

STRAND ALDWYCH

THE
NORTHBANK



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Strand Aldwych

www.strandaldwych.org

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Timeline

2013 The Northbank BID Launched

2015 Northbank Vision and Strategy

2016 Strand Aldwych Vision, Traffic optioning

2018 Westminster scheme adoption

2020 Approval for delivery, and Traffic management orders

2021 Construction started in January

2022 'Meanwhile' scheme completed December

2023+ Enhanced Management Model

Project Objectives

- Reduce congestion, improve air quality and journey times, with associated positive impacts on health and associated economic benefits.
- Create an inspirational, safe and secure destination that offers a meeting place for workers, students, visitors and residents.
- Encourage exemplary collaboration within and between a cluster of world-class cultural and educational institutions, SMEs and students enabling high end research, innovation and a public showcase.
- Nurture and promote skills, entrepreneurship and economic growth in the knowledge and creative sectors.



SUSTAINABILITY

Improve biodiversity and access to the natural environment

Once grey and choked with traffic, a stretch of Strand has been made car free, enabling Westminster City Council in partnership with local stakeholders to create a striking new landscape that brings people in close contact with nature right in the heart of historic, central London. Strand is an exemplar of a softer, greener, healthier city that better meets daily needs. The design, by LDA Design, introduces nature to a previously car dominated gyratory and in a way that enhances the Grade 1 listed architecture which lines the street.

The scheme delivers:

- 1,370m² of biodiverse planting with year-round colour, including 17 trees with spring flowers and autumn interest including: Alamanchier, Ulums New Horizon and Betula Edinburgh. Mature London Plane trees already provide the upper canopy, complemented now with new mid and lower level planting.
- Water management, drainage and drought planning have been incorporated.
- Environmental benefits to support wildlife including pollinators, cooling urban heat and transforming local air quality.

Improves, or will improve, air quality

Sitting within a GLA-designated Air Quality Focus Area means pollution has been monitored in the area since 2015, with the London Air Quality Network providing ratified public data. The data shows the dramatic impact that making the area car free has had on air quality.

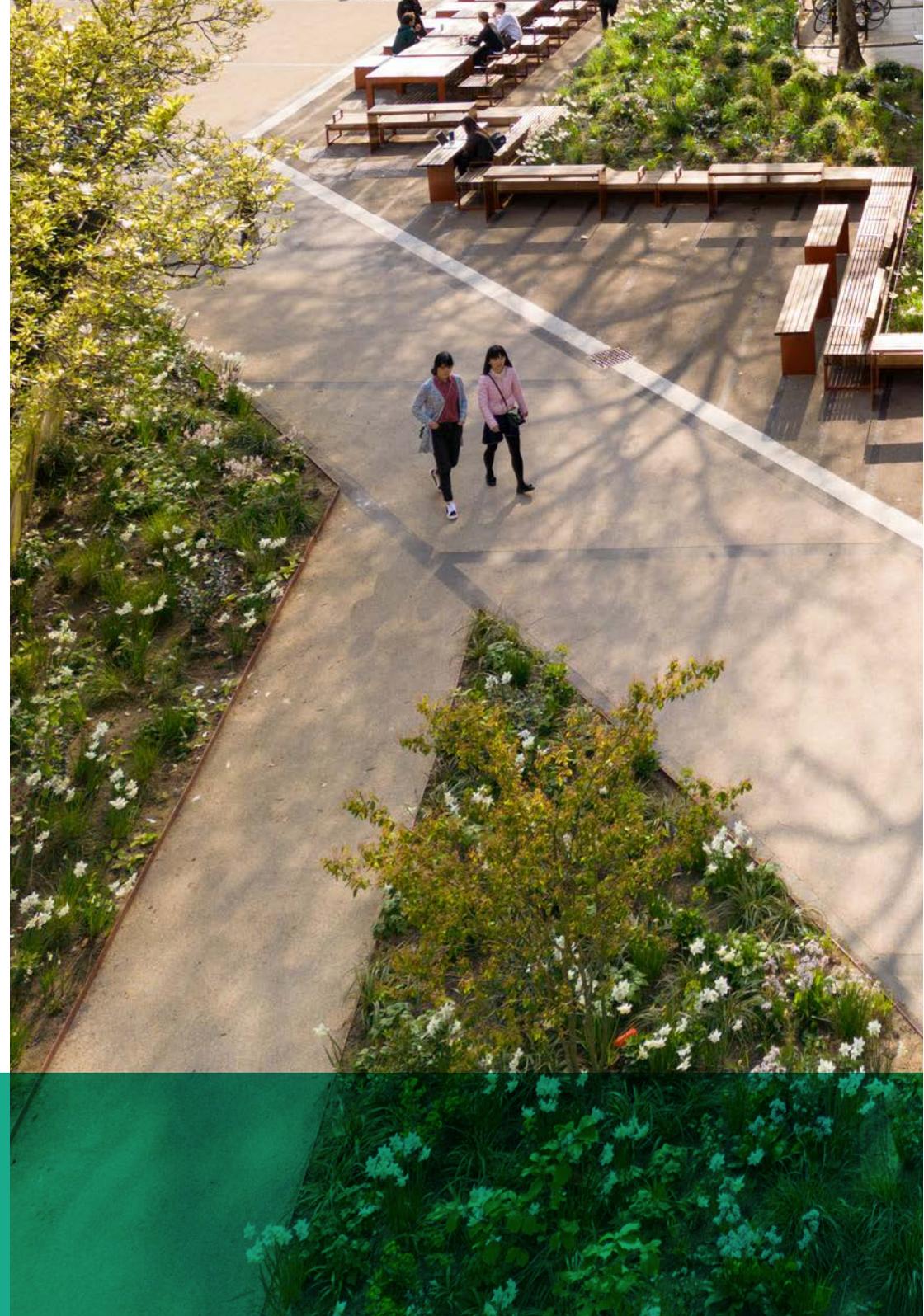
- The data shows a reduction NO₂ of 56%, from 76µgm³ in 2019 to 34µgm³ in 2022 - significantly below the target of 40µgm³.
- Hourly pollution levels show a significant decrease with both the morning and evening peak times improving, reducing the impact on commuters and workers.
 - From 85 to 42 in the morning
 - From 95 to 40 in the evening
- Local Breathe London monitoring has been put in place and a green screen has been created to protect a nearby school from pollution.
- King's College has installed 22 air pollution monitoring stations. Measurements began three months prior to pedestrianisation and will continue until 2024.

Seeks to improve, social and physical well-being and health

Strand Aldwych has been reimagined to better meet the needs of a community comprising students, visitors, workers, residents and businesses. It has created tranquil, inclusive public realm where vehicles were dominant, and made Aldwych safer and more accessible. Dwell time has also already increased.

Strand is now a destination, a social space with lounging lawns, communal dining, generous seating and spacious plazas. It will improve quality of life, providing respite and access to nature. For the first time, the world-renowned institutions that line Strand, including King's College and Somerset House, can use the space for cultural exchange, so knowledge is shared not stored away.

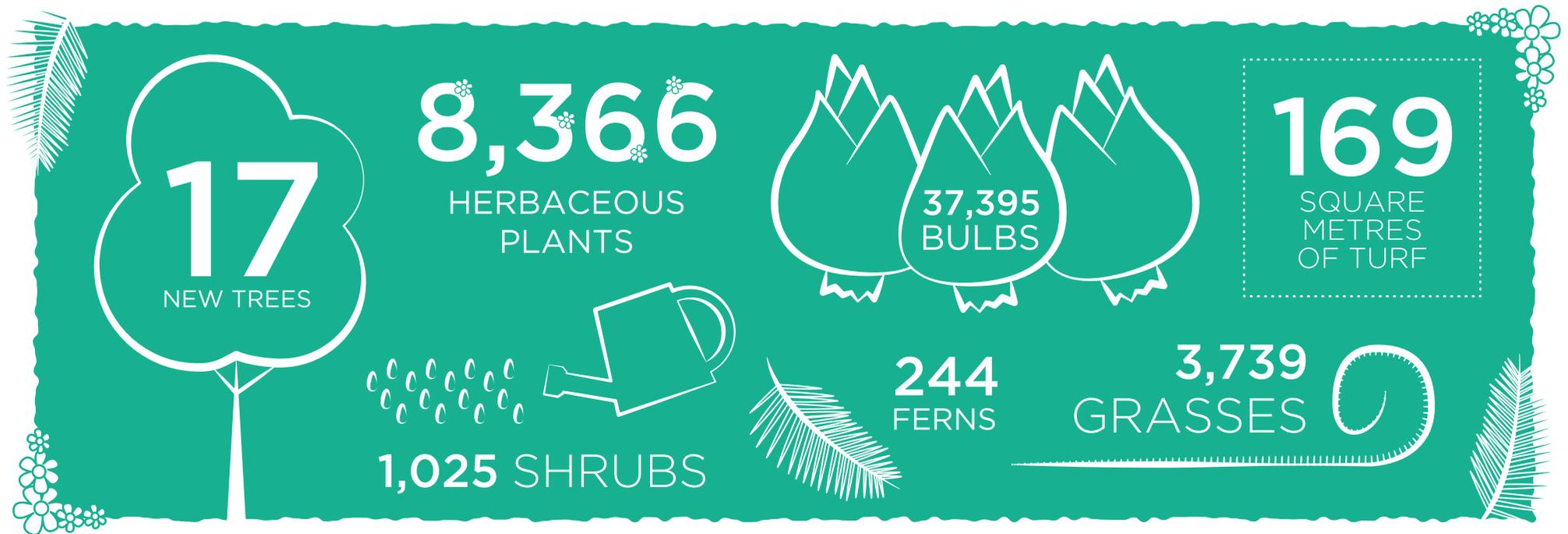
Stronger pedestrian and cycling links have improved access to Covent Garden, Holborn, the West End, the Thames and Embankment. Pedestrian conditions have been enhanced with wider footways on adjacent roads, more crossings on desire lines which improves connectivity.



Exemplary standards of environmental performance

London will be a healthier place to live and visit, but only if its public realm is improved. A reimagined Strand Aldwych pioneers a more sustainable city. Its redesign is of national and international significance.

Making space for nature in historic and contested urban spaces isn't easy. Strand Aldwych creates a new balance between hard and soft, whilst maintaining essential street functionality. In terms of bringing nature in, the design includes:



Permeable new surfaces manage heavy rainfall. Engagement with local stakeholders will pursue further greening opportunities.

150+ well-positioned cycle stands (50 new) support cyclists.

With traffic removed, the fantastic St Mary le Strand church, once a glorified traffic island, has been freed. Canon Peter Babington, priest-in-charge, has reported a visitor spike. He now anticipates around 50,000 visits a year.



“The best and most enlightened example of good town planning since the creation of Covent Garden Piazza in the 1970s”

Save Britain's Heritage

Longer-term sustainability legacy of the project

A management model has been developed in partnership with stakeholders in the area along with a new governance structure to ensure longevity in achieving a shared vision for the area.

One of the key pillars of the management model is sustainability. A stakeholder group is working to deliver an action-oriented approach which feeds into wider Council programmes. To date this includes:

- Monitoring air quality through a partnership with ReSET led by King's College.
- Sustainability Action Plan to drive change, for example, how freight and deliveries are managed or supporting landlords to reduce building carbon emissions.
- Education: a programme led by King's and LSE, Somerset House and The Courtauld that focuses on sustainability.
- Waste management.

The Northbank BID works with over 300 local businesses to develop sustainability initiatives and works with the Cross River Partnership to secure funding and resources for local installations and trials, such as the Clean Air Villages and Healthy Streets Everyday initiatives, and river freight pilot with Clean Air Logistics for London.

To encourage active travel one of the project partners, Living Streets, developed a walking map.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Ideas for Strand Aldwych were workshopped, tested, and shaped with 70 stakeholders, providing valuable insight to support the ambitions of local organisations to be relevant to all. Design stages were shared via a bespoke website with feedback shaping the scheme. Project Board meetings were held regularly to guide progress

Research was commissioned to understand existing audiences and potential gaps, and to ensure the scheme could support the local community in attracting people to the area. A specialist accessibility consultant joined the design team.

Events like 'September on the Strand', featuring a skatepark and outdoor dining, enabled people to experience the space differently. This activation has continued with The VoiceLine, a celebration of the first BBC broadcast from Marconi House on Strand 100 years ago.

The local community made up of schools, universities and theatres will help to curate a programme of activation, attracting new audiences and collaborations to enliven the space.





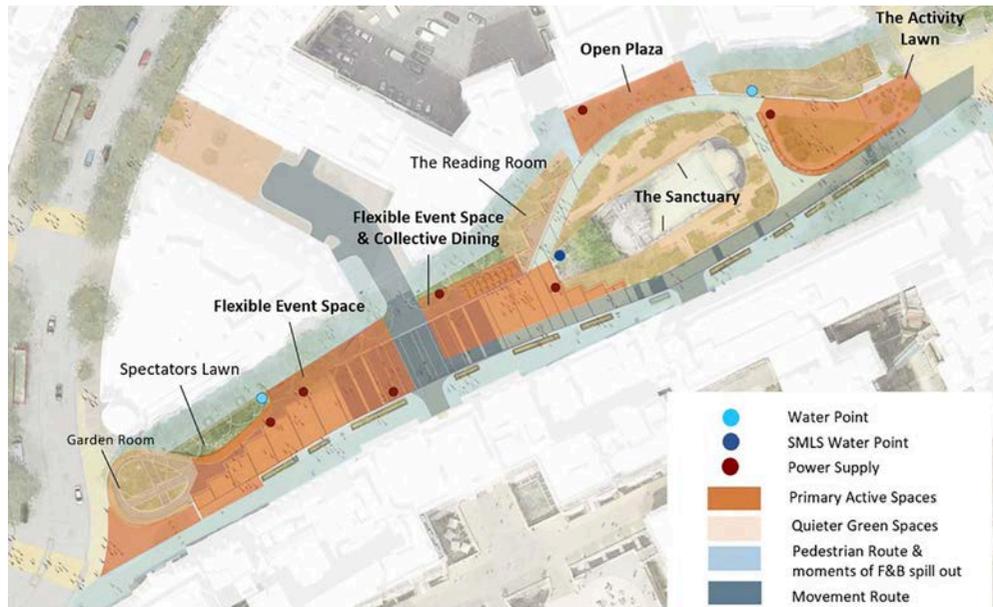
01 Aerial visualisation Credit: LDA Design



02 Before view to St Mary Le Strand Credit: LDA Design



03 Visualisation: view to St Mary Le Strand Credit: LDA Design



06 Strand Aldwych zones with activity zones Credit: LDA Design



07 View along Strand to flexible event space Credit: LDA Design



08 View along Strand



04 View of Aldwych Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



05 View of St Clement Danes area Credit: Furnitubes



06 View of flexible event & communal dining area Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



09 Rainbow bench Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



10 St Mary Le Strand - sanctuary area Credit: LDA Design



11 Stakeholders gather for opening Dec 2022 Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



12 Ribbon cutting with Westminster's Lord Mayor Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



13 Community time-capsule planted in schem Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



16 VoiceLine & landscaping at St Mary Le Strand Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



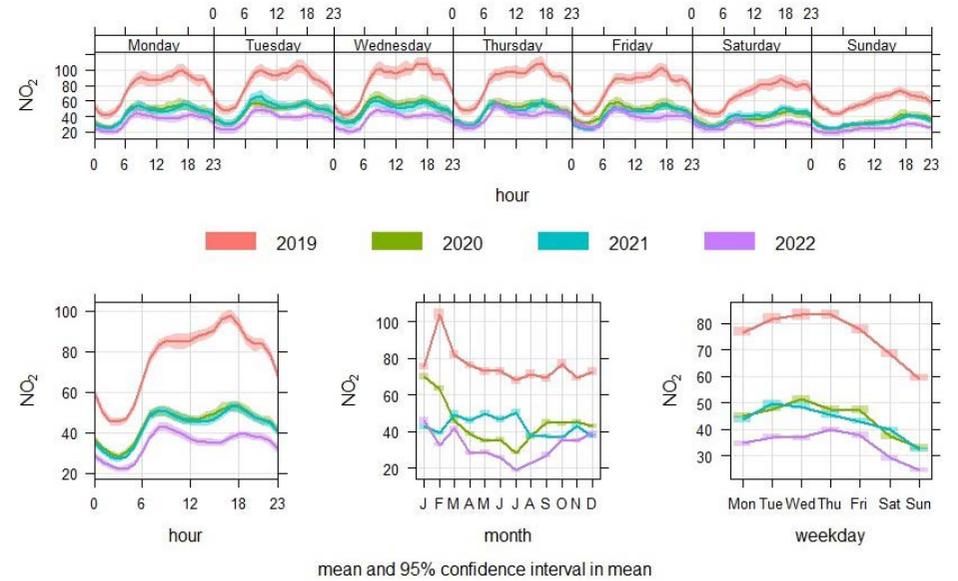
17 VoiceLine Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



by L.F. Lee for Northbank



14 Air pollution mitigation & greening near school
Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



15 Air pollution data: 2019 – 2022, London Air Quality Network (www.londonair.org.uk)
Credit: Imperial College London



18 St Clement Danes area, Austrian high Commission
Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



19 St Clement Danes area, Austrian high Commission
Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



HERITAGE

Investment and revitalisation of heritage and cultural assets

- Strategically important, Strand Aldwych features world-renowned buildings and institutions, including Somerset House, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Bush House, King's College, and LSE. However, heavily trafficked, Strand had become “an interspace” with the one-way gyratory with Grade 1* St Mary Le Strand Church, described by author/journalist Simon Jenkins as “the finest 18th century church in London”, being a traffic island known by taxi drivers as ‘St Mary in the Way’.
- The project has been a catalyst for the restoration and re-framing of the Church within the community, as an important cultural asset and hub. A new Vicar was appointed to lead a successful Heritage Lottery Bid to bring the Church back to life and maximise it's potential in its new context.
- Traffic changes have improved the setting of the world class heritage architecture and the car-free Strand has created a unique civic space, a cultural and learning destination for the institutions to share and programme, supporting creative exchange.

A positive contribution to the local community and economy

- Traffic congestion and narrow pavements meant Strand was a hostile place for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Carving out new public realm on historic city streets is challenging, but the unique partnership behind Strand has created an exceptional civic space that balances the needs of the everyday.
- A key objective was to encourage collaboration within and between a cluster of world-class cultural and educational institutions and SMEs with a public space to showcase ideas.
- The design has transformed the user experience for students, academic staff, workers, visitors and residents. Businesses are experiencing uplift now there is space for alfresco dining and meeting friends.
- Local organisations are investing in infrastructure, planning cultural events and re-purposing their estate to be community focused. New organisations have also been attracted to the area and have joined in shaping the emerging cultural hub.



**“benefit residents,
workers, and
visitors helping
to give London a
global, competitive
edge and ensuring
the central
activities zone is
for all, not
the few.”**

Cllr Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member
for Planning and Economic Development,
Westminster City Council

A genuine public benefit in terms of accessibility and education

- Strand Aldwych has been made safer and easier to walk, cycle or wheel. An accessibility consultant joined the project team to ensure changes were for everyone, with crossings on desire lines and enhanced adjacent streets improving access to neighbouring Covent Garden, Holborn, and Embankment.
- The project is designed to be of public benefit in myriad ways, as well as supporting neighbouring businesses, theatres, institutions and universities, with a platform for cross-pollination and collaborations to attract new audiences and all ages through: art, performance, exhibitions, festivals and events.
- The VoiceLine was the first installation in the new public space, celebrating the centenary of the BBC's first broadcast from Bush House in 1922. Flexibility in the design leaves space to maximise every future opportunity.

Long term vision for the continued viable use of the site and a sustainability legacy

- The long-term vision for Strand Aldwych is that it becomes a world-class cultural and creative quarter. Movement for this strategic city gateway has been rethought in order to provide a better user experience and to support the theatres, institutions and businesses in the area.
- The Management Model and stakeholder groups will continue the longevity of the shared vision and lock in a sense of local ownership. Robust area management, economic planning with smart technology and sustainability will provide holistic place management for a resilient future.

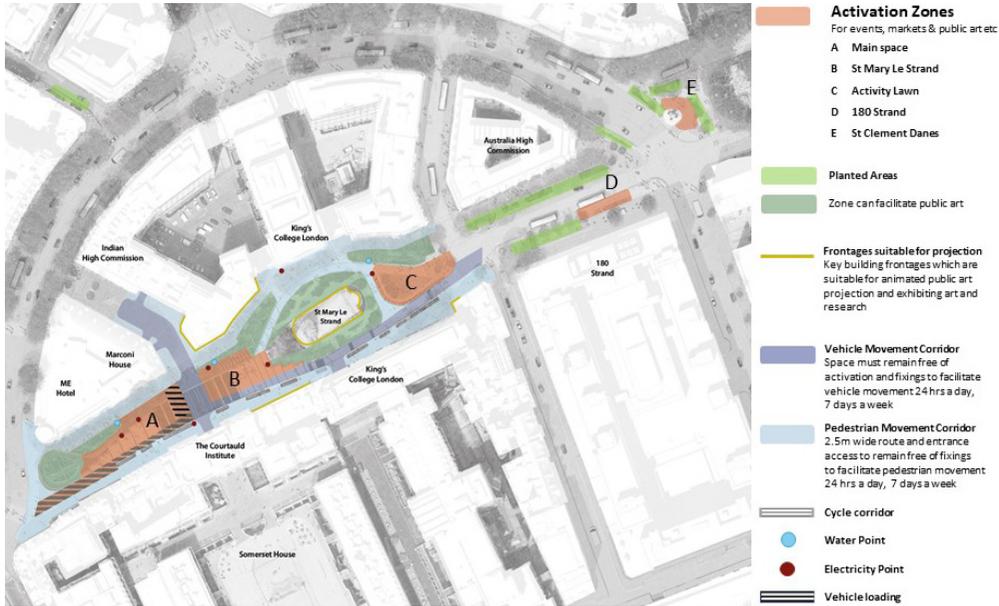
Design and Development

Strand is one of London's most historic streets. It is also a highly contested urban space; change would have to be carefully considered and consulted on.

The final scheme is the result of an inclusive co-design process, with ideas workshopped with and shaped by 70+ stakeholders. Cyclists and pedestrians have been carefully designed for.

Initial public consultation on the concept design ran for six weeks enabling everyone to review and highlight issues so that a preferred ones held design could emerge. Six exhibitions were held including at LSE and St Mary Le Strand church, plus on-street engagement, workshops and an online survey which received almost 1,500 responses. There was strong public support for increased greening, better air quality and for the design to be ambitious and innovative.

The scheme was reviewed following the pandemic, and a meanwhile design for Strand provided further opportunities to test how the space will be used.



01 Layout with events space Credit: LDA Design



02 Community event to celebrate car-free Strand Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



05 VoiceLine immersive audio artwork by Nick Ryan Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



06 VoiceLine immersive audio artwork by Nick Ryan Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



07 Curved rainbow s



03 Community event with alfresco dining Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



04 VoiceLine & landscaping at St Mary Le Strand Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



07 Street seating at St Mary Le Strand Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



08 Community activity celebrating new space Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



09 Enhanced seating and areas to meet Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



10 Areas for alfresco dining and working Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



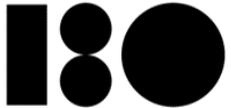
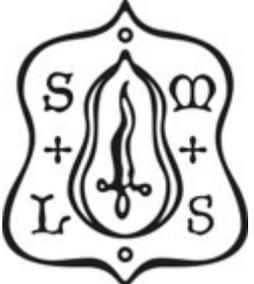
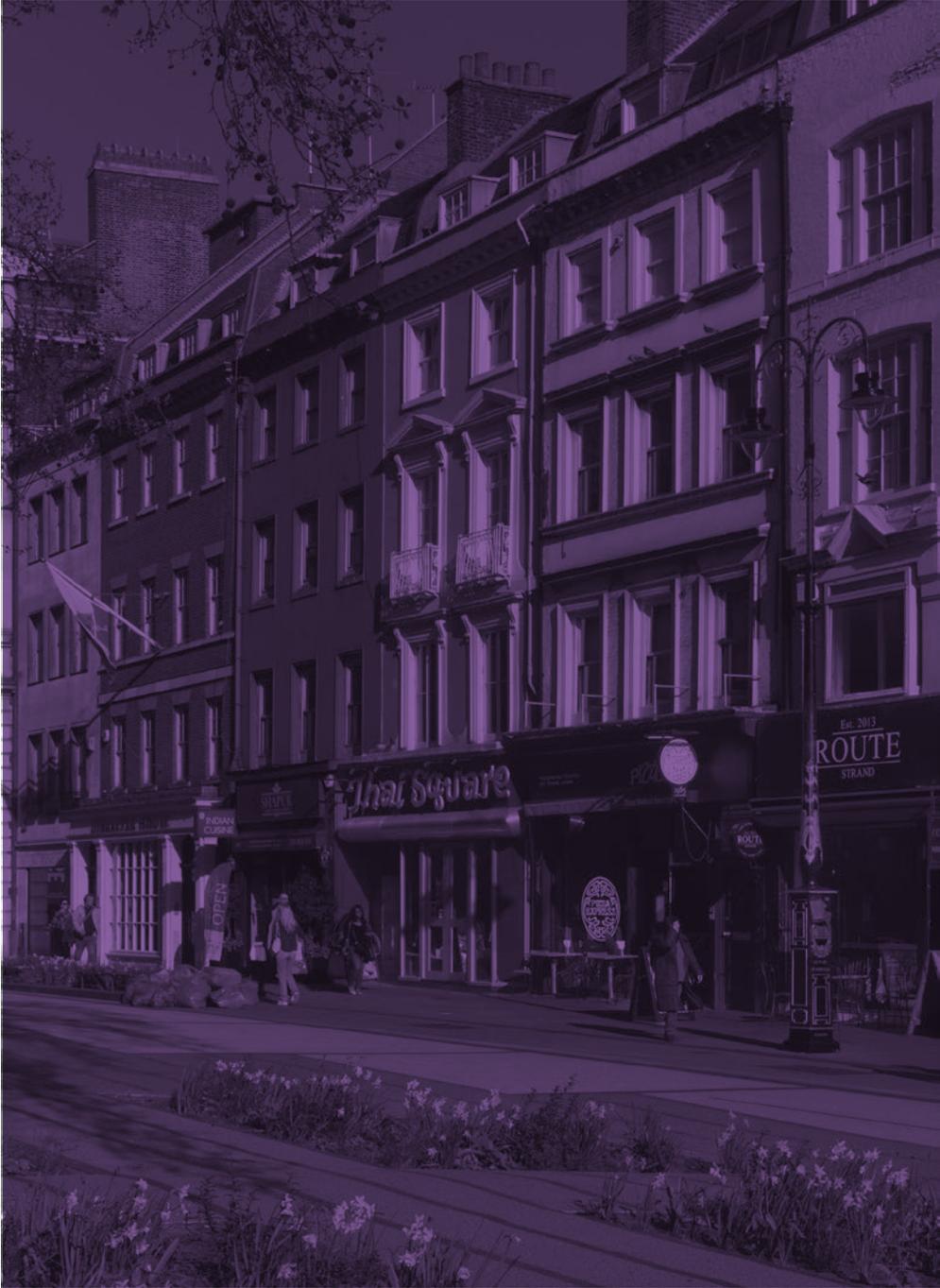
11 Enhanced seating and areas to meet Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



12 Biodiverse planting complimenting mature trees Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



13 Robust maintenance for resilient space management Credit: Mickey L.F. Lee for Northbank



Partnership and collaboration which shaped a shared vision

- Many partners, stakeholders and consultants worked to create Strand Aldwych. We'd like to thank all involved and look forward to continuing the area regeneration to establish Strand Aldwych as one of London's prime destinations with a thriving community and resilient future.



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