

2.0 Site Matters

2.2.5 Constraints

The existing building has a number of shared agreements and leases that impact the development of the proposal:

UKPN

The existing building has two UKPN substations at Basement Level that are accessed via a vehicle ramp. These must be maintained with the current level of access to the basement and is a constraint for large-scale alterations to the basement. This may require further negotiation and agreement in the next stages of design development.

Third Party Arrangements

Parking

There are currently two long-term car-parking leases for the adjacent building, Trentishoe Mansions that must be maintained.

Loading

There is a shared loading arrangement with an adjacent retail unit (119 Shaftesbury Avenue, currently occupied by Angels Fancy Dress Shop) that must be maintained/accommodated within the proposed servicing strategy.

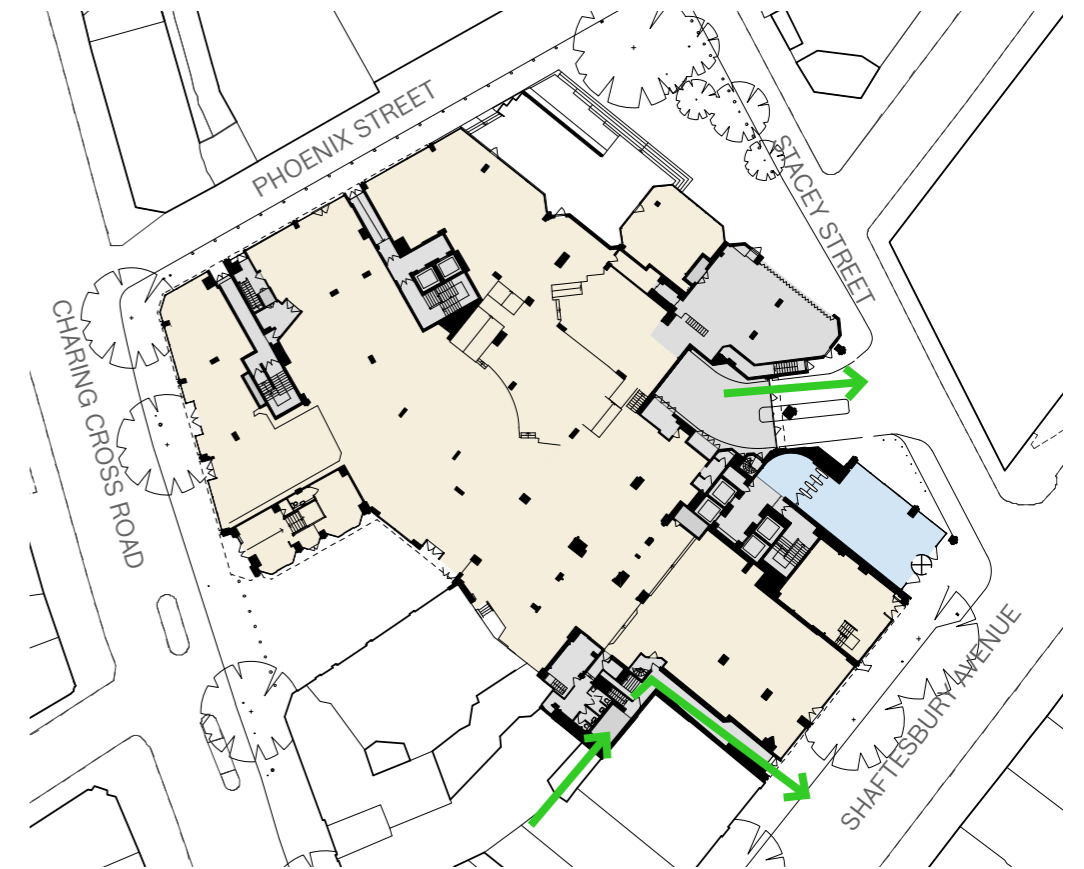
Escape

There are two separate escape routes that must be maintained. The adjacent residential building has access to a shared escape route in one of the light wells to escape to Shaftesbury Avenue. There is also shared basement access for the adjacent building for escape onto Stacey Street.

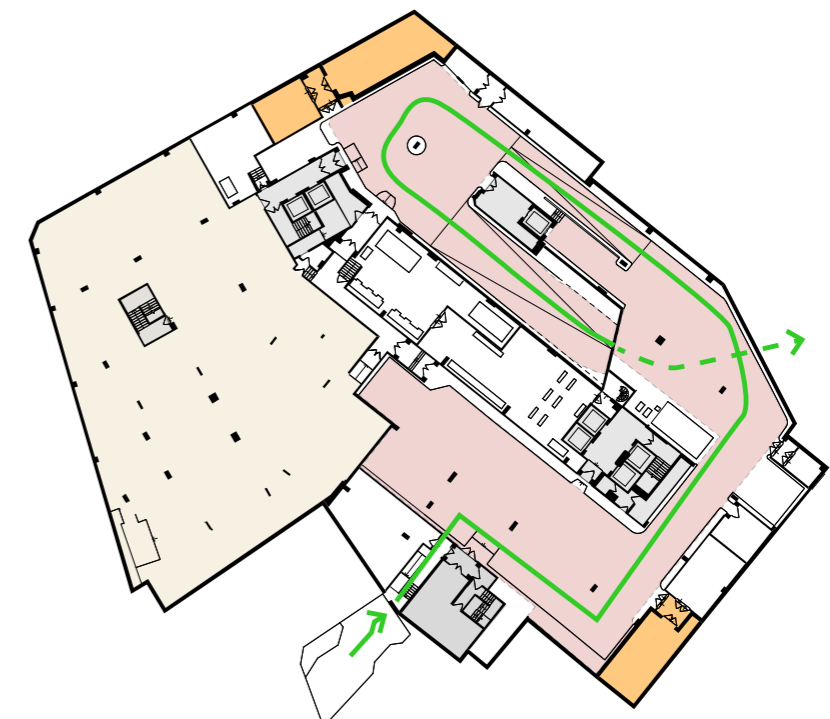


- Commercial
- Retail
- Back of House / Circulation
- Basement Access Ramp
- UKPN Sub Stations

➔ Escape route from adjacent building



Existing Ground floor Plan



Existing Basement Plan

2.0 Site Matters

2.3 Existing Public Realm

The existing building provides very little public realm within its site boundary. The two key areas of public realm are located on Caxton Walk (off Charing Cross Road) and, to the north of the building, at the junction of Phoenix Street and Stacey Street.

These areas are typically of poor quality, under used, include variation in levels with poor accessibility and attract anti-social behaviour.

2.3.1 Caxton Walk

Caxton Walk provides an opportunity for a key public space on Charing Cross Road at the junction of Old Compton Street. Yet, the space is currently colonised and cluttered by restaurant tables with there currently being no place to sit or rest informally. Dense planting and foliage obscures sight lines through the space, providing cover for anti-social behaviour and proving a nuisance to the local residents. There is no access to the upper floors contributing to the building's poor urban illegibility. Instead pedestrians are met with a sheer wall that creates a dark chasm-like space; an unfitting termination of the visual axis from Old Compton Street.



View from Charing Cross Road towards Caxton Walk

2.3.2 Stacey Street

The poorly designed existing public realm space to the rear of the site is under utilised. The existing (and oversized) entrances to the basement car park and to the ground floor loading bay contribute to the space feeling 'back-of-house', making it an undesirable area, especially at night.

The public space and footways are currently used for illegal parking and for idle taxis, which impedes pedestrian use and movement. Additionally, local consultation has revealed a high level of anti-social behaviour, leading to a perceived sense of danger and inhospitality.

An area of open space to the north of the building is raised by 5-steps and includes raised ventilation louvres as a result of the UKPN substation located below. This area is poorly designed and creates a barrier to the potential for active frontage and passive surveillance on this frontage. There is no planting with the exception of the street trees located outside the site boundary.



Stacey Street looking north towards (former) Phoenix Gardens community building (night time)



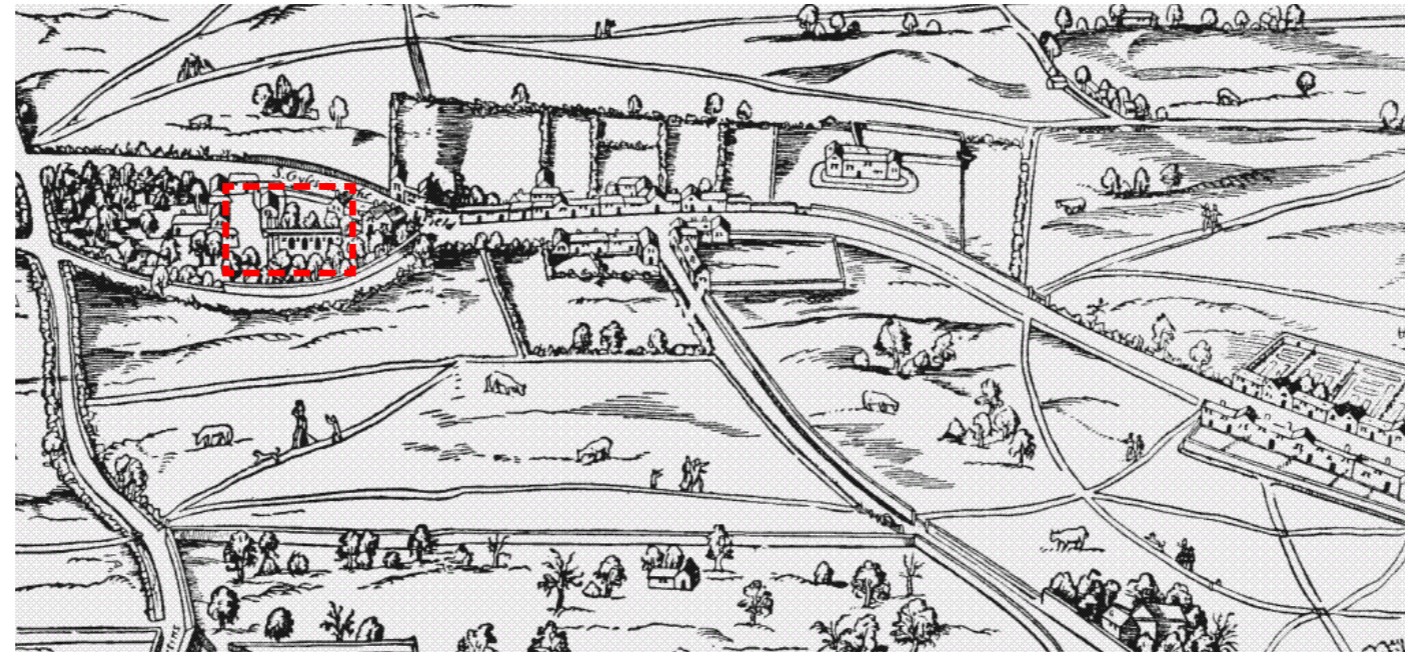
Stacey Street (view from Phoenix Street)

2.4 Historical Context

2.4.1 Historical emergence of St Giles Quadrant

125 Shaftesbury Avenue sits at the southern tip of a historic quadrant in the West End that has included a church of St Giles at its centre since the 12th Century. The western and eastern parts of the quadrant are currently anchored by Centre Point and Central St Giles.

The quadrant of St Giles has a vivid and dramatic history; historical maps and archive material tells us that a hospital for lepers was founded here in 1117, by Queen Matilda, the wife of Henry I and ran until 1539.



Extract from Agas's Civitas Londinum, showing the neighbourhood of St. Giles-in-the-Fields circ. 1560–70



St Giles in-the-fields 1718



Neighbourhood of St. Giles-in-the-fields, 1658. (Faithorne and Newcourt)



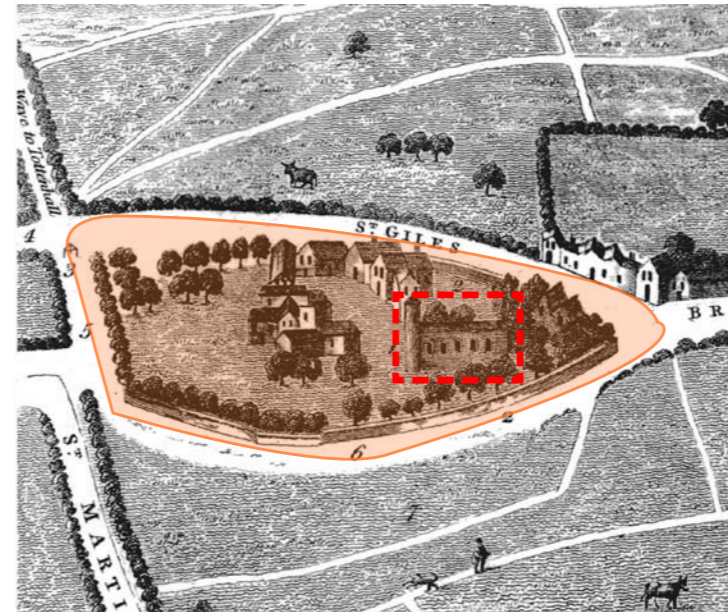
St Giles in-the-fields 1834

2.0 Site Matters

The hospital was built at a time when there was an outbreak of the infectious disease of leprosy in England and when many of the populous were afflicted by it. Built upon Crown land, this specific site was chosen because of its isolation and also as an old Saxon church stood in the area amongst the fields and marshes, far from the City itself. This parochial church lay at the west end of a small village situated where High Holborn and Drury Lane now meet which was known as Alde Wych, or the "old village".

St Giles-in-the-fields church has been rebuilt three times in its history, with a church always having been associated with the area; from the old Saxon church to the third and current church built in 1730-34, designed by the architect Henry Flitcroft.

Historic maps depicting the importance of the church in defining the quarter of St Giles are illustrated on this page.



Old Leper Hospital 1570



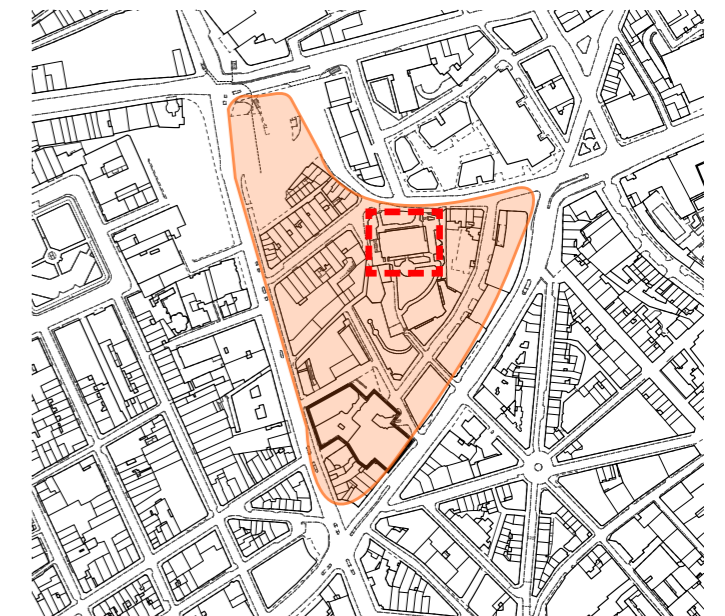
1658



1794



1890



Present

2.4.2 History of connection between Old and New Compton Streets

Until the development of 125 Shaftesbury Avenue in the early 1980s, Old Compton Street and New Compton Street was connected via Little Compton Street (as shown on the adjacent historic maps).

Extensive bomb damage during World War II led to the demolition of many of the Georgian houses and businesses on New Compton Street leading to extensive redevelopment. The site of 125 Shaftesbury Avenue remained largely clear (it was used as car park) until the development of the existing building in the early 1980s.



Showing the clearance of the bombed Stacey Street site



Further clearance work of the Stacey street, c.1941



1939-1945



WWII bomb damage to the east side of Stacey Street



Looking west up New Compton Street, dated 3rd September 1941

2.0 Site Matters

When the current building was first developed, it featured a shopping arcade at ground floor level providing pedestrian access through the building. This was later closed due to the poor performance of the retail units within the arcade.

The proposal aims to reinstate the historic route through the site to increase permeability, to enhance the public realm surrounding the building, and to improve access to St Giles-in-the-Field Church and St Giles High Street.



1720



1794



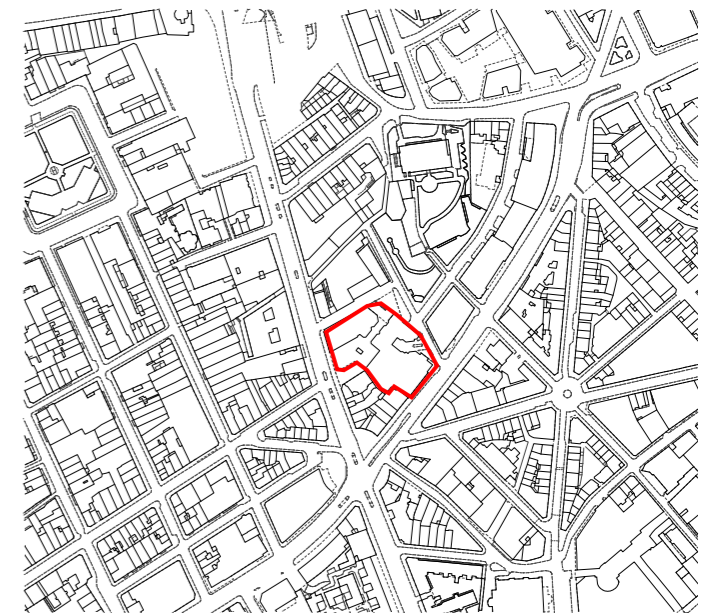
1890



1939-1945



1960



1985

2.0 Site Matters

2.5 Site Analysis

2.5.1 Transport Infrastructure

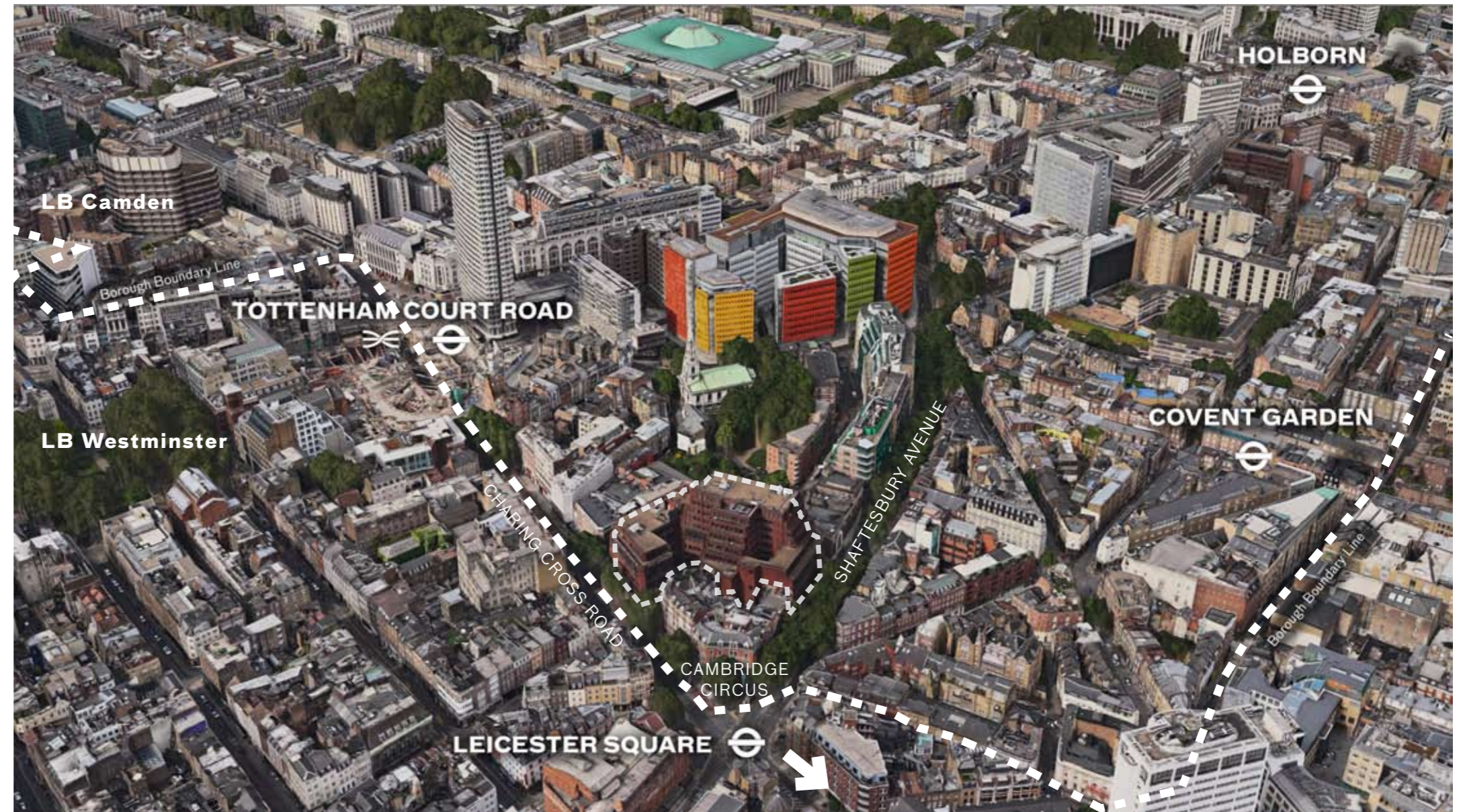
Rail

The site has high level of public transport accessibility with good access to nearby London Underground and National Rail services. A site-specific Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) calculation was undertaken by TfL based on public transport service frequencies during the AM peak period between 08:15 and 09:15. The PTAL was determined to be Level 6b, the highest level of public transport accessibility.

Tottenham Court Road Underground station is the closest station, being a little over 300m from the Site linking to the Central and Northern lines. Crossrail (the Elizabeth Line) will also serve Tottenham Court Road station from 2018. Also relatively close by are Covent Garden, Leicester Square, and Piccadilly Circus Stations Underground. There is one national rail station, Charing Cross Station, located 763m to the south of the site, approximately a 10 minute walk, which provides services to south-eastern parts of London as well as Ashford, Tunbridge Wells, Dartford, Gravesend, Gillingham, Hayes, Sevenoaks, Hastings, Dover and Ramsgate.

Road

The site has good access to several bus routes, many located within 1 minute's walk along Shaftesbury Avenue. Several other bus stops are within a short walk of the site, which has good quality footways along its highway frontages. The footways are safe pedestrian routes between the site, bus stops, rail stations and local services.



Bird's eye view indicating transport infrastructure and LBC - WCC borough boundary

2.5.2 Conservation Areas

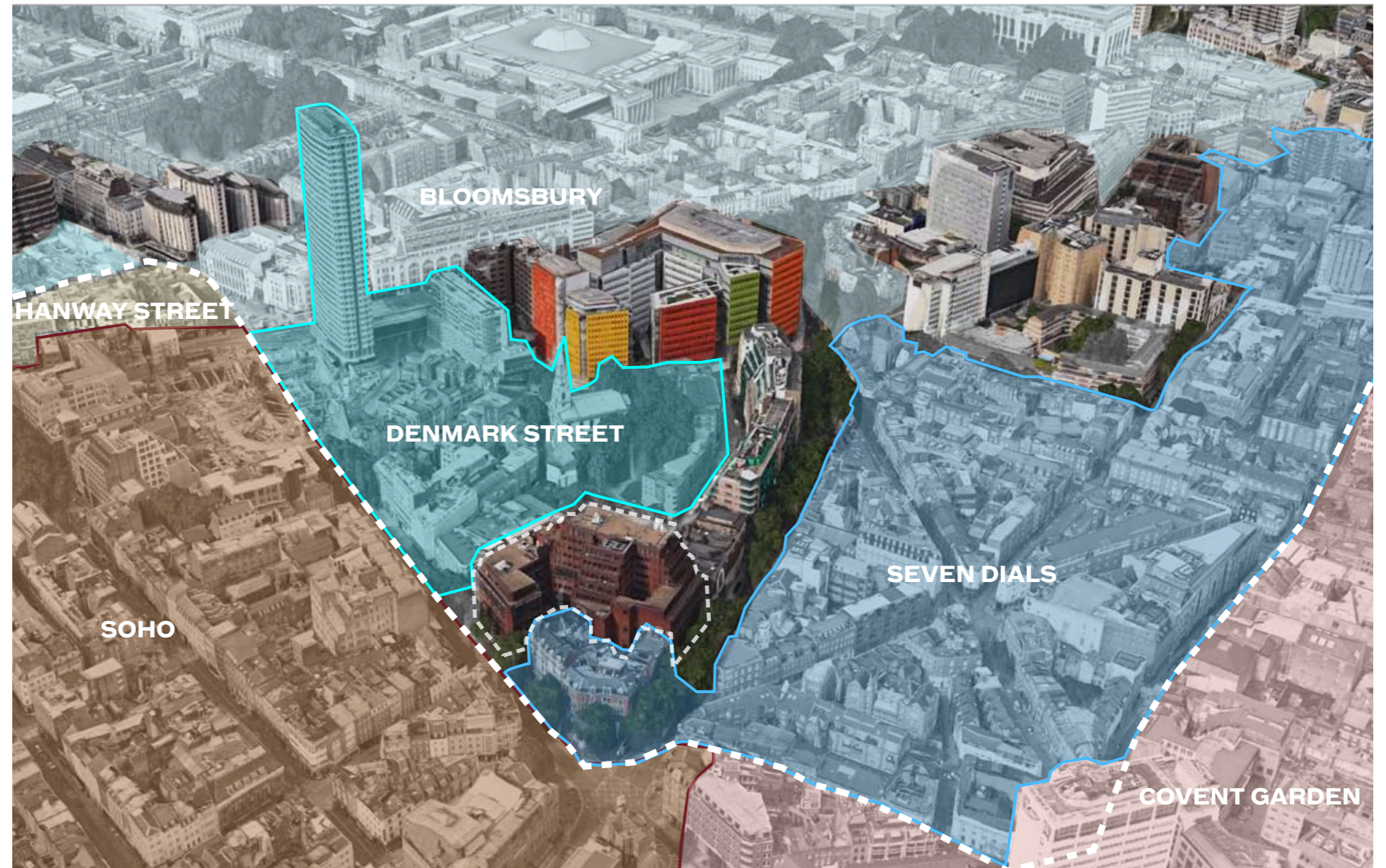
The site is not in a Conservation Area but sits between the Denmark Street, Soho and Seven Dials Conservation Areas, highlighted on the adjacent image.

As is typical of many central London sites, there are a number of listed buildings, landscapes and monuments within close proximity of the site but not immediately adjoining the existing building. These are highlighted on the next page.

The most significant listed buildings, due to their proximity to the site are: Phoenix Theatre (grade II), designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, Bertie Crewe and Cecil Massey; the Saville Theatre (grade II, now an Odeon Cinema), designed by Sir Thomas Bennett; and the grade I listed St Giles-in-the-Fields Church. Centre Point (grade II) also provides a significant landmark to the north of the site.

In addition to the Phoenix Theatre and Phoenix Artist Club, the site is located close to residential buildings including Trentishoe Mansions and Phoenix House on Charing Cross Road / Phoenix Street, Pendrell House and the Alcazar on Stacey Street, and the residential buildings along New Compton Street.

Whilst situated in the London Borough of Camden, the site is immediately adjacent to the City of Westminster border.



Conservation Area boundaries

2.5.3 Listed Buildings

There are a number of Listed buildings within close proximity of the site but not adjoining. These are annotated on the aerial view.



Key:

1. Odeon Cinema (former Savilles Theatre)
2. Phoenix Theatre
3. Church of St Giles-in-the-Fields
4. Gardens of St Giles-in-the-Fields
5. Elms Lester Painting Rooms
6. No.6 Flitcroft Street
7. Palace Theatre
8. Centre Point
9. No.2-6 Old Compton Street

Listed buildings and landscapes