FAIRER WESTMINSTER

Paddington-Bayswater High Streets Engagement Report

March 2024



Executive summary

In 2023, the Council launched the Westminster High Streets Programme and committed £10 million of capital funding to improve local High Streets outside of the West End. The vision is to make High Streets the backbone of thriving neighbourhoods where goods, services and green spaces are a walking distance from residents' doorsteps.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the continued rise of online shopping, and the current Cost of Living Crisis, it is little surprise that High Streets need a helping hand to recover and become resilient in the face of future change. Rather than re-inventing the approach for each neighbourhood, we have created the borough-wide Westminster High Streets Framework - a place-based approach to High Streets regeneration.

The Westminster High Streets Framework is organised according to 3 primary themes: 'Connected Communities', 'Safe, Sustainable & Welcoming Places', and 'Vibrant and Resilient Economy' which are underpinned by 14 strategic objectives. The Framework is designed to be adapted to each area based on an area-specific analysis and public engagement with local communities and stakeholders.

The first location to apply the Westminster High Streets Framework is Paddington-Bayswater, north of Hyde Park. After a rigorous context analysis in early 2023, we conducted a public engagement exercise in the summer of 2023 to identify the local communities' priorities according to the Framework themes and objectives.

Three methods were used to engage the public and solicit their feedback: 1) pop-up engagement hubs, 2) digital surveys, and 3) in-person on-street surveys. In total, we engaged with 1,991 people. The feedback gathered throughout the engagement identified the core priorities for Paddington-Bayswater as being to 1) create welcoming and safe street environments, 2) improve the High Street offer and uses, and 3) increase opportunities for social interactions and cultural activity.

Since the conclusion of the public engagement in autumn 2023, we have been busy working behind the scenes to analyse and translate the feedback into a strategic delivery plan for projects that will range in size, scope and speed of delivery. We will announce the delivery plan for the initial projects in the summer of 2024.

What's the vision?

Paddington-Bayswater High Streets will be the backbone of welcoming and safe neighbourhoods where everyday services and goods are accessible to all and cultural diversity is celebrated. They will support a fairer public life within an enjoyable, healthy and inclusive street environment that encourages diverse experiences, supports businesses and fosters meaningful community exchange and participation.

Which High Streets are we focusing on?



What are the key priorities for improving the High Streets?

- Creating a welcoming and safe street environment
- Diversifying the high street's uses and improving its retail offer
- Creating opportunities to foster community interactions and cultural activity

What are the next steps to realising the vision?

- Better street management
- Improving the public spaces
- Upgrading shopfronts
- Rolling out business support
- Increasing activation and uses
- More partnerships



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About this report

What is this report?

This report provides a detailed overview of the Paddington-Bayswater High Streets Programme and how it fits with our strategic goals. It explains the process and results of the comprehensive public engagement conducted in summer 2023. The findings from this engagement form the basis for the overall recommendations and the development of specific projects for the area.

Who is this report for?

Westminster City Council created this document for everyone who lives, works, or visits the High Streets in the Paddington-Bayswater areas. It's also meant for important local groups like business owners, landowners, and BIDs. The report allows those who couldn't take part in the first round of engagement to catch up on what's been done so far.

Get involved!

We value your input and encourage your participation in shaping the future of the Paddington-Bayswater High Streets. If you have any inquiries, require further information, or wish to contribute to the upcoming phase of public engagement, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at highstreets@westminster.gov.uk. Your involvement is crucial to the success of this transformative initiative.

How to use it?

This report consists of five chapters (as shown in the diagram on the right) which can be read sequentially or independently:

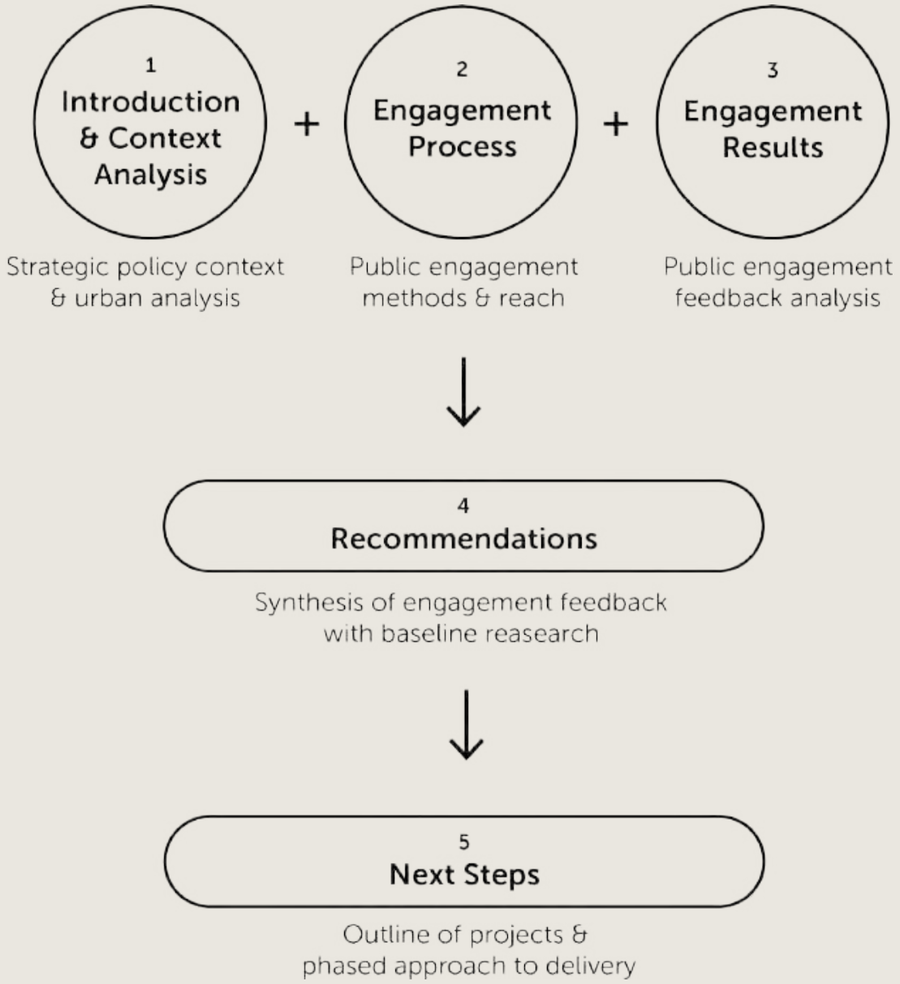
Introduction & context analysis
Summary of the strategic policy context and urban analysis of Paddington-Bayswater.

Engagement process
Outline of the public engagement methods and reach.

Engagement results
Analysis of feedback from all engagement methods.

Recommendations
Recommendations based on synthesis of engagement feedback with baseline analysis.

Next steps
Outline of projects and the phased approach to delivery.



Introduction

Whilst High Streets have seldom held the same esteem as the great public squares or grand civic buildings that grace postcards, High Streets are arguably one of the most important pieces of social infastructure that cities have to offer their communities. After all, High Strees are where people shop, work, socialise and access key services.

However, the pace of social, environmental, and economic change - which has only accelerated over the past two decades - has meant that high streets across the country are struggling to adapt fast enough, leading many into decline. Shuttered shopfronts, the disappearance of staple brands, the monopolization of big brands or the homogenization of the retail offer has meant that High Streets have become less reliable places to access everyday goods, services and activities.

More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic proved to be a double-edged sword for High Streets. During the pandemic lockdowns all but essential businesses were forced to shut, proving financially catastrophic for many. After the pandemic, the changing work pattern means that many hybrid and remote workers spend more time and money on their local High Streets - running errands, shopping and dining - rather than travelling into key employment areas. But the current Cost of Living Crisis continues to pose a challenge.

In light of these challenges and opportunities, we are committed to improving our local High Streets across Westinster and making them socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. We have built upon the research and strategies set out in national and regional policies and as well the Fairer Westminster Strategy to inform the Westminster High Streets Framework.

The Framework is a response to local and international pressures on High Streets:

2019

- Westminster City Council (WCC) declares Climate Emergency.
- Online shopping accounts for 20% of total retail sales in the UK. (Office for National Statistics)

2020

- Covid-19 pandemic forces all but essential businesses to shut and workers who can work remotely to work from home.

2022

- Labour win Westminster City Council election and committ to supporting local High Streets beyond the West End.

- The Cost of Living Crisis puts pressure on High streets businesses and shoppers.

2023

- Fairer Westminster Strategy under its Fairer Economy pillar commits to supporting local High Streets.
- We launched Westminster High Streets Framework and announced the first neighbourhood to benefit from it: Paddington-Bayswater High Streets Programme.

NATIONAL
UK Government





REGIONAL
Greater London Authority



















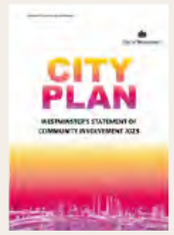


BOROUGH
Westminster City Council









Westminster High Streets Framework

The Westminster High Streets Framework aims to improve local High Streets to better meet the needs of local residents, workers, and visitors.

The three core aims of the Framework are to deliver ‘Connected Communities’, ‘Safe, Sustainable and Welcoming Places’, and ‘Vibrant and Resilient Economy’.

The Framework is designed to be adapted to each neighbourhood in order to ensure a place-based approach. However, the guiding vision (below) and the three core themes (opposite) will remain consistent.

Connected Communities

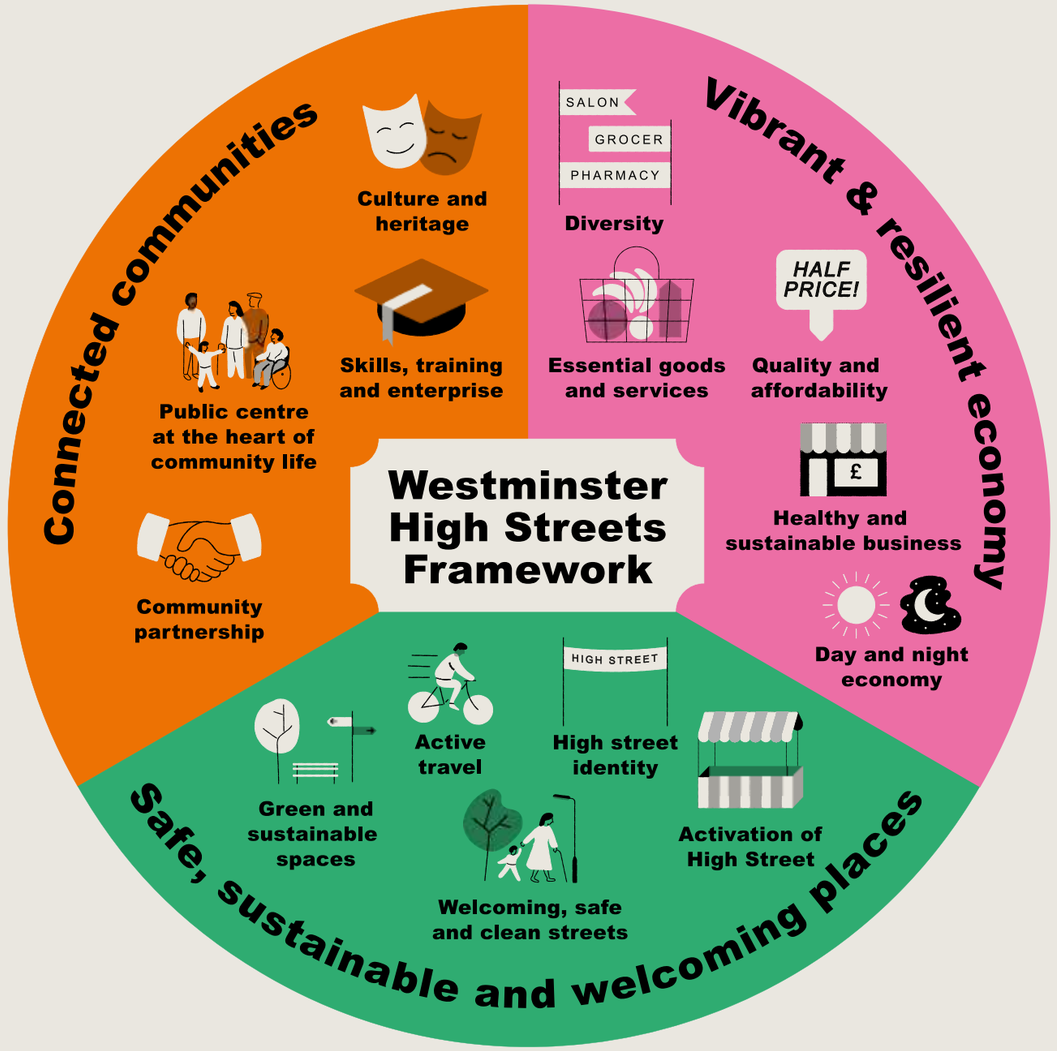
High Streets that reflect the local community and celebrate the local culture. High Streets that offer a diversity of spaces and activities for people of all ages and backgrounds to play, learn, or socialise.

Safe, Sustainable & Welcoming Places

High Streets where everyone feels safe and welcome regardless of their identity or ability. High Streets that are clean and green and promote healthy lifestyles and sustainable practices.

Vibrant & Resilient Economy

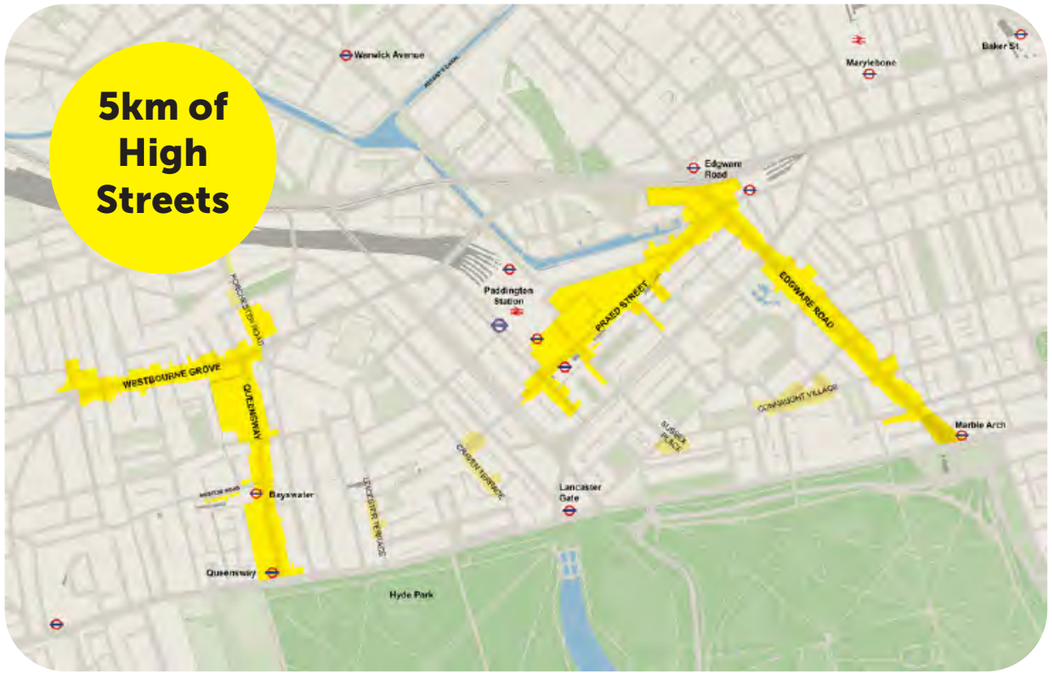
High Streets that offer a diverse mix of uses and cater to everyday needs and special occasions across the seasons. High streets that champion local businesses and promote entrepreneurship.



Paddington-Bayswater High Streets

The Paddington-Bayswater area is the first to use the Westminster High Streets Framework. It covers three wards: Bayswater, Hyde Park, and Lancaster Gate. The main High Streets are Edgware Road, Praed Street, Queensway, and Westbourne Grove, which collectively are visited by 94,000 people daily.

During and after COVID 19 pandemic, we focused on helping businesses to protect jobs. Now, we are investing to balance and spread the wealth across all of Westminster. Paddington-Bayswater was chosen as the first area for the Framework because it faces several challenges, such as poor walking and cycling infrastructure, safety and security issues, low-quality urban environment, and limited culture and community offerings.



Paddington-Bayswater fact sheet



11% under 17

(9% of the population is under 17 in London)

12% over 65

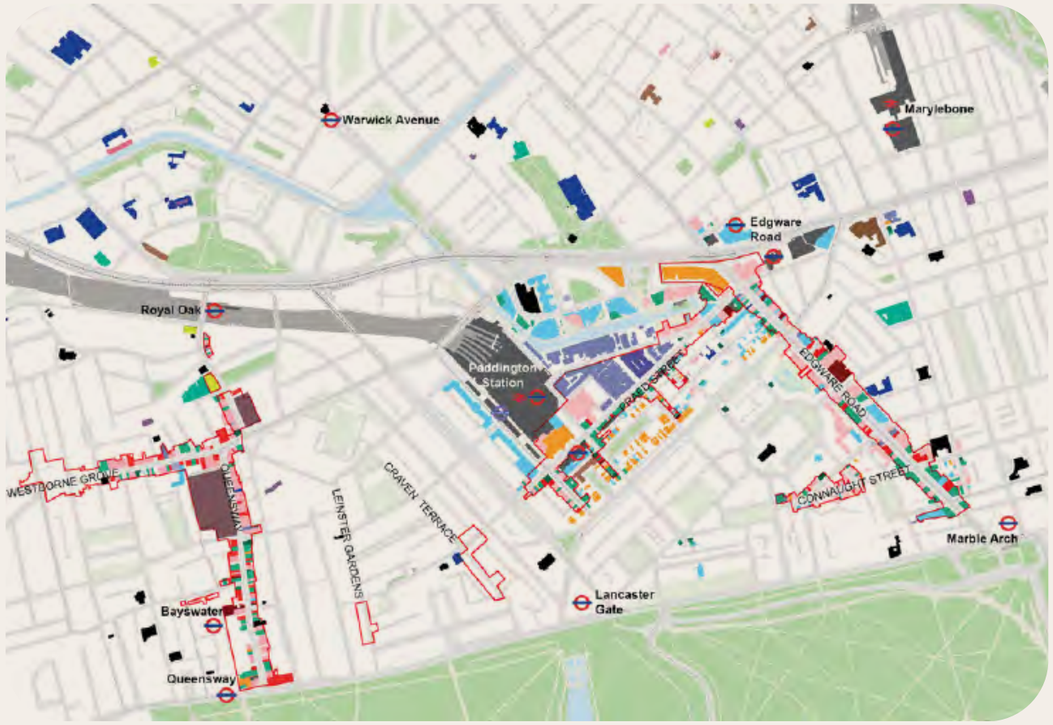
(12% of the population are also over 65 in London)

7 London Underground stations

109 million passengers

travel through Paddington Station annually

Paddington-Bayswater baseline analysis



Land use

The High Streets in Paddington-Bayswater offer a mix of activities and shops during the day and night. While restaurants and cafes are the most common, there are also many hotels, offices, beauty salons, and supermarkets. However, there are not many cultural, educational, entertainment attractions, or other essential services in the area. (Land use data from 2022).

- Education
- Hotels
- Casino
- Sport & leisure
- Medical
- Offices
- Retail
- Pubs & bars
- Restaurants & cafes
- Places of worship
- Mixed use
- Vacant

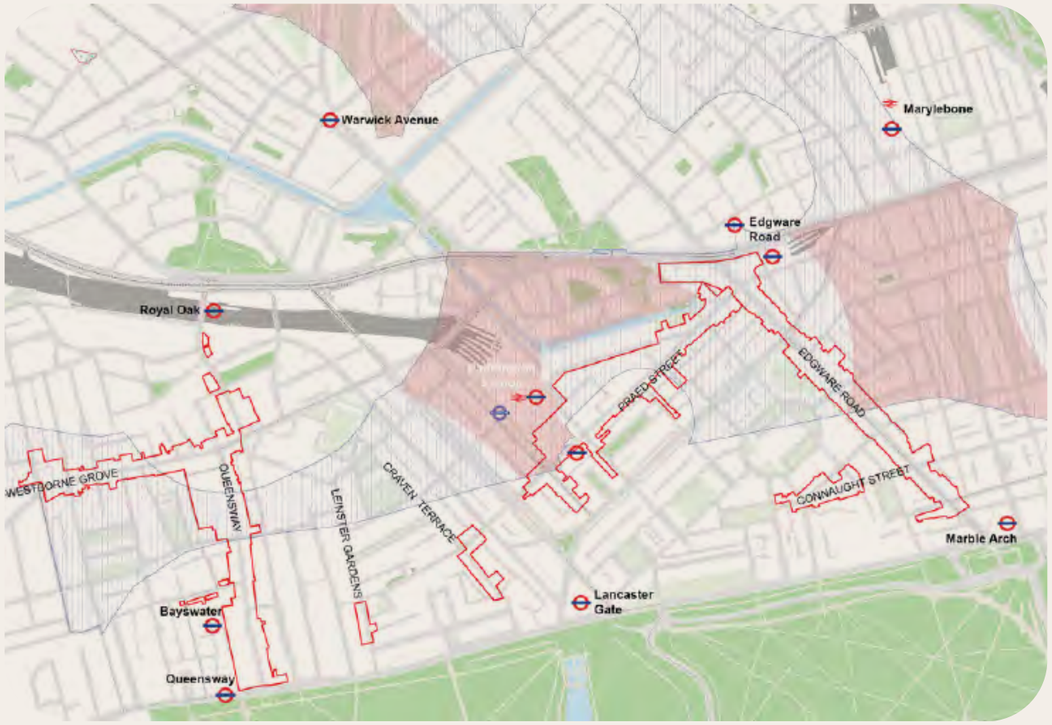


Connectivity

Paddington-Bayswater has good public transport connections to the rest of London, with 7 main tube stations and over 20 bus routes. However, walking and cycling on the High Streets can be difficult and unpleasant because of poor cycling paths and infrastructure, streets dominated by vehicles, and low-quality public spaces in some areas.

- TfL roads
- Cycle ways
- Proposed cycleways
- Tube station
- Bus stop

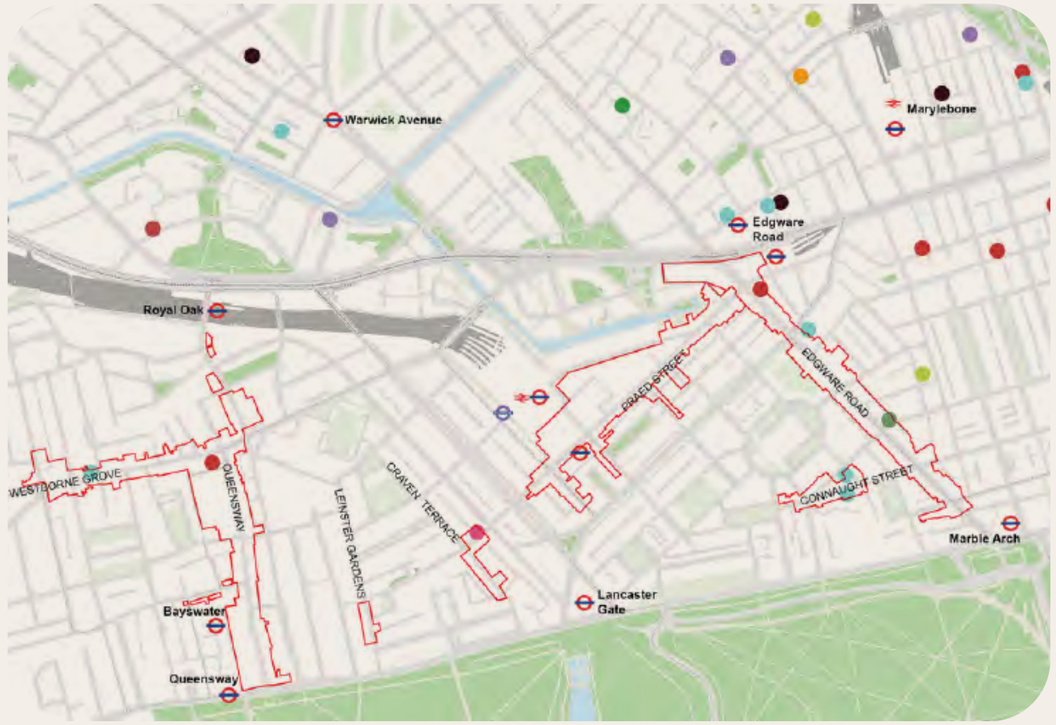
Paddington-Bayswater baseline analysis



Green spaces

Although Paddington-Bayswater is close to Hyde Park, Little Venice, and Westbourne Green, the area lacks easy-to-access public open spaces within the neighborhood itself. This shortage of green spaces contributes to air pollution and means there are not many shaded areas for people to rest and relax.

- Public green space
- Private green space
- Open space & play deficiency
- Open space & wildlife deficiency



Culture and arts

Paddington-Bayswater has a diverse mix of people, including Arab, Greek, Russian, French, and Malaysian communities. However, over the last 100 years, the area has lost some of its most important cultural and entertainment places, like the Metropolitan Theatre, Odeon, Arabic Centre, and the Arabic bookshop. There are now only a few places where people can celebrate and experience local culture, entertainment, and creative arts.

- Artist workspaces
- Commercial galleries
- Creative co-working desk space
- Dance: performance venues
- Dance: rehearsal studios
- Fashion & design
- Jewellery design
- Music: office based businesses
- Music: rehearsal studios
- Prop and costume making
- Textile design

Engagement process

Engagement has always been important to us. By listening to the experiences and priorities of local communities - residents, business owners, workers, students, and visitors - we can design and create more welcoming places that celebrate the area's spirit and meet local needs.

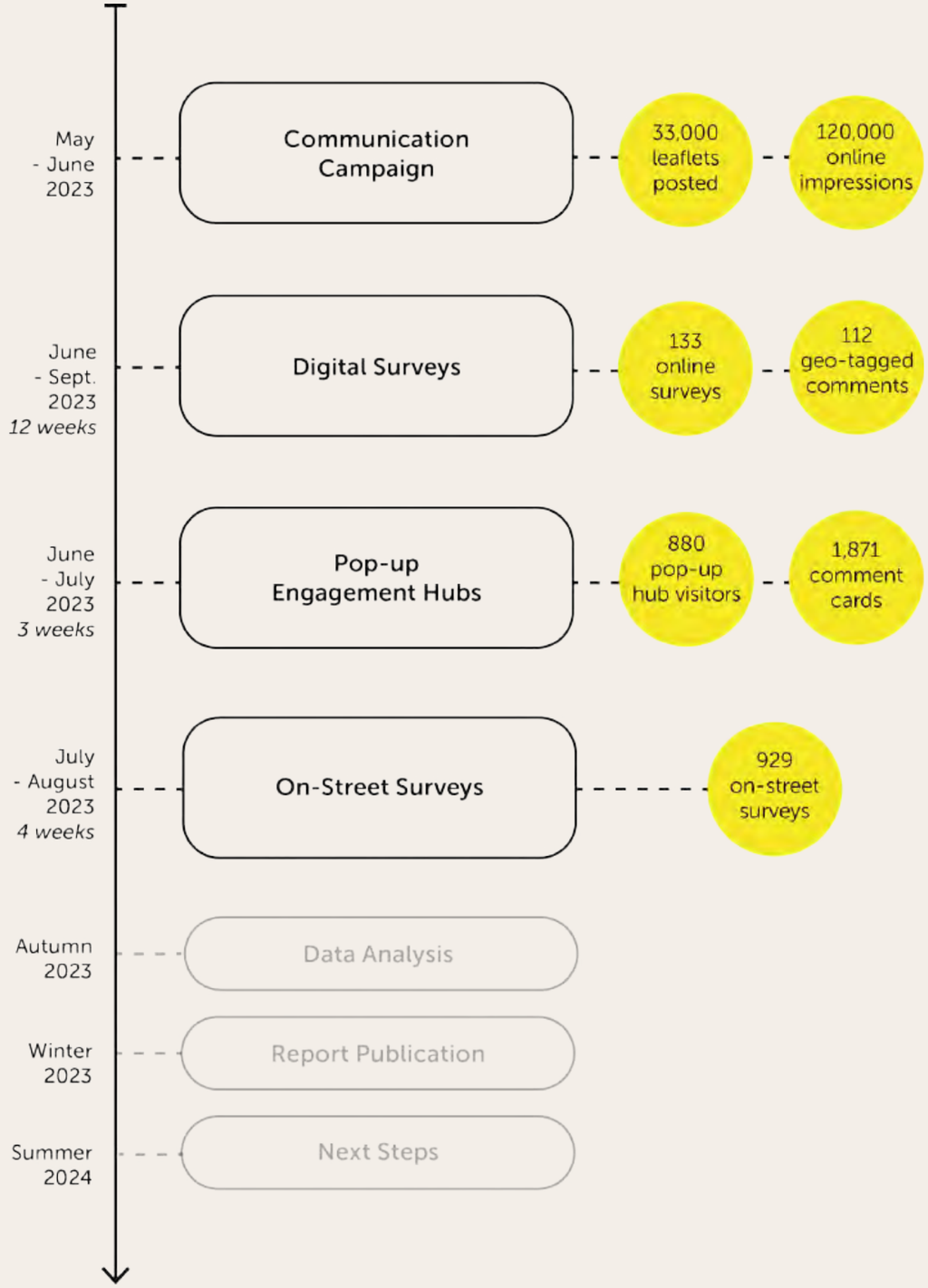
In response to the Fairer Westminster Strategy, which promised to put residents at the centre of decision-making, we published an updated Statement of Community Involvement in 2023. This set out five principles for meaningful engagement: 1) engage early, 2) be inclusive, 3) use appropriate methods, 4) provide clear information and simple communications, and 5) keep transparent records and give feedback.This policy shaped our engagement approach.

The engagement aimed to 1) raise awareness of the programme, 2) understand public perceptions of the High Streets, 3) find out what locals consider to be priorities for improvement, and 4) build long-term relationships with local stakeholders and communities to help develop and deliver the programme.

We worked with five Community Researchers from Mosaic Community Trust, a local organisation, and three graduate students from the London School of Economics. Together, we spoke 8 different languages, so we could often engage people in their native language if there was a language barrier.







Engagement methods



Communication campaign

To reach as many people as possible, we used various print and media channels. We launched a dedicated webpage and inbox, which we promoted through three Council newsletters (MyWestminster, Business, and Environment) with a total of 116,400 subscribers. We also used paid social media ads on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, resulting in over 120,000 impressions. Additionally, we delivered informational leaflets to 33,000 local households and businesses.



Digital surveys

We published two digital surveys on the programme's webpage - one for residents and visitors, and another for business owners and managers. These were promoted through print and digital channels. The webpage also had an interactive map where people could leave comments or suggestions for specific locations. The surveys and interactive map were available for 12 weeks, from June 12 to September 11. In total, 133 people completed the survey, and 112 left site-specific comments on the interactive map.



On-street surveys

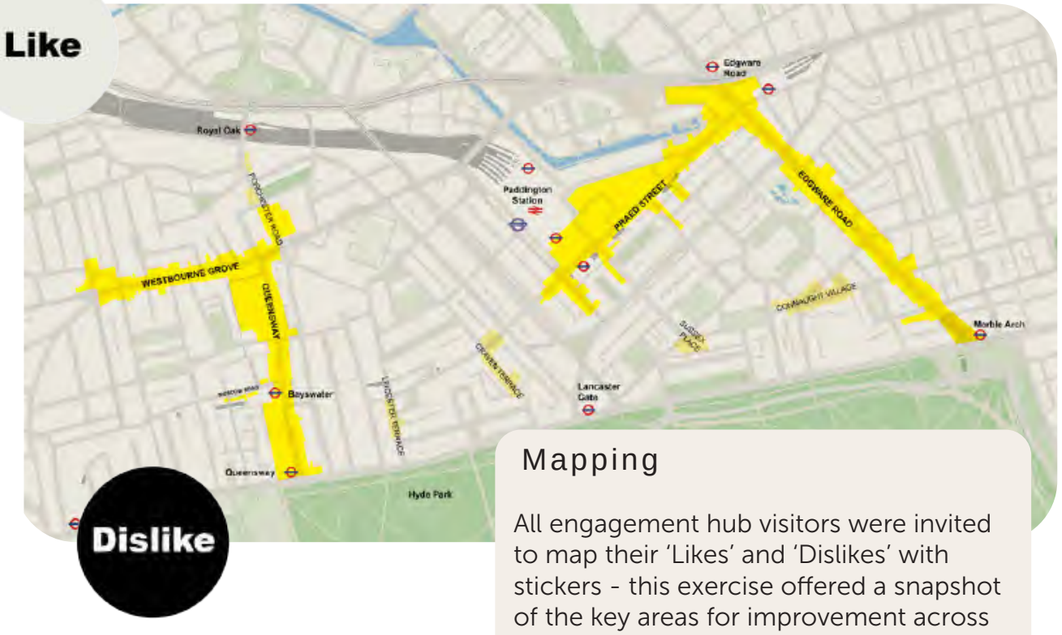
Knowing that some people may have difficulty accessing digital surveys, we also conducted on-street surveys between July and August. In total, 929 surveys were completed - 899 by residents and visitors, and 30 by business owners or managers. We also organised a walk-about on July 7 with Council Leader Adam Hug and Cllr Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development. During this walk-about, we met with over 20 business owners directly at their premises.



Pop-up Engagement Hubs

The 3 Pop-Up Engagement Hubs on Edgware Road, Praed Street, and the intersection of Queensway and Westbourne Grove were a key part of our engagement approach. The hubs were open for three weeks, from June 27 to July 15, from 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday, with later hours until 8pm on Thursdays. The hubs had an interactive exhibition designed to be clear, compelling, and accessible to all ages with three interactive components: mapping, commenting, and voting.

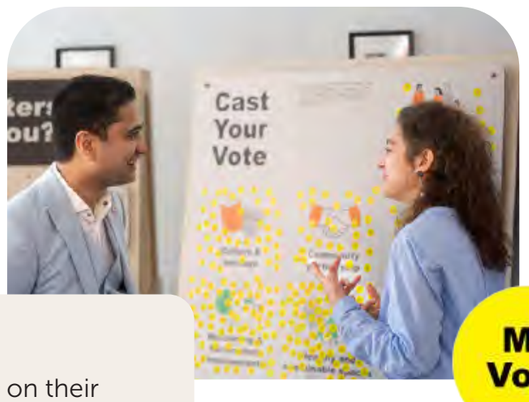
Engagement tools



Mapping

All engagement hub visitors were invited to map their 'Likes' and 'Dislikes' with stickers - this exercise offered a snapshot of the key areas for improvement across Paddington-Bayswater.





Voting

Visitors were invited to vote on their priority objectives with 'My Vote' stickers - this exercise revealed the popular objectives. 1,166 votes cast across the strategic objectives.



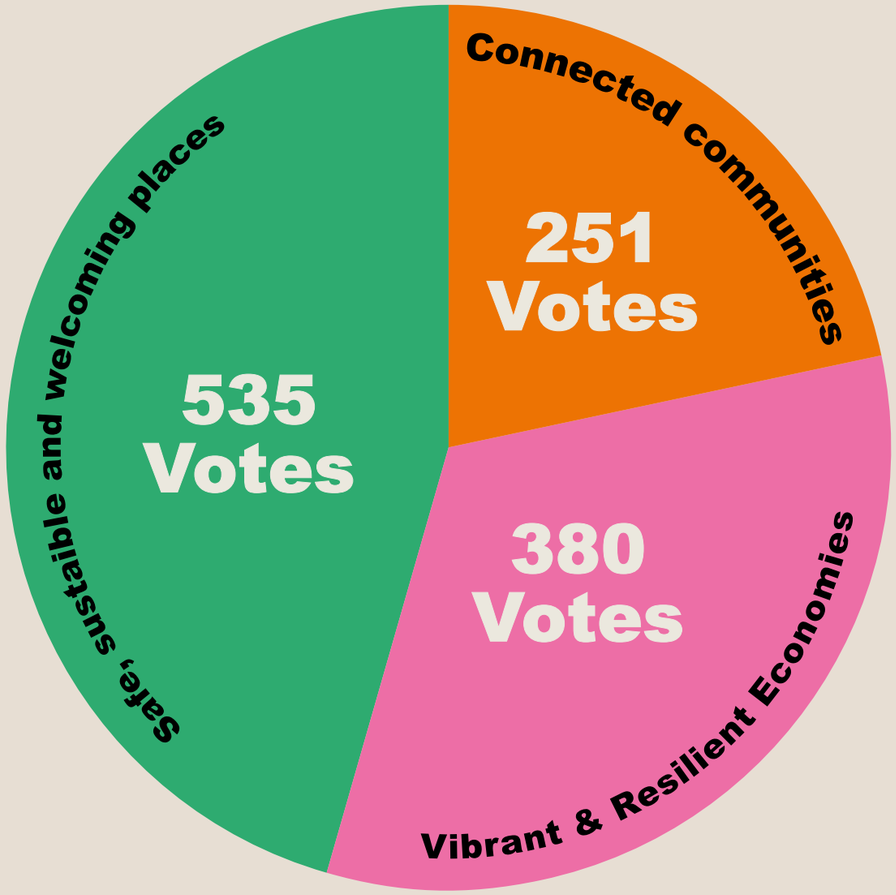
Commenting

Visitors were invited to respond to three different comment cards with different promots: 'I like...' and 'I dislike...' which were designed to elucidate their reasons for mapping their stickers, and an 'I have a dream...' comment card which invited people to dream big about how we can improve their High Street. In total, 1,871 comments were written on the theme of 'I like...', 'I dislike...', and 'I have a dream...'.

Engagement results

The engagement has painted a portrait of Paddington-Bayswater as a very ‘vibrant’ and ‘accessible’ area with a ‘good mix of products and services’, but one that suffers from a ‘poor public realm’ and ‘lack of community and cultural activities’. Whilst each of the High Streets has a unique character and condition, the below strenghts and challenges outlines the some commonalities across the Paddington-Bayswater high streets as a whole.

The pie chart on the opposite page shows how people voted across the three framework themes. The priorities below are a synthesis of what people perceive as strengths to be taken into consideration, challenges to be addressed, and direct feedback on what they like to see more of in terms of functions and services, improvements to the public realm, among other suggestions. These are colour-coded according to the three Framework themes. In the following pages, feedback specific to each of the main High Street is presented in more detail.



Strengths

- Good public transport connectivity (served by 7 underground stations and regional railway station) and walking distance to key destinations.
- Good range of retail and dining across the cluster of High Streets.
- Distinct cultural identity across the High Streets.

Challenges

- Poor public realm and lack of places to sit. Concerns around cleanliness and safety.
- Limited diversity of uses.
- Lack of community and cultural amenities.

Priorities

- Creating a welcoming and safe street environment
- Diversifying the high street’s uses and improving its retail offer
- Creating opportunities to foster community interactions and cultural activity

Edgware Road overview

Edgware Road has a rich history that dates back to ancient times. Initially, it was a forest track used by Celtic Britons before the Romans incorporated it into Watling Street, one of the major roads of the Roman Empire. The road's cosmopolitan community reflects the historical waves of migration. In the 19th century, Huguenots settled in the area, followed by Greek and Asian communities. Most recently, the Arab community began arriving as early as the 1970s, driven by the Gulf oil boom and the Lebanese Civil War.

Today, Edgware Road is recognized as one of Westminster's three Central Activity Zone (CAZ) Shopping Centres, alongside Oxford Street and Regent Street, as designated by the Westminster City Plan 2019-2024. This designation is due to its scale, with Edgware Road having 205 units compared to Oxford Street's 269.

According to on-street surveys, the most common reasons for visiting Edgware Road are night-time leisure activities (34%), meeting people (28%), and going to work (24%).







"I chose to live here because everything is walking distance – parks, my work, shopping. It's super central but there's a strong feeling of community here. I'd like to see more diverse dining options – it's quite monocultural – and outdoor seating for days like these."

Elizabet, local resident



"I'd describe the brand of Connaught village as "unknown" – it's a tough street for trading because there's a lot of traffic but little footfall. Edgware Road is a big barrier for those coming from West End. As a result there's a constant turnover of business. Look - the shop across the road is packing up as we speak."

Simon, business owner

"I associate Edgware Road with Middle Eastern food and night-life. As a mum I want to see more child-friendly places to take my family out in the evenings, places that don't serve alcohol or shisha."

Ayaan, frequent visitor

"My husband and I have lived here for almost 50 years and we raised our children here. We've largely seen the area improve but over the past few years we've lost some key affordable high street brands which are important for our everyday needs."

Catherine, local resident

Edgware Road perceptions

In addition to some strengths, challenges and priorities that are shared across Paddington-Bayswater's main High Streets, feedback specific to Edgware Road highlighted its cultural diversity and accessibility that complement a distinct retail and leisure offer, especially at night. However, safety issues and overall quality of the street environment are affecting people's everyday experience.

Strengths

Accessibility and convenient location
Distinct and attractive street character.

Diversity of shops & products
Culturally diverse food options.
Vibrant night-time activity.

Distinct Middle Eastern community which contributes to unique sense of place.

Challenges

Unpleasant, car-dominated public realm with insufficient greeny, street furniture or public art. Safety concerns around theft.

Lack of diversity among businesses making it hard to find everyday products and services.

Lack of cultural activities. Sense of monocultural identity.



Edgware Road priorities

Creating a welcoming and safe street environment

- Prioritise safety during the day and night
- Improve cleanliness levels
- Increase greenery and planting
- Provide comfortable and inclusive spaces to dwell and socialise
- Improve walking experience
- Improve street aesthetics and maintain shopfronts

Diversifying the high street's uses and improving its retail offer

- Diversify uses and retail offer to include health and well-being facilities
- Support a mix of chain and independent shops
- Enhance the range of essential products and services to cater to varying income
- Introduce markets and festivals
- Support existing businesses
- Offer more business support

Creating opportunities for social interactions and cultural activity

- Create family-friendly spaces and spaces for the youth
- Support social cohesion through social initiatives and services
- Introduce and sustain cultural and artistic spaces
- Improve communication channels with the Council
- Promote cultural diversity and richness

Praed Street overview

Praed Street, named after William Praed, the chairman of the company that built the Paddington Basin, was laid out in the early 19th century.

The area around Praed Street has a high density of hotels. Paddington Station is now the second busiest railway station in London, with 109 million railway and underground entries and exits annually, and around 16,000 daily Heathrow Express users. According to on-street surveys, most participants said that Praed Street is a place for social encounters: meeting people (28%), enjoying leisure during the day (31%), and at night (36%). Similar to Edgware Road, 22% of participants visit Praed Street for work, and 13% use its retail offerings for everyday essentials and services.

The London Plan categorises Praed Street as a 'District Shopping Centre', a designation it shares with St John's Wood, Harrow Road, and Church Street. This is because it has a core convenience function and primarily caters to the local area, rather than being a Major Shopping Centre that attracts visitors from further afield.







"As students we can't really afford to the go to the cafes and restaurants, we buy food in supermarkets or markets so we need more places to sit and eat outside."

Saina, local student



"The local high streets should offer more night-life options and places to meet friends locally."

Camfair & Carter, local residents



"If on-street parking is removed Praed Street could have wider pavements which could improve footfall. But firstly, the street needs to be cleaned and better maintained. It's a poor gateway to London for tourists coming from Paddington Station."

John, local resident and SEBRA Chairman



"I'd like to see more parklets to allow restaurants and cafes to spill out onto the street – like they did in the pandemic. It will make the street look more friendly and help businesses out as we're still feeling the impact of pandemic and working from home patterns."

Chris, local worker

Praed Street perceptions

In addition to some strengths, challenges and priorities that are shared across Paddington-Bayswater's main High Streets, feedback specific to Praed Street highlights its convenient location, cultural diversity. and good mix of food options and products. However, the lack of spaces to dwell and socialise contribute to an unpleasant experience of the street.

Strengths

Accessible and convenient location in close proximity to Paddington Basin and Grand Union Canal.

Affordable and diverse retail offer, albeit much of it within the Station (which functions as a de facto High Street).

Attractive street character due to low-rise buildings and recent public space improvements around Paddigton Station.

Challenges

Cluttered pavements with forecourt dining and retail, leaving less room for pedestrians, and too few places to rest and relax.

Products and services are more aligned to workers and tourists rather than residents.

Lack of cultural destinations or nightlife destinations for young adults.



Praed Street priorities

Creating a welcoming and safe street environment

- Provide spaces to dwell and socialise
- Incorporate more planting and green spaces
- Consider outdoor spaces for local events and services such as markets and festivals
- Improve safety during the day and night
- Improve the walking experience
- Improve street aesthetics and maintain shopfronts

Diversifying the high street's uses and improving its retail offer

- Diversify uses and retail offer to include health and well-being facilities
- Support a mix of chain and independent shops
- Enhance the range of essential products and services to cater to varying income
- Provide flexible workspace for start-ups and/or local creative businesses
- Provide opportunities for upskilling and training

Creating opportunities for social interactions and cultural activity

- Introduce and sustain cultural and artistic spaces
- Create family-friendly spaces and spaces for the youth
- Support social cohesion through social initiatives and services

Queensway & Westbourne Grove

Westbourne Grove started developing in the 1840s. Queensway, originally called Black Lion Lane, was renamed in honor of Queen Victoria, who enjoyed riding her horses along the road. It is famous for being the site of London's first and finest department store, Whiteleys, which is currently being redeveloped and is expected to be completed in 2024.

Queensway & Westbourne Grove have a traditional High Street character and are mostly surrounded by residential areas. They provide everyday goods and services to residents and workers. Our on-street survey shows that 37% of people visit Queensway and Westbourne Grove for work, 30% for daytime leisure activities, and 27% for everyday essentials and services.

It is the only 'Major Shopping Centre' in Westminster. Although smaller than an 'International Centre' (like the West End) or 'Metropolitan Centre' (like Croydon), its 1.5km length with 234 retail units and mix of convenience, retail, and entertainment activity make it larger than a 'District Centre' like Praed Street and Harrow Road. However, out of the 234 retail units, 50 are vacant, resulting in a 21.4% vacancy rate, which is ten times higher than the average of 2.6% across London.

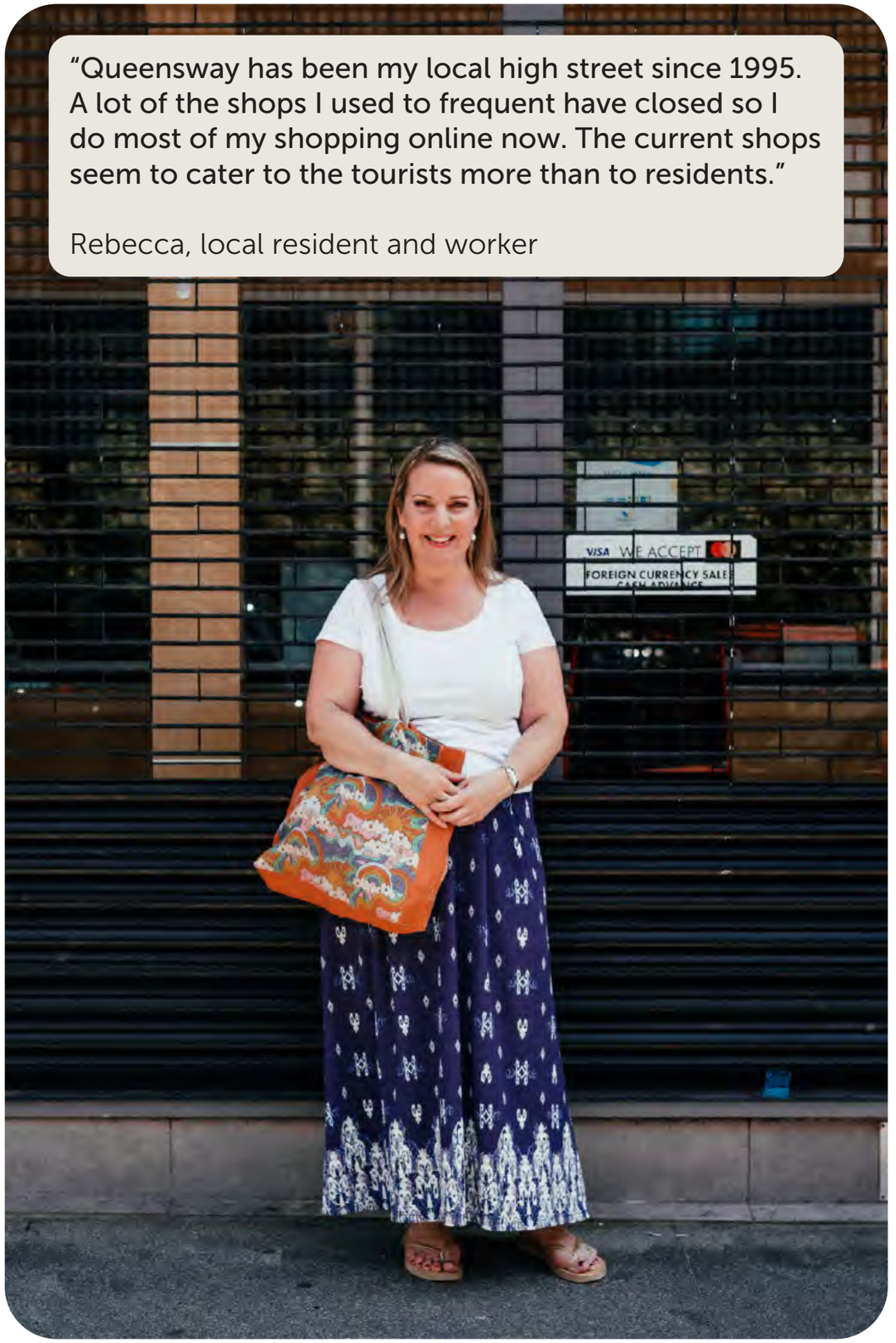






"My mates and I normally go to coffee shops after school. But we want more entertainment spaces like arcades – places to hang out without having to spend a lot of money."

David, local student



"Queensway has been my local high street since 1995. A lot of the shops I used to frequent have closed so I do most of my shopping online now. The current shops seem to cater to the tourists more than to residents."

Rebecca, local resident and worker

“The area is very calm and safe, but there’s no nightlife, nothing to do in the evening. Our restaurant is trying to change that by offering live music in the basement, but it’s been a slow start as people don’t associate the area with nightlife and music yet. One way to attract more people at night would be to increase lighting.”

Emilia, local business owner



“Queensway has been my local high street for over 40 years. The only thing I would change is more seating. I’m partially blind and I need to sit down to rest every so often, but there aren’t enough benches so I end up having to sit in coffee shops or pubs to rest which gets expensive.”

Derrick, local resident

Queensway & Westbourne Grove perceptions

In addition to some strengths, challenges and priorities that are shared across Paddington-Bayswater's main high streets, feedback specific to Queensway and Westbourne Grove highlights their accessibility and relatively good quality public realm that complement their use for leisure. However, the lack of culture and public space to socialise are among the challenges that need to be addressed.

Strengths

Accessible and convenient location in close proximity to Kensington Gardens. Attractive architectural and urban fabric.

Good range of price ranges and mix of chain and indepedent businesses.

Strong sense of community among residents - significantly more residential than Praed Street and Edgware Road.

Challenges

Lack of public places to rest and relax without spending money.

Lack of affordable workspaces and vocational or business training Range of products not aligned to local needs.

Lack of community, cultural and family amenities and activities - ways of spending time without shopping.



Queensway & Westbourne Grove priorities

Creating a welcoming and safe street environment

- Provide spaces to dwell and socialise
- Incorporate more planting and green spaces
- Consider outdoor spaces for local events and services such as markets and festivals
- Improve safety during the day and night
- Improve the walking experience
- Provide cycling infrastructure
- Introduce environmental and sustainable features

Diversifying the high street's uses and improving its retail offer

- Diversify uses and retail offer to include health and well-being facilities
- Support a mix of chain and independent shops
- Enhance the range of essential products and services to cater to varying income
- Provide flexible workspace for start-ups and/or local creative businesses
- Provide opportunities for upskilling and training
- Improve the promotion of the area's local offer
- Offer more business support

Creating opportunities for social interactions and cultural activity

- Provide inclusive spaces for arts and culture
- Promote the area's culture and heritage assets
- Provide family-friendly spaces for community activities
- Support initiatives for social activities among neighbours

Recommendations

The baseline analysis and public engagement feedback provide a comprehensive overview of the strengths, challenges, and priorities for improving Paddington-Bayswater High Streets. Based on these, we are proposing recommendations organized by the three Framework themes.

These recommendations aim to:

- Highlight the role of the Council as the custodian of the high street to oversee and manage its present conditions and enable future improvements
- Guide the development of projects to achieve multiple strategic objectives and deliver our vision for Westminster's High Streets
- Define the Paddington-Bayswater High Streets Programme's contribution to the Fairer Westminster Strategy and Fairer Economy Plan

Safe, sustainable and welcoming places

The area is well-connected with convenient access to services and open green spaces in the local surroundings and beyond. However, there is a pressing need to improve the quality of its high streets during the day and night to support health, well-being, mobility and climate resilience, as well as celebrate the area's rich culture and create safe, welcoming places.

- Upgrade the look and feel of the streets to improve the experience for all (cleanliness, comfort, safety)
- Introduce planting, green spaces and sustainability features (sustainable drainage, EV charging points)
- Enhance safety and comfort for pedestrians and cyclists with decluttered footways, safer crossings and cycling infrastructure
- Create spaces to dwell, socialise & hold outdoors events (festivals, markets, seasonal celebrations, alfresco dining)
- Animate the high street to promote its local offer and identity (shopfronts, wayfinding, public art, local stories)

Vibrant and resilient economy

The unique retail offer, multicultural dining and leisure activities characterise the area with a vibrant street life during the day and night. However, there is need to diversify ground floor uses (such as health and well-being facilities, community spaces and flexible workspace) and upskill businesses. Continued engagement with BIDs, business owners and other stakeholders is imperative as the Coucil ownership of High Streets is limited.

- Improve the retail offer to ensure the accessibility of essential products and services for different needs
- Diversify the uses and functions on the high street to better meet the local needs
- Retain and attract a mix of retail providers (independent and chains) to ensure a range of options for varying incomes
- Improve and diversify night time uses and functions
- Support businesses to ensure quality offer and promote sustainable business models

Connected communities

The area is celebrated for being socially and culturally diverse, however, there is a need for more arts, culture, sports, well-being and education activities that allow all age groups and backgrounds to come together. Whilst we have improved community engagement, there is a need to strengthen engagement to 'lesser heard' groups in innovative ways to highlight the available resources and support services.

- Provide opportunities to enable and foster interactions across communities
- Engage, support and upskill local talent and entrepreneurship
- Promote the area's culture and heritage assets and increase arts and leisure activities
- Enable and sustain strong participation between the local communities and the Council

Next steps

Having finished the first stage of the Paddington-Bayswater High Streets Programme, we are now moving onto the next stage. This stage will focus on designing and delivering the first phase of projects.

Considerations for the next steps:

- Projects will range in type, scope, and speed of delivery. The team is currently working on scoping projects that have a high demand and initial endorsement from key stakeholders to be delivered in the short and medium-term (pictured below and opposite) .
- Once the Council approves the location, scope, and budget for the projects, we will announce the delivery plan in the summer of 2024.
- Additional projects will be identified to meet the programme's objectives, attract future investment, and enable positive long-term change in the area.



Street management

Coordinating efforts with street operations and enforcement teams to improve safety, cleanliness, and business compliance.



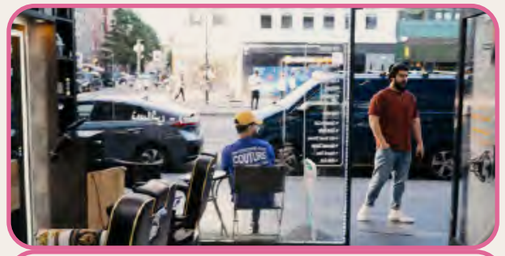
Public realm design

Improving Westbourne Grove and Praed Street through greening, spaces to sit and dwell, safer pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.



Shopfront improvements

Tailoring the shopfront improvement scheme to provide grants and free architectural services to independent businesses and property owners.



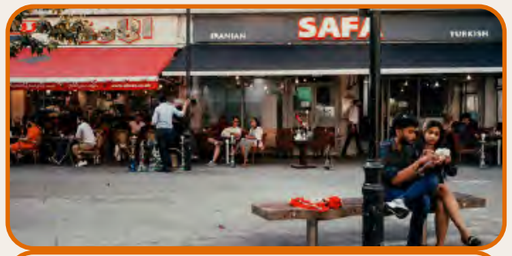
Business support

Rolling-out of the Council's business support programmes including business resilience toolkits, 'Start up to Scale up' among others.



Activation and animation

Developing proposals to activate vacant shops and diversify uses and offer with a focus on community and cultural spaces.



Collaborations

Collaborating with Edgware Road Placemaking Strategy Group for potential partnerships to deliver greener social spaces.



"Benches are so important - after a while, no matter your age, you need to sit and rest."

Shannon, local student

"The best high streets have a mix of pop-ups, independent shops and recognisable chains, as well as green pocket spaces to chill in."

Sienna, local student

Acknowledgments

Every successful programme requires a village of collaborators and we'd like to acknowledge the 2,000+ collaborators, formal stakeholders and community members here.

Firstly, we'd like to thank our local partners, the Marble Arch London BID, Paddington Now BID, The Portman Estate, SEBRA (The South East Bayswater Residents' Association), and The Church Commissioners. Particular thanks to The Portman Estate and Michael Yelvington for helping us secure High Street units for our pop-up hubs. We'd like to acknowledge the High Street Task Force for their support and guidance.

We're grateful to the Mosaic Community Trust who were invaluable in staffing the Pop-up Engagement Hubs with Community Researchers from the local area. We were also ably supported by LSE graduate students Ben Chapman, Dhruv Raja and Jinhan Sheng who diligently assisted us during the engagements and supplemented our research.

Our successful opening event would not have been possible without the diverse voices of our panel: Andrey Haley, High Streets Task Force Expert, Cllr Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Stella Abani, Westminster City Council Director of Economy and Skills Kay Buxton, Chief Executive of Marble Arch London, Rosa Han, Associate Director at The Portman Estate Jan Kattein, Founder of Jan Kattein Architects.

Maddison Graphic created the clear and compelling visuals for the exhibition and this report. Lewis Rowland took the photographs of the streets which capture the sense of place and provide an important bank of 'before' images, as well as the portraits of the people who bring these streets to life. Capital Models produced the exhibition boards that allowed us to wheel our engagement material between pop-up hubs. MJCP printed all the material including the eye-catching window vinyls that invited people into the hubs.

Last but certainly not least, we're grateful to the 1,991 members of public who generously gave us their time and reflected on the Paddington-Bayswater High Streets. Their views have shaped our recommendations and given direction to the next steps of the Paddington-Bayswater High Streets Programme.

Our Westminster High Streets will serve as the backbone of welcoming and safe neighbourhoods, where everyday services and goods are accessible to all, and cultural diversity is celebrated. These vibrant spaces will support a fairer public life within an enjoyable, healthy, and inclusive street environment that encourages diverse experiences, supports businesses, and fosters meaningful community exchange and participation. By investing in these vital public spaces, we are laying the foundation for a Fairer Westminster.

www.westminster.gov.uk/place-shaping/westminster-high-streets-programme

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