

**CONSULTATION DRAFT**

**SOHO  
CONSERVATION AREA  
AUDIT**

December 2004

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This conservation area audit is accurate as of the time of publication; xxxxx 2004

Until this audit is next revised, amendments to the statutory list made after xxxx 2004 will not be represented on the maps at figure 12.

For up to date information about the listing status of buildings in the Soho Conservation Area please contact the Council's central area planning team on 020 7641 2514.

This Report is based on a draft prepared by the Architectural History Practice.

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## **PREFACE**

Since the designation of the first conservation areas in 1967 the City Council has undertaken a comprehensive programme of conservation area designation, extensions and policy development. There are now 53 conservation areas in Westminster, covering 76% of the City. These conservation areas are the subject of detailed policies in the Unitary Development Plan and in Supplementary Planning Guidance. In addition to the basic activity of designation and the formulation of general policy, the City Council is required to undertake conservation area appraisals and to devise local policies in order to protect the unique character of each area.

Although this process was first undertaken with the various designation reports, more recent national guidance (as found in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 and the English Heritage Conservation Area Practice and Conservation Area Appraisal documents) requires detailed appraisals of each conservation area in the form of formally approved and published documents. This enhanced process involves the review of original designation procedures and boundaries; analysis of historical development; identification of all listed buildings and those unlisted buildings making a positive contribution to an area; and the identification and description of key townscape features, including street patterns, trees, open spaces and building types.

Given the number and complexity of Westminster's conservation areas the appraisal process has been broken down into three stages, the first of which is complete. This first stage involved the publication of General Information Leaflets or mini-guides for each conservation area covering in brief a series of key categories including Designation, Historical Background, Listed Buildings and Key Features.

The second stage involved the production of Conservation Area Directories for each conservation area. A Directory has now been adopted for 51 of the city's conservation areas and includes copies of designation reports, a detailed evaluation of the historical development of the area and analysis of listed buildings and key townscape features.

The City is now working on a programme to prepare Conservation Area Audits for each of its conservation areas. This will form the third and final stage of the appraisal process. As each audit is adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance it will incorporate the Directory for that conservation area.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. They are areas which are recognisable for their distinctive and interesting townscape.

1.2 The City Council has a statutory duty to review the character and boundaries of its conservation areas. The Audit is the third and final stage of the appraisal process. The overall appraisal strategy is based upon the English Heritage publication, *Conservation Area Practice*.

1.3 The first stage (Mini-guide) and second stage (Directory) documents have already been adopted. The Mini-guide is a leaflet which provides a brief description of the area and its characteristics. The Directory provides a detailed source of factual information such as listed building descriptions. This has now been incorporated as part of the Audit, providing an Appendix of factual information.

1.4 The Audit describes both the historical development and the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is designed to identify and explain important local features such as unlisted buildings of merit, unbroken rooflines and local views. In addition, the audit seeks to apply relevant Unitary Development Plan policies to the local context in order to preserve and/or enhance the character and appearance of the area.

1.5 The Conservation Area Audit for Soho was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Cabinet Member for Customer Services on **XXXXXXXXXX**. The Conservation area was first designated in 1969 and extended in 1976, 1979, 1983 and 1990. The designation reports can be found in the Conservation Area Directory at the back of this document.

## 2.0 BOUNDARIES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

2.1 The Soho Conservation Area is bounded on the north by Oxford Street, on the east by Charing Cross Road and on the west by the back of the properties in Kingly Street behind Regent Street. The irregular southern boundary follows the lines of Lisle Street and Coventry Street. The land slopes gently down from north to south and there are no marked changes of level.

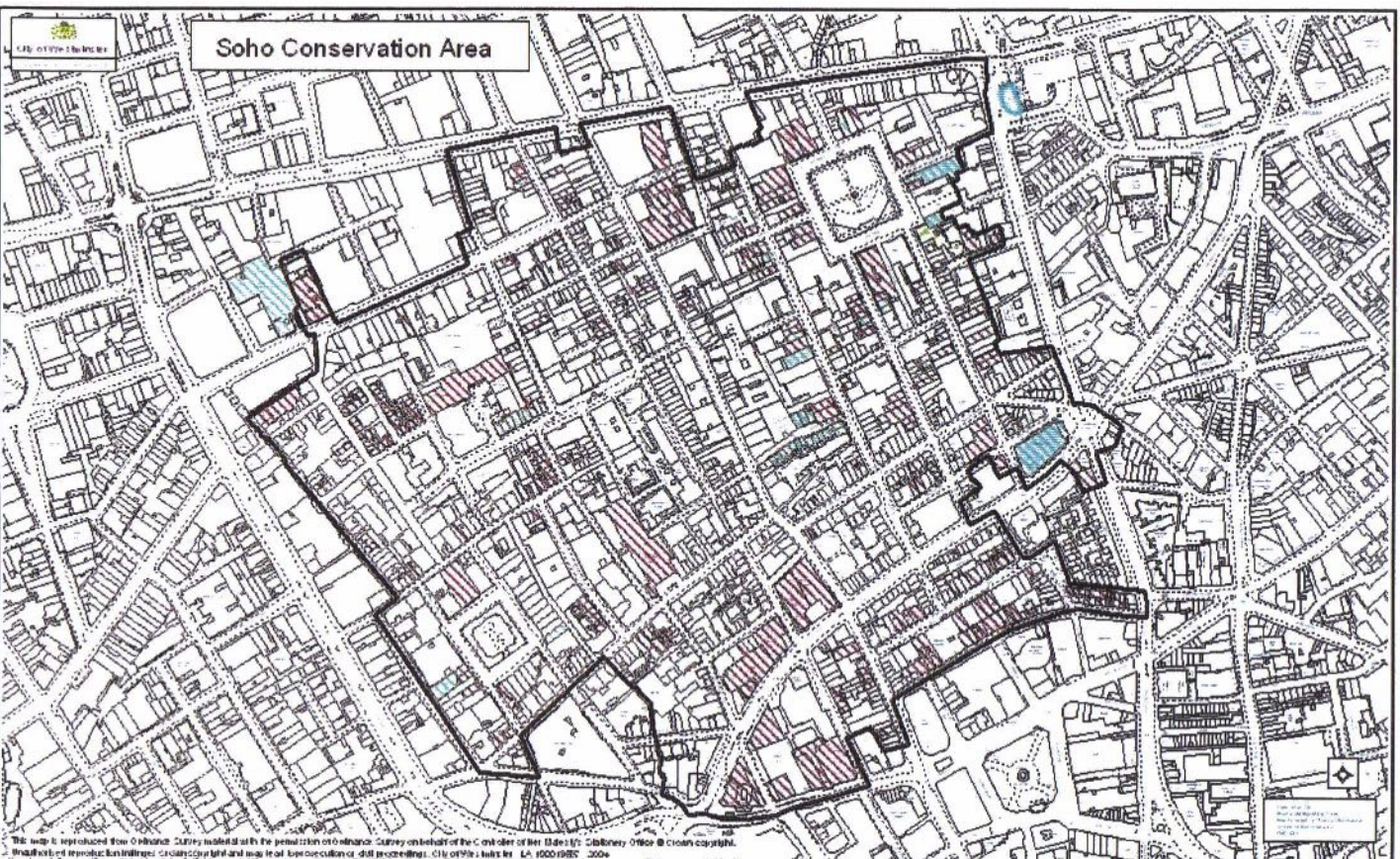


Figure 1: Boundaries of Soho Conservation Area

### 3.0 HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT OF SOHO

3.1 Most of the land included in the Soho Conservation Area was first developed in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, as part of the expansion of London which followed the restoration of King Charles II in 1660. The only exception was the north-western corner, around Great Marlborough Street, which was not finally built up until the 1730s.

3.2 The pattern of development in the area was a result of land ownership and a complicated and long-drawn out interaction of several relatively small estates. Soho lies in two London parishes. Everything east of Wardour Street lies in the parish of St Anne, Soho; everything west of Wardour Street lies in the parish of St James, Westminster. The division is important to an understanding of the character of the area as the original pattern of development was slightly different in the two parishes, a difference which can still be perceived today in the street layout (see Figure 2).

3.3 Most of the ground in this part of St Anne's parish, originally known as Soho Fields, was a single estate, owned in the late seventeenth century by the Earl of St Albans and, after 1734, by the Earl of Portland. The streets were laid out in a fairly regular manner across the whole of the estate, with Soho Square as the principal feature. In general, the streets in this eastern part of Soho are wider than those further west and the houses were generally of better quality.

3.4 The ground in St James's parish was originally part of the Bailiwick of St James, which came into crown ownership in 1531 but was partly sold off in 1560. By the time of the Restoration, the principal landowners were the Baker and Pollett families, but the ground was already divided into a large number of small fields and plots with a complicated pattern of leasehold or freehold tenure, belonging to several different owners. As a result, development was piecemeal; in many cases the varying street widths and haphazard alignments which characterise this part of Soho are a direct result of the old plot boundaries. The most coherent development took place around Golden Square, which was built in the centre of Gelding Close, on the Pulteney Estate and centred on Great Pulteney Street, and on the Argyll Estate centred on Great Marlborough Street.



**Figure 2: Plan Showing Old Estate and Field Boundaries overlaid on the Present Street Pattern (derived from the *Survey of London*)**

3.5 Thus, by the middle of the eighteenth century the whole area had been completely built-up and Rocque's Map of 1746 (Figure 5) shows the street layout very much as it is now. Some major features such as Leicester House on the north side of Leicester Square, St James's Burying Ground, on the site of the Marshall Street Baths, and Carnaby Market just to the east of Carnaby Street no longer exist, but they had a lasting effect on the street pattern.

3.6 Soho in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries was predominantly a residential area. The grander houses were concentrated in the two squares as well as the streets leading off Soho Square, together with Great Marlborough Street and Great Pulteney Street. Elsewhere, the houses were more modest, often



only two windows wide and three storeys high and the standard of building in was generally low.

3.7 In the first decades of the eighteenth century this poor overall building quality and lack of coherent planning meant Soho gradually became less fashionable. The land west and north of Soho was developed with higher quality housing and wealthier residents began to move away. They were gradually replaced by those with lesser means, among them many artists. As such, the population of Soho began to diversify and change.

3.8 It was also during these years of widespread change and development that foreign communities began to settle in Soho, partly Greek but consisting mostly of French Huguenots who left France after the ending of religious toleration in 1685. In the second half of the eighteenth century Soho also became extremely popular with painters, sculptors and engravers. Many of the inhabitants of the narrower streets were tradesmen, who operated from their houses. Some noxious trades were carried on in the western part of Soho such as brewing in Brewer Street and saltpetre making in Peter Street, but most commercial operations were domestic in scale.

3.9 As the fabric and social character of the area was changing, those with a financial interest in the area perceived a decline and attempted to tackle this. Longer leases were granted in the hope that the mass produced houses could be rebuilt in a more substantial manner. With Soho still not as expensive as Mayfair but having large houses, many became inhabited by foreign ambassadors and envoys.

3.10 The dispersal of estates also began around this time. In Soho fields there was extensive rebuilding between 1723 and 1740, and the houses on the leasehold Pitt estate in Dean Street were almost all rebuilt in c1723 and c1740. None of the great houses in the parish were still in private occupation after 1784 and by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the sites of most of these great houses had begun to be developed, including Carlisle House and Monmouth House. The estate dispersal coincided with and was partly the cause of a considerable increase in Soho's population.

3.11 During the first half of the nineteenth century the population of Soho continued to increase steadily until by the 1850s the area was one of the most densely populated parts of London and also one of the poorest. The insanitary conditions in which many inhabitants lived encouraged Victorian philanthropists to turn their attentions to Soho. This is reflected in the establishment of six hospitals in Soho between 1850 and 1875 to deal with local health problems as well as various charity houses providing temporary shelters for homeless men and women. Many specialist medical institutions were established in the area including the Hospital for the Women, which moved to Soho Square in 1851. Later in the century several of the most overcrowded areas with the worst conditions were cleared and replaced by blocks of new model dwellings, of which examples still survive in Brewer Street and Ingestre Place.

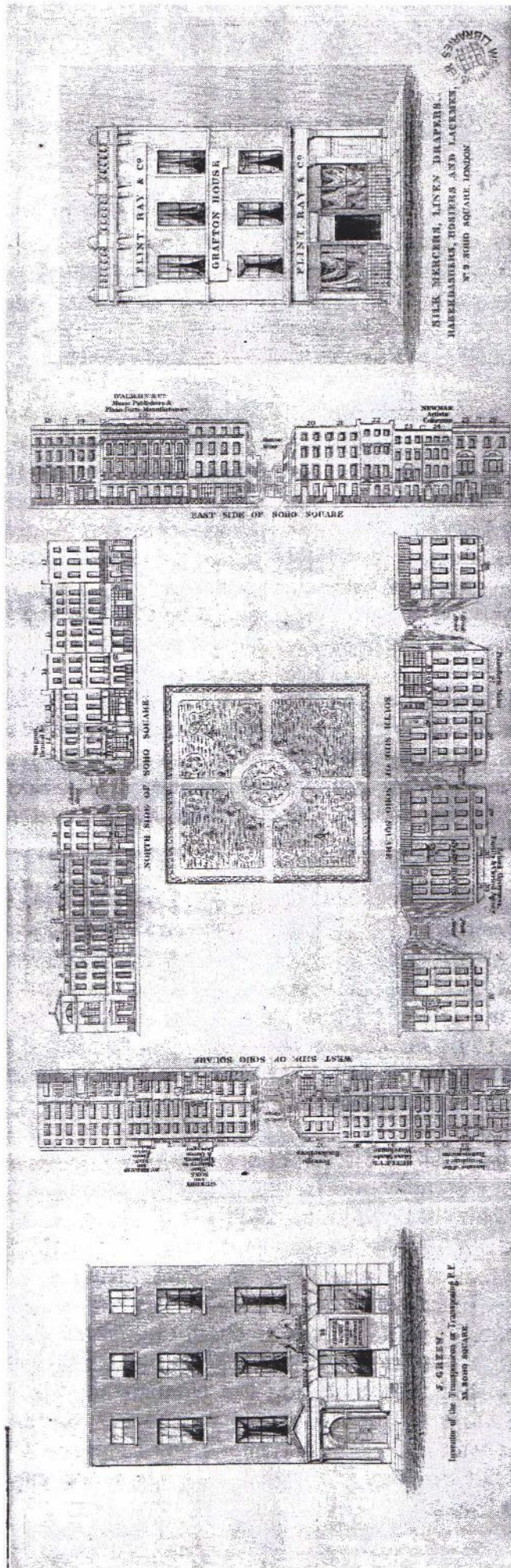


FIGURE 3: TALLIS VIEW OF SOHO SQUARE (1838-40)

3.12 The decline in the social status of the area was accompanied by increasing commercial use. In the early nineteenth century Wardour Street became the centre of the antique furniture trade, with both showrooms and workshops for the repair and manufacture of antique furniture, many of the latter in small courtyards off the main thoroughfares.

3.13 The street layout of Soho remained virtually unchanged until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the formation of Regent Street, roughly on the line of the old Swallow Street, divided St James's parish in two. This created a further barrier between Soho and the more respectable part of the parish to the west, which resulted in a separate character to Soho evident to this day.

3.14 In 1884-86 Shaftesbury Avenue was cut through the southern part of Soho to improve communication between Piccadilly and New Oxford Street and as part of the same project the Charing Cross Road was formed in 1887 on the eastern side of the district following the line of Crown Street. These two new streets helped to define the area of Soho more closely and improved access to the area.

3.15 Several theatres were built along the newly formed Shaftesbury Avenue, bringing a new entertainment function to the area. The larger scale of the buildings in the new street and the flamboyant freestyle architecture of the theatre fronts was echoed in several of the new commercial buildings which began to replace older houses in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

3.16 In the late Victorian and Edwardian period several major textile firms made their headquarters in the area round Golden Square. The former Dormeuil building on the west side of the square is a reminder of this phase of development, and there are still a number of Soho shops selling trimmings. Elsewhere in Soho, the Shaftesbury Avenue theatres were followed by other buildings of the entertainment industries and, after about 1918, Wardour Street became the focus of the emerging British film industry.

3.17 Soho also continued to attract new immigrants and a variety of foreign communities settled the area. The 1860s and 70s saw an influx of Germans and Italians and in the 1890s large numbers of Polish and Russian Jews moved to Soho from Whitechapel. Many of these communities started up small businesses. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this led to the area developing a reputation as a vibrant restaurant and food quarter, built largely on establishments serving the French and Italian communities.

3.18 However, it would not be until after the First World War when the decline in domestic servants increased the habit of eating out that it began to serve a wider audience. Cookery writers like Elizabeth David publicised Soho as a source of exotic foreign food. In recent years many of the specialist shops she prized have gone but some survive like Lina's Stores in Brewer Street and Camisi Fratelli in Old Compton Street.

3.19 In the 1950s the first Chinese communities began to settle around Soho especially in Gerrard Street. After Limehouse and the Docklands were bombed in the war, there was an influx of people into the area, attracted by the affordable rents and short leases around Gerrard Street, and many opened new businesses and ventured into catering. In the 1960's, land reform in Hong Kong also brought disillusioned agricultural workers to Britain in search of employment and drawn to the booming Chinese restaurant trade. By this time British soldiers from the war in the Far East had created a new customer base for Chinese cuisine. As the restaurants enjoyed success, the area around Gerrard Street came to be known as 'Chinatown'.

3.20 The 1950s also saw the emergence of coffee bars throughout Soho. With their Formica fittings and Italian coffee machines, these were based on the memory of bars in Italy and came to be regarded as centres of Bohemian youth culture. Although few of the original coffee bars survive, they were in a sense the predecessors of the various coffee bar chain outlets, which are an increasingly conspicuous element in many of Soho's streets.

3.21 Probably as a development of the coffee bar culture, Soho, and especially the area centred on Carnaby Street, became one of the recognised centres of 'Swinging London' in the 1960s and its trendy boutique shops became a place of fashionable pilgrimage. Something of that character remains and has spread into the small streets surrounding Carnaby Street.

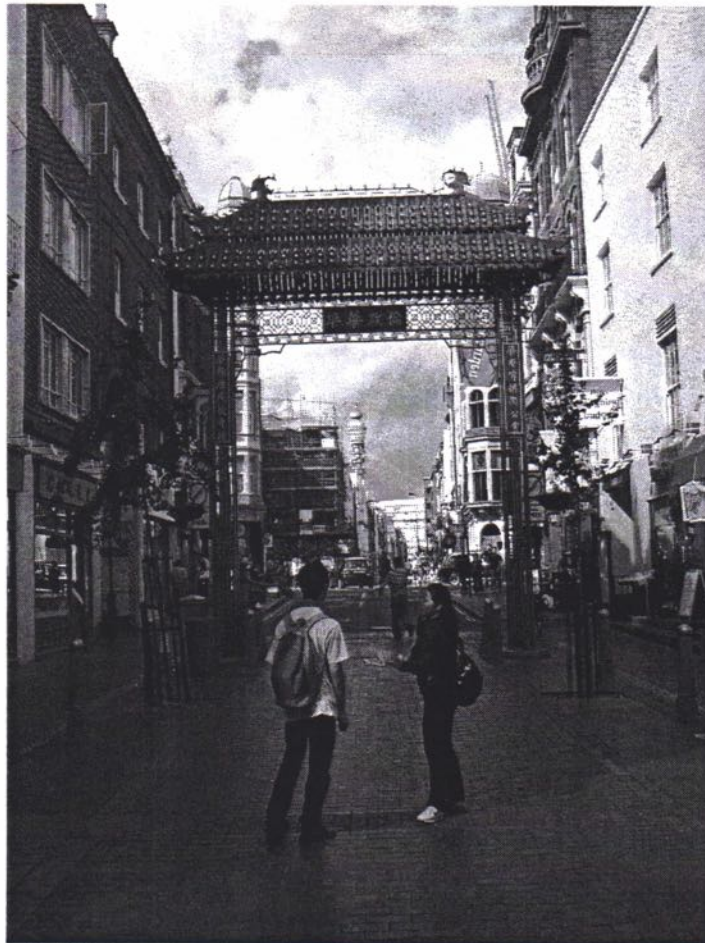
3.22 Soho has long had a reputation for vice and prostitution but in the twentieth century, it became better known as the UK's most famous red-light district. During the war, clubs like The Windmill established a fashion for openly erotic shows and Raymond's Revue Bar in Brewer Street opened in 1958 as a centre of commercial erotic entertainment. Many smaller less salubrious establishments could be found in nearby streets, especially after legislation in the late 1950s, which prohibited soliciting in public places, and in the sixties and seventies some feared that this threatened to engulf Soho. This side of Soho has been in decline since the 1980s when new licensing laws were brought in.

3.23 From the 1920s onwards Soho also became a venue for music and night clubs, in Gerrard Street, Coventry Street, Meard Street and Dean Street. Jazz came to Soho in the 1950s, most famously at Ronnie Scotts on Frith Street. Soho has also long been a focal point for London's gay community, in coffee bars, pubs and private clubs. More recently gay culture has become more prominent in Soho, with gay bars and clubs centred especially around Old Compton Street.

3.24 In the later half of the twentieth century, Chinatown has also been transformed, to become a major tourist attraction as well as a cultural focal point for the Chinese community in London. More recent arrivals to the area have been mostly Fugian immigrants from mainland China. Chinese Community Centres, schools and churches offer key services and London's Chinatown is now the largest and most centrally located 'Chinatown' In Europe and one of the largest in any western city.

3.25 Elsewhere, increasing commercialisation and mass tourism mean that Soho no longer feels as uniquely cosmopolitan. Evidence of the old trades is shrinking fast and small shops have given way to bars and cafes. Yet Soho has managed to absorb these changes and today still welcomes a diverse range of people, trades and activities as well as retaining a substantial residential population and character.

3.25 During the 1960s property boom some perceived Soho to be cramped and old fashioned and high rise developments at Broadwick street, Berwick street and Ingestre Place illustrate the new ideas planned for Soho. Yet in the last twenty years conservation has been a strong force within Soho, preventing widespread demolition and retaining the separate character of the area. Soho was first designated a conservation area in 1969.



**Figure 4: The gateway to Chinatown in Macclesfield Street**

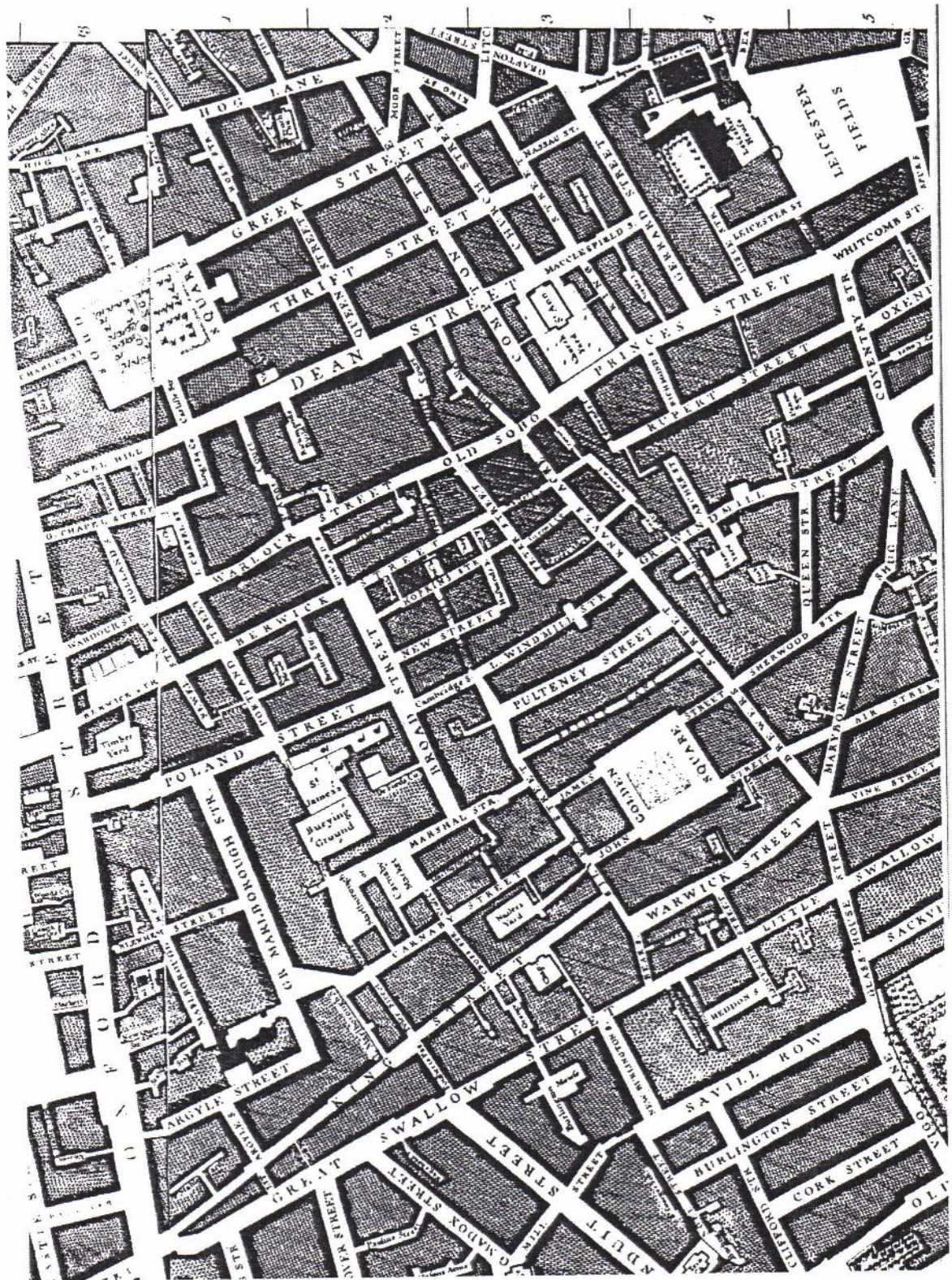


FIGURE 5: ROCQUE'S MAP 1746

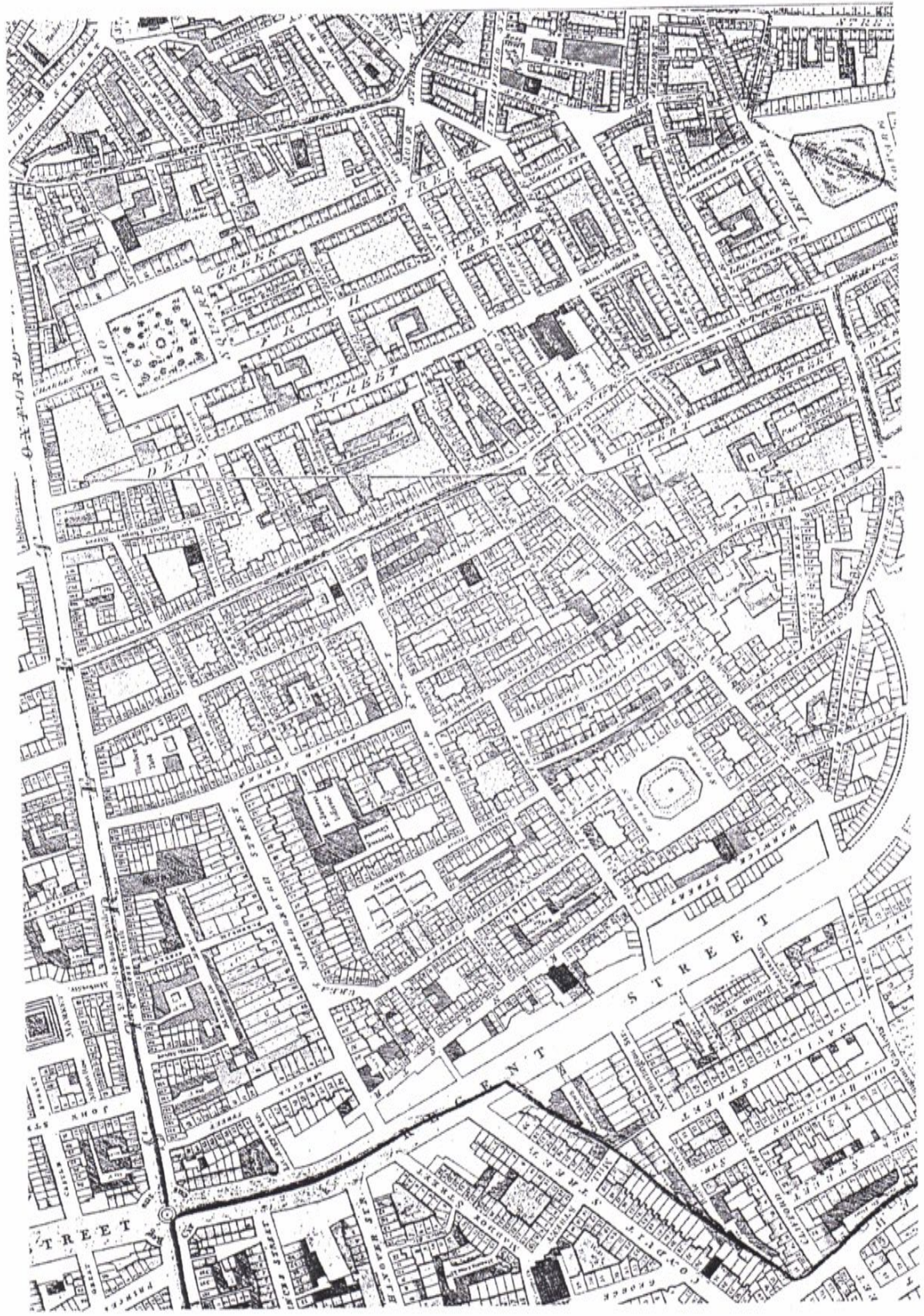


FIGURE 6: HORWOOD'S MAP 1819



FIGURE 7: ORDNANCE SURVEY 1870





**FIGURE 8: ORDNANCE SURVEY 1914**

## **4.0 CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

4.1 Soho is London's most central 'village', with narrow streets and alleyways, restaurants, cafes and food shops, small businesses and street markets intermingled with many surviving eighteenth century houses. Its multiple layers of history and varied street life make Soho's streets both fascinating and lively. Yet it is also a strongly residential area, with a growing residential population. The important residential element to Soho's character prevents it from appearing entirely commercial.

4.2 In terms of its townscape, Soho has an extremely dense and urban character defined by an irregular and often confusing grid of narrow streets. Longer streets run north/south and the shorter east/west and between the main streets are many narrow courts and alleys. This is essentially a late seventeenth century street pattern and most of the streets are noticeably narrower than those north of Oxford Street or west of Regent Street, which were built-up in the early eighteenth century.

4.3 Throughout the conservation area, there are few long views or urban landmarks. This gives a sense of Soho as being both impenetrable and also separate from surrounding areas. Significantly, there are no tube stations within Soho itself and the only bus routes run along the boundary streets and along Shaftesbury Avenue.

4.4 Soho today remains one of London's most colourful and vibrant neighbourhoods. Its character is defined not just through its built form but by its many and varied uses and residents and the diversity of communities which use and occupy its spaces.

### **Character Areas**

4.5 Whilst it retains an overall cohesiveness in its townscape, differing uses in particular contribute to the sense of several distinctive sub areas of character within the conservation area, which have their own identities. These are: Chinatown, Shaftesbury Avenue, Carnaby Street, Berwick Street Market, Soho Square and Golden Square and an overview of each is given below:

#### **4.6 Chinatown**

South of Shaftesbury Avenue and centred on Gerard Street, including the north side of Lisle Street, the south end of Wardour Street and a number of small courts opening off these streets, is London's Chinatown, which has grown up since the Second World War. The underlying townscape in this area shares a similar history and architectural style as that to the north of Shaftesbury Avenue, comprising a core of modest Georgian houses, intermixed with some later buildings and pubs. Yet the area has a unique character derived in large part from its residents and uses. Almost all of the buildings in this area have Chinese and East Asian restaurants and businesses on their ground and sometimes first floors and the area acts as focal point for London's Chinese community. These uses have brought a distinctive overlay of ornament, bright colour and Chinese characters to the

historic streetscape, which gives this area its own distinctive identity. The separate identity of this part of the conservation area has been further emphasised by the erection of temple gateways in Macclesfield Street and at either end of Gerard Street clearly defining the sense of entering a different and distinct area.

#### **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

For detailed guidance on the Chinatown sub area of character, reference should be made to the Chinatown Action Plan and the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance on Chinatown.

#### **4.7 Shaftesbury Avenue**

This broad curving street carves Soho in half and differs in age, scale and character to the rest of the Conservation Area. It was formed in the early 1880s, partly on the line of an existing street, but with entirely new frontages, mostly of red brick. Many of the new buildings were tall blocks with commercial premises on the ground floor and apartments or offices above. These buildings are on a larger scale than those in the older streets to north and south. On the north side of Shaftesbury Avenue is a concentration of late Victorian theatres, and the street is generally recognised as the heart of London's Theatreland.

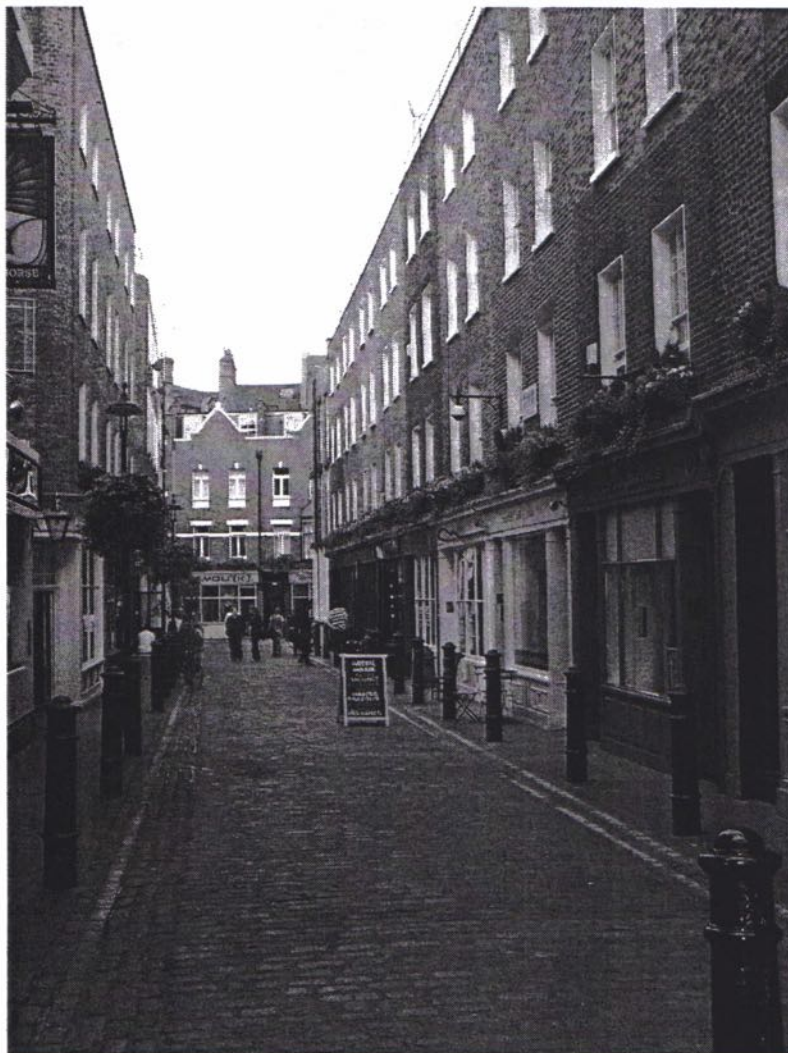


**Figure 9: Shaftesbury Avenue**

#### **4.8 Carnaby Street**

Carnaby Street adjoins the old Carnaby Market area to the east, which was built-up with new houses in the 1820s. Carnaby Street remained a quiet

backstreet until the 1960s when it established itself as an icon of Swinging London with a large number of small clothes boutiques. This reputation persists and the retail function has now spread into the adjoining streets like Newburgh Street where there are many traditionally detailed timber shopfronts. Carnaby Street and the small streets which cross it have been pedestrianised, unit sizes are small and the whole area has an attractive, intimate character.



**Figure 10: Newburgh Street**

#### **4.9 Berwick Street Market**

The southern part of Berwick Street has a vibrant street market. The buildings in this part of the street are very mixed and overall the area is characterised by its sometimes chaotic and slightly down-at heel feeling. Most of those on the west side are modern and form the podium for the 1960s tower block known as Kemp House. Those on the east side are very modest and many are in poor condition but some date from the later eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries and all preserve the original small plot sizes.



**Figure 11: Berwick Street market**

#### **4.10 Soho Square,**

Soho Square was the centrepiece of the Earl of St Albans's late seventeenth century development in Soho and is still the focus of the north eastern part of the area. It is popular and well-used as one of the few green open spaces in the conservation area. The square itself is generously-proportioned, with mature trees, which terminate the views along Frith Street and Greek Street and with a small half-timbered building in the centre forming a local landmark. There are a considerable number of large-scale twentieth-century buildings in the square. Yet the remaining eighteenth century houses, including the grade I listed No 1 Greek Street, and the two handsome nineteenth century churches still give Soho Square an air of elegance.

#### **4.11 Golden Square,**

Although Golden Square originally had a domestic character, and scale, this is now only preserved by a handful of buildings, greatly outnumbered by much larger later nineteenth century and twentieth century buildings, which dominate the square. Most of the buildings are in office use and it has a much quieter and more subdued character than Soho Square. The present formal

layout of the square garden, with hard paving and relatively small trees, dates from 1952. Despite the alterations to its original character, Golden Square is important as the only open area in this part of Soho.

## **HIERARCHY OF STREETS & OPEN SPACES**

4.12 The historic street layout and the relationship of built form to open space define the overall framework of an area. Within this framework, the fine grain of the townscape, including plot sizes and building lines are important in establishing the pattern and density of development. This has a significant impact on the character of an area, dictating the scale of development and level of enclosure or openness.

4.13 Soho has an enclosed and urban character with a high density of development, small plot widths and few open spaces. Overall the street plan has a predominantly north-south alignment reflecting the line of the old field patterns, so that it is still much easier to cross Soho from north to south than from east to west. Of the north/south routes, Wardour Street and Dean Street are the most important. Of the larger east/west routes Old Compton Street/Brewer Street is the most significant.

4.14 However, much of Soho's character derives from its intimate routes and spaces, with small courts and very narrow thoroughfares. These narrower streets and sometimes labyrinthine street pattern adds to an at times louche and edgy feel. In many cases these form part of a pedestrian network which allows east/west movement across the area.

4.15 The only primary route within the conservation area is Shaftesbury Avenue, which cuts across the historic street pattern and carves the conservation area in two, creating a separation between Chinatown and the rest of Soho. Primary routes also define the edges to the conservation area: Charing Cross Road and Oxford Street, are busy thoroughfares with a quite different character to the rest of Soho and mark the eastern and northern boundaries of the conservation area. Regent Street to the West, is not in the conservation area having been built to separate Soho from its wealthier neighbours and marks a change in character.

4.16 The principal public spaces are Soho Square, Golden Square and St Anne's churchyard fronting Wardour Street. Of these Soho Square, with its large grass plots, is the busiest and perhaps the most attractive. However, all three contain mature trees and provide important open spaces within an otherwise densely built up area.

### **POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

Dominant street patterns should be respected and where historic patterns remain these should be protected and reflected in any proposed schemes. Policies DES1 A 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and DES 12 should be consulted.

## ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

### Overview

4.17 Soho has a mixed architectural character caused by successive phases of development across the whole area. For two hundred years there have been no great estates in Soho with surveyors regulating construction over a large area. As a result, buildings have been repaired, re-fronted and rebuilt in a piecemeal fashion and there are few consistent terraces or streets where the architecture is homogenous, or of a single period. However, a considerable degree of unity is provided by the survival of the original street layout and more especially by the narrow seventeenth and early-eighteenth century building plots. These still predominate, despite some twentieth century amalgamations to provide plots for larger buildings and buildings in Soho are generally characterised by their modest scale and design.

4.18 Few visible traces of the original seventeenth century buildings survive. Much of the area was rebuilt in the first half of the eighteenth century and a substantial number of houses of this date do survive across the whole conservation area. There are also many small, flat-fronted Georgian properties dating from the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Many of these buildings are of modest quality and are not listed, but they nevertheless make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area.



Figure 12: Meard Street

4.19 Almost without exception, the Georgian buildings are built of brick, either red brick or yellow London stock, in some cases stuccoed and painted. None is more than four storeys high, sometimes with an additional mansard storey or with a London roof behind a parapet cornice. Most of these houses are two or three bays wide and modestly detailed. Many buildings still retain original sash windows and some elegant doors and doorcases. Yet even the finest of Soho's Georgian houses, the Grade 1 listed House of St Barnabas on the corner of Soho Square, retains a relatively simple and restrained exterior.

4.20 The many Soho public houses, often on conspicuous corner sites, are of similar scale, though they are generally later in date and of much more varied character. They range from traditional Victorian drinking houses like The John Snow in Broadwick Street, through versions of the High Victorian gin palace like The Clachan in Kingly Street or the faience-clad Intrepid Fox in Wardour Street to early twentieth century half timbered-buildings.

4.21 The Victorian era saw the start of some larger scale buildings being inserted into the fine grain of the Soho streetscape. In particular Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road, which were laid out in the late nineteenth century, are lined with tall generally red brick commercial buildings and blocks of mansion flats typical of the date and interspersed, in the case of Shaftesbury Avenue, with more flamboyant theatre buildings.

4.22 The formation of these new streets stimulated the rebuilding of many small commercial properties in the centre of Soho, and there is a wide and delightful variety of late Victorian and Edwardian frontages, mostly of red brick and in a variety of styles. Most of these retain small plot widths and hence the intimate scale and vertical emphasis of the Soho street-scene.

4.23 The row of four listed theatres in Shaftesbury Avenue, the Lyric, Apollo Gielgud and Queens exemplifies the products of the late Victorian and Edwardian theatre-building boom. Designed by specialist architects like C. J. Phipps, Frank Matcham and W. Sprague these buildings were intended to attract attention by their varied and sculptural fronts. One of the most notable is the concave fronted Palace Theatre on Cambridge Circus built for Richard D'Oyley Carte as a full scale opera house.

4.24 Industry, commerce and trade has also left its mark on Soho's architecture, giving an industrial character to many of its buildings and mews with nineteenth and twentieth century warehouses are interspersed throughout the conservation area. In the first half of the twentieth century several large new commercial and institutional buildings were erected in Soho, often spread over several old building plots and rejecting the eighteenth century grain of the streets. One example is the former Dormeuil building of 1924 in Golden Square by Mewes and Davis; others are to be found most conspicuously in Wardour Street where a series of new blocks were built in the 1920s and 1930s for various film and publishing companies.





Figure 13: Portland Mews

4.25 After the Second World War this commercial rebuilding continued and a large number of surviving Georgian houses were demolished to make way for office and commercial buildings, usually of indifferent quality. The most conspicuous buildings of the immediate post war decades are the tall blocks of flats built by Westminster City Council in Berwick Street, Broadwick Street and Ingestre Place in the 1960s and 1970s, originally part of plans to redevelop Soho, which neglected the intimate character of the area.

4.26 Since the late 1970s, rebuilding has continued, though on a lesser scale, and with much rehabilitation behind existing facades. Among the more interesting of these modern buildings is Quinlan Terry's neo-Palladian office in Dufour's Place built in the early 1980s to fund the repair of the grade II\* listed early-Georgian terrace in Broadwick Street, and more recently the offices on the corner of Broadwick Street and Berwick Street designed by the Richard Rogers Partnership and completed in 2000.

#### **POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

Any proposal should take into account the character of its context. Policies, DES1 A 3 and 4 and DES4 should be consulted on the Principles of Development and DES5 A and B should be consulted on alterations and extensions.

DES4B should be referred to for scholarly replicas within terraces of unified townscape and/or DES4A in terms of respecting adjoining buildings in areas of varied townscape.

Original architectural features and detail are vital to the architectural quality of individual buildings and the character of the conservation area. Policy DES 9 C states that the council will not allow schemes which involve loss of original features and where these are missing their reinstatement to the original design detail and materials will be encouraged.

Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance documents are noted throughout the audit document.

### **Landmarks of Soho**

4.27 Landmark buildings contribute significantly to the character and legibility of the townscape of an area, being focal points or key elements in views. This can be for various reasons, including their siting, detailed design or iconic status.

4.28 The densely built-up nature of Soho with its narrow streets and restricted views, mean that there are relatively few obvious landmark buildings, and these are on the edge of the conservation area, marking its edges and entrance points.

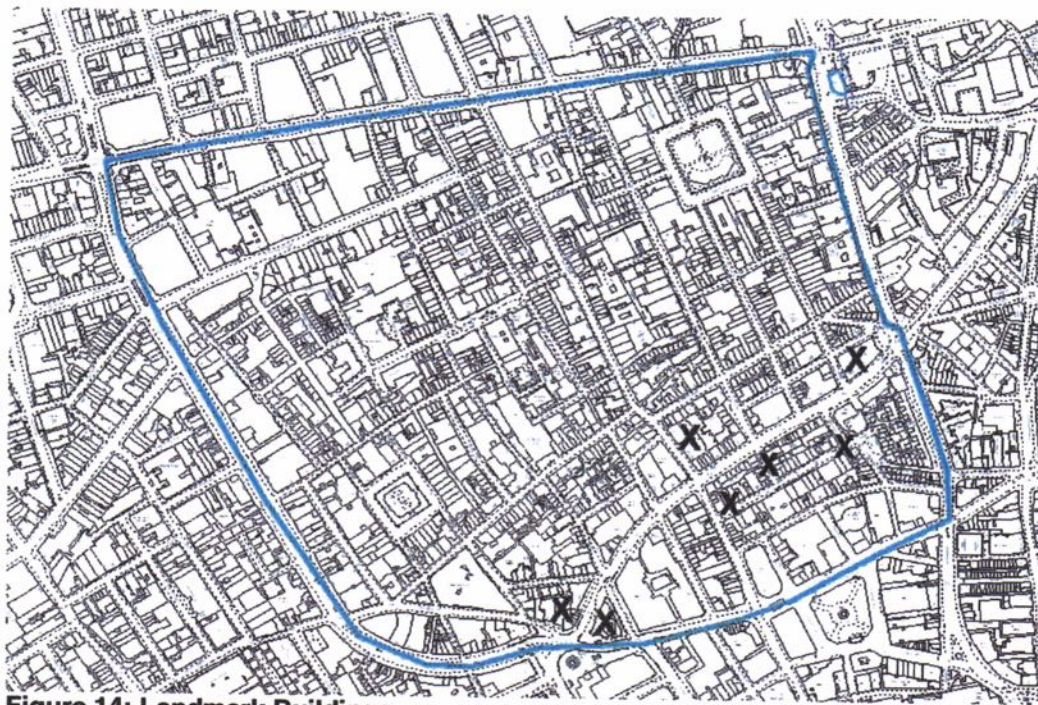
4.29 The Palace Theatre in Cambridge Circus is a major building in a prominent location at one of the familiar 'gateways' into Soho. Built for Robert D'Oyley Carte, between 1888-1891 and to designs by the builder G H Holloway and the architect TE Collcutt, it was designed as a full-scale opera house.

4.30 The London Pavilion, 2-8 Shaftesbury Avenue is a major building in a prominent location on the edge of Piccadilly Circus. Dating from 1885, it was the first grand west end music hall.

4.31 The curved illuminated advertising hoarding on the unlisted No 1 Shaftesbury Avenue, across the road from the London Pavilion, is conspicuous in all views of the north side of Piccadilly Circus and is a internationally-recognised symbol of London.

4.32 The tower of St Anne's church on the east side of Wardour Street is a focal point in Soho, partly because it stands near the junction of Wardour Street, Old Compton Street and Brewer Street which is itself the key point of entry to southern Soho from Shaftesbury Avenue. By S P Cockrell of 1801-3, it is now incorporated in a mixed-use scheme of 1989-91.

4.33 The Temple Gateways at either end of Gerrard Street and in Macclesfield Street are landmarks, which define the boundaries of Chinatown. They date from 1985 and were designed by Richard Swain of Westminster City Council's planning department.



**Figure 14: Landmark Buildings**

### **Unlisted buildings of Merit**

4.34 More modest unlisted buildings also add to the character and quality of the local area. They may make a valuable contribution to the townscape, and can be of architectural interest in their own right or have local historic and cultural associations for example with a famous resident or event. Within the Conservation Area Audits these are identified as 'unlisted buildings of merit'. By definition these properties are considered to be of particular value to the character and appearance of the conservation area and their demolition or unsympathetic alteration will normally be resisted.

4.35 The list of unlisted buildings of merit for the Soho area is reasonably comprehensive. Whilst this includes the best Georgian buildings, there are many late eighteenth or nineteenth century flat-fronted houses which are not listed but which still form a vital component in the townscape and serve as a reminder of the original scale and character of the streets. Yet despite its obvious Georgian origins, one of the distinctive qualities of Soho is the diversity of its street architecture. Victorian, Edwardian, inter-war and post-war buildings all make a positive contribution to that diversity.

4.36 The following list indicates buildings which are considered to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and these are also shown on the map at Figure 15.

#### **Archer Street**

2, 3,4,6,7,9-16 (consec), The Windmill

#### **Bateman Street**

2,10,11,12,13,15, 19-22 (consec)

**Beak Street**

10-18 even, 40, 42/44, 46/48, 15, 17, 25-39 odd 45, 49, 50-54, 51-71(odd),75,Old Coffee House PH

**Berwick Street**

9-23, 25-30,34-37, 40-44, 49, 53/54, 55, 60, 61, 68,71-78,82-84

**Brewer Street**

1-7 odd, 9-47odd, 53-61odd, 2,4, 14-22, 24-30 even, 54, 58, 64 Crown PH , 66-68, 72-78 even, 84, 86

**Broadwick Street**

7,11,41-49 odd, Broadwick House, 4-18 even, 26-34 even, John Snow PH

**Bridle Lane**

10-12, 28,29,36

**Carlisle Street**

7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 18

**Carnaby Street**

2-4, 9, 30-35 consec, 41-48 consec

**Charing Cross Road**

45, 47, 49, 84, 85, 93 (Cambridge PH), 95/99, 167

**D'Arblay Street**

1, 6-9 consec,14-16,16a, 20-31consec

**Dean Street**

1,5,9,10,26-29,31-32, 34,35,39,40,41, 42 & 43, 46, 47, 49, 50, 54, 57, 58-60, 61, 71, 80, 91/92, 93, 95, 96 Bath House PH

**Denman Street**

1-10,St James's Tavern

**Dufours Place**

1-16

**Foubert's Place**

9-21 odd, 29-43odd, 8-14 even, 20, 22, 22A, 26-32

**Frith Street**

5-9, 19, 20, 21, 21a, 23a, 23b, 24/25, 27, 41, 42, 43, 50-57 consec

**Ganton Street**

23, 26

**Gerrard Street**

7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15a, 17, 20-22, 25-27, 45, 46

**Golden Square**

1, 2, 3, 9, 10 13-18 consec, 20, 25-29 consec

**Great Chapel Street**

9, 13, 13A, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25-27

**Great Marlborough Street**

1, 2, 32-44 consec, 46, 47, 49/50, 54-57, 60

**Great Pulteney Street**

2-7 consec, 16-18, 22, 32, 33, 34

**Great Windmill Street**

17, 18, 19 (The Windmill), 20, 21, 23 (St Peter's Schools), 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 37-44

**Greek Street**

2, 4, 5, 7 (Pillars of Hercules PH), 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 35A, 49, 51-57 consec, 59

**Horse & Dolphin Yard**

1, 2, 3

**Ingestre Place**

St James Dwellings

**Kingly Street**

1,2,4,9—21consec, 25-31,

**Lexington Street**

29-35 odd, 6-38 even, 40,42

**Lisle Street**

2-5 consec, 28, 29,30

**Livonia Street**

7A

**Lower James Street**

2-3

**Lower John Street**

1, 3, 5-8, 10, 11, 13

**Macclesfield Street**

1-5consec, 11, 12, 13

**Marshall Street**

1, 2, 54

**Moor Street**

6-11, Three Greyhounds PH, 12-17

**Newport Place**

9, 11-13

**Noel Street**

6, 6a, 22-27 consec

**Old Compton Street**

7, 9, 11, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 33, 37, 39, 41-45, 51/53, Prince Edward Cinema  
8-20 even, 36-52 (even)

**Oxford Street**

1-15 (odd), 17, 19-23(odd), 21--65odd, 81, 103, 111-125, 133-5137, 139, 145,  
147, 159

**Peter Street**

1, 2, 3, 27-31

**Poland Street**

1-5consec, 6, 8, 9, 10, 10a, 12, 13, 14, 23 Kings Arms PH, 44, 48, 55, 56, 57,  
60, 61, 62 Star & Garter PH

**Romilly Street**

19, 20, 24, The Spice of Life PH, 35-39

**Rupert Street**

16-22 (even), 30-42 (even), 35, 45-63 (odd), 50, 52

**Shaftesbury Avenue**

1-17, 25, 33, 39-45, 53-73(odd), 75/77, 40-86(even), 90-124(even) 138

**Silver Place**

1, 2, 6, 7, 8

**Soho Square**

1, 11, 14, 20, 26, 31-35

**Soho Street**

9-14 consec

**Tisbury Court**

1, 3, 4

**Upper John Street**

5, 7

**Wardour Street**

3-25 odd, 33-39, 41, 43, 45, 77-85, 89/91,93/95,97/99 Intrepid Fox PH, 103-9(odd)113-143(odd),173 George PH, 175-9(odd)183/185, 189, 191, 193, 199, 201/203, 20 Falcon PH, 22a-30 even,34,36, 54-60, 68/70, 72, 76-90, 96-114, 116-126, 128, 134-150,170, 178-152

**Walkers Court**

6

**Warwick Street**

1-11consec,14-19, 21-24

**Winnett Street**

2,3

**POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

Policy DES9 2 states that permission will not normally be given for proposals which involve the demolition or substantial demolition of buildings which contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the existing building cannot be repaired or adapted so as to extend its useful life and that the proposed development will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. This requirement may be balanced against the City Council's other policy objectives.





## **Soho Roofscapes**

4.37 The streetscape of Soho is very varied and this is reflected in its wide variety of roof forms, detail and materials. Throughout the conservation area there are variations in mansards, gables, unbroken parapets, brick corbelled eaves and pitch slate roofs, each denoting a phase in the historical and architectural development of the area. The pattern of land ownership meant that much of Soho was developed in a piecemeal fashion and intact regular terraces of buildings with consistent rooflines are therefore rare. As a result, there are very few examples of uniform groups of more than two or three buildings. Exceptions include listed terraces of Georgian houses in Broadwick Street, Lisle Street and Meard Street.

4.38 However, whilst roof detail varies, overall buildings are of a similar small scale with few rising above four storeys. Although Shaftesbury Avenue and the other major streets along the boundary of Soho, along with the area round Broadwick Street, have large-scale buildings, the preservation of the essentially Georgian scale of the Soho streets is therefore important to the intimate character of the conservation area.

4.39 Policy DES6C of the Unitary Development Plan highlights the instances where roof extensions are not considered acceptable. These include cases where buildings are completed compositions, where the varied skyline of a terrace or group of buildings is of interest, where the roofline is exposed to long views from public places and where important historic roof forms would be lost. In areas with a high concentration of listed buildings, such extensions can be particularly damaging and are seldom acceptable.

4.40 Of the unlisted Georgian buildings in Soho many already have mansard roofs. Most of the later nineteenth century and twentieth century buildings in Soho are complete architectural compositions, which do not easily admit of upward enlargement. Many twentieth century buildings were again designed from the start with roof storeys, sloping back from the street frontage in conformity with the old LCC height regulations and here again any extension would be inappropriate. Where buildings are already out of scale with the streetscape, then further extension to height will not be acceptable.

4.41 As such upward extension of many buildings in Soho is unlikely to be acceptable. A map of buildings where roof additions will be considered is below at Figure 16.

4.42 In terms of materials, a variety of original roof coverings can be found within the conservation area including Welsh slate and plain clay tiles. Roof coverings consistent with the date of the parent buildings should be retained wherever possible. The Council will not normally encourage the use of modern materials such as concrete tiles or artificial slate as they rarely meet the high quality, appearance or longevity of traditional natural materials.

4.43 Roof clutter, such as railings, antennae and satellite dishes, can also have a significant and detrimental impact on the character of an area, affecting both short and long-distance views, and careful consideration should be given to the siting of such equipment to minimise its visual impact. All such equipment should be located away from the front façade of buildings and the roof, chimneys or other locations where it may be visible.

**POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

Policy DES6A highlights instances where roof extensions are likely to be unacceptable in townscape terms without proper justification.

Further advice is given in the publication 'Roofs. A Guide to Alterations and Extensions on Domestic Buildings (1995). 'Mews, a Guide to Alterations' explains how these policies apply in mews-streets.

## VIEWS

### Strategic Metropolitan and Local Views

4.44 The Soho Conservation Area is crossed by two strategic views, which are shown in the Conservation Area Directory. These are the views from Primrose Hill to the Palace of Westminster and from Parliament Hill to the Palace of Westminster.

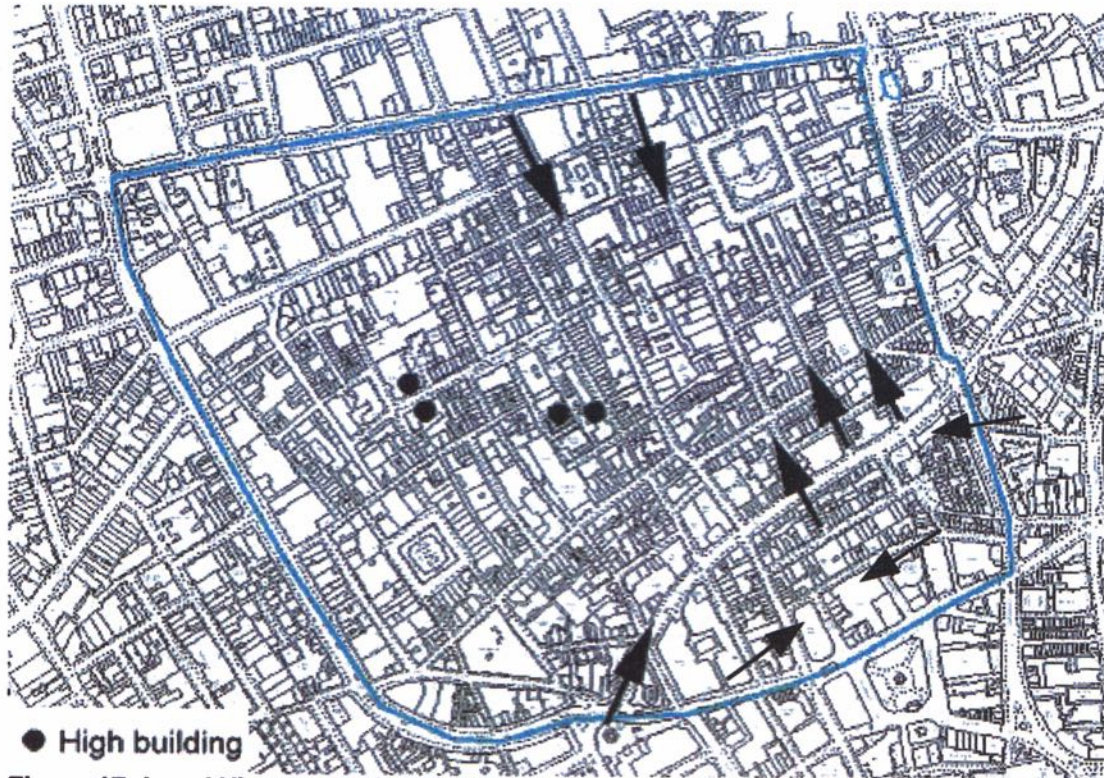
4.45 The Unitary Development Plan, in policy DES15, also identifies the importance of more local level views and two further categories of views, which contribute to Westminster's townscape and historic character. These are Metropolitan and Local Views.

- **Metropolitan Views** are 'postcard' views. They include both views from Westminster to other parts of London and views from other parts of London into Westminster, such as views along and across the river Thames. They also include views within and across Westminster, particularly views of landmark buildings.
- **Local Views** are by definition more localised and can be of natural features, skylines, smaller landmarks and structures as well as attractive groups of buildings and views into parks, open spaces, streets and squares.

4.46 Because of its dense street pattern and enclosed character, there are no significant Metropolitan Views and only a few significant local views in Soho, many of these defining entry points. The following section of the audit identifies local views in the conservation area.

4.47 Both Dean Street and Wardour Street provide long views north and south across the conservation area. Greek Street and Frith Street afford views northward from Shaftesbury Avenue and Old Compton Street to the green oasis of Soho Square. Shaftesbury Avenue gives views of theatre-land from Piccadilly Circus. The view looking westward along Oxford Street from Tottenham Court Road is familiar and significant. Views into Chinatown are also identified as of note.

4.48 Full consideration must be given to the impact of any development proposals on important metropolitan and local views both within the conservation area and into and out of it. These are shown on the plan below. The impact of high buildings within the Soho Conservation area is discussed under 'negative features' below.



● High building  
**Figure 17: Local Views and High Buildings**

#### **LOCAL TOWNSCAPE DETAIL**

4.49 Other features and small details also contribute to a sense of local distinctiveness within an area. These can range from boundary treatments and street furniture to the landscape qualities of the streetscape. Individually and collectively they contribute to the overall quality of Westminster as well as enhancing individual areas of character within the city.

#### **Shopfronts**

4.50 Shopfronts of all eras, including well-designed, contemporary shopfronts, contribute to the character and appearance of both individual buildings and conservation areas as a whole. Many shopfronts are of historic or architectural interest in their own right. Soho's role as a retail and entertainment centre has meant it has a particularly rich and eclectic mixture of shopfronts, which are a key part of the character of the area.

4.51 The retail trades have left a range of older shopfronts in Soho, including one of the best Rococo fronts in London at 88 Dean Street, dating from 1791 and listed grade II.\* At 15 Frith Street a remarkable Gothick front made of cast iron and dating from the early nineteenth century. Many good and relatively intact early shopfronts can be found in other streets including Lexington Street and Beak Street, and Newport Court on the edge of Chinatown. Fragments of old, pre-1850, shopfronts are scattered throughout Soho, though usually with modern glazing.

4.52 There are several surviving earlier twentieth century shopfronts including Lina's Stores at 18 Brewer Street with its green external tiling. Many twentieth century office buildings, especially those dating from the inter-war

period, have handsome glazed fronts; one outstanding example is the Fintex building in Golden Square.

4.53 There are many good modern shopfronts in historical styles, mainly neo-Georgian. There are many such modern shopfronts in the Carnaby Street area, especially in Newburgh Street, and also in Gerrard Street and Lisle Street in Chinatown. In Chinatown many shopfronts are characterised by bright colour, decoration and Chinese characters.



**Figure 18: Victorian shopfronts in Beak Street**

4.54 Cafes, pubs and clubs are also an established part of the Soho streetscene. Soho's many interesting public houses illustrate the changing fashions in pub architecture. These range from simply detailed, traditional Victorian drinking houses like The John Snow in Broadwick Street, to a variety of more decorative late Victorian pubs such as the Dog and Duck on Bateman Street. The more domestic style of early twentieth century pubs is witnessed in half timbered-buildings such as the Pillars of Hercules.

4.55 The role of historic pub names is also important, providing clues to the history of individual buildings and the conservation area. Examples include 'The King of Corsica' in Berwick Street which was named after the ill-fated Theodore, King of Corsica who died in Soho and is buried in St Anne's Soho. The John Snow is named after Dr John Snow who lived in Soho and traced the source of the Cholera epidemic in 1854 to a pump in Broadwick Street.

4.56 The following list, though not comprehensive details some of the shopfronts of interest within the Soho Conservation Area.

#### **Shopfronts and Public Houses of Interest.**

|                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 16 Archer Street                     | 21,23, 65, Beak Street           |
| 2, 13 Bateman Street                 | 79 Beak Street                   |
| 18 Bateman Street (The Dog and Duck) | Duke of Argyll, 37 Brewer Street |
|                                      | 18, 47-53 Brewer Street          |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Glasshouse Stores, 55 Brewer Street                      | Red Lion, 14 Kingly Street                     |
| 59, 61 Brewer Street                                     | 20-21 Kingly Street                            |
| The Blue Posts, 7 Broadwick Street                       | 39-53, 44-46 Lexington Street                  |
| 29 Carnaby Street  | 28-30 Lisle Street (The Polar Bear)            |
| Golden Lion, Dean Street                                 | 1 Lisle Street                                 |
| The Bath House, Dean Street                              | 11 Macclesfield Street (De Hems)               |
| 88 Dean street   | 33-37 consec Marshall street                   |
| Nellie Dean Of Soho, 89 Dean Street                      | 13 Moor Street                                 |
| 9 Denman Street  | 1-10 consec & 13-15 consec<br>Newburgh Street  |
| 4 Fareham Street   | 4-8 Newport Place                              |
| 15 Frith Street  | 25 Newport Place-fascia                        |
| 27 Frith Street  | 52 Old Compton street                          |
| 2-8 Ganton Street  | Comptons, 51-53 Old Compton<br>Street          |
| 24,25 Ganton Street                                      | 33 Romilly Street                              |
| 4&6 Glasshouse Street                                    | 58-60 Shaftesbury Avenue                       |
| 42 Glasshouse Street (The<br>Glassblower)                | 2 Silver Place                                 |
| 19 &22 Golden Square                                     | 6/5 Silver Place                               |
| 9 Great Chapel Street                                    | 13, 37, 38 Soho Square                         |
| 1&2, 48 Great Malborough Street                          | 28 Rupert Street (The Blue Posts)              |
| 21-22 (The Sun & 13 cantons), 34<br>Great Pulteny Street | 45 Rupert Street (The White Horse)             |
| The Lyric, Great Windmill Street                         | 20, 22,24, 30-32 Rupert Street                 |
| 3, 14, 17, 18, 20 21, 48, Greek Street                   | 27, 34-36 41-43 Wardour Street                 |
| The Coach and Horses, 29 Greek<br>Street                 | 79, 81, 160 Wardour Street                     |
| The Three Greyhounds, 25 Greek St                        | The Ship Public House, 126 Wardour<br>Street   |
| 12-16 Ingestre Place                                     | 163-165 Wardour Street (Duke of<br>Wellington) |
| The Blue Posts, 18 Kingly Street.                        | 21-22 Warwick Street                           |

4.57 The city council seeks to retain original shopfronts wherever possible and new signage should use high quality materials and be of design and detail sympathetic to the character of the parent building and conservation area as a whole. If required, security shutters should usually be located internally and of the open lattice variety.

4.58 Within Soho there are also many examples of inscriptions, lettering and old shop signs, which give important clues to the history of buildings. Wherever possible, these should be retained in situ. —

#### **POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

The relevant City Council policy concerning historic shopfronts and the design of new ones is DES5 C. Reference should be made to the design guide 'Shopfronts, Blinds and Signs: A Guide to their Design' (1990) and 'Advertisement Design Guidelines' (1992). Guidance specific to pubs and cafes can be found in 'Food and Drink Premises'

For specific guidance with regards to shopfronts and signage in the Chinatown area of character, reference should be made to the Chinatown Supplementary Planning Guidance.

#### **Railings and boundary walls**

4.59 Railings and boundary walls can also contribute significantly to the character of conservation areas. They add interest and variety of scale in the streetscape and provide a sense of enclosure, separating spaces of differing character and often marking the boundaries between public and private spaces.

4.60 Many of Soho's buildings front directly onto the street, with no intervening boundary wall or railings. The narrower streets do not allow for front enclosures or basement areas. However, in the wider streets and squares there are still good examples of Georgian houses with front areas, lightwells and boundary railings. Most follow the traditional London pattern, with plain iron spears set directly into a stone coping, sometimes with corner urns. Meard Street has a good collection of 18<sup>th</sup> century houses and ironwork, both wrought and cast iron.

4.61 There is also a good variety of later railings, including the High Victorian examples in front of Quaritch's in Lower John Street dating from 1886 and the Arts and Crafts railings at the former Police Section House in Beak Street (1909). Examples of modern railings can be found in Soho Square, Dean Street, Lower John Street and elsewhere. Whilst

4.62 The two squares within the conservation area have post-war boundary railings of traditional style, enclosing the central area.

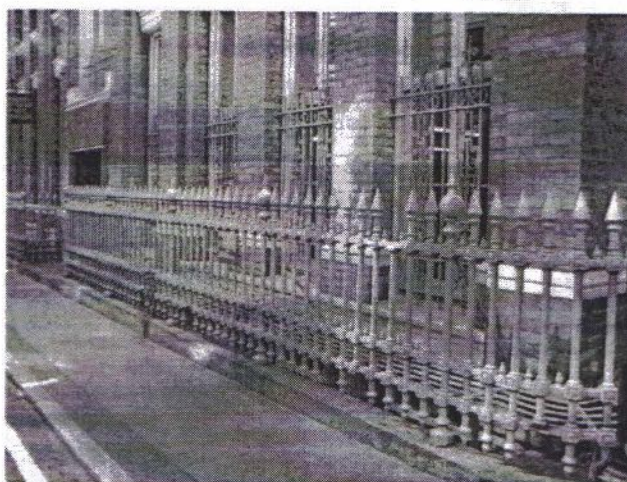
4.63 Where they exist, most historic railings within the Soho Conservation Area are painted black. It is expected that the colour of railings should be appropriate to the age and style of the parent building and in most instances should be painted black.

**POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

The city council will seek to preserve and repair boundary features of interest. Council policy in respect of these is DES7 G and further guidance can be found in the design guide: 'Railings in Westminster A guide to their design, repair and maintenance.'



**Figure 19: Railings in Soho Square**



**Figure 20: 1880s railings in Lower John Street**



**Figure 21: Modern railings in Dean Street**



## Public Art

4.64 The Soho Conservation Area contains a wide variety of public art, though comparatively little of it is in the form of free-standing sculpture. Both of Soho's squares contain listed statues as centrepieces. Soho Square has a statue of King Charles II, all that remains of a statuary group that once included the gods of the Severn, Thames, Tyne and Humber. Golden Square has a statue by Van Nost intended as King George II. Both statues are listed grade II.

4.65 Public art can also be found in the decorative features applied to buildings throughout the conservation area. The porch of St Patrick's Church in Soho Square has a statue of St Patrick in bishop's attire trampling snakes. Above the door of the French Protestant church in the same square is a relief panel inserted in 1950 showing Huguenots being welcomed to England in 1550 by King Edward VI. Other relief panels in Soho include a pair of Art Nouveau angels on the Apollo Theatre, a pair of musical angels on the Catholic church in Warwick Street, Charles Pibworth's 1912 relief of Euterpe on the Orchestral Association in Archer Street and a faience relief of Charles James Fox at the Intrepid Fox, 96 Wardour Street.

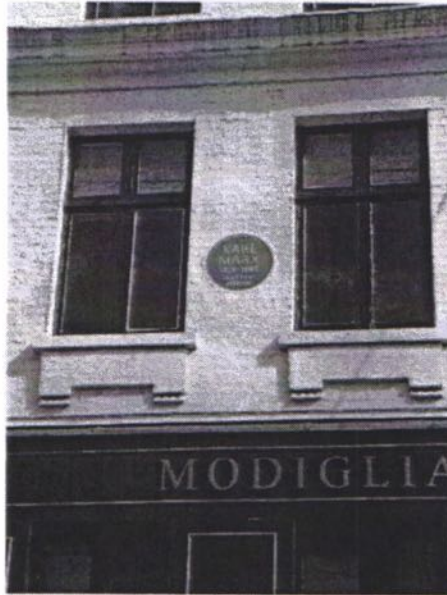


Figure 22: Euterpe by Charles Pibworth on the front of 13/14 Archer Street

4.66 There are also many examples of fine pub signs in Soho, many of recent date. Noteworthy examples are those at the Pillars of Hercules in Greek Street, the King of Corsica in Berwick Street, the Dog and Duck in Frith Street and the White Horse in Newburgh Street. Wherever possible, the council will encourage their retention in situ.

4.67 Public art in the south east part of the conservation area has a distinct Chinese character. A colourful hexagonal pavilion in Newport Place, and Chinese gateways at either end of Gerard Street set the tone, which is continued by a pair of stone Chinese lions in Gerard Street, gifts from the Chinese government, and a dragon coiling round a column in Wardour Street. A public art strategy for Chinatown is currently in preparation and will provide for temporary and permanent new works of art for the area.

4.68 Not surprisingly, Soho has a large number of blue plaques (nearly twenty in all) commemorating famous residents, including those to Karl Marx, Mozart and Canaletto who may have been drawn to the area because of its diverse community and cosmopolitan character. There are also a number of green plaques erected as part of the Westminster run Green Plaques Scheme. These celebrate other famous Soho buildings and personalities and include a plaque to Sir Morell Mackenzie (throat surgeon) and one on the Turks Head Tavern at 9 Gerrard Street, recognising its importance in the second half of the 18th Century as a great rendezvous for artists, actors and literary figures.



**Figure 23: Blue plaque to Karl Marx on Dean Street**

### **Street furniture**

4.69 Westminster has a fascinating collection of historic street furniture, much of which is listed. It is important this is properly cared for and maintained. Unnecessary or redundant modern street clutter and signage can be obstructive and detract from the character of streets.

4.70 Within Soho, there are many examples of the early-nineteenth century cast-iron 'cannon' type bollards, like those in Great Chapel Street and Beak Street. Most of these are listed. Many of the minor streets and courts have tall iron lamp-standards and some of the mews have wall-mounted lanterns.

4.71 In Broadwick Street is a modern replica of the iron water pump which was one of the sources of the 1854 cholera outbreak. There are also several old stone street name tablets, like that on No. 19 Golden Square which reads 'John Street 1685'.

4.72 Cast iron winch brackets can be found on several buildings within the conservation area, a reminder of the industrial heritage of many of Soho's buildings. Other conspicuous features of many streets in Soho, including Soho Square and Boardwick Street are the traditional red telephone kiosks.

4.73 In Chinatown the street furniture is painted red and gold, traditional colours to symbolise good luck and wealth and street signage also uses chinese characters.

4.74 Elsewhere, much of the metal street furniture, including historic items, has been protected with black intumescent paint, which gives a much less happy visual effect. There is also a large amount of modern street furniture and a plethora of street signs, which appear the more conspicuous because of the narrowness of the streets.

#### **POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

Policy DES7 C & F is intended to protect these historic and characteristic features of the street scene.

#### **Hard Landscaping & Original Street Surfaces**

4.75 Traditional surface treatments such as setts and paving can be important elements in the townscape of an area. Paving, if well-designed, maintained and in high quality materials, contributes to the character of an area, often by providing a backdrop to the surrounding buildings.

4.76 Other than some York stone pavement surfaces and granite kerbstones, there are few historic floorscapes in Soho although new granite setts have been laid in some streets including Broadwick St. Meard Street and Newburgh St. Where these exist, these add considerably to the intimate character of smaller streets and alleyways.

#### **POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

For guidance on best practice relating to both street furniture and public realm works, the Westminster Way is the council's emerging public realm manual.

#### **Trees & Soft Landscaping**

4.77 Trees and green spaces are vital to the quality of urban environments. They contribute significantly to the character and appearance of conservation

areas and the local townscape providing a soft edge within urban landscapes as well as environmental benefits. Often a single tree can provide a focal point, whilst avenues or groups of mature trees may form part of an historic planting scheme or an estate layout. The council must be notified of works to prune or cut down trees within conservation areas.

4.78 Soho has a very urban character, with few trees and green spaces. Soho Square and St Anne's churchyard in Wardour Street are the exceptions with large mature London Plane trees providing green enclaves within the conservation area. Golden Square is also an important open space and has smaller ornamental trees. For the most part, the narrow streets do not lend themselves to tree-planting, although trees have recently been planted along Broadwick Street and Marshall Street where the street is wide enough to permit future growth.

**POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

UDP policy ENV 14 seeks to protect trees which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of a conservation area. Advice on trees and their protection is given in the City Council design guide, Trees and Other Planting on Development Sites.

## CHARACTERISTIC LAND USES

4.79 Land uses and activity are fundamental to the character and appearance of conservation areas, particularly in a vibrant central district such as Soho. Uses have a direct influence on the building typology or make-up of an area, and on the nature and use of the public spaces and streets. Particular uses may be of historic or national importance and will have dictated the evolution of an area. Different users of buildings and spaces also change and influence their character over time.

4.80 Until the mid-nineteenth century, Soho was characterised by a mixture of residential and small business uses, often carried out in the same buildings. After the mid- nineteenth century many former residential buildings were replaced by commercial premises and public buildings and institutions. More recently the amount of office use has increased and there has also been an increase in the number of restaurants and bars. At the same time, the residential population of the area is also increasing gradually as the popularity of city-centre living increases. With all these changes, there is a considerable mixture of uses across the whole of the conservation area.

### 4.81 Residential

Soho was originally a predominantly residential area, its streets laid out with terraced houses, many occupied by single families. During the nineteenth century the population increased very considerably leading to overcrowding and multi-occupation of the older terrace houses. From the mid nineteenth century onwards various attempts were made to replace the worst slum area with blocks of model industrial dwellings. At the same time blocks of mansion flats were erected along the new streets of Charing Cross Road and Shaftesbury Avenue.

4.82 After about 1850 the population of Soho began to decline, but has revived steadily since the 1970s. The tall blocks of flats built by Westminster Council in the 1960s are the most conspicuous modern contribution to the residential character of the area but residents are more likely to live in refurbished older properties. Despite its reputation as a venue for entertainment and reputation, Soho today retains a strong residential population and character.

### 4.83 Restaurant/cafes and pubs

There are a large number of A3 and late night entertainment uses in Soho and there are particular concentrations in locations such as Chinatown, Old Compton Street including streets opening off it, the lower end of Wardour Street and Kingly Street. This use is steadily increasing and is making a noticeable impact upon the character of the area through the treatment of the ground floor frontages of the buildings and also from the increased number of people attracted to the area. Public houses are scattered through the whole of Soho, often on prominent corner sites. Besides purpose-built public houses there are now several pubs and bars converted from other commercial premises.

#### **4.84 Retail**

Retail use is spread throughout Soho but the main concentration of shops is in and around Carnaby Street, with small boutiques, along Oxford Street with larger shops and to a lesser extent along Berwick Street, mainly because of the location of the street market there. Brewer Street and Old Compton Street also have a retail character, at least in part. Chinatown is a centre for Chinese retail.

#### **4.85 Office**

There are offices throughout Soho. Small offices occupy the upper floors of many buildings whose ground floors are in retail or restaurant use. Some larger offices can be found in and around Soho Square and Golden Square.

#### **4.86 Media Industry and Light Industrial uses**

Soho has a long association with the media industry. There continues to be a strong media industry occupying smaller properties throughout Soho and TV studios, editing and cutting studios retain a significant presence in the area especially in Wardour Street and Great Malborough Street. The Soho Conservation Area forms part of the Creative Industries Special Policy Area.

#### **4.87 Entertainment**

Soho has long been a venue for entertainment. The new wider streets formed in the 1880s provided large sites suitable for theatres and the north side of Shaftesbury Avenue has several theatres, with more along the Charing Cross Road. From the 1920s onwards Soho has also been known for a wide variety of clubs and venues. Most famous are Ronnie Scotts in Frith Street and Raymonds Revue Bar in Brewer Street. The sex industry has a long historical association with Soho and retains a significant presence within the area, particularly concentrated around Brewer Street.

4.88 The map below shows the land uses current in 2004.

- A1 Shops
- A2 Financial and professional services
- A3 Food and drink
- B1 Business
- B2 General industrial
- B8 Storage and distribution.
- C1 Hotels
- C2 Residential institutions
- C3 Dwelling houses
- D1 Non-residential institutions
- D2 Assembly and leisure

#### **POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

The City Council will consider the contribution of existing and proposed uses to the character or appearance of the conservation area. DES9 D is the relevant UDP policy.



**FIGURE 24: MAP SHOWING GROUND FLOOR LAND USES**

## **NEGATIVE FEATURES**

4.87 Negative features detract from the special character of an area and present the opportunity for change, which will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. It may be that simple maintenance works could remedy the situation, or in some cases there may be the opportunity to redevelop a particular site.

### **Features**

4.89 Throughout the conservation area there are examples of casual or thoughtless treatment of buildings, which has an adverse effect on the special character of the area. These include:

#### **4.90 Brickwork: Painted surfaces, poor repair and repointing.**

There are several examples flat-fronted late Georgian buildings which have had their brickwork painted. Such painting is non-reversible and can accelerate decay in the brickwork. Poor repairs and pointing, particularly with hard cement based mortars can have an equally damaging effect.

#### **4.91 Small scale alterations such as replacement of windows**

The introduction of standardised modern windows and doors, which do not relate to the architecture of the original building has a significant and detrimental impact on individual buildings and the character of the area as a whole. There are many examples of removal of period windows from properties for example replacement of the original sashes from georgian properties or crittals from twentieth century properties with modern metal-framed or UPVC windows, which do not relate in size, proportions or detailing to the original building and detract from the visual quality of the buildings.

#### **4.92 Poorly located services, plant and air-conditioning equipment:**

Throughout Soho there are many examples of poorly sited and highly visible external ducts, air-conditioning units, services and cables. Many of these are located on roofs or often in courts and alleys and have a significant and detrimental impact on individual buildings and the street scene.





Figure 25

#### 4.93 Poor Quality Shopfronts & Security Shutters

In general, shopfronts should relate to the proportions and detail of the building in which they are set, as well as adjoining townscape. There are several examples in Soho of commercial fronts which take no account of the building to which they belong. Some fronts spread over decorative features of the building and in some cases over upper floors or several fronts. Gerrard Street can show several examples of commercial brick fronts with inappropriate stone cladding. There are also examples of steel roller shutters, which are not appropriate in the conservation area and have a deadening impact of the street-scene.

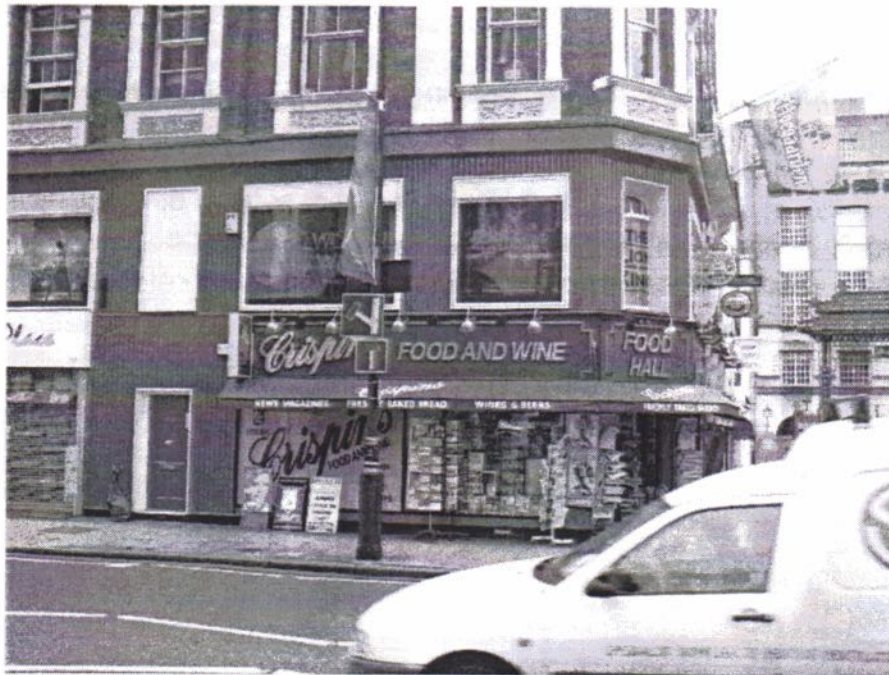


Figure 26: An oversized shopfront in Shaftesbury Avenue

#### 4.94 Poor Signage

Soho is an area where signage plays an important part in the character of the streetscape. It is important that shop signs should be of appropriate scale and materials. In some parts of Soho, excessive numbers of signs, particularly at high level, creates visual clutter. Internally illuminated and box signs can be bulky and detract significantly from the buildings on which they are placed. In general, signs should not be placed at high level and should not obscure architectural detail.



Figure 27: Signage can contribute to visual clutter.

#### High Buildings

4.95 High buildings are not in keeping with the established scale and character of much of Westminster. Their appearance disrupts the skyline of the City and intrudes upon cherished views. Many harm the townscape, relating poorly at street level and damaging the setting of listed buildings, conservation areas and historic parks and open spaces. Others give emphasis to places where such additional emphasis is seldom required or deserved.



**Figure 28: Blake House rising at the west end of Broadwick Street**

4.96 There are four tall buildings in the Soho Conservation Area with over ten storeys. Although the narrow and irregular street pattern of Soho restricts long views, these dominate their immediate locality, are clearly out of scale with adjoining buildings, and as such have an adverse effect upon the character of the conservation area. The four buildings are grouped in two pairs.

4.97 Kemp House is a tall block of flats on a podium building between the south end of Berwick Street and Ingestre Place, which is dominant in views of Berwick Street Market. Ingestre Court is a tall freestanding block of flats in Ingestre Place.

4.98 William Blake House is a tall block of public housing on a raised podium at the junction of Broadwick Street and Marshall Street. This is the most prominent of Soho's tall buildings and overshadows the listed Marshall Street Baths and also the grade II\* listed terrace of houses in Broadwick Street. On the south side of Broadwick Street, facing William Blake House, is Stirling Court, another tall post-war block.

4.99 In general, however, Soho is characterised by its narrow plot widths and domestic scale, with most buildings no more than four stories and it is considered further development should relate to this established scale.

#### **Other Buildings and Sites**

4.100 In addition, there are a number of other buildings and locations that detract from the special character of the area.

4.101 The former Post Office and Telephone Exchange building fronting Gerrard Street (nos. 32-35 consec) and extending through to Lisle Street is a large brick structure built c1930 by H.M. Office of Works to replace an earlier telephone exchange by Leonard Stokes. The front façade of the building is of some architectural interest, and terminates the view south down Dean Street across the centre of Soho. However, it is conspicuously out of scale with the other buildings in Gerrard Street. It has a damaging effect on the character of the north side of Lisle Street, recently been made worse by the addition of a large and conspicuous rooftop air-handling plant.



**Figure 29: A view west along Lisle Street, showing the former telephone exchange looming over the Georgian houses on the north side of the street**

4.102 Newport Place, at east end of Gerrard Street, lies on the eastern boundary of the conservation area. This is of importance as a meeting point and one of the gateways to Chinatown, yet serves as the exit route from a major car-park, is surrounded by blank buildings frontages and would benefit from enhancement.

4.103 Ham Yard south of Smith's Court, off Great Windmill Street and just north of Shaftesbury Avenue, is presently derelict and unsightly. At the time of writing permission has been granted for a mixed use development at Ham Yard comprising residential, retail and restaurant uses, with associated environmental improvements. This permission has yet to be implemented.

4.104 14 Frith Street is a gap-site, with a single storey building in continuous three-storey Georgian street frontage

4.105 As well as the tall buildings described above, there are several other late 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings in Soho which relate poorly to the established character and scale of Soho. These include Poland Street Car Park, 39-45 Marshall Street, 45a-49 Old Compton Street and 22-24 Greek Street and 81-82 Dean Street.

4.105 Both Gerrard Street and Carnaby Street are pedestrian areas where the brick pavements are beginning to look untidy, detracting from the character and interest of these two streets, which are among the most-visited in the conservation area.

4.106 **Buildings at Risk.** Marshall Street Baths is listed Grade II and is currently vacant and on the English Heritage Buildings at Risk register. A planning brief was published for the site in October 2004, setting out the priorities for the site.

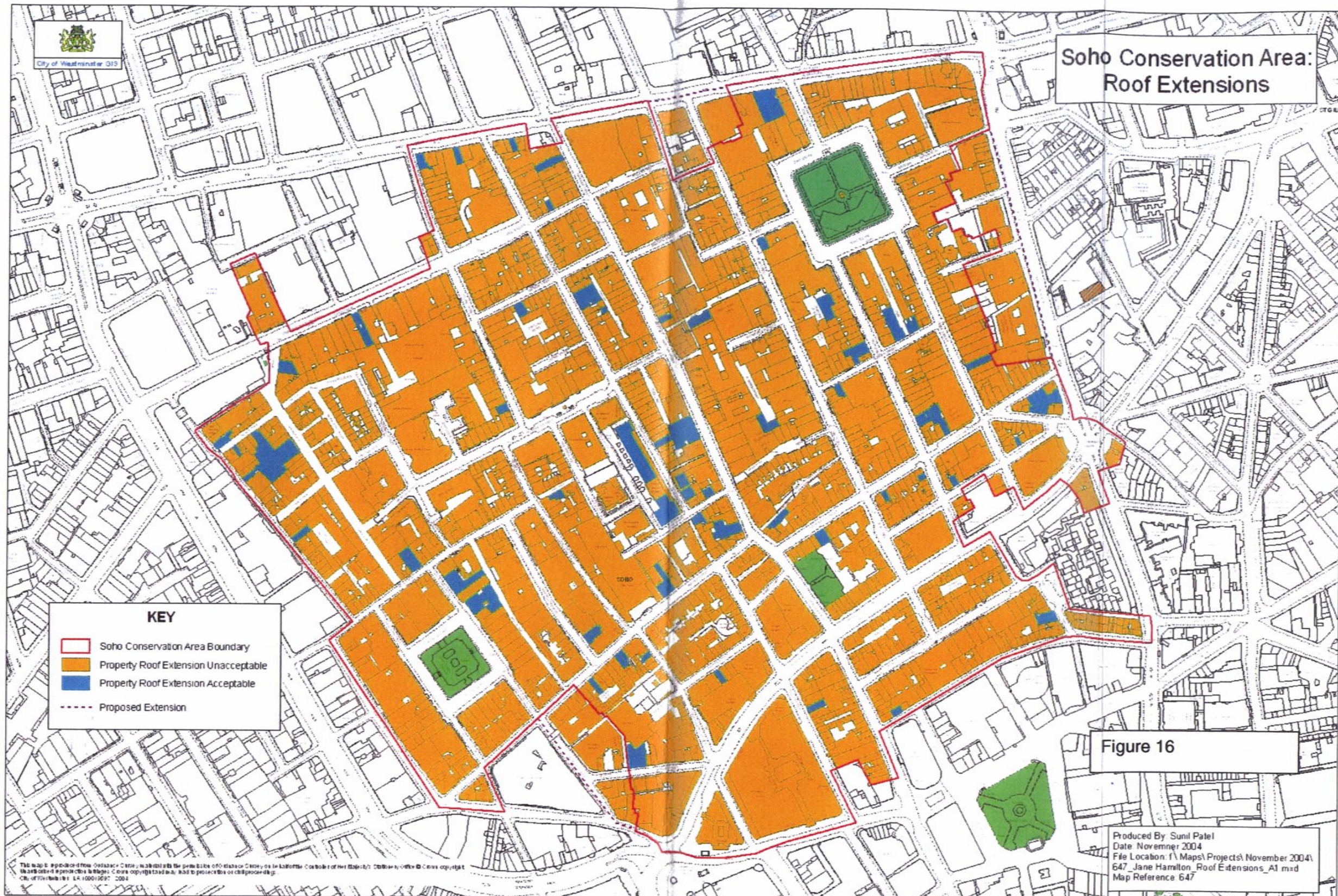
**POLICY & FURTHER GUIDANCE**

Any proposal will be judged against policies DES1 and DES9.





# Soho Conservation Area: Roof Extensions



**KEY**

- Soho Conservation Area Boundary
- Property Roof Extension Unacceptable
- Property Roof Extension Acceptable
- Proposed Extension

**Figure 16**

Produced By: Sunil Patel  
 Date: November 2004  
 File Location: I:\Maps\Projects\November 2004\647\_Jane Hamilton\_Roof Extensions\_A1.mxd  
 Map Reference: 647

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# Soho Listed and Unlisted Buildings of Merit



**KEY**

- Soho Conservation Area Boundary
- Unlisted Buildings of Merit
- Listed Buildings

Produced By: Sunil Patel  
Date: November 2004  
File Location: f:\Maps\Projects\November 2004\  
648\_Jane Hamilton\_Listed and Unlisted Buildings\_A1.mxd  
Map Reference: 648

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