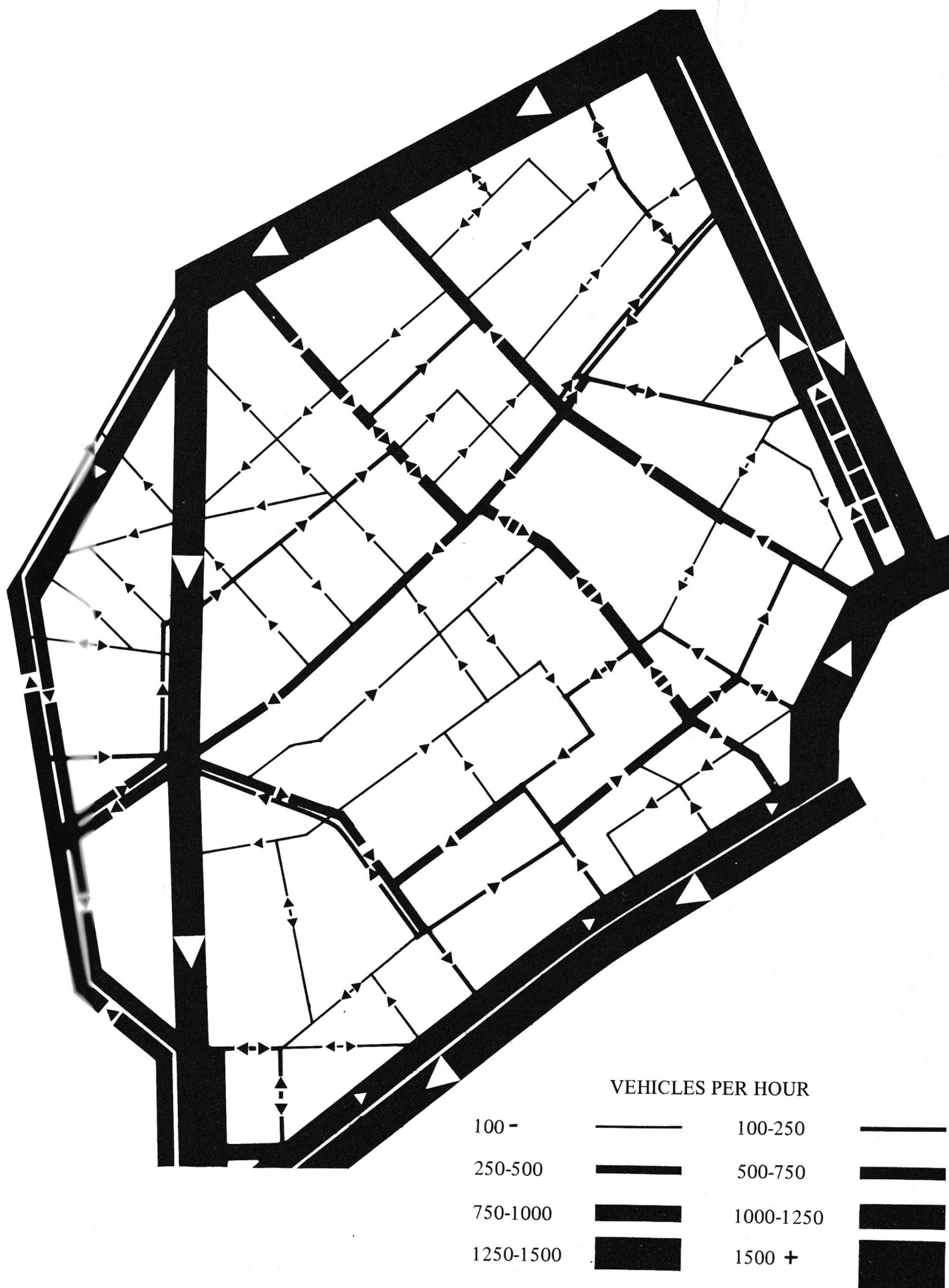


FIGURE 3 EXISTING TRAFFIC DENSITY (5.00-6.00 p.m. WEEKDAY)

Maiden Lane is used as an eastbound Strand by-pass. Many of these minor through routes even though they only carry comparatively small volumes of traffic do cause difficulties for pedestrians and intrude generally within areas designated specifically for conservation.

The Market traffic has two effects on circulation within Covent Garden. Firstly it sterilises a good deal of the roadscape in the market area by its on-street activities and secondly it is a major generator of goods vehicles. The streets in which the market operates are, from the very early morning to about 10.00 a.m, effectively 'no through roads' to other traffic and even when the market activities close very little traffic uses these roads. The traffic generated by the market is mainly goods vehicles, some of them very large, but the quantities of traffic are not all that great. The amount of traffic varies somewhat depending on the season and day of the week but is around 3500 vehicles per day, or as a comparison, roughly half the daily flow on Bedford Street.

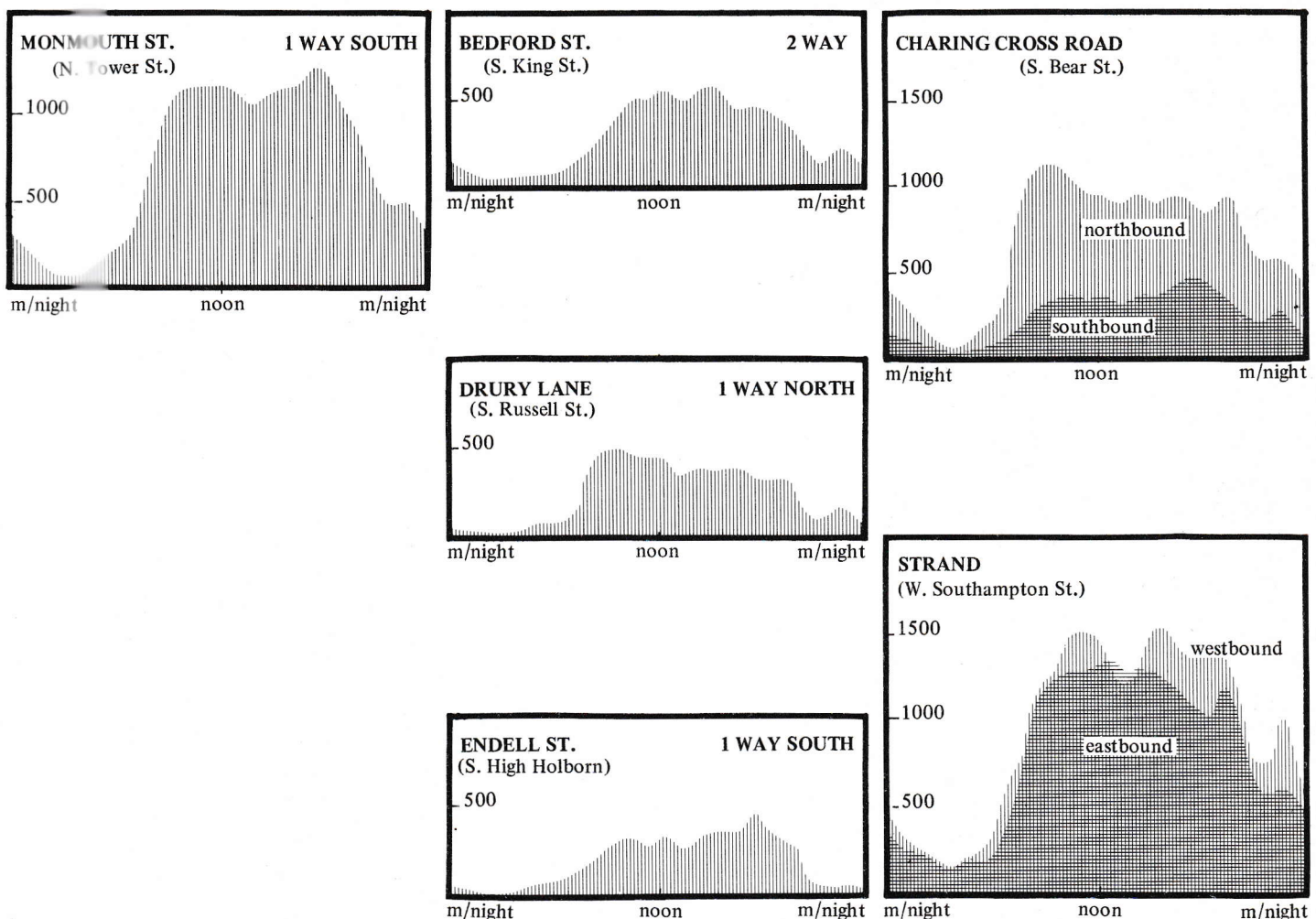


FIGURE 4 HOURLY TRAFFIC DISTRIBUTION (AVERAGE WEEKDAY)

When the Market moves to Nine Elms, the absence of this market traffic movement, much of which is early morning, will probably have little effect, but the removal of the market activity from the street will either attract through traffic or the area will become, as it is now during the afternoon, very quiet. The level of construction activity involved in the restoration and rehabilitation of buildings could be a major factor in a possible build-up of through traffic.



FIGURE 5 THROUGH TRAFFIC ROUTES

4.2 Controls

The controls available for the management of circulation come basically from three sources; highway, traffic regulation and planning legislation. Circulation is controlled by the construction and layout of the street, the signed restrictions on movement and the designation as either road or footpath.

The construction and layout of a street though limited in scope is probably the most effective and attractive control on circulation. It can provide a good balance between the needs of access traffic and pedestrians without placing undue restraint on either, assist considerably in ensuring safety for pedestrians, enhance the character of a street, and probably requires little enforcement. However, controls by this method need very careful design so as to ensure pedestrians do not develop a false sense of security. This was the principal reason that 'play streets' have gone out of general practice.

Traffic regulation is probably the most flexible method of control and is much cheaper to implement and indeed change if it does not fulfill the desired objective. It can be used to specify the direction in which traffic must travel, by one way streets and banned turning movements, prohibit vehicles within certain classes, e.g. lorries, coaches, motor vehicles, and can apply the restriction at certain times of the day only if this is desirable. It

cannot however take away all rights of vehicular access to properties. Traffic regulation does create the problem of areas littered with signs, which may be undesirable, particularly in conservation areas, and it requires regular enforcement to be successful.

Planning powers can be used to remove all vehicular right of way from a section of road to convert it into a footpath or open space. However, most of the streets in Covent Garden have frontages requiring some level of access by vehicles.

4.3 Lines of Approach

From the existing street and footpath system we must develop a system which provides a balance between the needs of pedestrians and the necessity of vehicular access. It must be flexible to implement. Such a system, based on the existing street network, will certainly involve vehicles and pedestrians living together, but they should be allowed to do so without danger and annoyance to each other.

A system which it is believed will to some extent be capable of fulfilling these requirements is outlined below for your consideration and for you to define the detailed objectives.

The system uses the term 'minimum traffic' and is based on the ideas of environmental areas or units, partial pedestrianisation, and full pedestrianisation.

Within a network of urban roads some roads are more suitable for carrying traffic than others. These have usually been developed, by safeguarding widening when rebuilding takes place along the frontages, and by applying efficient highway and traffic management techniques to their design. These principle roads are normally designated to take through traffic, and the spaces between these roads should ideally only contain traffic with 'business', in its loosest sense, in that area. Thus, we could call such an area, containing only traffic requiring access, a 'minimum traffic area', (see figure 6.1). However merely making a large area between principle roads an 'access only' area produces three problems.

- (i) A vehicle which has a destination in one corner of the area can use the internal road system to travel from the opposite corner when it may be more desirable for it to use the principle roads round the area and to travel only a short distance to its destination.
- (ii) It is difficult to enforce an 'access only' restriction on such a large area as Covent Garden, since there are so many possible destinations.
- (iii) It takes no account of the fact that some internal roads may be more more suitable than others for carrying traffic while some roads may be much more important for pedestrians.

Thus a system is required which will eliminate long trips across the area, allow the most suitable roads to distribute the access traffic and minimise the vehicular traffic on those roads most desirable for pedestrians. This can be done by extending the minimum traffic principle to the internal roads. 'Minimum traffic zones' could be set up which worked the same way as minimum traffic areas, i.e. only traffic would be allowed in which has business within the zone. (see figure 6.2)

The zones would then need to be serviced by distributor roads which would cater for only those vehicles requiring access to the zones surrounding the road. There are several ways of ensuring that through traffic does not use these distributors, including making them very tortuous or cul-de-sacs, but one of the most effective on an existing street system would be to form loops of the existing roads by management controls. (see figure 6.3).

If space could be made available for turning vehicles these loops could be split into two culs-de-sac at a later date, to provide pedestrian-only links between zones. (see figure 6.4).

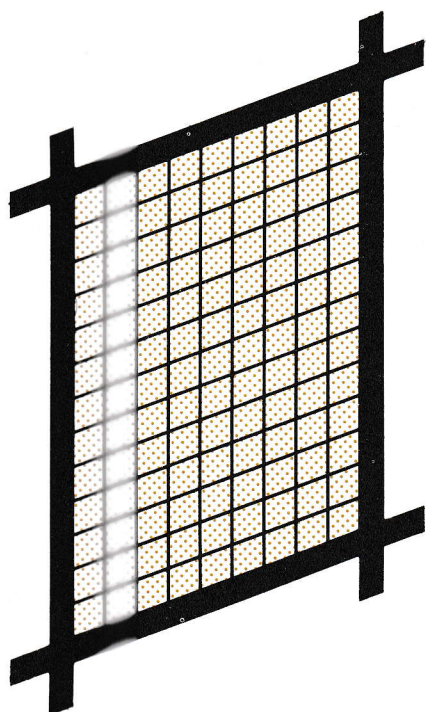


FIGURE 6.1
MINIMUM TRAFFIC AREA
WITHIN PRINCIPAL ROAD
FRAMEWORK

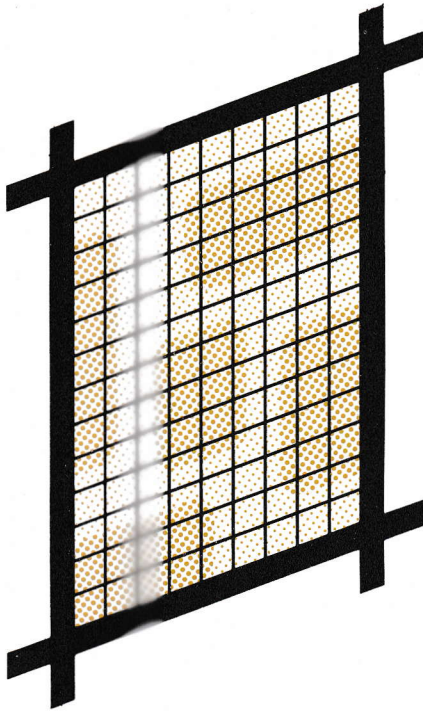


FIGURE 6.2
MINIMUM TRAFFIC ZONES
WITHIN AREA

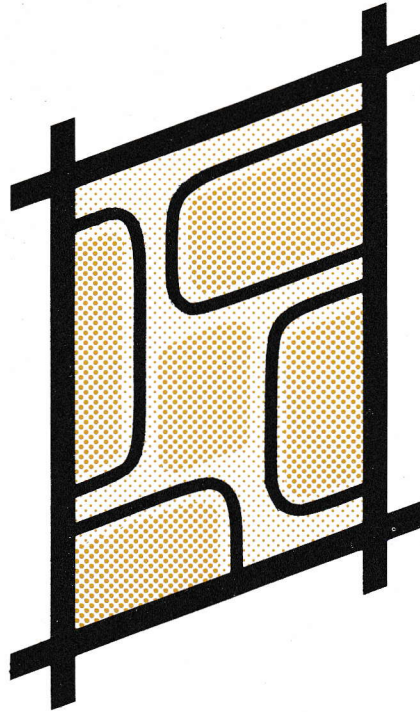


FIGURE 6.3
LOOPS OF EXISTING ROADS
TO DISTRIBUTE TRAFFIC
TO ZONES

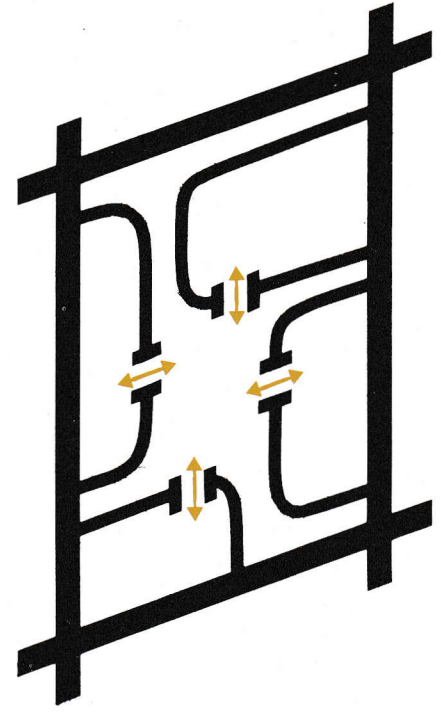


FIGURE 6.4
BROKEN LOOPS WITH
PEDESTRIAN ONLY LINKS

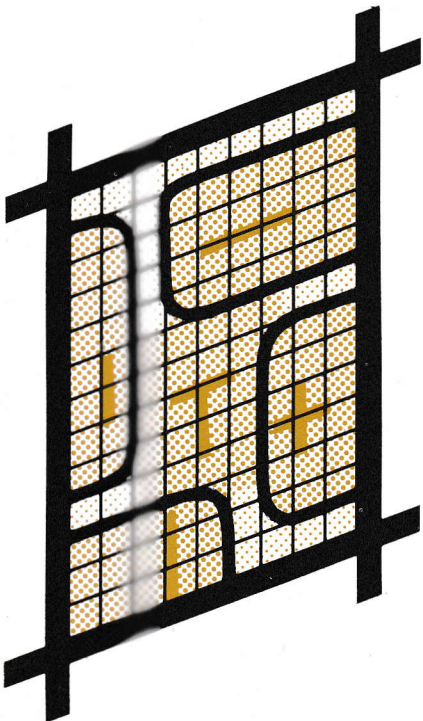


FIGURE 6.5
MINIMUM TRAFFIC STREETS
WITHIN ZONES

The minimum traffic principle could be further extended within the zones where 'minimum traffic streets' could be set up which would only contain traffic requiring access to that street. (see figure 6.5).

These streets could be shopping streets, residential streets sensitive to noise, streets of special attraction in conservation areas, main pedestrian routes or streets of special danger to children. Vehicles requiring access could be controlled either by redesign of the road or by traffic order, or both. If it was possible to service the premises at a time when there was little pedestrian activity the streets could be effectively closed to traffic during part of the day and become a pedestrian-only area. Indeed there may be streets or part of streets where no regular vehicular access was required and these could become areas of open space either for general purposes or more specifically for children to play or miniature parks with planting and seats, performing the same function as the small squares in Soho. This could also provide a stimulus to the conservation areas by acting as a catalyst to the restoration of buildings. Even outside these areas it could brighten up the general street scene. There are however problems in making streets more visually attractive. It may change the character of the street to the point where land values change and pressures for different uses become great. This problem is considered more fully in the discussion paper 'Conservation and Development Opportunities'.

Another possibility for the re-use of streets for pedestrian benefit could come where development may take place. It may be that a street is at present unattractive due to its surrounding buildings or lack of sunlight. If the street area was developed as part of the site, an equivalent area of attractive open space might be made available.

If it is agreed that such a system is reasonable for Covant Garden, and that the long term objective for circulation should be to allow for access traffic only in this way, *the most important step is the decision on which parts of the area should become minimum traffic zones.* Thus we would like your ideas on which parts of the area you feel would benefit from minimising traffic and which are the most important pedestrian streets within each of these zones.

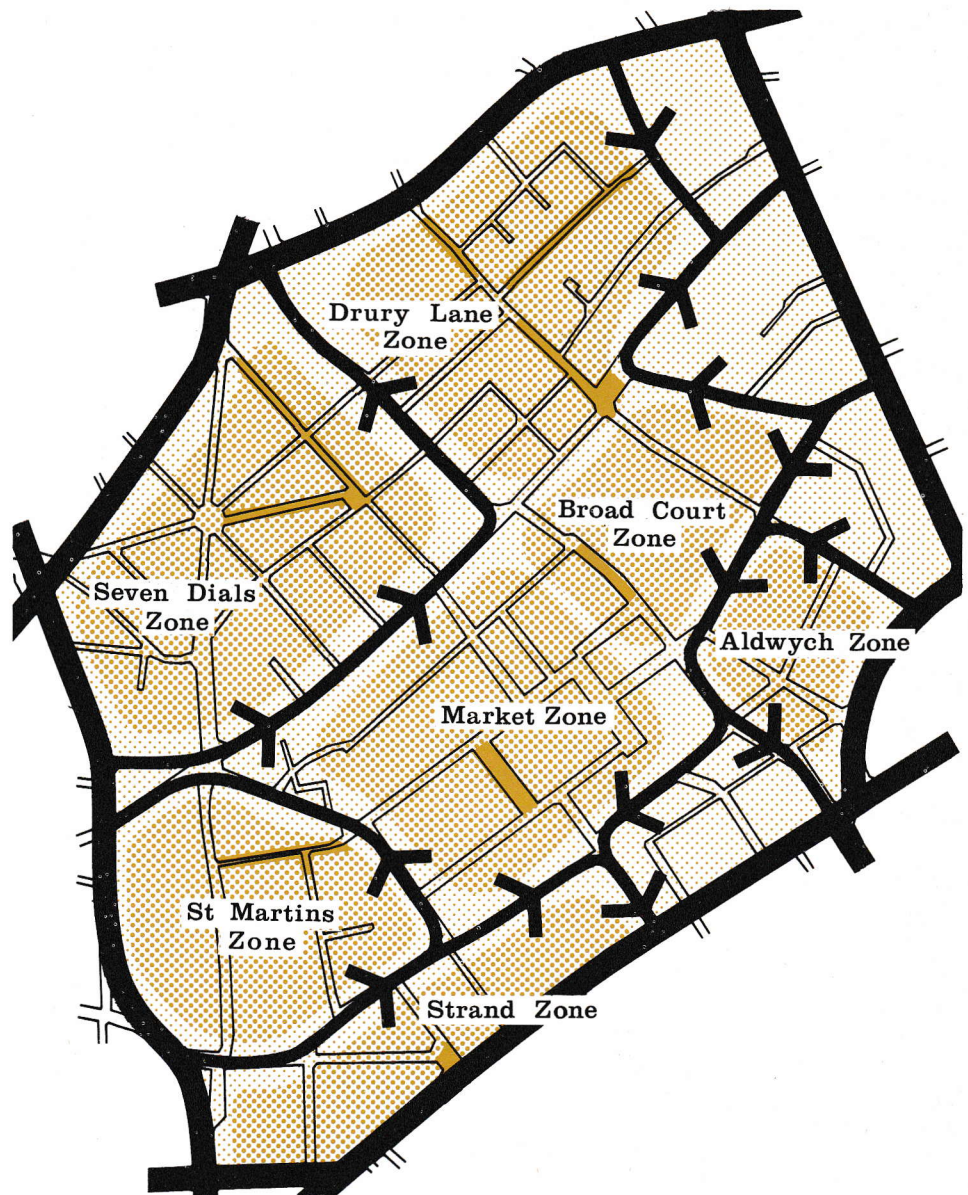


FIGURE 7 EXAMPLE OF 'MINIMUM TRAFFIC' PRINCIPLE APPLIED TO COVENT GARDEN

Figure 7 shows an example of the 'minimum traffic' principle applied to the more familiar network of Covent Garden. This is not a proposal – indeed no work has been done on the technical feasibility of the traffic circulation or effect on the principle road framework; it is merely an illustration of the principle. The zones illustrated were chosen as reflecting the Conservation and shopping areas. Most of the distributors are reasonably suitable streets but the zones, which will actually be defined will be identified in the public debate.

4.4 Public Transport

So far we have only discussed circulation in terms of pedestrians and private vehicles, but it is worth considering at this stage whether any allowance should be made within the system for public transport. Covent Garden is very well served by public transport.

There are 5 underground stations close to the perimeter and one in the centre of the area giving direct access to 7 of London's 9 tube lines (including the Fleet Line) as well as the main line station at Charing Cross. All the perimeter roads are bus routes, and within a few minutes walk from

anywhere in Covent Garden a range of bus services is available. Taxis use many of the through routes within Covent Garden and 'for hire' cabs are often available on these roads. Thus most public transport routes are fairly readily available but mainly on the edge of the area.

Certainly there is no chance in the foreseeable future of extra rail facilities within the area. There is the possibility, if it is considered desirable by the community, and is feasible operationally to London Transport, of diverting one of the perimeter bus services through the area. The implementation of the zones and loops system would of course mean that a 'buses only' through route would need to be opened through the area, which may of course be an operational advantage. Such a facility might be obtained by diverting say a Kingsway/Strand service which picks up few passengers at the Aldwych through say Great Queen Street, Long Acre, Bow Street, Wellington Street. Again no work has been carried out on the possibility of bus diversions through the area, and this is only intended as an illustration. Thus the principle question is whether or not the advantages of a through bus service would outweigh the disadvantages of the vehicles actually running through the area.

A similar problem occurs with taxis. The availability of 'for hire' cabs would to some extent be reduced if there were no through routes hence the desirability of a special through facility for taxis must be considered. However if such a route was provided there is no guarantee that they would use it, or that they would not use it to such an extent as to become a nuisance.

4.5 Lorries

Although it may be said that Covent Garden is accustomed to lorries, it may be desirable to impose some kind of general restriction on the size of lorries gaining access to the area. This has not been tried in such an area of Central London up to this time, and would almost certainly need to be introduced on an experimental basis. Covent Garden is within the Central London 40 foot lorry ban area but this only applies to through lorries and not to those with destinations in the area. A restriction on lorry size would be difficult to enforce and may make the operation of certain businesses including the theatres more difficult. However it may be that such a ban would make possible physical street closures where they would not otherwise be feasible if allowance had to be made for the manouevring of large vehicles.

4.6 Bicycles

It is unlikely that any special provision would need to be made for cyclists within a circulation system as outlined above but the section on parking considers other facilities for bicycles.

4.7 Constraints

The existing Central London network roads constrains the development of a minimum traffic system for Covent Garden in three ways. Firstly the route between *Euston Road* and *Trafalgar Square* relies on Monmouth Street and St Martin's Lane to provide the majority of its southbound traffic capacity around Covent Garden, as it does with Gower Street to the north. Secondly the network relies on the longer distance access trips within Covent Garden taking place on the internal road system. It also places minor reliance on the few minor through routes discussed earlier and shown on Figure 5.

To implement a minimum traffic system within Covent Garden would therefore put three sets of extra traffic on to the perimeter roads:

- (1) All the southbound traffic on the Monmouth Street/St Martin's Lane

corridor.

(2) All the traffic needing access to the area which would have to circuit on the principle roads to get to the appropriate loop distributor.

(3) All the traffic at present 'rat running' through the area, principally that on the Drury Lane/Endell Street one way pair, Long Acre and Bedford Street.

Clearly all this extra traffic could not be accommodated on the perimeter roads in their present form. Most of these perimeter roads are at present running at or near their maximum capacity, the critical points being at the junctions. However it may be possible to absorb the second and third sets of extra traffic on the perimeter roads, depending on two factors which cannot be assessed at this stage.

The first is the amount of traffic generated by the new uses which will replace the Market. The traffic from these new uses will probably be generated during the normal working day, unlike the Market's unusual activity times. Hence it could to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the uses proposed, negate the advantage, in traffic terms, of the Market move. The important issue is whether the amount of traffic generated by the new uses should be a major criterion in assessing their suitability for Covent Garden, or whether other social, economic and planning factors should take precedence, and the traffic management system be adjusted to cope.

the second factor is the detailed design of the internal circulation system. This will decide the amount of traffic entering and leaving the perimeter roads and where access points will be. However the detailed design must await the definition of the objectives by the public in the form of recommended minimum traffic zones.

The problem of the traffic in Monmouth Street/St Martin's Lane is however much greater. Only a small proportion of the through traffic on this route could be diverted to Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road. The Initial development plan (as amended by the Secretary of State) now indicates a safeguarded widening line for Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road. This would be unlikely to result in more available capacity within the time scale desirable for the implementation of a minimum traffic system for Covent Garden. Further, the safeguarding of future development on these roads has serious planning repercussions on Covent Garden (this is considered in detail in 'Conservation and Development Opportunities'). With this in mind the GLC is reviewing the desirability of retaining this safeguarding.

Thus the possibility of removing through traffic from Monmouth Street/St Martin's Lane really depends on whether a system of over-all traffic restraint for Central London, such as supplementary vehicle licensing, can be introduced in the near future or whether an overload amounting to the majority of this southbound traffic is acceptable.

Much of the work on the future of Central London's road network is being undertaken at present by the Central London Planning Conference as part of a transport study. The officers working on the study have just issued their first Transport Topic Paper in which they report their preliminary results on the testing of notional networks. The object of the study was to assess how coarse or fine the principle road network for Central London should be. They tested four networks, ranging from a very coarse one, i.e. only a few principle roads, to one approximating to the existing main road network. CLCP concludes that neither of these two extremes represented the optimum scale of road network and environmental or minimum traffic areas. Tests carried out demonstrated that the two other networks were better in most respects. One of these gave minimum traffic area sizes of the same size as the Covent Garden area, and the other slightly larger. The level of restraint required for these two middle networks is *probably achievable by means, which according to recent research, could be made available in the near future, and the effect of such restraint is unlikely to be harmful to the economy and social life of Central London.*

It should be stressed, though, that as yet the report is only by the officers of the constituent member authorities and has not been considered by the authorities themselves.

This does not prove that the implementation of a minimum traffic area for Covent Garden is technically feasible or that it will not affect the area's economy or social life. It does however indicate that a long term objective for Covent Garden becoming a minimum traffic area is not unrealistic.

Until all the work on Central London Transport is completed and accepted by the Central London Planning Conference the situation remains somewhat uncertain.

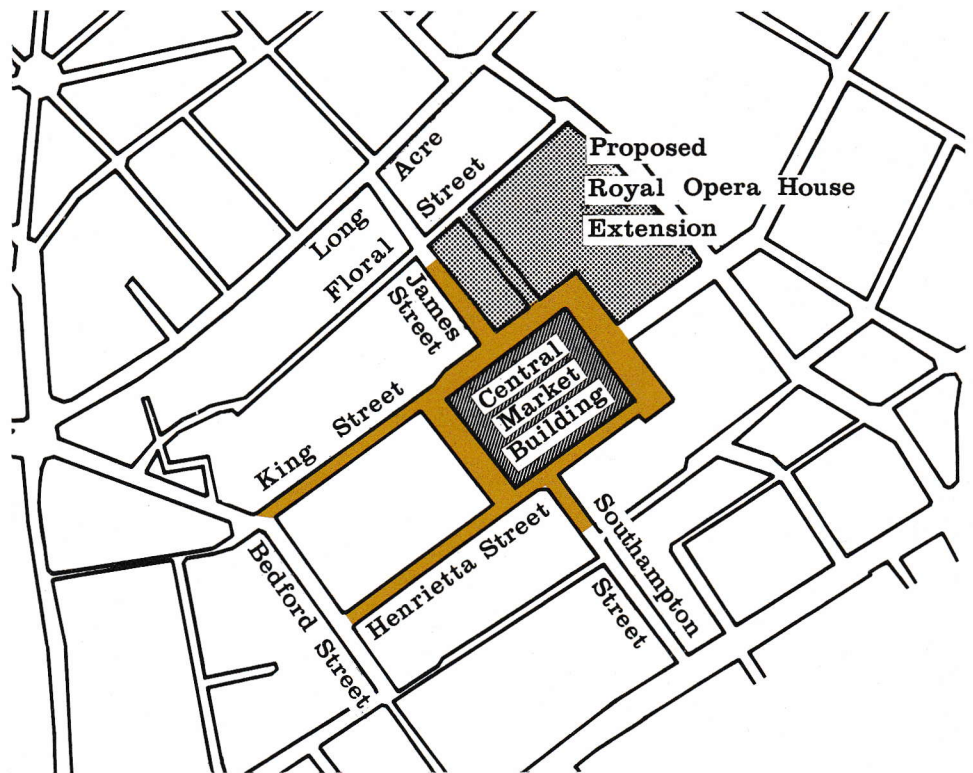


FIGURE 8 POSSIBLE PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY AREA

Within Covent Garden the imminence of the Market move has to some extent predetermined one minimum traffic zone. During the work on the future of the roads around the market it has been assumed that roads coloured on figure 8 would have some form of vehicular traffic restriction. Hence it is considered that they should form part of such a zone. A separate paper dealing in detail with the immediate problems of Market Roads will be issued shortly.

4.8 Major Issues – Circulation

- (1) The planning of the circulation system for Covent Garden should be based on the assumption that, in the long term, the road network for Central London is unlikely to have any principle roads passing through the area. Hence Covent Garden should be planned as a minimum traffic area.
- (2) In pursuit of an objective of 'traffic free areas', with an existing street network fronted by buildings, most of which need some degree of vehicular access, zones and streets should be selected within which this traffic should be minimised. The minimum traffic streets should wherever possible ban vehicles for either all or part for the benefit of pedestrians.

- (3) Which parts of Covent Garden are the most suitable to become minimum traffic zones? Which streets within these zones are the most important for pedestrian activity and movement, safety, visual attraction and noise reduction?
- (4) The introduction of pedestrian priority measures and general street improvements may in some areas bring pressures for changes in character which might be regarded as undesirable.
- (5) Would there be advantages in having through bus services within the area?
- (6) Should facilities be provided for taxi route through the area?
- (7) Should the possibility of introducing a ban on large lorries either full time or part-time be considered on an experimental basis?
- (8) Are there any special facilities which could be made available for bicycle movement?
- (9) The implementation of a minimum traffic area for Covent Garden depends on the removal of through traffic from the Monmouth Street/St Martin's Lane corridor.
- (10) A system of dividing the area into zones would, provided the smaller amounts of through traffic could be removed on the other streets, enable much of the minimum traffic area to be implemented in the area east of Monmouth Street/St Martin's Lane.
- (11) Should the amount of traffic generated by new uses be a principal factor in assessing their suitability for Covent Garden?

5.0 Parking

Parking is considered in this chapter under two principal headings, daytime commercial or visitors parking, and residents parking. Each discusses the existing situation, the current policies and their effect on Covent Garden and the desirable levels and positioning of parking provision.

5.1 Commercial and Visitors Parking

5.1.1 *The Existing Situation*

There are four types of car parking space currently available for use by business and visitors within Covent Garden, they are; public off-street car parks, private non-residential off-street car parks, on street metered space and the streets around the Market, which at present are freely available for parking.

The dispersion of public car parks and private non-residential car parks is shown on Figure 9 – the circles refer to the total space within a block of buildings and are not positioned on each group of spaces. The total number of public off-street car parking spaces within the area is about 700, concentrated principally within 3 parks on the north and west sides of the area. Most of the car parks outside the area but within walking distance are also to the north and west, the major exception being the Savoy car park to the south. Private non-residential parking spaces total approximately 800 and unlike the public spaces are dispersed in small numbers all over the area, apart from the unused garage under Space House.

The on-street parking within Covent Garden is for most of the area on 2 hour parking meters but the existence of the Market has necessitated the retention of a large area (see figure 2) of uncontrolled on-street parking. For much of the early part of the day this space is used for market activities and little parking not associated with this activity is possible. After this time the area is used as a free visitors parking area. To prevent it becoming a free commuter car park after the market move a scheme, which extends the same kind of restrictions in force in the rest of the area, is proposed on these streets. However, this is merely a stop gap measure awaiting the results of the public participation, on the new plan and was only accepted by the Covent

10 SPACES
100 SPACES
PUBLIC
PRIVATE



FIGURE 9 EXISTING OFF-STREET NON-RESIDENTIAL PARKING SPACE

Garden Development Committee on condition that it would not prejudice any changes required by that plan, in particular the removal of the parking meters in possible pedestrian priority streets.

5.1.2 Current Policies

The G.L.C. considers that in order to provide an adequate system of transport within the Central Area of London it is necessary to restrict further the use of private cars and encourage the use of public transport. Although it is studying the possibilities of restraint on the movement of vehicles by such methods as supplementary licensing, restraint by parking controls is at present still the most important method. For this reason it aims to reduce the total number of meter spaces in Central London, to increase meter charges, to reduce the number of temporary public car parks, to halt the increasing provision of public off-street car parks, to apply more restrictive parking standards for new development and to find methods to reduce the amount of private non-residential parking.

How do these aims affect the long term provision of commercial and visitors spaces in Covent Garden? The reduction of the number of meter spaces will probably go hand in hand with the provision of minimum traffic streets and

the possibility, discussed in the next section, of residents on-street parking. The increase in meter charges would be related to areas where the level of occupancy of meters is above 85% and since the existence of the uncontrolled market area inevitably effects the existing meter occupancy in Covent Garden, an announcement of the possibility of applying this increase must wait.

With regard to the off-street controls there are no temporary public car parks within Covent Garden. The imposition of restrictive parking standards for new development and the reduction of existing private non-residential car parking is aimed primarily at reducing the number of car commuters coming into Central London. Preliminary surveys of this type of car park have shown that up to half the users are regular commuters who do not use their cars during the day. Thus the application of such measures is likely to be beneficial to the area. The halt on the growth of further public off-street car parking could have a significant effect on the provision of parking space within Covent Garden. The criteria used to decide where an application for public off-street car parking should be refused are:

- (i) where the proposed car park would facilitate the use of private transport for purposes for which public transport facilities are available
- (ii) where the site is in an area in which public car parking is adequately provided for, or could be accommodated by reducing the level of long term parking in nearby car parks, or by converting existing non-residential provision.

Thus the parking provision within the area cannot be increased unless facilities are required which are outside these criteria.

5.1.3 Possible Provision

The question for Covent Garden are then:

- (a) what level of provision is desirable for visitors and commercial parking? and
- (b) can they be justified in terms of the overall transport policy for Central London?

A traditional approach to the question might involve assessing the existing parking demand and calculating from comparable data the demands of the new uses when they are known. This would probably be desirable for some commercial and social activities but would not be justified in terms of overall transport policy. Further, part of the reason for a restraint on parking is to reduce the impact of the motor vehicle within Central London and similarly parking restraint within Covent Garden will reduce the impact here and then allow more of the desirable pedestrian measures outlined in the section on circulation.

Thus the question becomes, more realistically, should the provision in Covent Garden be maximised within the limits of overall transport policy or should more restrictive measures be taken to further reduce the impact of vehicles in the area?

The maximising of provision within overall policy would probably involve reducing the meter provision to the numbers which could be accommodated after the circulation system described previously and possible residents space had been provided. The off-street provision would include the existing private and public space, though some of the private space may be converted to public use, and any further space possibly in the south-east of the area if it could be justified in terms of the criteria outlined previously.

At the other extreme a severely restrictive circulation system could be developed with no on-street parking and the levels of off-street parking reduced to match the restricted availability of space for circulation.

Within such a system careful consideration would need to be given to the night workers for instance in the printing industry and Post Office who have no other available means of transport.

Whether one of these two extremes should be the aim at or at what intermediate level the provision should be established is the principal issue in the determination of a parking policy for Covent Garden.

5.1.4 Coaches

So far we have only discussed the problems of visitors car parking but coaches are increasingly being used for theatre matinee performances and for sightseeing. The possibility of using valuable space within Covent Garden for coach parking is extremely remote but problems can and do occur with coaches illegally parking on streets for short periods between being moved on by the police. Thus it may be that some restrictive policy for keeping coaches to certain roads near the edge of the area for setting down and picking up only should be considered.

5.1.5 Bicycles

The role of bicycles as a means of transport within the centre of cities is being looked at by many organisations at the present time including the G.L.C., indeed cycleways are common in many U.S. cities now. The chief deterrent to the use of bicycles, apart from the British climate, is the difficulty of negotiating a road network managed principally for the circulation of motor vehicles. A circulation system such as that discussed earlier would provide few problems for cyclists but perhaps something could be done to alleviate within Covent Garden a second problem that of cycle parking and so to positively attract the use of the bicycle. It is difficult within Central London to find anywhere which is both undercover and, possibly more important, secure to leave a bicycle. Hence it would be worth giving serious thought to the attractiveness of providing small cycle 'stables' within the area.

5.2 Residents Parking

5.2.1 Existing Situation

The levels of car ownership in Covent Garden are very low in comparison to Greater London as a whole. 14% of households in Covent Garden own a car compared with 27.5% for Central London as a whole and 46.3% for Greater London* and there has only been a small increase in car ownership since 1966.

*Ref: 1971 Census Report.

There are several reasons why the levels of car ownership have remained low in Central London; for many the cost of buying and running a car is simply too much; for others the cost is not justified whilst considering the level of public transport available and the restraints on car usage. Many of these factors show little sign of swinging in favour of car ownership.

The level of resident's parking provision in the area is also very low, mainly consisting of the court areas around the major housing blocks, and this is insufficient even for the few cars owned by residents in the area. Thus it is probably that since the off-street parking charges are so high during the day many of the cars are used for travelling to work and are only parked in Covent Garden after parking restrictions end. Others may be parked in the uncontrolled market area during the day and when this area becomes a 'meter area' it is hoped to make available temporary off-street resident's parking pending the outcome of the new plan.

The Housing Survey described in the discussion paper on 'Living in Covent Garden' will provide more detailed information on where residents park at present.

Current Policies

The G.L.C.'s present overall standard for residential parking is one space per dwelling, of which only half need be provided initially. This standard is retained to prevent residents in some new dwellings having to park elsewhere at night, possibly illegally and probably in unsuitable locations. It does

however realise that a reduced standard in areas of low demand and in high density housing developments would allow greater flexibility of design, better use of land, and could well reduce costs. Thus the G.L.C. agrees that decisions on standards for residential parking appear to be very much ones which the Boroughs are most fitted to make in view of local circumstances and needs and encourages them to adopt more restrictive standards where these circumstances merit it. At present within the central area on public housing and housing association work a standard of between 35 and 50 spaces per hundred households is usually applied.

Possible Provision

The quantity of provision of residents parking within Covent Garden must be based on the existing levels of car ownership, up to date figures on which will be available from the Housing Survey.

It is difficult in this area to predict the growth in car ownership, and thus the level to be allowed for in planning must be a matter for public discussion.

Residential parking provision for new housing in the area will be within housing development sites but whether each should cater exclusively its own households is an important question. Within some sites which are being considered as possible large housing developments, e.g. the former Odhams press site, the existing basements mean that underground parking is relatively easy to provide. In other similar sites, or buildings re-habilitated for housing, provision for parking may be virtually impossible. Thus, if it could be accepted that some people had to walk further to their cars, the physical design of smaller new housing developments and the possibilities for re-habilitation would undoubtedly increase. Indeed, depending on the parking standards accepted, it might be possible to provide sufficient parking space for existing residents with no existing facilities.

The alternative for existing residents is to make the whole of Covent Garden a residents parking zone which, like the others in and around Central London, would be a mixture of resident only spaces and short stay visitor spaces. On a circulation system as discussed earlier this would probably mean that residents spaces could be within the zones with visitors spaces on and close to the distribution roads. However, any residential space which could be made available off-street would reduce the competition between visitors parking, residential parking, environmental improvements for pedestrians, essential circulation, and loading.

Problems and Issues – Parking

- (1) The provision of commercial and visitors parking in Covent Garden must be within the limits set by the overall transport policy for Central London. This policy considers that it is necessary to restrict further the use of private cars and encourage the use of public transport.
- (2) Should parking in Covent Garden be maximised within overall policy limits or should more restrictive measures be taken to further reduce the impact of vehicles in the area?
- (3) At which sections of the community should further restrictions be aimed?
- (4) Should a policy be considered for restricting coaches in the area?
- (5) Is there a demand for undercover, secure cycle parks?
- (6) What growth in car ownership, if any, should be allowed for in assessing the amount of resident's parking?
- (7) Should residential parking be sited for the maximum convenience of car owning residents? What degree of inconvenience is acceptable?
- (8) Should all residential parking be provided off-street to allow more room for short stay visitors on-street?

6.0 Entertainment Traffic

Covent Garden shares with Soho a peculiar traffic effect during the evening caused by the influx of private cars and coaches generated by the entertainment industry. It is debatable whether this influx of traffic constitutes a serious problem, or whether it is part of the general level of activity which adds to the excitement in this area of London. What is certain is that the traffic movements and levels of parking which occur at the moment during the evening cannot be accommodated within the circulation and parking systems discussed in the previous sections of this paper.

The issue of evening traffic is first discussed in terms of what happens now and what the possible causes. This will highlight some of the constraints on possible approaches before considering whether and how the situation should be changed.

6.1 Existing Situation

Although detailed surveys are not yet complete, some initial results give a reasonable guide for a discussion of the issues.

In terms of the level of general traffic flow on the main roads within Soho and Covent Garden, the effect of entertainment traffic is noticeable but not particularly marked. Figure 10 compares the daily distribution of traffic flows generally within Central London with the distribution along Charing Cross Road for an average weekday. The hourly figures are plotted as a percentage of the maximum hourly flow in a day. The entertainment traffic is shown up clearly, but it is not simply as a comparative increase in flow that the entertainment traffic has its greatest effect.

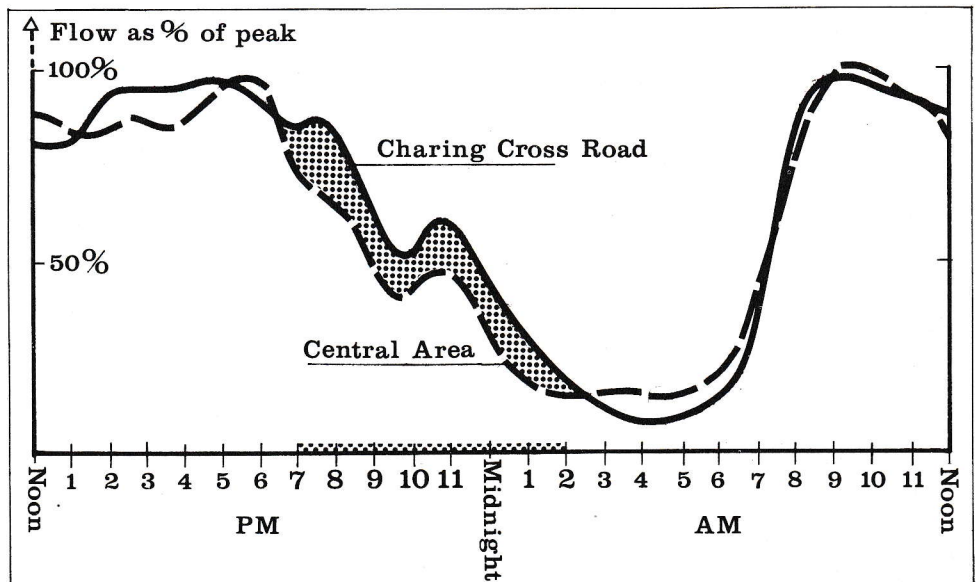


FIGURE 10 COMPARISON OF CENTRAL LONDON AND CHARING CROSS ROAD HOURLY TRAFFIC DISTRIBUTION

The major effects on these areas are due to the fact that the majority of the entertainment traffic has destinations within the areas. Within Covent Garden somewhere in the region of 4000 people travel each night to the theatres by car, over a quarter of these coming to the Royal Opera House and the Coliseum. Table 1 shows the percentage of people coming by different modes with separate figures for the Royal Opera House and the Coliseum, though these latter two are still preliminary figures based on only part of the collected data.

Methods of Travel to:	Royal Opera House	Coliseum	Other Theatres
Car	31	24	20
Coach	—	9	5
British Rail	2	2	2
Underground	27	23	25
Bus	6	8	10
Taxi	7	5	18
Walk and Other	27	29	20
	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 1. METHODS OF TRAVEL TO THEATRES (WEEKNIGHT)

Travel by car to theatres probably accounts for some 1500 vehicles requiring parking space on arrival. A recent survey of the evening parking on the streets within Covent Garden showed 2100 vehicles parked on almost all the available kerbside space.

The dispersion of this parking is shown in Figure 11. The extra vehicles would include resident's and other visitors vehicles and many of them from observation were probably overspill from the entertainment areas to the north and west. These figures refer to the weeknights and it is reasonable to assume that there are probably nearer 2500 vehicles parked on the streets within Covent Garden on a Saturday evening. The proposed extension of the Royal Opera House, which will effectively add 50% to its existing seating capacity will also increase the demand for parking spaces. There are several possible reasons why so many people come by car; many people probably consider that an evenings entertainment should be as convenient and comfortable as possible and would simply not go to the theatre, if they could not use their cars from door to door. Other people find it more convenient than public transport, while some may find that public transport is not available for the journey home. Thus the two underlying causes of the car usage are the lack of constraints on cars normally in force during the day and the relative shortage of public transport facilities late at night. Unfortunately, extra public transport and enforcement of restrictions of vehicle movement and parking both require manpower, which is in very short supply.

So, what demands do visitors using cars put on Covent Garden? Briefly, they demand easy 'to the door' access to the theatres and other entertainments for setting down passengers, as do taxis and coaches, and somewhere conveniently close to park their cars. However approximately 60% of the people who come to the theatres in Covent Garden, as far as this area is concerned, are pedestrians.

The other mode of transport which appears to be increasing in usage is the private coach. There are two ways of viewing its role, and unfortunately precise data on its effect is very difficult to gather. A coach on one hand can be seen as a replacement for 20 cars requiring road and parking space, or, as a mode which reduces the demand for public transport, hence reducing its viability. Most of the coaches operating at present appear to park outside the area during performances but this presumably merely causes environmental and traffic problems elsewhere. If the amount of coach traffic does increase significantly, consideration will need to be given to the provision of evening coach parking within Covent Garden.

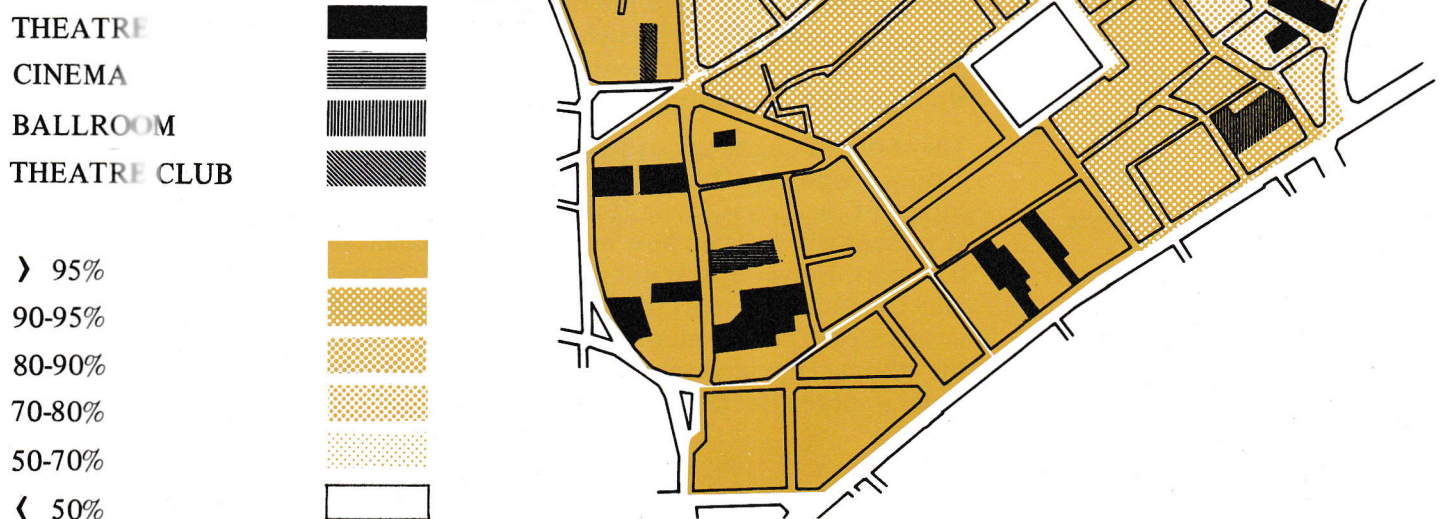


FIGURE 11 EVENING ON-STREET PARKING DENSITY

6.2 Lines of Approach

Before discussing the possible courses of action for management of theatre traffic it is worth considering whether those courses of action should apply solely to Covent Garden. The whole of Soho and the West End evening entertainment district shares very much the problems and constraints of Covent Garden. Westminster City Council have carried out a great deal of research into the possibilities of management for Soho which when augmented by the studies in Covent Garden, could provide the basis for the consideration of an integrated system for the whole of the West End entertainment district.

There are several broad lines of approach for dealing with the theatre traffic: to retain the status quo with a free for all circulation and parking system; to allow as much on-street parking as possible whilst retaining some of the daytime pedestrian areas and to ensure if possible that the space is used only for entertainment within Covent Garden; to attempt to implement some kind of semi-public transport system possibly on a park and ride basis specifically for the entertainment industry; or simply to restrain the use of the private car and force people to use public transport.

To retain the existing evening situation would mean that much of the

circulation management which provided improved pedestrian facilities during the day would be of a part-time nature. Not only would this mean that the balance between vehicles and pedestrians would be suddenly changed in favour of vehicles at say 6.30 but that since the pedestrian areas would have to be of a temporary nature their attractiveness during the day would be much less. The possibility of retaining some or all of the pedestrian priority area at night and maximising on the available parking space including off-street parks for the advantage of the Covent Garden entertainment industry would require a great deal of co-operation amongst the interested parties. In brief a system of timing the end of daytime parking restrictions and the beginning of theatre performances would need to be arranged so that the parking space was available when Covent Garden audiences arrived but it would be either too early or too late for other theatres.

The third line of approach could be one developed for the whole of the West End. The chief problems in developing a semi-public transport system for the entertainment industry are – the difficulties of making the system attractive and convenient; the difficulties of enforcing the restrictions on car usage which would otherwise always be more attractive and convenient; the dispersion of the home destinations; and the legal and staffing problems of actually running the transport. However, ways round these problems may be found if this is considered the right approach and the situation serious enough to demand the research. Such a system would also need full co-operation of entertainment industry and indeed, it is possible that they would need to be the operators of this specialised transport.

The restraint on the use of private cars during the evening could have a serious economic effect on the entertainment industry. A very detailed survey of the Royal Opera House and Coliseum audiences being undertaken at present will indicate how many car trips could take place on public transport. However, it is not possible to assess whether they would actually take to public transport or whether they simply would not use the theatres in this area. The advantage of forcing people to use public transport during the evening is to increase its evening revenue and hence in the long term, make it more effective.

6.3 Problems and Issues – Entertainment Traffic

1. Theatres are major generators of private cars. Between 20 and 30% of audiences travel to the theatres by private car and demand at present around 1500 parking spaces within Covent Garden. There are around 2000 vehicles parked on streets within Covent Garden during a weekday evening.
2. The two underlying causes for the usage of private cars are the lack of parking restrictions during the evening, and the relative shortage of public transport.
3. The increasing use of coaches for entertainment transport may put pressure on Covent Garden to provide evening coach parking.
4. Should an integrated management system be worked out for the whole of the West End entertainment district?
5. Which of the possible courses of action should be followed?
 - (i) To make the majority of the daytime circulation management of a temporary nature, so that the existing situation can continue during the evening.
 - (ii) To ensure that whatever space is left for parking, after the pedestrian priority schemes are implemented, is used solely for Covent Garden Theatre parking.
 - (iii) To implement some kind of semi-public transport system solely for the evening entertainment industry, possibly on a park and ride basis.
 - (iv) To restrain the use of private cars by parking control, and hopefully increase the effectiveness of evening public transport.

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