

Public Realm Vision for

Victoria



Contents

•	Introduction	5	3	Conclusions and Ways Forward	65
1	Character Study	7	3.1	Conclusions	66
1.1	Victoria's place in the city	8	3.2	Undertake quick-win projects	67
1.2	Policy	10	3.3	Build consensus, champion public realm projects as they become feasible	68
1.3	Victoria's streets and open spaces	12	3.4	Group projects, identify priorities, commission design briefs	69
1.4	Land uses lining streets and spaces	14	3.5	Undertake a high-profile catalyst project	70
1.5	A 24-hour part of the city	15	3.6	Respond to the changing context	72
1.6	Retail life and public space	18	3.7	Adopt a bold, long-term strategy for all of Victoria's roads, streets and spaces	74
1.7	A residential neighbourhood	20			
1.8	The buildings that frame Victoria's public realm	22			
1.9	Vehicles and road hierarchy	26	•	Appendices	77
1.10	Walking in Victoria	27	A:	Ideas for a network of improved public spaces	78
1.11	Cycling in Victoria	30	B:	Ideas for better walking routes and connections	80
1.12	Paving materials	34	C:	Ideas for vehicle routes and the road network	82
2	Principles and Recommendations for the Public Realm	37	D:	Ideas for cycle improvements	84
2.1	Create a network of related spaces to build a new public character	38	E:	Ideas for a greener Victoria	86
2.2	Improve air quality	40	F:	Ideas for programme, events and play	88
2.3	Improve walking routes and the pedestrian environment	42	G:	Relevant policy and bibliography	90
2.4	Minimise the impact of traffic and vehicles	44	H:	The top 12 questions asked of Victoria BID Ambassadors	92
2.5	Improve cycling conditions	46	I:	BID interviews	93
2.6	Enhance trees, greenery and planting	50			
2.7	Build character, programme events in public spaces and provide play opportunities	52			
2.8	Ensure public identity through signage and wayfinding	54			
2.9	Encourage unified, discreet management and oversight	55			
2.10	Enhance lighting	56			
2.11	Commission art in public places	60			
2.12	Adopt a coherent material palette for Victoria	62			

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Executive Summary

This Public Realm Vision examines the streets and open spaces of the Victoria area of London. The report sets out principles for the improvement of these streets and spaces, suggests ideas for public realm projects and makes recommendations of ways forward for the upgrade of the public realm. This vision was commissioned from Publica by the Victoria Business Improvement District (BID) in the summer of 2014. This report presents the studies, conclusions and ideas produced by Publica between July and October 2014, building on previous work by Publica looking at the area for Land Securities.

This vision is intended as a document that can be adopted by the Victoria BID and all its members. It should be used to facilitate dialogue, debate and decision making by stakeholders in the area including Westminster City Council (WCC), Transport for London (TfL), developers, landowners, businesses, residents and community groups.

The aim of this report is to present the existing public realm conditions in this area of Westminster, to formulate a principle-led approach to the development of the district and to make informed recommendations on how the area's roads, streets, gardens and other public spaces can be improved for all users. This Public Realm Vision suggests ideas for projects and describes ways to achieve a meaningful, coherent upgrade of the area's public spaces in the years ahead.

The public realm of Victoria is not currently of a uniformly high quality. Traffic, vehicles and pedestrian congestion dominate the experience for workers, visitors and residents. There is much that could be done to further improve the streets and spaces of the district for the benefit of local businesses, workers, residents and visitors.

Victoria is changing. Major new developments and infrastructural projects are currently underway such as Land Securities' Nova developments and the Victoria Station Upgrade. Several major projects in the years ahead mean that the streets and spaces of the area will come under increasing pressure to perform as a high-quality environment for multiple user groups and increased numbers of pedestrians and cyclists. The Victoria Station masterplan being investigated by Network Rail, Crossrail 2 and the Davies report on airport capacity, which may result in an expansion of Gatwick Airport, could all have a significant impact on the streets and spaces of Victoria.

Publica recommends that 12 guiding principles are adopted to guide development of the public realm in Victoria:

- Create a network of related spaces to build a new public character
- Improve air quality
- Improve walking routes and the pedestrian environment
- Minimise the impact of traffic and vehicles

- Improve cycling conditions
- Enhance trees, greenery and planting
- Build character, programme events in public spaces and provide play opportunities
- Ensure public identity through signage and wayfinding
- Encourage unified, light-touch management and oversight
- Enhance lighting
- Commission art in public places
- Adopt a coherent material palette for Victoria

In order to deliver real, meaningful change in the area in the years ahead a series of projects should be undertaken. Publica has identified a host of ideas for potential projects at this stage. These are presented in relation to the guiding principles in Chapter 2 of this report, and in more detail in this document's appendices. The ideas for projects and interventions contained in this report are suggestions that will require further consultation, investigation, engineering and testing.

Ideas should be discussed, debated and reviewed by the relevant stakeholders. Certain projects should be prioritised based on a range of factors. Ways of ordering and prioritising projects are investigated in Chapter 3 of this report. Projects that are deliverable in the short term should be undertaken for completion within the next two to three years. At least one high-profile catalyst project should also be pursued for completion within the next three to four years.

Designs for individual sites in Victoria and any area-wide strategies for transport, traffic and public realm improvements should help build a coherent character for the area over time. All designs should be produced and reviewed in relation to the overall vision for the district. The careful review of individual designs in light of this report will be critical for the realisation of an improved public realm in Victoria. This report should be used to facilitate decision making on the future of Victoria, to build consensus on the development of the area's public realm and as a guide for the commissioning of individual projects and spatial upgrades.

In conclusion, Publica believes the Victoria BID and its members should adopt the principle-led approach described in this report to help direct investment in the public realm. A series of quick-win projects have been identified that would build momentum for further improvements. Publica believes a high-profile catalyst project should also be selected and championed by the Victoria BID over the next 3–4 years. The Victoria BID should work with its members, Westminster City Council, Transport for London, Network Rail and other key stakeholders to help shape decisions that will create an attractive, vibrant and functional district for people working, living and visiting the area.



Introduction

Victoria is a dynamic and varied part of central London. The area's rich, layered history has created a townscape and public realm of great diversity. From quiet Georgian streets to major arterial roads, from the busy mainline station and Victorian urban grandeur to multi-story glass and steel, the periodic rebuilding of the area has resulted in a complex sense of place. In contrast, the areas around Victoria tend to have more unified architectural and public space characters and therefore a clearer definition within the city as a whole.

The range of spaces that constitute Victoria's public realm vary considerably in character and quality. The paving materials and design of public spaces in Victoria can often seem of lower quality than those in other areas of Westminster, many of which have benefited from the adoption of enhanced conservation-area materials and a holistic approach to improvements.

Recent developments in the area can feel like urban islands unrelated to their surroundings. The lack of an overarching vision for the identity and design of Victoria's public and civic spaces has contributed to this condition. The presence of the Inner Ring Road and the large number of pedestrians in the heart of the district present certain challenges. The setting of many public spaces between large new buildings is another major consideration.

Creating a compelling, exciting and pleasant pedestrian environment in Victoria requires imaginative thinking that tackles the realities of conditions such as daylight, sunlight, wind, vehicle movement and pedestrian desire lines. This report outlines a holistic approach to the upgrade of the area's streets and spaces.

Victoria Street cuts a clear swathe through the district and forms the main spine of the area. Victoria Street, Buckingham Palace Road and Terminus Place are the principal front streets of the district and in many ways form the face of the district. These main public spaces have a logic and scale of their own, not clearly related to the urban grain and scale of surrounding parts of the district. This can lead to surrounding streets and spaces feeling 'other' rather than an integral part of Victoria. The quiet back streets and smaller public spaces of Victoria are often charming but are not always obvious to visitors or those not familiar with the district. Useful back street routes and connections can be hard to navigate without local knowledge.

The proximity of the Royal Parks and walking connections through to the West End, Whitehall, Belgravia, Knightsbridge and Pimlico are often not appreciated and require local knowledge. This results in a public realm that can lack identity and feel disconnected from neighbouring districts.

Victoria is the gateway into London for hundreds of thousands of national and international visitors each day. The district has several major buildings of national importance, not least Buckingham Palace and Westminster Cathedral, and the rethinking of the public realm in Victoria presents a significant opportunity for visitors, residents, workers, businesses, land owners and London as a whole.

Current investment in the area has prompted multiple parties to look more closely at the public realm. There is also a wider context of major infrastructure upgrades by Transport for London and Network Rail, the ambitions of the Victoria Business Improvement District and an aspiration by Westminster City Council to ensure high-quality improvements are made to the district. This once-in-a-generation opportunity calls for a joined-up approach to the ongoing improvement of the streets, spaces and gardens of Victoria.



Public Realm Vision for

Victoria

Character Study



1.1 Victoria's place in the city

Victoria is a varied urban district within the City of Westminster. Its geographical extent and the streets and spaces that comprise the area are not always clearly agreed upon. The area is surrounded by more defined districts with clearer edges and characters, as seen in the map at right. The maps on this page reflect this landscape and seek to illustrate the subtle layering of the area's identity.

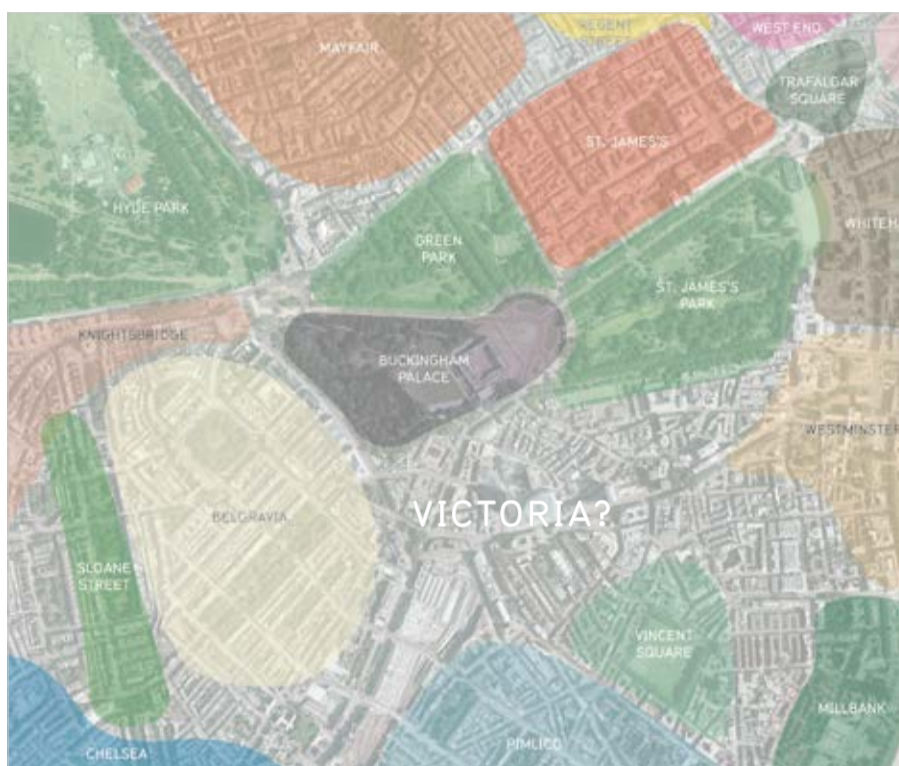
The map at top right shows the areas surrounding Victoria. Buckingham Palace and the Royal Parks form a distinct area of central London. St James's most commonly refers to the area between the parks and Piccadilly. The areas around Westminster Abbey, Parliament and Whitehall have a clear identity. To the north west, Belgravia is defined by stucco terraces and garden squares, as is Pimlico. Millbank, the Tate and the surrounding housing estates are a clearly identifiable part of Westminster. But what then of the areas between these districts?

The second map translates the result of a Google search for the term 'Victoria' across this part of London, with a clear clustering around the mainline station.

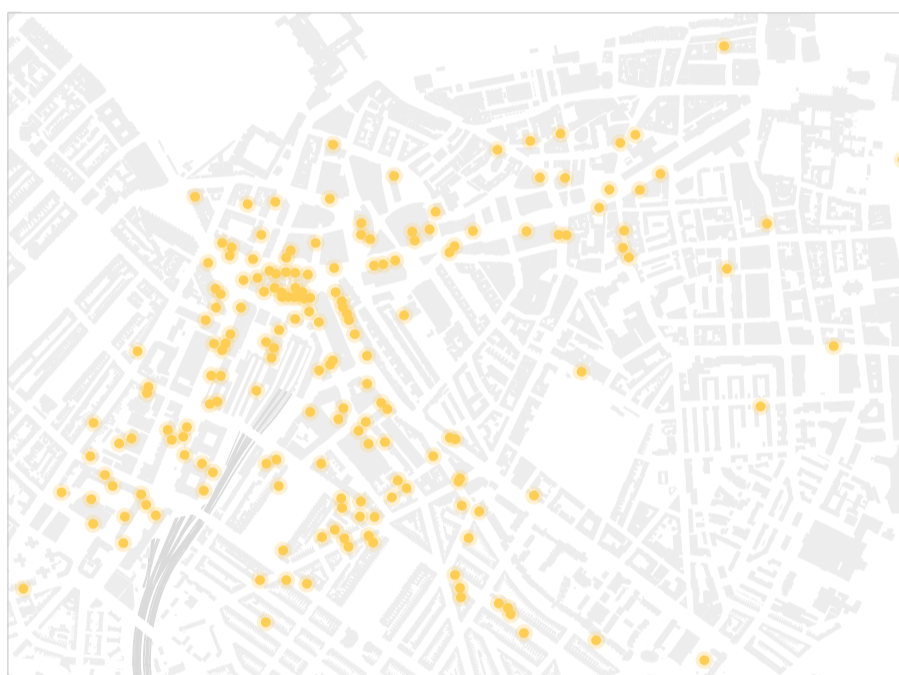
The third red map at the bottom of this page shows the results of an exercise asking people to draw what they perceived were the edges of Victoria. The areas were drawn by members of the Publica staff, including people unfamiliar with the area. The red shapes vary greatly, however, the rail station, western Victoria Street, Buckingham Palace Road, Bressenden Place and Palace Street are all consistently included.

To many people today, the name Victoria and its public space image is associated primarily with the mainline rail station and its immediate environs, the busy main streets and spaces around the Inner Ring Road gyratory and Victoria Coach Station. These streets and spaces do not always provide positive associations for the public realm. They evoke a crowd and traffic-heavy atmosphere with few quiet or green spaces, rather than the high-quality environment that exists around Westminster Cathedral and the area between Victoria Street and St James's Park, with its more tranquil spaces and residential uses. The area around Broadway and Petty France is not clearly considered part of Victoria at present and is more associated with St James's Park Underground station and the civic core of Westminster. However, the Victoria Neighbourhood Forum extends into this area, as does the remit of this report and the vision contained within it. Improvements to public spaces across this wider definition of Victoria would help to integrate the district as a whole and build a coherent, high quality public realm that would change perceptions of the district.

Transport for London and Network Rail, major developers in the area such as Land Securities, Grosvenor and other private enterprises along with Westminster City Council and the Victoria and Belgravia Neighbourhood Forums all have a role to play in defining the future of Victoria and its public realm. The public realm that they control or influence will set the character and experience of the district. A coordinated approach to the design and materials of the public realm across Victoria should help to define the area in people's minds, reveal its local assets and build better connections to surrounding areas of quality and calm. The Victoria BID is in a unique position to bring together the major stakeholders in the area to facilitate and promote improvements to the public realm of the area.



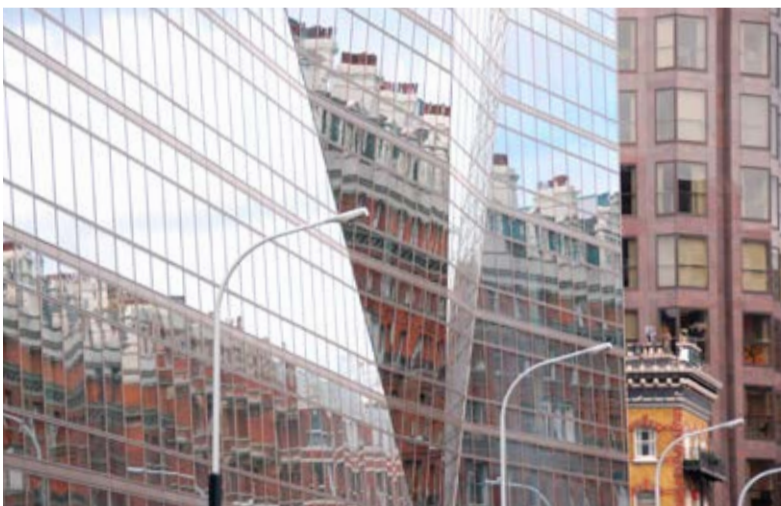
Areas surrounding Victoria



Google search: 'Victoria'



'Where is Victoria?' according to members of the Publica staff

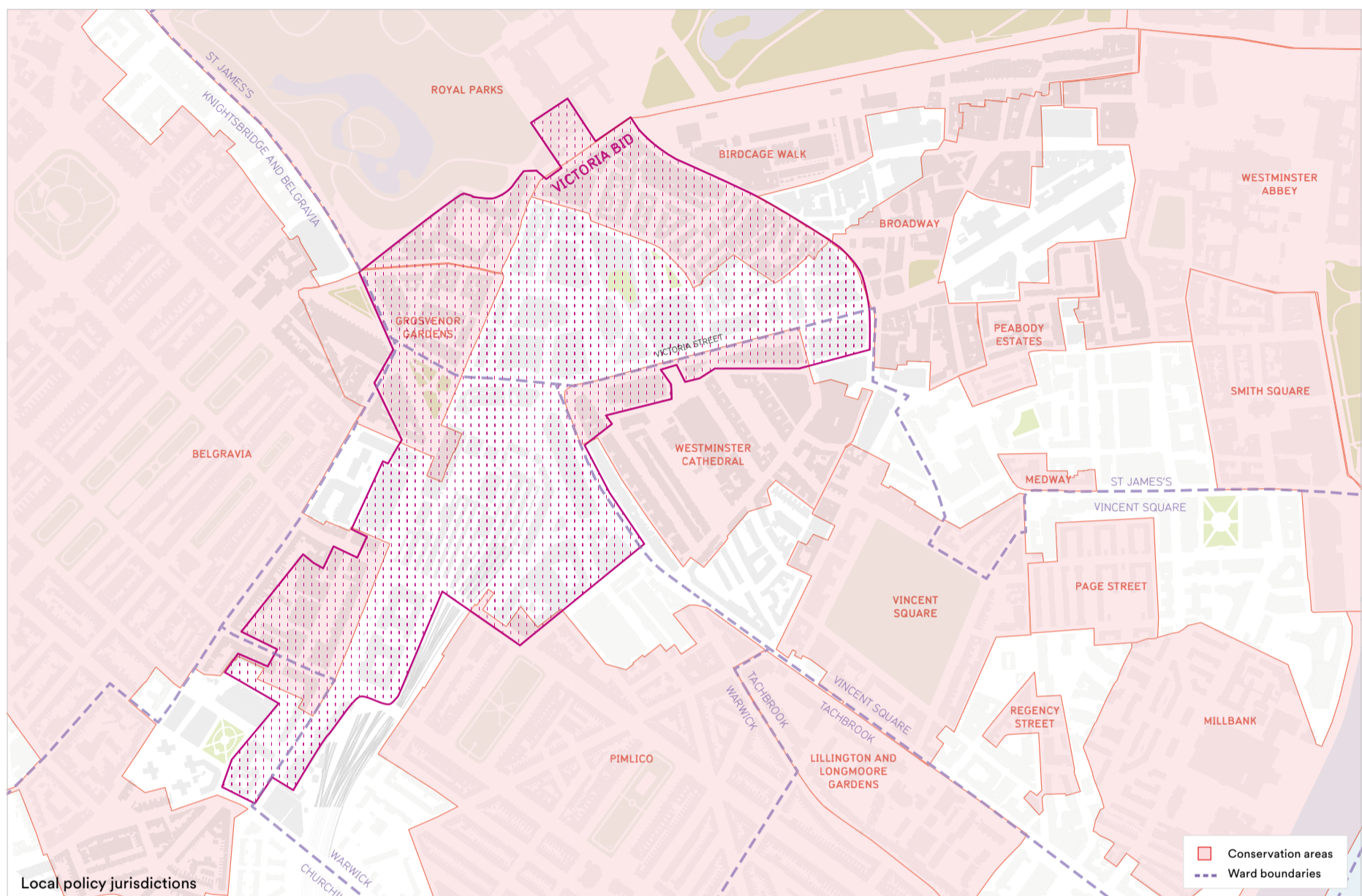


History of Victoria Street

The streets and built fabric of Victoria have developed over the centuries to form a unique and dramatic urban environment that defines the function and character of the public realm. The timeline below sets out some of the major milestones and events that have contributed to forming this part of the city.

- c.1600 Settlement extends across the east of the area as part of the ancient City of Westminster. The western end of what is now Victoria Street is sandy ground at the banks of the Tyburn River.
- 1618 A small prison exists at Tothill Fields Bridewell.
- 1825 Beginning of development in Belgravia. Thomas Cubitt and Lord Grosvenor.
- 1830s A notorious slum, 'Devil's Acre', exists in the area south of Tothill Street, around Old Pye Street.
- 1834 Tothill Prison opened, south of where Victoria Street now lies.
- 1840s Victoria Street planned as a grand boulevard between Westminster and Belgravia, a broad direct connection between Parliament and new desirable residential areas. The intention was also to create a second boulevard, Albert Street, leading directly to Buckingham Palace, but this did not happen. Westminster Improvement Acts and Peabody Housing begin to improve the area.
- 1850s Continued construction of the 'grand boulevard' and the original building of the street as offices and residential mansion blocks. Proximity to Parliament and government departments. The first generation of offices catered for organisations that wanted to be close to the country's decision makers—petitioning for new railway companies, engineering firms seeking patents etc.
- 1851 The Great Exhibition.
- 1860s The creation of two Victoria stations, initially to service the new exhibition site in Sydenham, then further afield. Rail lines followed the existing route of the Grosvenor Canal with the stations constructed on the canal basin. The area gained a new purpose connecting west London with south London, southern England, and the continent.
- 1868 Victoria Underground station opens.
- 1870 New Parliament buildings completed at the Palace of Westminster.
- 1872 Army and Navy opened in 1872, the first major retailer on Victoria Street. It was another 50 years until the street was lined with retail emporia.
- 1903 Westminster Cathedral established.
- 1908 West side of the rail station is rebuilt.
- 1909 East side of the rail station is rebuilt.
- 1924 The two stations were unified, the eastern side provides services to Medway towns and the Kent coast. The western platforms serve routes to Sussex.
- 1932 Victoria Coach Station opens. Beginning to be perceived as a massive transport hub.
- 1940s WW2 bomb damage—more extensive at the Westminster end of Victoria Street.
- 1950s Post-war developers wanted to build new, not repair. Much speculative development. Victoria was to become second only to Whitehall as a primary location for government departments. The aim was to leave none of Victoria Street's pre 1940s buildings standing.
- 1960s Construction of large modernist-inspired office blocks. Mobil house, Kingsgate House and Westminster City Hall by Burnet, Tait and Partners 1960–1966.
- 1973 IRA bomb in Victoria Station.
- 2000s Leases from 1960s and 1970s begin to expire, the opportunity for redevelopment arises along with government policy decentralising staff.
- 2005 Cardinal Place development.
- 2013 62 Buckingham Gate development completed.
- 2014 –
 - Zig Zag building, Kings Gate, Nova under construction.
 - Victoria Underground Station upgrade under construction.
 - Victoria Station now Britain's second busiest railway station. Currently, the station cannot cope with the number of passengers, station platforms have to be closed at rush hour to prevent dangerous overcrowding. The masterplanning project aims to address over 115 million people passing through the station each year.
 - Westminster City Council, Transport for London and the Grosvenor Estate exploring the potential of relocating Victoria Coach Station.
 - New London Underground north ticket hall set to open 2016.
 - Crossrail 2 from Wimbledon to Hackney likely to pass through Victoria.

1.2 Policy



Local government policy and other organisational jurisdictions have a real impact on the development and use of the city's public spaces. Victoria is an area with a complex policy context. Historically, several overlapping jurisdictions and policy areas covered the district and for the most part this continues to be the case. There is no Victoria council ward. This is a reflection of the area's past; over time the name Victoria was increasingly applied to the area around Victoria Street, but this route is itself a radical 19th-century imposition on a range of pre-existing settlements within Westminster.

As shown in the map above, Victoria Street currently runs between three Westminster City Council wards: St James's, Vincent Square and Warwick. It is notable that these names are not immediately redolent of the district, and in some cases refer to less well-known places. The map above also shows that the area is covered by a range of conservation areas which are generally set back from the core of the district around the rail station and the major new buildings along Victoria Street. There are no conservation-area guidelines tailored to the particular needs, built fabric or public realm of Victoria as a whole.

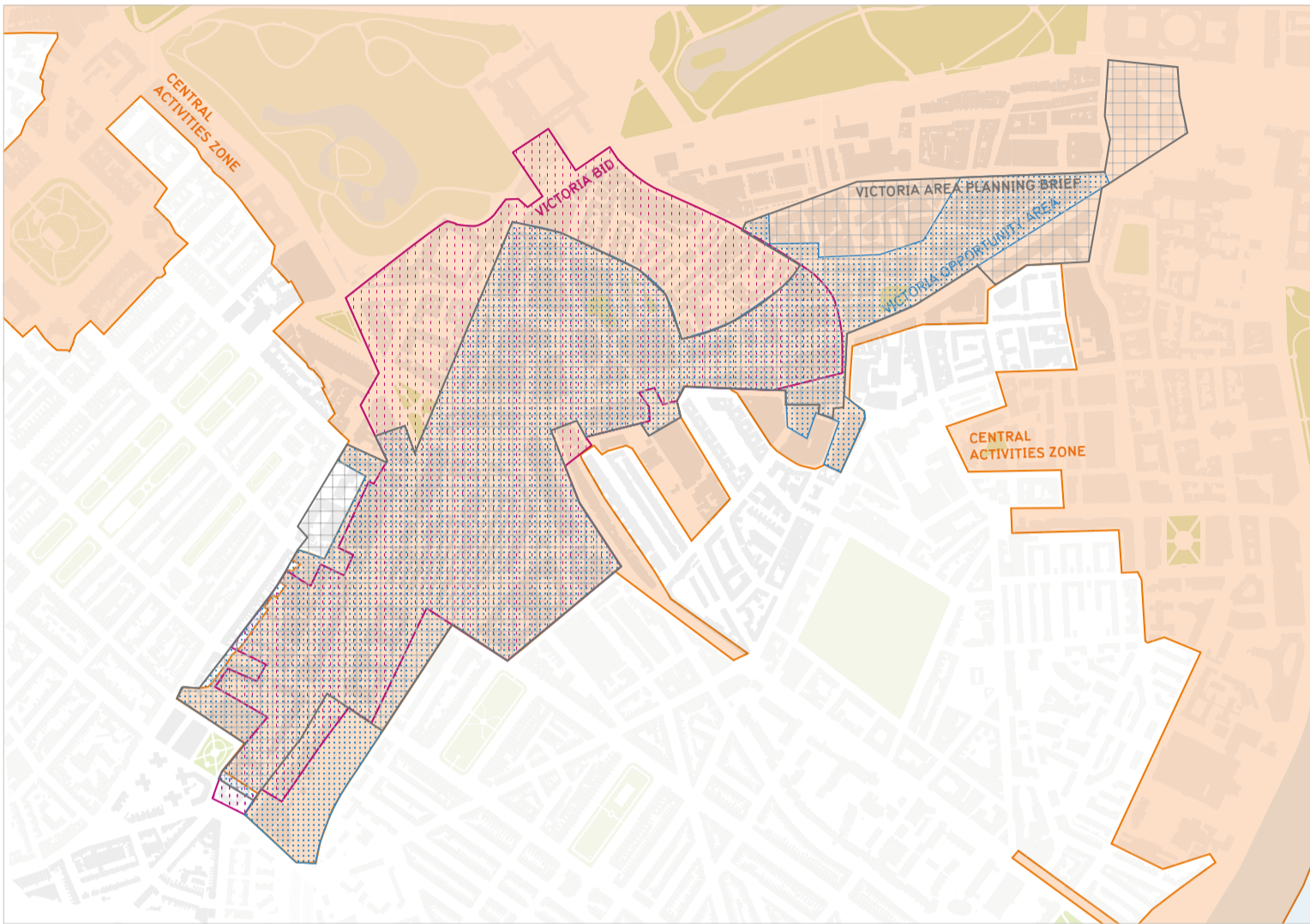
Some more recent special-policy areas and jurisdictions do consider the district more widely and as a whole, but do not all share consistent boundaries: the Victoria Opportunity Area, the Victoria Area Planning Brief and the Victoria BID area are shown in the map at top right on the facing page. All these areas cover the heart of the district around the rail station, western Victoria Street, Bressenden Place, Palace Street and south along Buckingham Palace Road to the coach station. However, in aggregate, the zone defined as Victoria through

these policies and jurisdictions embraces the whole area north to Buckingham Place, Petty France, Broadway and east towards Parliament Square. The Central Activities Zone extends into the area as far as Victoria Street and along Vauxhall Bridge Road and Buckingham Place Road but stops at the main streets and does not extend into the residential areas found directly adjacent to them.

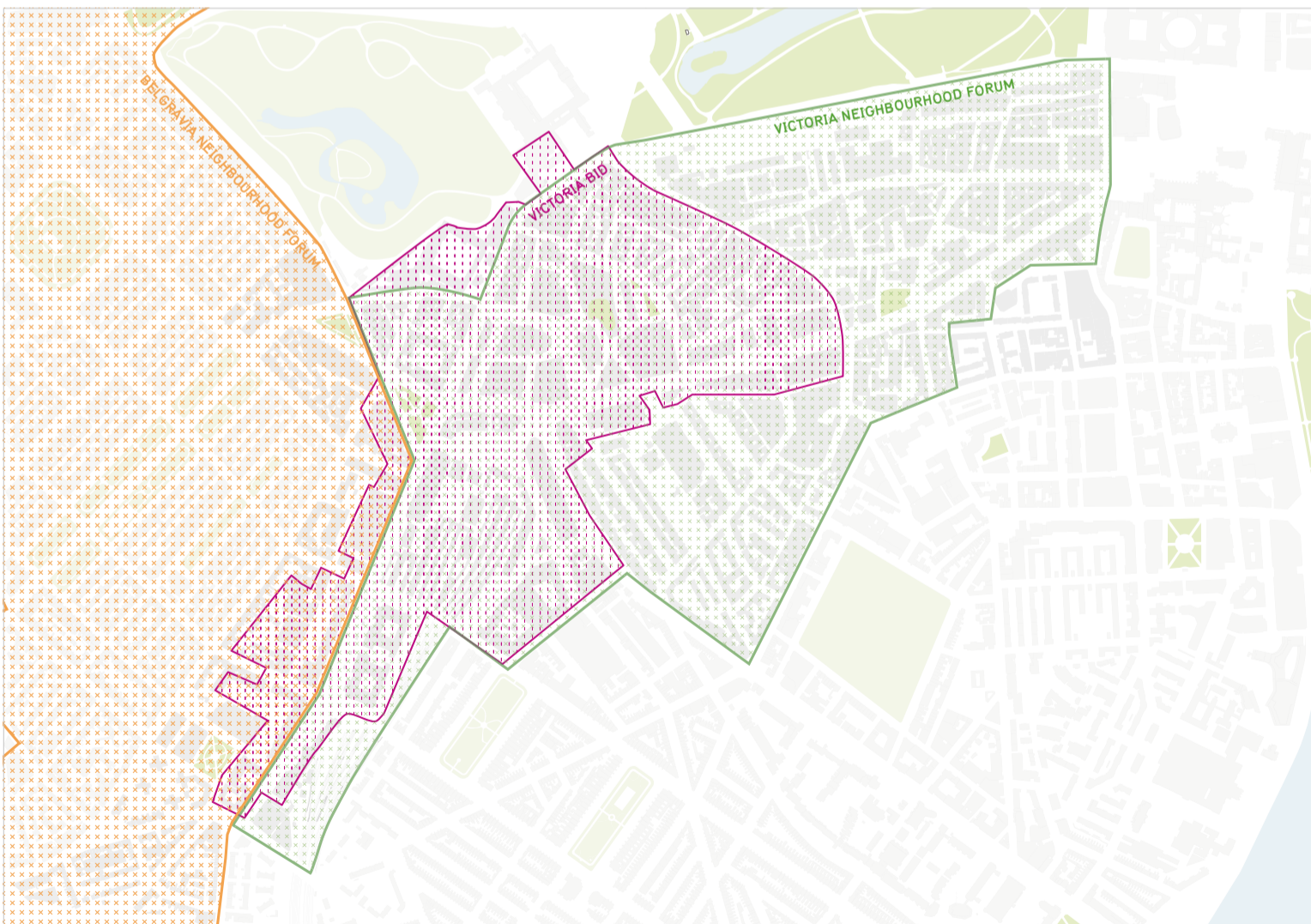
In recent years the Victoria BID and Neighbourhood Forums have added further definitions of the area. The area around Westminster Cathedral is covered by residents groups reflecting the special residential character of those streets. These overlapping areas are shown in the map below right on the facing page. These areas have formed the geographical scope of this Public Realm Vision by Publica.

When defining an area for public realm upgrades in Victoria, when setting the extent of a material palette or a common approach to the public realm it is clear that several policy areas and jurisdictions will be included and their specific attributes need to be taken into account.

A 'Victoria public realm area' should be defined by realities on the ground and the pedestrian experience of streets and spaces, rather than by policy areas alone. The qualities of the built fabric, historic development, sight-lines, connections and aspirations for improvements to the district and its neighbourhoods should guide any demarcation. The Victoria BID and its members are in a unique position to champion a coherent and well-considered public realm vision for the area as a whole by working within the BID's boundaries and in partnership with neighbours.



Planning policy areas



Local business and residential bodies

1.3 Victoria's streets and open spaces

Streets and open spaces are as important as buildings to the experience, character and quality of an area. Victoria has a mix of built conditions and an urban grain with many variations in scale. The streetscape often changes suddenly as one walks around. The public realm of the area is defined by this dramatic mix: large buildings of a metropolitan scale are juxtaposed with small buildings on side streets, mews and cut-throughs, historic pubs sit alongside high-rise developments, Georgian residential terraces face large offices.

A clear defining pattern to the grain and scale of streets and spaces in Victoria can be hard to see at first. However, a hierarchy of streets can be described:

- Long, wide, busy principal streets with large buildings (such as Buckingham Palace Road or Victoria Street)
- Shorter, city-scale streets with a mixed character (such as Petty France or Thirleby Road)
- Small side streets, mews streets and cut-throughs (such as Castle Lane)
- Distinct and characterful public spaces (such as Strutton Ground and the Cathedral Piazza)

The distinct public spaces provide additional pedestrian space to the busy street network of Victoria. Other, smaller spaces, especially at the perimeter of large buildings and new developments, can lack a distinct identity. This results in a number of undefined secondary public spaces where service entrances and blank frontages dominate that have a less public character. These spaces could be better utilised in such a densely built up-district.





The streets and open spaces of Victoria (shown in grey, private open spaces light grey)



The buildings of Victoria (shown in dark grey)

1.4 Land uses lining streets and spaces

The shops, homes, offices and other uses lining streets and public spaces in many ways define their character. The maps on this page show all the street-level land uses of Victoria's buildings and a smaller sample of uses on the upper levels of buildings in the centre of the area.

Victoria has a diverse mix of street-level building uses, with clusters of institutions, residential streets and large scale commercial buildings alongside rows of local shops. Patterns are difficult to define at first within this mix, but on closer analysis it becomes apparent that the age of streets and buildings, along with the hierarchy of busy streets and back streets, largely define use.

As one would expect in the centre of London, street-level uses are often distinct from those on upper floors on main streets. The large

buildings along Victoria Street have ground-floor retail uses with commercial above. Much of Victoria Station and Victoria Street are dominated by high-street retail shops and there is a noticeable presence of tourist retail uses around Buckingham Palace Road. Elsewhere in the district building use is more singular than other central London areas such as the West End.

Pockets of fully residential uses at all levels exist on side streets to the north and south of Victoria Street. The institutional buildings linked to the monarchy, army, church and government stand out in the north and east of the survey area. Fully commercial buildings are also prevalent. The main arterial routes of Buckingham Palace Road and Grosvenor Gardens are primarily commercial. Strutton Ground's varied retail and food and drink uses bring the distinct character of a fine-grain, local high street to an area with many larger single-use buildings.



Street level land uses in Victoria



Upper-level uses

1.5 A 24-hour part of the city

In order to understand the varied life of Victoria and how it affects the function of the public realm in the district, Publica surveyed opening hours for ground-floor uses in the heart of the area. The maps on this page show in bright yellow the premises that are in use at various times of day. Residential land uses are consistently shown in orange as they may be occupied at all hours.

During weekdays Victoria's buildings are in full operation and the public realm is bustling with office workers, school children, shoppers, retail and other workers, tourists and people passing through or interchanging on public transport. At present, a large community of builders work on the numerous construction sites in the area. Local residents and their visitors are identifiable in the residential side streets but join the crowds on the main thoroughfares.

In the evening after 6pm and at night after 9pm there are pockets of intense use where theatres, pubs and restaurants remain active after most offices and shops have closed. These uses create moments of

activity in the public realm, for example on pavements outside public houses. Outside working hours, the homeless population also becomes more apparent, sleeping in the many set-back service fronts of large buildings.

Victoria significantly changes in character at the weekend with few shops open and most offices closed or not fully occupied. The hubbub of lunchtime visitors on Strutton Ground and the bustle of commuters outside the station is absent. The area feels quieter and the residential aspect of the district becomes more apparent. Pockets of activity are concentrated around cafés, restaurants and theatres. Some specialist retailers such as Runners Need are destinations for shoppers from across London and remain open. Tourists continue to travel into the area to visit Westminster Cathedral, the Abbey and Buckingham Palace. Coaches are often parked along Petty France at weekends, changing the demographic around St James's Park station from one of office workers and civil servants to tourist parties heading towards Parliament Square or St James's Park.



Buildings in use: daytime (to 6pm)



Buildings in use: evening (6-9pm)



Buildings in use: night-time (after 9pm)



Buildings in use: Saturday (daytime)



Buildings in use: Sunday (daytime)

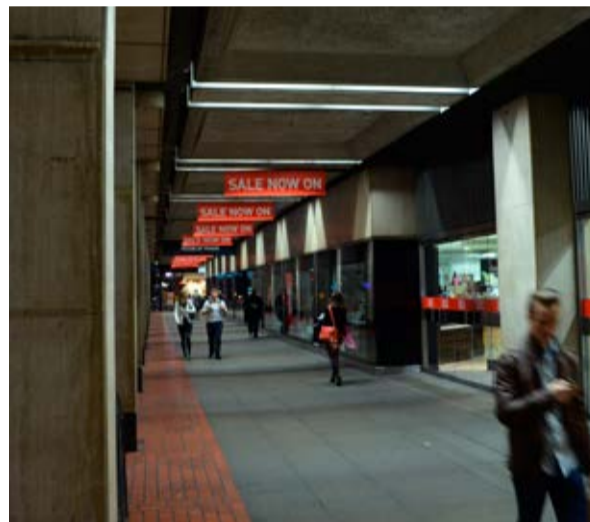
1.5 A 24 hour part of the city

The night-time environment in Victoria has many positive features. The distribution of retail and entertainment uses throughout the area, the extent of residential properties and the major transport termini ensure that there is significant lighting linked to evening and night-time activity. This is especially evident along the key corridors of Buckingham Palace Road and Victoria Street. Away from these main streets, the location of pubs and restaurants on key corners and at the end of vistas helps create a gradient between the busier areas and more low-key, night-time activity in residential and commercial areas. We would expect this resilience to be strengthened by the Nova and the Zig Zag developments and the proposed redesign of Terminus Place.

Studio Dekka has worked alongside Publica to investigate the issues around lighting in Victoria and the photographs on these pages illustrate some of the many varied lighting conditions found in the district.



A mix of building scales and lighting make Victoria a dramatic place at night



The colonnades of Victoria Street have varying levels of light



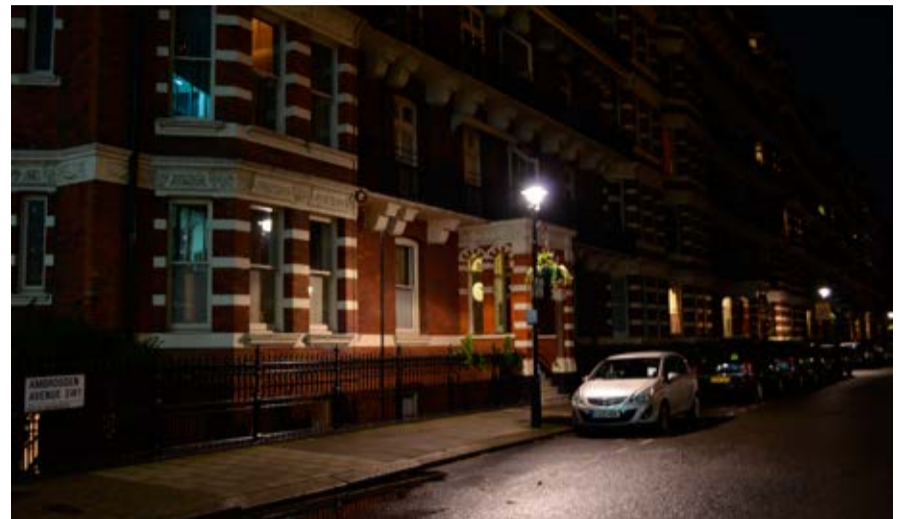
Shops, pubs and restaurants add to the baseline street lighting in the public realm



Feature lighting in developments often has a different character



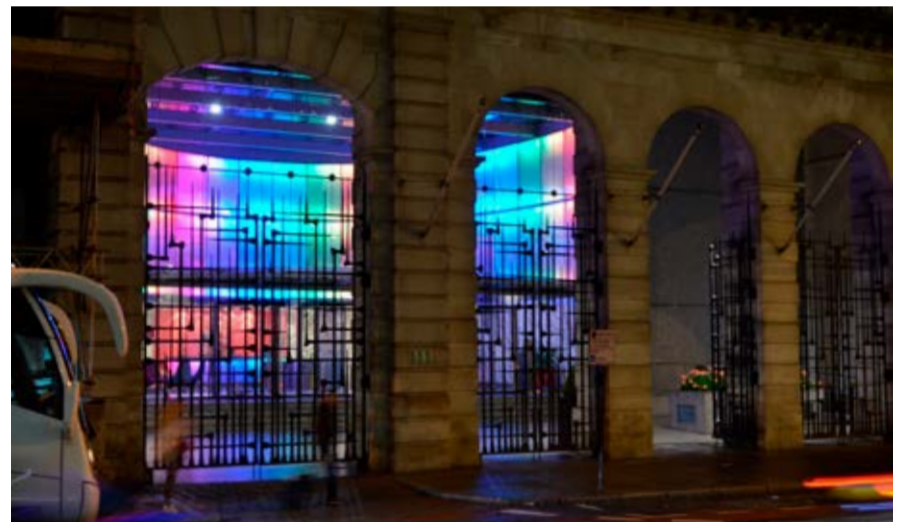
Terminus Place has a range of lighting conditions but can be confusing to navigate



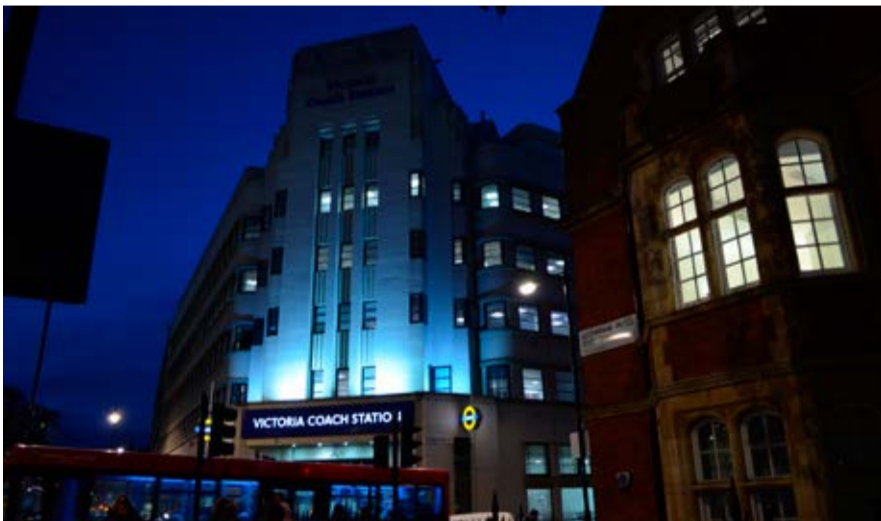
Some residential streets in the area have lower, historic street lamps and a softer atmosphere



Some businesses and entrances have distinctive lighting, such as the entrance to Victoria Place Shopping Centre



The entrance and forecourt of 111 Buckingham Palace Road becomes a feature after dark

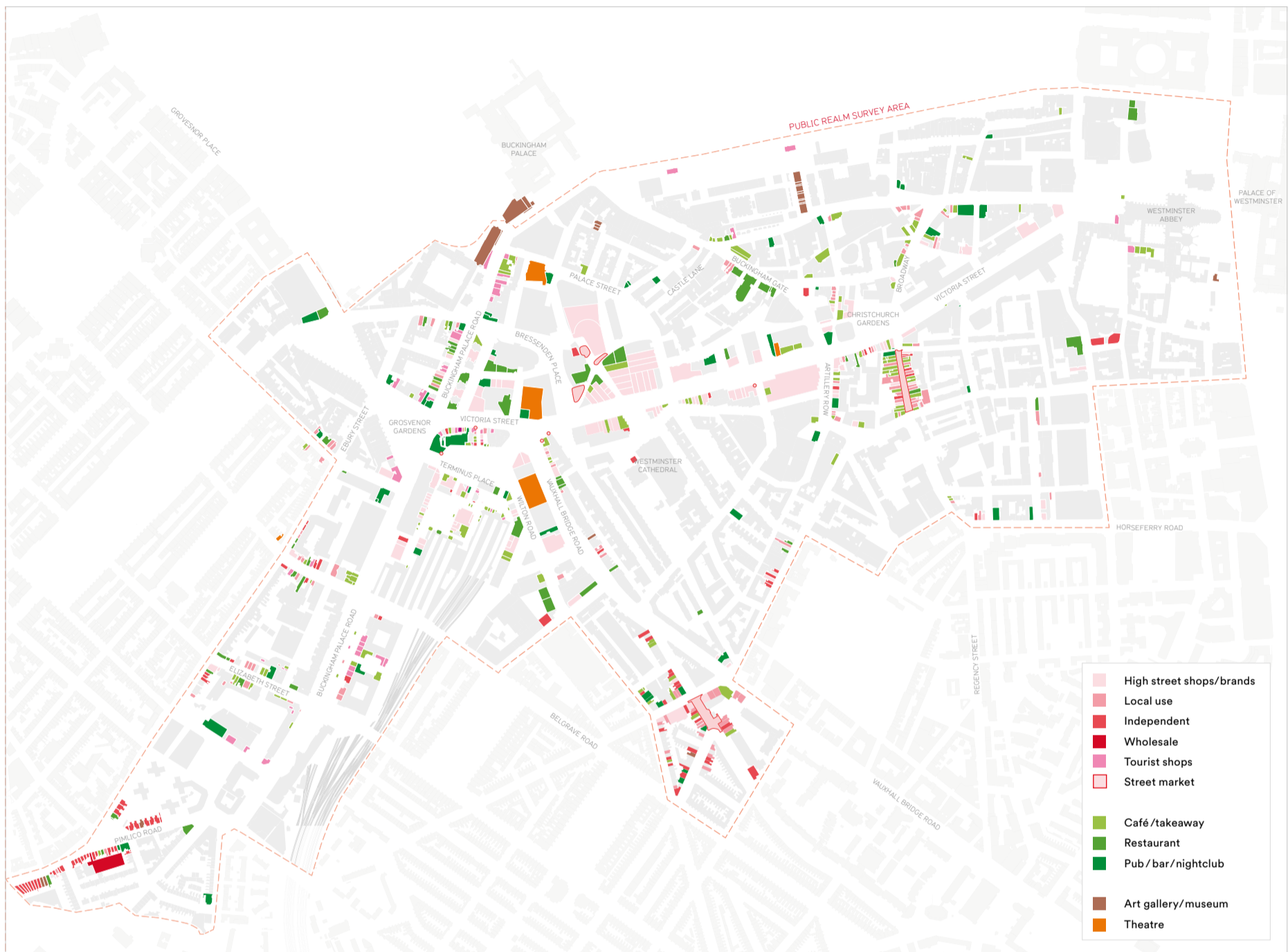


Key buildings, such as the coach station, could be better lit as landmarks



The lighting conditions in green spaces can have their own character; on Birdcage Walk lighting is dictated by the Royal Park setting and its use as a traffic route

1.6 Retail life and public space



Street level retail uses in Victoria

The impact of shops, cafés, restaurants and bars on the public realm is significant. These uses can bring activity, pavement life and occupation to the public realm and are often an important factor in making new public spaces function well. The map above shows all the retail, food, drink and entertainment uses in the Victoria area.

Victoria Street has a predominantly high-street retail profile, catering for office workers and visitors. Likewise around the station there is little in the way of local or independent retail.

Tourist shops dominate the retail offer around Buckingham Palace Road, associated with the coach station, the train station and the Palace. These are often small independent retailers targeting a specific group and offer little to local workers or residents.

Strutton Ground has a bustling London street market and is lined with retail units. The street maintains a balance between traders serving the

local residential community, and coffee shops and food stalls targeted towards office workers.

Pimlico Road is home to a cluster of independent retailers, small cafés and restaurants and a weekly farmers' market in Orange Square that reflects the characteristics of the surrounding residential area. There are also small clusters of independent retailers, cafés and restaurants around Eccleston Street and Elizabeth Street that serve both the Belgravia residential area and users of the coach station.

Entertainment uses in Victoria primarily comprise the area's three theatres, the Apollo Victoria Theatre, the Victoria Palace Theatre and the newer St James's Theatre. The Apollo Victoria was previously a cinema, alongside the old Metropole Cinema on Victoria Street and the Biograph Cinema on Wilton Road. The area was once associated with cinemas and the recent opening of a Curzon cinema on Victoria Street has reintroduced this activity to the area.



Strutton Ground is an important historic street market established in the 1860s and a key local high street. The shops and stalls provide a mixed offer for local workers, visitors and residents. Strutton Ground's place in the network of main public spaces in Victoria should be maintained and strengthened as an important asset.

The use of certain public spaces for events or markets is a characteristic of London's public realm. The street markets of Victoria are a key feature of the area.

The market is currently in operation Monday to Friday 8am to 2:30pm. Westminster City Council is investigating ways of supporting the markets in Victoria and Pimlico, improving provision for stall holders. Any upgrades to Strutton Ground should preserve the mixed offer for a range of local people. New markets could take

place in Strutton Ground over extended hours. Other public spaces in Victoria also accommodate specialist markets and more seem possible.

Street markets in central London have undergone a minor resurgence in recent years with the offer of goods and produce often shifting to hot food and a primarily lunchtime clientele.

Other street markets that could provide a model for improvements include the Southbank book and food markets, Exmouth Market and Whitecross Street in Islington. At Whitecross Street improvements to services for stall holders, new paving and new shop fronts have been part of a general upgrade and investment in recent years. These improvements were made through the EC1 New Deal.

Strutton Ground

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Market stalls: | |
| | Groceries |
| | Hot food/drink |
| | Clothing |
| | Household goods |
| | Vacant pitch |
| Retail | |
| | High street |
| | Local use |
| | Independent |
| | Wholesale |
| | Tourist |
| Food and Drink | |
| | Café/takeaway |
| | Restaurant |
| | Pub/bar/club |
| | Commercial |
| | High commission/embassy |
| | Residential |
| | Hotel/hostel |
| | Institution |
| | Health |
| | Art gallery |
| | Theatre |
| | Education |
| | Community |
| | Civic |
| | Religious |
| | Transport |
| | Other |
| | Vacant |
| | Construction/refurbishment |

Tachbrook Street market just to the south of Victoria is a traditional London market with its roots in amenity for the local residents. Relunched in 2010, it now attracts a range of clientele from varying demographics with a peak at lunchtime due to its food offer, drawing customers from Victoria to the north.

Tachbrook Street market is currently open between 8am and 6pm Monday to Saturday. The market takes place on a pedestrianised section of the street which has recently been upgraded with a continuous surface of granite paving and

improved services. These improvements were made by Westminster City Council (at a cost of around £1.7m) who also organise and regulate the market.

Several of the stalls are very well established and have been serving the needs of the local residents for many years. These include a butcher and fish monger, and are complemented by lunchtime hot food trade. The traders hold a range of temporary and permanent licenses and some of those permanent licenses have hereditary rights.

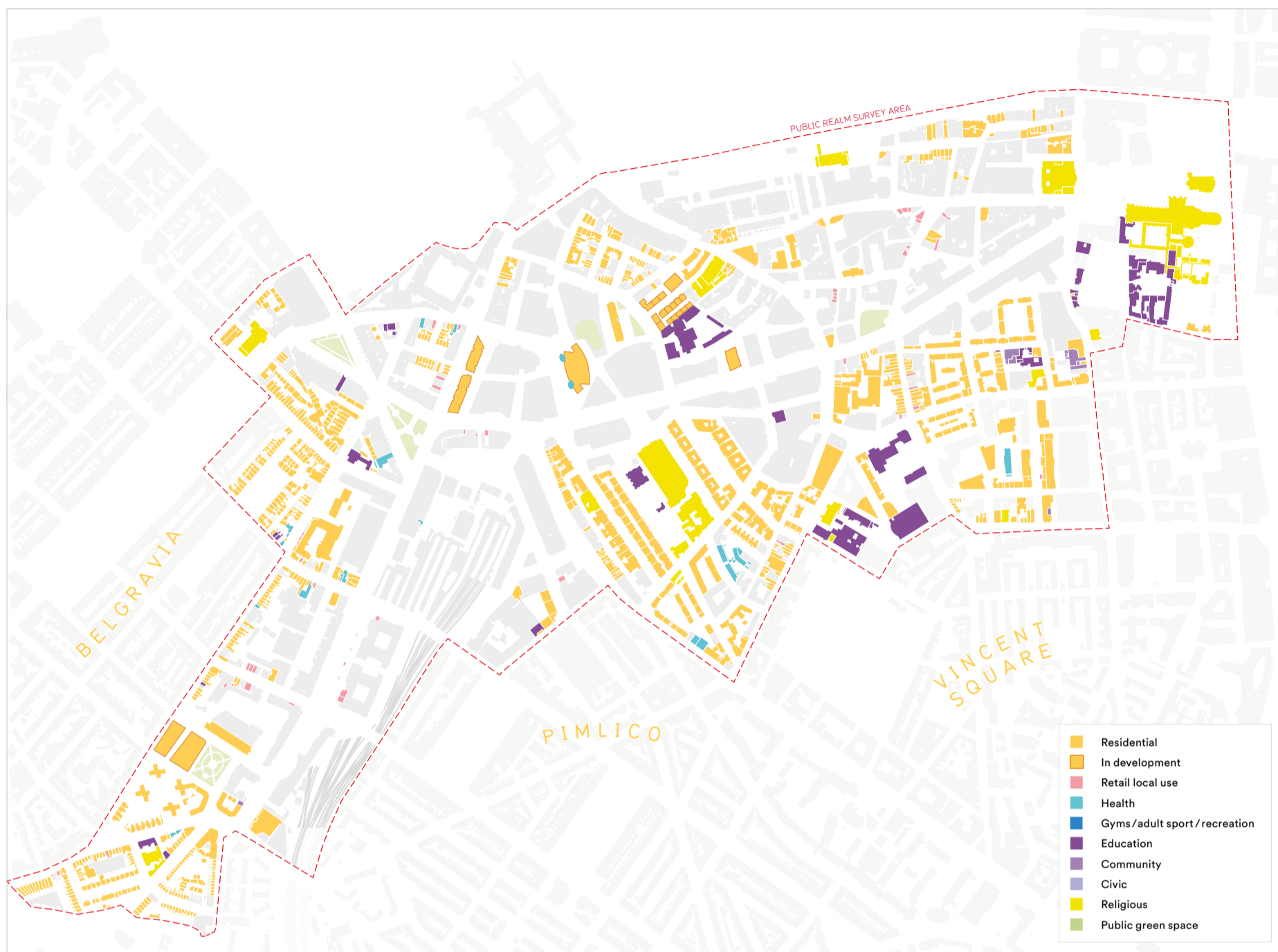


Tachbrook Street

Key as above



1.7 A residential neighbourhood



Victoria is a residential area as well as a business district. The presence of a residential community greatly influences what the public realm of an area can and should feel like, what provision should be made for local people and the need for play and recreation spaces. Publica surveyed all the residential buildings in the area, shown in orange in the map above. We also surveyed the play spaces, health centres, sports, education, religious and community uses associated with a neighbourhood.

Unlike neighbouring Pimlico and Belgravia, Victoria is not usually recognised as a residential area. However, there are a large number of residential buildings: mansion blocks, Georgian terraces, Peabody estates and hostels for homeless people. Land Securities are introducing several large residential buildings along Victoria Street at Nova, Portland House, and Kings Gate, with further developments planned on Castle Lane and at Wellington House on Buckingham Gate.

During on-site surveys, Publica team members noted large numbers of children and young people in the streets and spaces of Victoria. The presence of several schools with pupils across all age groups and the residential profile of the area belie most people's expectations of Victoria as a central London district dominated by transport, commercial and office uses.

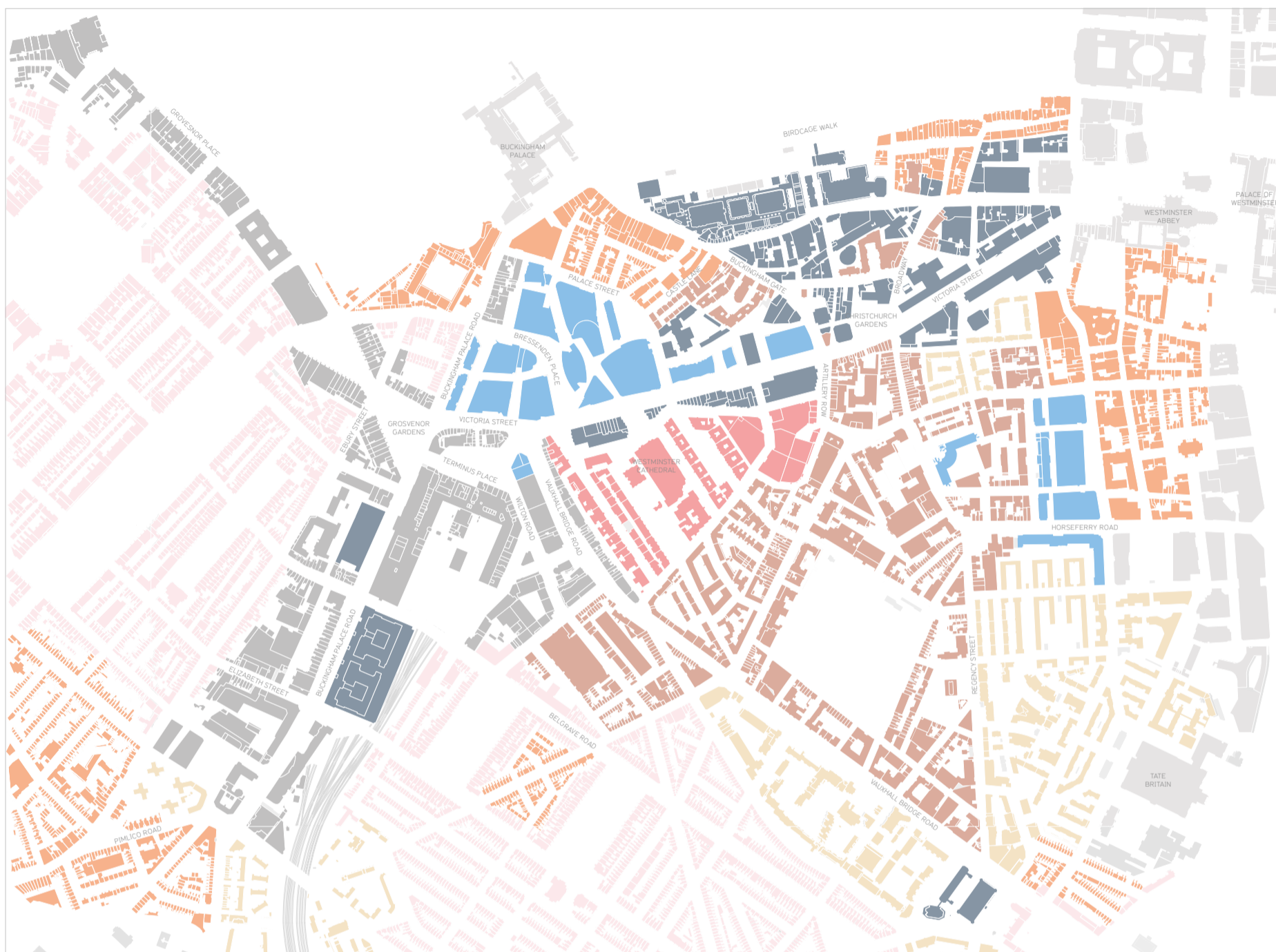
The public realm of Victoria does not always cater for these younger users. Some play opportunities exist within the formality of the Cardinal Place Gardens and elsewhere, but in general streets and public spaces are designed for movement, eating and drinking or to limit loitering and anti-social behaviour.

Away from the hustle and bustle of Victoria Street, Victoria has a network of residential amenities from nurseries to health centres, residential gardens and secondary schools. Set back from the large offices and high-street retail lies an array of local retail shops and community buildings. Bordering Pimlico to the south and Belgravia to the west, these facilities often feel more connected to other neighbourhoods, but are in fact within easy walking distance of Victoria Street.

As the residential population in and around Land Securities' and other developments are due to increase significantly in the future, the provision of residential amenities around Victoria Street and towards St James's Park needs to be addressed.



1.8 The buildings that frame Victoria's public realm – architecture



General areas of architectural character in Victoria (key on facing page)

The character of public spaces is influenced by the architecture that encloses and frames them as well as the materials and design of the ground itself. When formulating a future vision for the public realm of Victoria it is important to consider this three-dimensional reality.

Understanding the material character of the buildings that line Victoria's streets is vital in delineating what might be appropriate for the new surfaces of individual streets and public spaces. The map above seeks to outline the predominant age, architectural style and materials of buildings across Victoria. The different colours used in the map, defined on the facing page, denote the general type of architecture found in those locations.

Architectural materials and styles in Victoria are varied and have a significant bearing on the feel of various streets and spaces. A single-material approach to the whole of the wider Victoria area would not be appropriate.

The key architectural styles and materials in Victoria can be broadly divided into five categories. The predominant styles in the heart of the district are:

- Metropolitan-scale Victorian and 20th-century buildings of mixed-materials on the main roads
- 20th-century modernist buildings in glass, steel and concrete
- 21st-century commercial buildings in glass and steel

Additionally, areas to the north and south of Victoria Street are mostly:

- Victorian mixed-scale buildings in yellow London stock brick
- Neo-Byzantine striated brick at and around Westminster Cathedral

Victoria Street is the unifying public space of the district and represents a microcosm of the area. The area takes its name from this street. It has a rich and varied history marked by periodic rebuilding and reimagining by successive generations of architects. The street has an urban scale and drama that is rare in Westminster and feels in some ways akin to cities with more modern histories, such as New York or Chicago.

The current rebuilding of large sites on Victoria Street is being undertaken by Land Securities with their developments at 62 Buckingham Gate, Kings Gate, the Zig Zag building and the Nova development. The recent refurbishment of 123 Victoria Street by Land Securities ensures the continued presence of bold architecture from the mid-20th century rebuilding of Victoria Street. The colonnade at 123 Victoria Street has been improved and refurbished by Land Securities with a new soffit and shop fronts.

Future upgrades to public spaces in Victoria should be carefully designed to harmonise with their architectural enclosure. Any upgrades to the public realm on Victoria Street should aim to celebrate the unique modern architecture of this important street in Westminster. High-quality, imaginative designs for planting, paving, crossings, lighting and other features should be made within the overall guidelines for Westminster while also helping to further define a new character for Victoria.



● Grand historical and governmental buildings: generally stone façades, Portland stone predominates



● Georgian and mixed historic buildings: generally darker brick



● Victorian mixed buildings: generally yellow stock brick



● Large-scale housing developments: Peabody and WCC Estates, each with one predominant brick tone



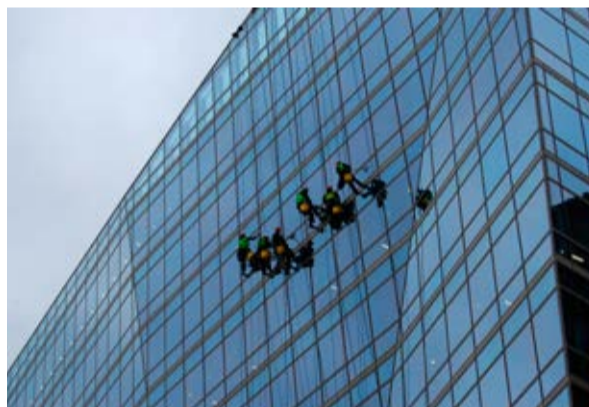
● Victoria metropolitan-scale buildings: mixed ages with mixed materials



● Neo-Byzantine brick: red brick striated with other colours or features



● 20th-century modernist buildings: generally glass, steel, exposed concrete



● 21st-century commercial buildings: glass and steel



● Belgravia and Pimlico: white stucco terraces

1.8 The buildings that frame Victoria's public realm – frontages



Active frontage



Passive frontage



Blank frontage



Closed frontage

Building frontages at street level have a significant impact on the public realm. A general consensus is that glazed retail frontages can be defined as 'active', while all other frontages are 'inactive'. The inference drawn from this is that all glazed active frontages are positive for the public spaces they front onto, while other frontages are less desirable. A more nuanced reading of the enclosure of the public realm in London can be useful.

Publica believes that some frontages designated as 'active' do not in fact offer much to the streets or spaces they enclose. A division of frontages into active, passive, blank or closed and service categories helps to define the real impact of frontages and façades on the public realm. The photographs on these two pages show examples of frontage conditions that are typical in Victoria. The careful design of the way in which buildings front onto public spaces is key to the success of the public realm and its functions.

Active frontages are only truly engaged with the public realm through entrances, window displays and open sight-lines between the interior and the street. A strong rhythm of narrow shop fronts responding

to historic plot divisions along streets is a typical central London condition. Retailers working with very long glazed frontages will often use vinyl to block out glass if such length is not necessary for their business. When a retail unit has a primary frontage onto a busy retail street and also a side frontage onto a quieter secondary space these sides are especially likely to be covered with graphics, in effect creating shiny blank walls onto the public realm.

Passive frontages with some visual connection through framed openings in solid walls are the norm for many London streets. Windows into residential or office buildings afford views out to the street as well as glimpses into the interior for pedestrians. This passive overlooking creates a certain condition in the public realm that has less active communication but still makes the street feel alive.

Blank or closed frontages can have several conditions, they are an inherent part of mews streets and the backs of London buildings. Solid walls can create calm backdrops to some public spaces. If architectural finishes and materials are robust, have visual interest or an attractive patina, blank frontages can be a positive feature.



Active frontage, enlivened by views, entrances, outside seating



Passive frontage, used for store graphics and advertising



Blank frontage, optimised with lush greenery



Closed frontage with grilles and servicing

Modern buildings require service frontages, air ducts and vents, service doors and vehicle entrances at street level that when not in use are effectively blank frontages. However, many modern materials used lack the solidity of traditional secondary frontages. These frontages can have a negative impact on the public realm due to their scale, material finishes, and their ability to withstand misuse, wear and tear. The placing of necessary services should be carefully considered for their impact on the public realm.

Behaviour in the public realm is very much affected by the type of frontages that line its edges as well as the design of the surfaces and space itself.

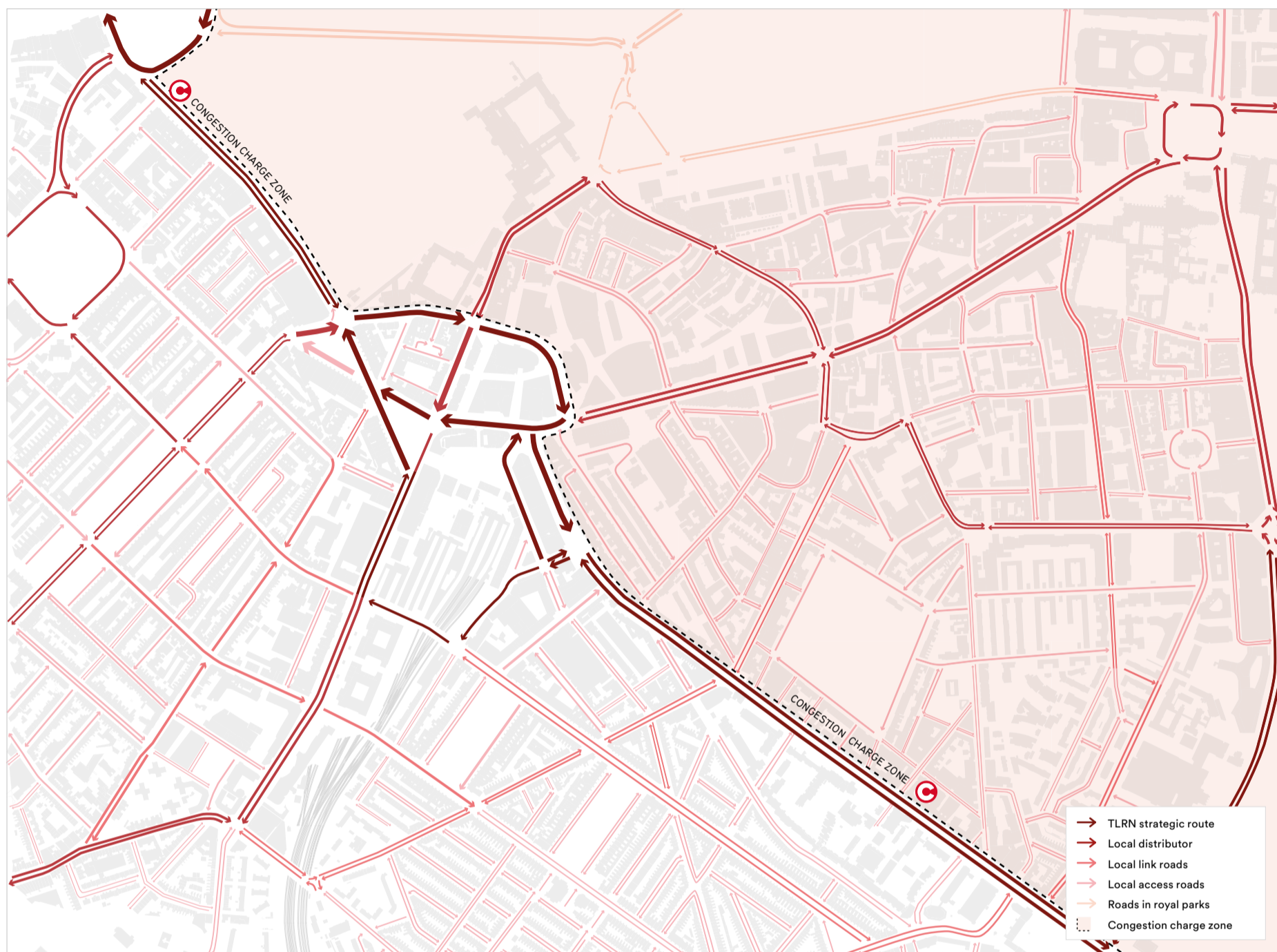
Overhangs, set-backs and service frontages are often appropriated as places where people stop, linger or take refuge. Generally people find it more comfortable to stop and use spaces beside a solid or shuttered façade than in front of a window or a see-through glazed façade. Small set-backs and covered areas in the public realm have always been an obvious choice for those wishing to take refuge from the weather or

pause at the side of footways without impeding other pedestrians. These spaces can have a positive impact to the public realm. However, conditions that allow people a quiet, sheltered, private moment are also often conducive to activities that are often seen as anti-social behaviour.

Air vents and heat extractors can create strange conditions in the public realm, emitting gusts of warm air. Louvred panels are prone to damage. Metal shutters on shop units can help retailers feel that their premises are more secure. However, a street of shuttered frontages can create an intimidating, darker and uninviting public realm which can in turn lead to more problematic behaviour.

Set-back spaces, service frontages, retail-side returns and blank frontages in new developments should be carefully designed and managed. These sometimes problematic frontages can be improved with special material treatments or enlivened with micro-retail units, kiosks or planting.

1.9 Vehicles and road hierarchy



Road hierarchy in Victoria and surrounding areas

Road traffic and the design of public spaces for vehicles has a significant bearing on the character and quality of the public realm. The map on this page sets out the road hierarchy in Victoria, showing all the streets in the area open to traffic, their direction of flow, relative intensity of use and class or category.

London's Inner Ring Road cuts through Victoria, channelled into a one-way gyratory system through the heart of the district. The traffic flows this creates have a deleterious effect on the district's public realm, the experience of visitors, residents and local workers, people's perception of Victoria as a whole, the image of the area and local air quality.

Public spaces designed primarily for road traffic bring noise, pollution, severance and an imbalance of space use relative to numbers of people to the public realm. However, good road transport infrastructure is vital to the life of the city and Victoria.

The Mayor's Roads Task Force document, *The Vision and Direction for London's Streets and Roads* (2013), recommends that traffic routes through Victoria be reviewed. The document states that: 'Some of the roads in the vicinity are one-way, creating circuitous routes for vehicular traffic and severing key pedestrian movement corridors, including crossing movements to the rail and Underground stations located outside the Inner Ring Road.' The document continues to say: 'Long term options should consider diverting the Inner Ring Road outside the station hub.'

Publica supports the Mayor's approach and we believe it is vital to review and bring changes to the road system in this part of London over the coming years in order to improve the quality of the public realm in Victoria for all users.