

City of Westminster

Westminster After Dark

All Engagement Findings

NOVEMBER 2024

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1. Document Purpose and Overview

1.1 This document provides a comprehensive analysis and summary of the responses gathered from the stakeholder engagement process for the council's Westminster After Dark strategy development process. The engagement outputs, drawn from a variety of sources including surveys, workshops, and community feedback, have been consolidated and categorised under the four strategic pillars of the Westminster After Dark Strategy: Safe and Secure, Accessible and Positive Places, Community and Culture, and Economic Development and Opportunities.

Engagement Insights and Categorisation

1.2 All engagement data has been organised under these key themes to ensure a clear and actionable framework. This categorisation allows for a targeted approach in addressing the specific needs and concerns of the stakeholders whom we engaged with or who took the time to provide their comments. The themes encapsulate the core areas essential for fostering a vibrant and inclusive night-time environment within Westminster.

Purpose of the Document

1.3 This document is prepared to assist in the development of the strategic vision, pillar objectives for the Council's Westminster After Dark Strategy 2025 - 2040. By consolidating the engagement findings into a structured format, it serves as a critical tool for:

<u>Strategic Vision Development:</u>

- Crafting a clear and compelling vision that aligns with the aspirations and concerns of the community and stakeholders.
- Ensuring the vision addresses the multifaceted aspects of Westminster's night-time environment.

<u>Objective Setting:</u>

- Defining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) objectives under each strategic pillar.
- Aligning these objectives with the overall strategic vision to ensure coherence and focus.

<u>Strategic Actions:</u>

- Identifying actionable steps and initiatives that can be implemented to achieve the set objectives.
- Ensuring these actions are practical, sustainable, and have the support of key stakeholders and community members.

Intended Outcomes

1.4 The aim of this document is to facilitate informed decision-making and strategic planning. By presenting a clear analysis of stakeholder feedback and categorising it under relevant themes, it helps ensure that the Westminster After Dark Strategy 2025 is:

- **Inclusive:** Reflecting the diverse voices and needs of all community members.
- **Strategic:** Focused on key areas that will drive positive change and enhance the night-time environment.
- **Actionable:** Providing a clear roadmap of initiatives that can be implemented to achieve the strategic vision and objectives.

The Westminster After Dark Strategic Pillars

1.5 To effectively capture and address the various aspects of Westminster's evening and night-time environment, four key strategic pillars were established. These were:

- **Safe and Secure:** Ensuring the safety and security of all who live, work, and visit Westminster after dark.
- **Accessible and Positive Places:** Creating and maintaining public spaces that are welcoming, clean, and accessible to everyone.
- **Communities and Culture:** Promoting cultural activities and community engagement to foster a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere.
- **Economic Development and Opportunities:** Supporting economic development and opportunities while maintaining the quality of life for residents.

Engagement Summary Source Material

1.6 The findings and proposals within this document are based on a thorough review of various engagement sources collected during the Westminster After Dark engagement period. These sources include:

- Common Place Questionnaire Responses
- Common Place Ideas Map Comments

- In Person Stakeholder Engagement Notes
- Women's Night Safety Audits
- On-street Surveys
- Westminster Resident Association Members Questionnaire
- Stakeholder Assembly Report

1.7 This summary captures the current data and insights gathered, with additional engagement sessions planned to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the needs and perspectives of all stakeholders.

Engagement Responses

1.8 The document includes a detailed summary of responses, organised according to the Westminster After Dark pillars. Responses have been grouped to identify commonalities and key insights. The summary is structured around feedback from different respondent groups, including residents, workers, business owners, visitors, and organisational representatives.

1.9 By presenting this information in a structured manner, the Westminster After Dark Strategy aims to provide a strategic and holistic approach to managing and enhancing Westminster's night-time environment, ensuring it remains a leading global destination that is safe, vibrant, and inclusive.

2. Summary of engagement responses

2.1 The following summary has been compiled by reviewing source materials, categorising responses according to relevant Westminster After Dark themes, and consolidating where duplications and commonalities occurred. The summary of responses is presented below under the relevant source location.

Common Place Ideas Map

2.2 Ideas Map Context and Respondents Details

Ideas Map on Common Place platform was open for a period of 10 months, between October 2023 and July 2024, and received over 500 comments and agreements. Comments are users' direct responses to Ideas Map's questions and agreements (reactions) are users reacting to previous comments with a 'like' button.

2.3 When interacting with Ideas Map, users answered two open-ended questions referring to a specific area in the borough:

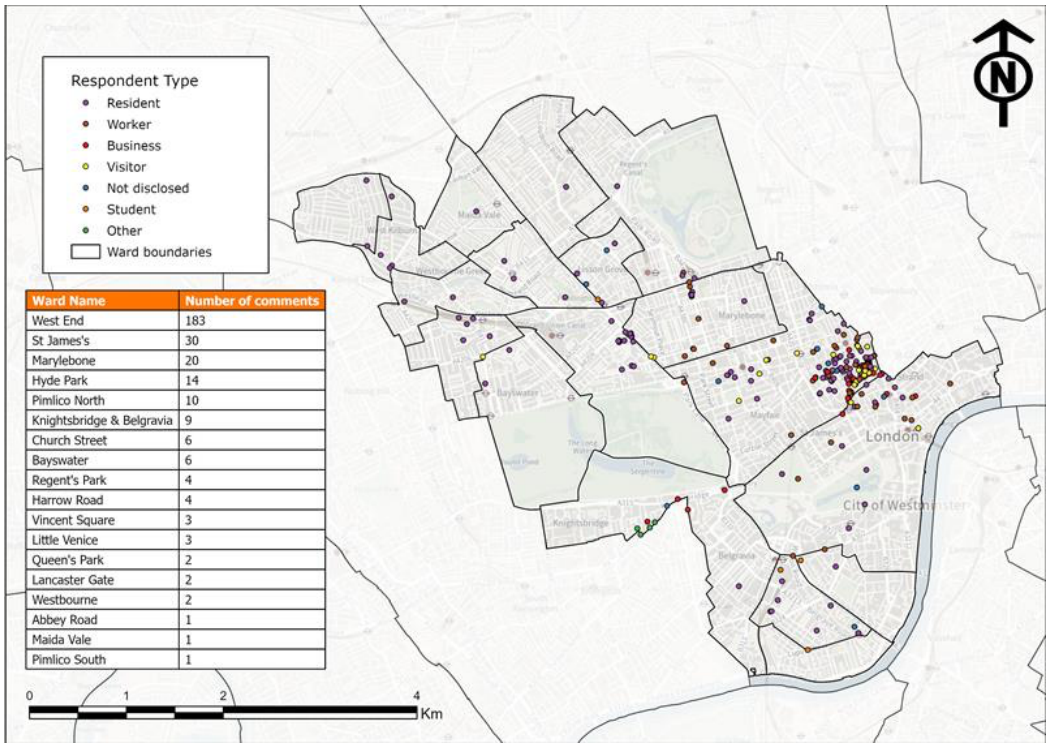
1) **How does this place make you feel between 6pm and 6am, and why do you feel this way?**
2) **Do you have any other comments?**

2.4 Answers to **Question 1** are referred to as Main Comments, and to **Question 2** as Additional Comments. A significant number of comments focused on areas like Soho, Oxford Street and Covert Garden, with lower engagement in areas like Paddington and Victoria. In terms of different groups engaging with the Ideas Map, residents provided the highest number of comments, followed by local workers, visitors, and businesses. Respondents were able to choose more than one group to identify with. Detailed engagement by category can be seen below.

Main Comments (302 responses)		Additional Comments (140 responses)	
Category	**Percentage**	**Category**	**Percentage**
Residents	44%	Residents	36%
People who work in Westminster	35%	People who work in Westminster	22%
Visitors	18%	Visitors	9%
Business Owners	11%	Business Owners	9%

Geographic distribution of respondents' comments

2.5 Based on the analysis of the map (see below) wards with the highest density of comments are West End (183 comments) and St James's (30 comments). Other wards like Marylebone (20 comments) and Hyde Park (14 comments) also have notable comments number. Several wards such as Queen's Park, Lancaster Gate, Westbourne, Abbey Road, Maida Vale and Pimlico South have very few comments.



Ward Name	Number of comments
West End	183
St James's	30
Marylebone	20
Hyde Park	14
Pimlico North	10
Knightsbridge & Belgravia	9
Church Street	6
Bayswater	6
Regent's Park	4
Harrow Road	4
Vincent Square	3
Little Venice	3
Queen's Park	2
Lancaster Gate	2
Westbourne	2
Abbey Road	1
Maida Vale	1
Pimlico South	1

Map showing the location of responses and respondent types

2.6 In terms of distribution of respondent types, **residents'** comments are distributed across most wards but densely populated in specific areas like West End and Hyde Park. **Workers and Business** responses are concentrated in commercial wards like West End. **Visitors'** comments concentrate around central areas of the borough, indicating already established touristic hotspots. Comments from **students and other** are less common respondent types and are not concentrated in any particular ward. It is important to mention that due to the number and density of comments in the West End, particularly in Soho, the dots on the map overlap each other.

Key themes

2.7 **Crime and safety** are significant issues, with specific concerns about drug dealing and anti-social behaviour in areas like Soho, Covent Garden, and Edgware Road. Poor lighting, particularly near public toilets, exacerbates these problems, prompting calls for better street lightning and CCTV coverage.

2.8 **Noise** from late-night activities, such as loud parties and extended bar hours, disrupts residents' peace, especially in Soho and Covent Garden. Comments also included repeated mention of high noise levels from cars, pedicabs and rickshaws. **Traffic** issues also pose a problem, with dangerous conditions for cyclists and pedestrians, particularly after dark. There is widespread support for pedestrian priority streets to enhance safety and create more space for outdoor dining and drinking, with specific mentions of areas like Connaught Street and Kendall Street.

2.9 **Blocked public footpaths** received a significant number of comments. They pointed out issues with e-bikes, pedicabs and venues' customers blocking the footpaths, making it difficult for pedestrians, especially for families with children or those with disabilities, to navigate. **Cleanliness and the condition of public amenities** are recurring concerns, especially among visitors who note litter and poorly maintained public toilets. Public urination due to a shortage of toilets is also mentioned, with the focus on streets surrounding Soho. The need for **more public toilets** and better maintenance of existing ones is emphasised across the borough.

2.10 The **vibrant nightlife** in areas like Soho and Carnaby Street is seen as vital for economic and social prosperity. Business owners stress the importance of maintaining late-night venues and preserving Soho's unique character. They also highlight the positive atmosphere created by friendly, inclusive local businesses. However, visitors and workers alike note that Soho's ambiance has shifted post-Covid-19, moving from an LGBTQ+ hub to a more tourist-oriented area. Many comments from all categories of respondents, reflect a **general affection for Soho's vibrant culture** and nightlife, despite the issues mentioned above.

2.11 A breakdown of the responses by strategic pillars and additional comments are presented in the tables below.

Main Comments on Strategic Pillars and Sub-Categories:

Strategic Pillars and Sub-Categories*	Percentage	No. of mentions
Safety and Security	44%	134 mentions
Crime	12%	37 mentions
General Safety	28%	84 mentions
Antisocial Behaviour	15%	44 mentions
Economic and Licencing	30%	92 mentions

Licenced Premise	11%	34 mentions
Outdoor Seating	10%	31 mentions
Pedicabs	5%	14 mentions
Infrastructure and Amenities	27%	83 mentions
Clean Streets	8%	24 mentions
Street Lighting	7%	22 mentions
Toilet Accessibility	5%	14 mentions
Visitor Experience	7%	21 mentions
Traffic and Pedestrianising	43%	130 mentions
Area Pedestrianisation	23%	69 mentions
Busy Pavements	10%	31 mentions
Traffic	23%	68 mentions
Resident Specific and Noise	16%	47 mentions
Youth Clubs/Community Spaces	2%	5 mentions
Late Night Waste/Deliveries	4%	13 mentions
Noise	12%	37 mentions
Sleep	2%	7 mentions
General Ambiance	53%	161 mentions
Variety of Options	5%	16 mentions
Good Vibe	23%	69 mentions
Other	6%	19 mentions

Main Comments Strategic Pillars (Based on 302 comments and 76 agreements).
**Strategic Pillars in bold represent main categories, while non-bold themes indicate sub-categories under those pillars.*

Additional Comment on Pillars:

Pillars and Sub-Categories*	Percentage	No. of mentions
Safety and Security	22%	31 mentions
Crime	2%	3 mentions
General Safety	16%	23 mentions
Antisocial Behaviour	6%	8 mentions
Economic and Licencing	29%	41 mentions
Licenced Premise	9%	12 mentions
More businesses/Longer Business Hours	9%	12 mentions
Outdoor Seating	8%	11 mentions

Pedicabs	4%	6 mentions
Infrastructure and Amenities	11%	15 mentions
Clean Streets	6%	8 mentions
Street Lighting	4%	6 mentions
Traffic and Pedestrianising	19%	26 mentions
Area Pedestrianisation	14%	19 mentions
Busy Pavements	4%	10 mentions
Taxi Ramps	3%	4 mentions
Traffic	8%	11 mentions
Resident Specific and Noise	16%	23 mentions
Late Night Waste/Deliveries	8%	11 mentions
Noise	7%	10 mentions
Sleep	2%	3 mentions
General Ambiance	17%	24 mentions
Variety of Options	1%	2 mentions
Queer Venues	1%	1 mention
Good Vibe	2%	3 mentions
Other	22%	31 mentions

*Appendix B – Additional Comments Strategic Pillars (Based on 140 comments). *Strategic Pillars in bold represent main categories, while non-bold themes indicate sub-categories under those pillars.*

Category Specific Summaries

Residents

2.12 **Concerns about Crime**: Residents in Westminster have reported significant issues with drug dealing and consumption in certain areas, which is contributing to anti-social behaviour and crime. Specific locations have become known hotspots for drug activity, leading to a sense of insecurity among the community. Residents reported those issues in Soho, Covent Garden and Edgware Road areas.

2.13 **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**: Numerous comments highlight persistent ASB, including loud parties, and locals disrespecting licencing times. Residents say these ongoing problems have been reported to local authorities on multiple occasions but remain unresolved. Comments focused on Soho and Edgware Road/Church Street areas. Residents have expressed concerns about poor lighting, particularly in areas near public toilets, which they believe could facilitate anti-social behaviour.

2.14 **Balance of Night-time Activities**: Residents call for a need to balance night-time activities with their need for peace and quiet. The trend towards later licenses for bars and restaurants is causing disruptions for residents who say they struggle to get a good night's sleep due to noise and disturbances. Residential areas surrounding Soho and Covent Garden specifically mention issues with noisy vehicles, late night deliveries and licenced premises. Residents feel that Soho is overly concentrated with alcohol consumption venues. On the other hand, residents in Victoria or Pimlico pointed out lack of night-time activities in the area.

2.15 **Pavement and Traffic Issues**: Comments indicate a significant problem with traffic, particularly with vehicles and taxis, which make cycling and walking unsafe, especially after dark. Residents also report issues with delivery bikes and e-scooters on pavements creating hazards for pedestrians. Many residents support the idea of pedestrian priority streets to enhance safety and reduce traffic-related issues. The idea was particularly mentioned to help in creating more space for outdoor dining and drinking.

Workers

2.16 **Vibrancy and Nightlife:** Many people who work in Westminster expressed a desire for a vibrant nightlife scene. They point out the early closures of businesses, in areas like Victoria, noting lack of late-night non-alcoholic venues. On the other hand, the majority of comments praise areas like Soho for its diversity of food and entertainment options, describing it as a thriving business community.

2.17 **Safety and Security:** A number of comments highlighted safety concerns, particularly around anti-social behaviour, and lack of police presence. Specific areas like Paddington and Leicester Square are mentioned as needing better lighting and more security to deter crime.

2.18 **Public Spaces and Pedestrianisation:** Comments from local workers highlighted a strong support for pedestrian priority streets in more areas, particularly in Soho, to enhance the ambience and safety. Some suggest improvement for public spaces, like having better lighting and signage as well as encouraging al fresco dining.

Visitors

2.19 **Safety and Security:** Visitors shared the need for increased police and security presence to curb crime and make people feel safer. Specific areas, such as Wardour Street, are perceived as dangerous due to crime activity. Visitors also

point out issues with predatory businesses taking advantage and overcharging tourists, such as unscrupulous pedicab drivers. Additionally, visitors focused on the need for more pedestrian priority streets to enhance safety but also reduce overcrowding and improve the ambiance of areas like Oxford Street, Soho, and surrounding streets. Most common crimes mentioned by visitors were phone snatching and small robberies.

2.20 **Cleanliness and Public Amenities:** Visitors often point out that streets and public places are often littered and not-well maintained. Specific areas surrounding Soho were mentioned in that regard. Comments also covered the shortage of public toilets, often leading to public urination, as well as the poor conditions of existing public toilets.

2.21 **Soho's nightlife and culture:** Many appreciate the diverse and inclusive atmosphere of Soho's nightlife, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community. The historic and cultural significance of Soho is valued and mentioned as a key reason for visiting Westminster. A number of comments mentioned that the aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the ambiance of Soho, with some pointing out that it used to be an LGBTQ+ hub but now it is more of a tourist attraction.

Business owners

2.22 **Economic and Social Benefits**: The vibrant nightlife in areas like Soho and Carnaby Street is seen as vital for economic and social prosperity. Business owners emphasise the importance of maintaining late-night venues and suggest pedestrian priority streets in certain areas to enhance safety and appeal.

2.23 **Community and Atmosphere**: The unique character and spirit of Soho are highlighted, with a strong call to preserve its vibrant nightlife. Business owners express concern that catering too much to a small number of residents could harm the area's special appeal. Additionally, many comments reflect a positive experience with friendly, inclusive environments in other local businesses, which contribute to the overall attractiveness of Westminster as a place to visit.

Common Place Questionnaire

2.24 The council opened an online survey which sought to gather insights and views from stakeholders who live, visit, learn, work or run a business in Westminster after dark. This survey was open between the 1st of October 2023 and 5th July 2024. It should be noted that between February 2024 and the close of the survey the Council was unable to promote it due to the London Mayoral and General Election pre-election period restrictions.

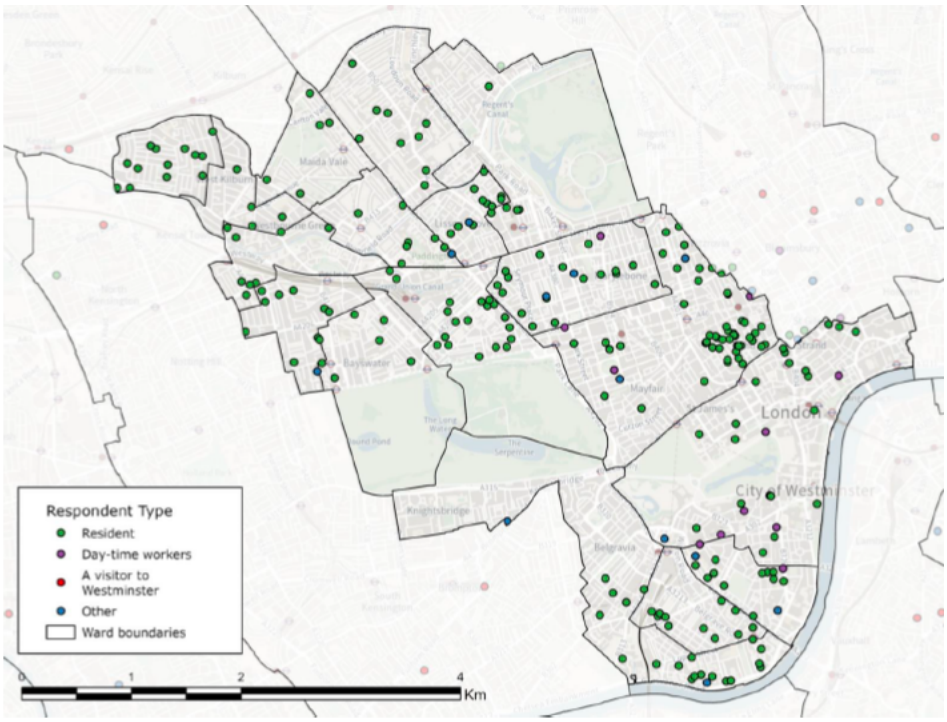
2.25 The council received 461 responses to the Common Place Westminster After Dark Survey, made up of 286 residents, and 90 visitors, with the remaining being students (28), day-time workers (24) and other types of respondents (37).

Respondents' locations:

2.26 The survey achieved a fair spread of residents across Westminster's 18 wards.

2.27 West End residents were strongly represented in the survey responses. On the other hand, Maida Vale, Regent's Park, Lancaster Gate, Harrow Road, and Knightsbridge & Belgravia had fewer respondents.

2.28 Most visitors who responded came from Greater London, with a significant number visiting from neighbouring boroughs.



Resident Respondents by ward

Ward Name	Number of respondents
West End	57
St James's	21
Hyde Park	20
Marylebone	17
Bayswater	16
Queen's Park	14
Pimlico South	13
Pimlico North	11
Vincent Square	11
Church Street	10
Abbey Road	9
Westbourne	9
Little Venice	8
Harrow Road	6
Knightsbridge & Belgravia	6
Lancaster Gate	6
Regent's Park	6
Maida Vale	5
Not disclosed	41

Visitor respondents by area

Area Name	Number of respondents
Greater London	35
Neighbouring boroughs (Camden, Islington, RBKC, Southwark, Wandsworth)	28
Southeast England	6
East England	1
Not disclosed	20

Limitations

2.29 The results of this survey should be considered indicative rather than definitive. The survey was conducted online, which introduced sampling biases as those who answer the survey may not fully represent target populations. Additionally, the sample size is not large enough to reflect the broader target populations – whether Westminster residents or visitors. Nevertheless, the results provide us with a good indication of the viewpoints of residents and visitors on Westminster during the evening and night-time period and can be used, alongside the other engagement responses and data to support our evidence base.

2.30 The sample sizes of some sub-groups remain relatively small, limiting our ability to conduct detailed analysis of some groups – for example, we only received 28 responses from black residents or visitors, meaning we are unable to look at how responses from this group differ to other ethnicities.

2.31 The demographic data gathered in this survey changed after the 2nd October 2023 to gather more detailed demographic information, such as religion, sexual orientation, and disability status. As a result, we do not have full demographic data for all responses, e.g. those responses made on the 1st and 2nd October before this change was introduced.

2.32 Responses from night-time workers and businesses have been separated into their own section due to the small number of responses received. (54 night-workers and 40 businesses).

Significant differences

2.33 Statistical significance indicates whether differences in the data are likely to be a real difference or just coincidence, for example between the views of residents and the views of visitors. A red box indicates that a difference between two specific samples is significant – therefore likely to be a real rather than a coincidence. However, as with the overall limitations of the survey results, any differences between residents and visitors are indicative.

Resident and Visitor Responses

2.34 The common place questionnaire was completed by 376 people, broken down as follows:

- 286 residents
- 90 Visitors

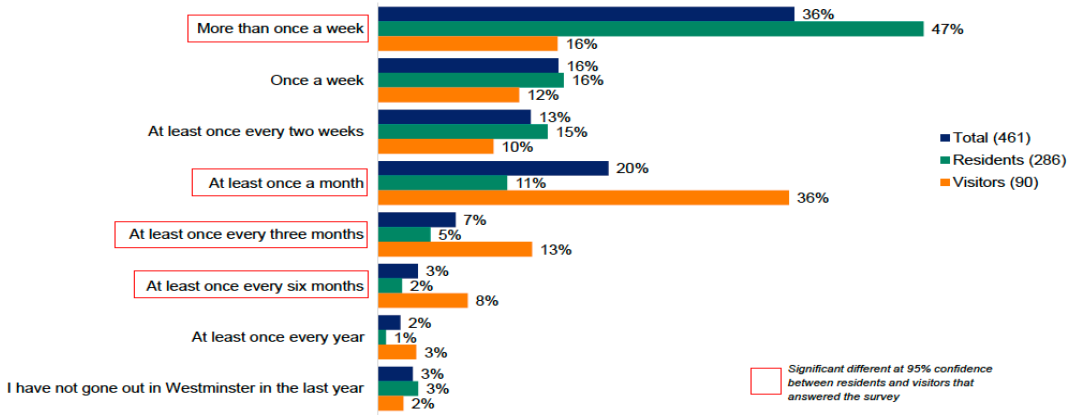
2.35 The demographic breakdown for respondents is as follows:

- **Gender:** 57% were women, 34% men, 4% other and 7% preferred not to say.
- **Ethnicity:** 63% were white, 10% Asian, 6% Black, 6% mixed and 2% Arabic and 12% preferred not to say.
- **Age:** 4% under 18, 6% 18 to 24, 13% 25 to 34, 15% 35 to 44, 17% 45 to 54, 18% 55 to 64, 15% 65 to 74, 7% 75 and over and 5% preferred not to say.
- **Sexual orientation:** 46% straight, 11% gay/lesbian/bisexual or other, 8% prefer not to say and 35% not asked.
- **Disability status:** 5% limited a lot, 16% limited a little, 73% not limited, and 6% preferred not to say.

Going out in Westminster after dark:

2.36 The following question and results related to how often respondents went out in Westminster during the evening and night-time.

Q16. In the past 12 months, approximately how often did you go out in Westminster in the evening and night-time? Base Residents, workers, students, visitors, day workers (461)

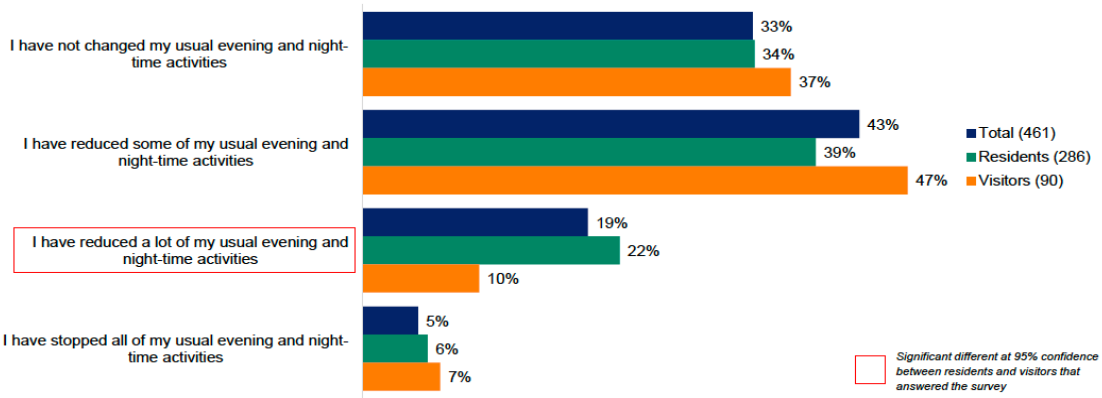


- Almost 3 in 5 of residents who answered the survey go out in Westminster in the evening and night-time at least once a week.
- From the visitors who answered the survey they mostly visit Westminster's evening and night-time environment at least once a month.

Impact of the cost of living:

2.37 The following question and results relates to the cost-of-living crisis and how this may have affected peoples usual evening and night-time activities.

Q.20. Thinking about the cost-of-living crisis…how, if at all, have you changed any of your usual evening and night-time activities as a result of cost-of-living pressures? Base: residents, workers, students, visitors, day workers (461)

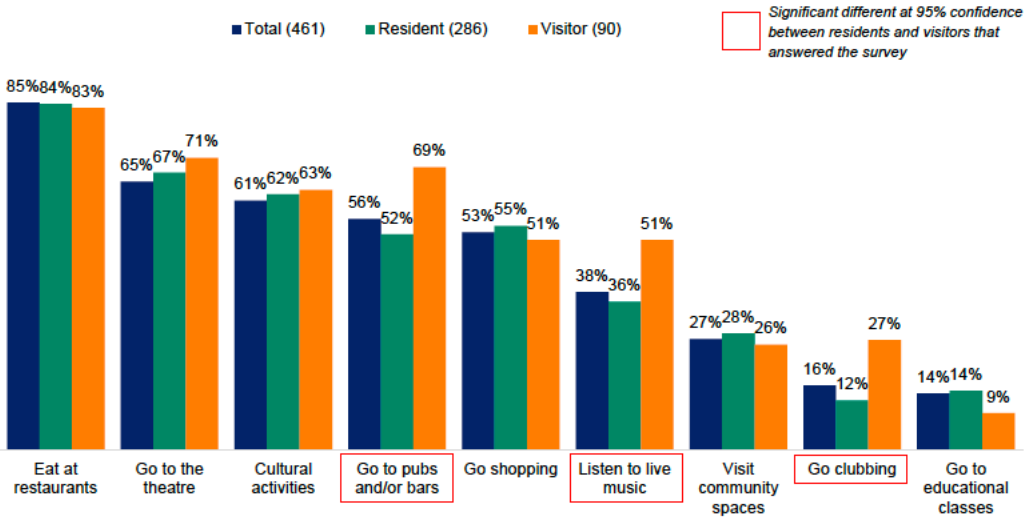


- The cost of living has had an impact on residents and visitors going out within Westminster's evening and night-time environment.
- Around two thirds of the survey respondents have reduced their evening and night-time activities due to cost-of-living pressures, mostly by a small amount. One-third had not made any changes to their activities.

Favoured activities after dark:

2.38 The following question and responses relating to where people visited or went out in Westminster after dark.

Q.19. Which, if any, of the following do you do when you visit or go out in Westminster in the evening and night-time?



- Residents and visitors are attracted to similar activities in Westminster's evening and night-time.
- Restaurants, theatres, cultural activities and pubs and bars being the most popular activities.
- Going clubbing and going to educational classes were the least popular
- Visitors are more likely than residents to go to pubs and bars, listen to live music or go clubbing.
- Men are more likely to listen to live music, go to pubs and bars or go clubbing than women.
- Those aged 55+ are more likely to attend cultural activities than other age groups.
- Those under 34 are less likely than all age groups to attend the theatre.
- Those from a Global Majority background are less likely than white people to go to pubs and bars, cultural activities, the theatre or live music.

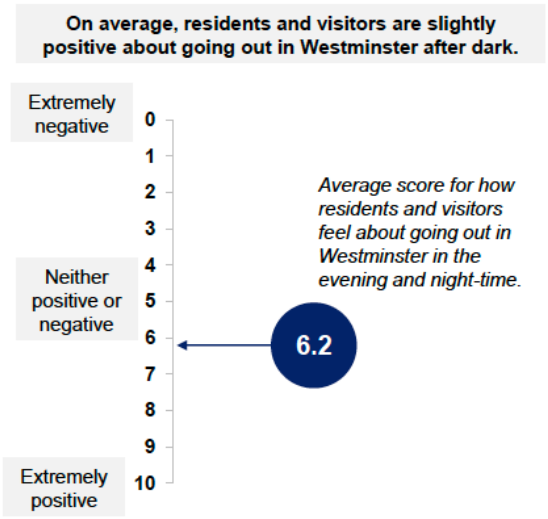
<u>Positivity for Westminster after dark:</u>

2.39 The following questions and results related to how people feel when they visit or go out in Westminster evening and night-time environment.

Q. 27. Overall, how do you feel about visiting or going out in Westminster in the evening and night-time. Please tell us on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is extremely negative, 5 is neither positive nor negative (neutral), and 10 is extremely positive.

- Residents and visitors are generally positive about Westminster after dark and appreciate the wide range of things to do.
- People are generally positive about going out in Westminster in the evening and night-time, particularly areas like Soho, Chinatown, and the West End.
- Respondents appreciate the vibrant and diverse atmosphere, with a wide range of options for restaurants, pubs, theatres and cultural activities.
- The wide variety of entertainment choices, including live music venues, LGBTQ+ establishments, and late-night options, contributes to the appeal. However, some people express concerns about noise, traffic, and a shift towards chains and fast-food outlets.
- Safety is a reoccurring theme, and many people note they generally feel safe going out in Westminster after dark, with some referencing the volume of people and the crowds as contributing to a feeling of safety. It is worth noting that as many people also feel unsafe and raised a number of safety issues.
- Overall, the responses highlight the dynamic and lively nature of Westminster after dark, where people enjoy cultural and social diversity and wide range of things to do.

Q. 17. What do you like about Westminster in the evening and night-time?



<u>Experiences and issues that residents and visitors raise:</u>

2.40 The following question focused the respondent on what they disliked about Westminster in the evening and night-time.

Q.18. What do you dislike about Westminster in the evening and night-time?

- **Safety Concerns:** Despite many people saying they feel safe after dark in Westminster, many people feel unsafe, particularly women.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour:** Concerns about anti-social behaviour, rowdiness, noise, and the impact of alcohol-led venues on the streets are often mentioned. Issues include harassment, aggression, and feeling unsafe.
- **Traffic and Congestion:** Many respondents express frustration with traffic congestion, unsafe driving practices, and a lack of pedestrian priority streets in certain areas. Some suggest pedestrian priority streets in certain areas such as in Soho.
- **Early Closing Times:** People complain about early closing times for pubs, bars, and other venues. Uniform closing times seen as contributing to congestion and limiting late-night options. Some feel that there is a limited variety of late-night options for entertainment, food, and activities.
- **Dirty and Unkempt Streets:** The cleanliness of streets is an issue, with complaints about rubbish, graffiti, and an overall sense of neglect. The smell of urine in certain places is also noted with people mentioning insufficient availability of public toilets as an issue contributing to this problem.
- **Pedicabs and Noise Pollution**: Pedicabs are a source of annoyance, with mentions of noise pollution, aggressive behaviour, and the need for stricter regulations.

<u>Changes that would improve resident and visitor experiences of Westminster after dark:</u>

2.41 The following question asked respondents to comment on what they felt would improve their experience of Westminster after dark.

Q.24. What would improve your experience of visiting or going out in Westminster between 6pm and 6am?

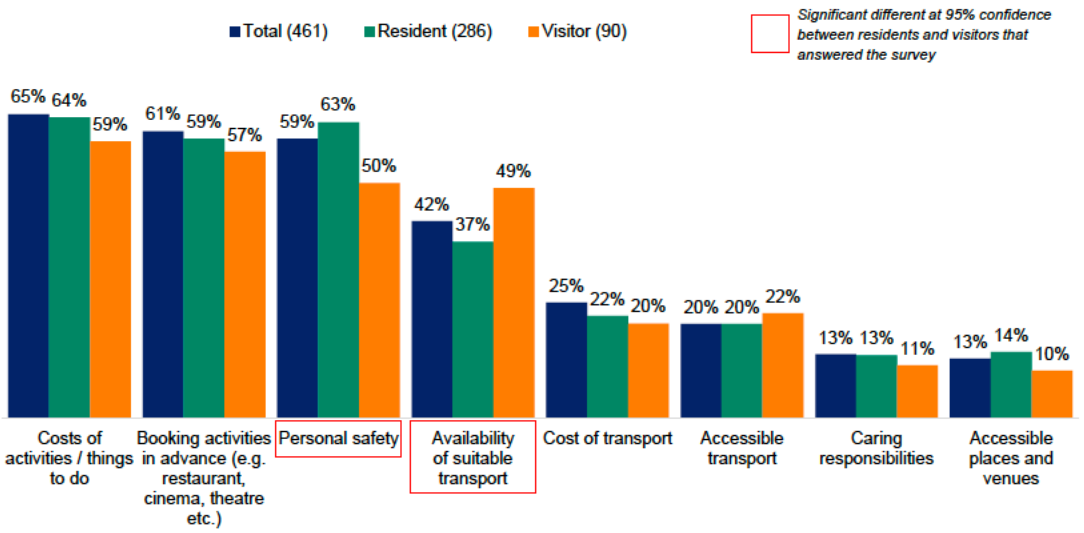
- **Safety and Security:** Desire for increased police presence, better lighting, and measures to address anti-social behaviour, drug use, and crime. Concerns about feeling unsafe, particularly for women, are noted.
- **Reduced Noise and Crowds:** People emphasise the need for reduced noise, both from traffic and late-night activities. Complaints about crowded streets, especially in areas like Soho, are frequent.
- **Affordability:** Some respondents mention the cost of going out as an issue, suggesting more affordable options would improve their experience.
- **Traffic and Pollution:** People call for reduced traffic, better cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian priority streets. Concerns about air pollution and noise from vehicles are mentioned.

- **Extended Opening Hours:** Requests for businesses, including pubs, bars, and restaurants, to have extended opening hours.
- **Public Facilities:** Requests for more public toilets, especially during the night. Suggestions for creating safe spaces and facilities for women, families, and vulnerable individuals.
- **Transportation:** Requests for better and more frequent night bus services. Desire for the night tube to operate beyond Fridays and Saturdays. Concerns about the availability and cost of late-night transportation, including taxis.

Planning to go out in Westminster after dark:

2.42 The following question asked respondents what are the key things that they think about when planning an evening or night out in Westminster.

Q. 21. Which, if any, of the following do you need to think about when planning an evening or night out in Westminster?

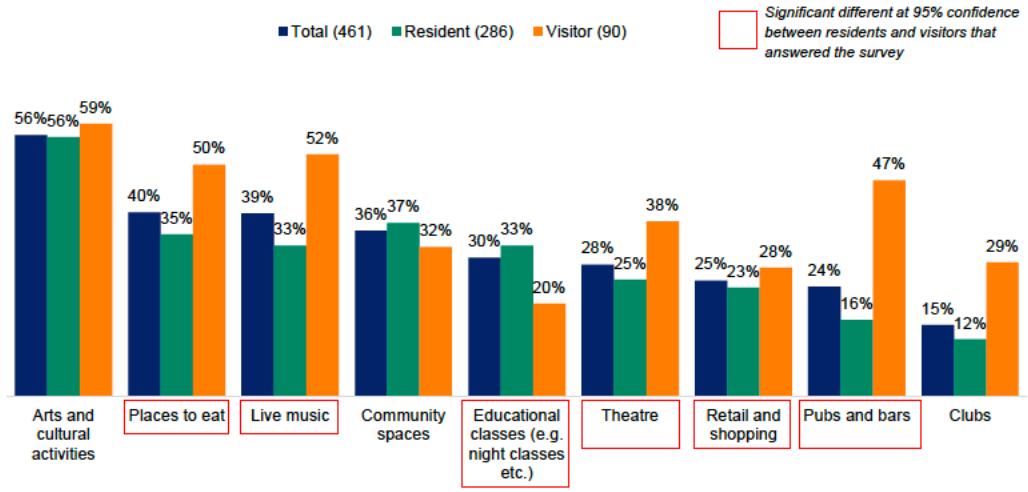


- The cost of activities, booking activities and personal safety are the most important considerations for people going out in Westminster after dark.
- Personal safety is a greater consideration for residents than for visitors.
- Women are more likely than men to consider personal safety (68% vs 46%)
- People from a Global Majority background are more likely to consider personal safety (54% vs 71%) and the costs of transport (46% vs 16%) than white people.
- People aged 55+ are less likely to consider the cost of activities than other age groups (58%).
- Those aged 35-54 are more likely than other ages to consider caring responsibilities (28%).

Activities residents and visitors would like to see more of:

2.43 The following question and response indications the activities that respondents would like to see more of in Westminster's evening and night-time environment.

Q. 23. Which, if any, of the following activities would you like to see more of in Westminster between 6pm and 6am?

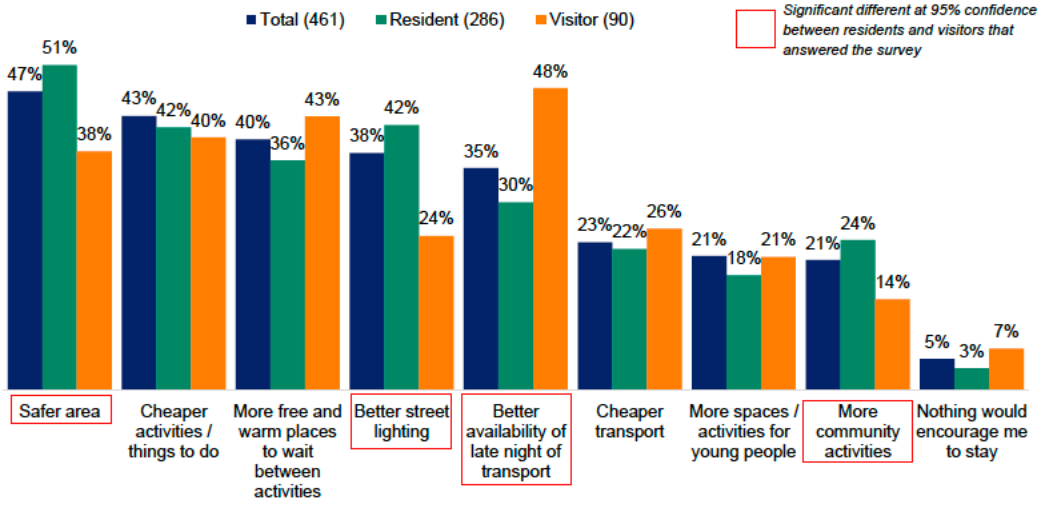


- People would like to see more arts and cultural activities in Westminster's evening and night-time.
- Compared to residents, visitors see more restaurants, live music, theatre, pubs and bars and clubs as an attractive proposition.
- Residents, on the other hand are more likely than visitors to want more educational classes.
- Men are more likely than women to want to see more pubs and bars, clubs and live music venues.
- Women are more likely to want to see more educational classes.
- People from a Global Majority background are more likely to want to see more community spaces and retail and shopping than white people.
- White people are more likely to see more pubs and bars than other ethnicities.

Encouraging people to remain in Westminster after dark:

2.44 The following question sought to understand what would encourage respondents to staff out after dark in Westminster if they were there during the day.

Q.22. If you're in Westminster during the day (before 6pm), which, if any, of the following would encourage you to stay and go out in the area for the evening and night-time?

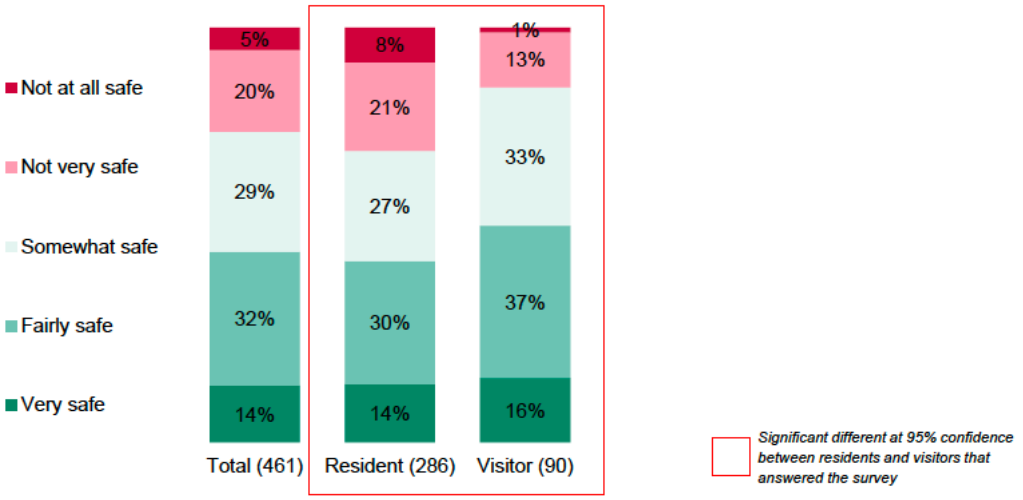


- Though cheaper activities and free/warm spaces are attractive to both residents and visitors opinions are somewhat split around what changes would encourage them to stay in Westminster after 6pm.
- Residents are significantly more concerned about safety and improving street lighting
- Better late-night transport is the most important factor for visitors.
- Women are more likely than men to say that a safer area, better street lighting, cheaper transport and free and warm places to wait would encourage them to stay and go out in Westminster after dark.
- People from a Global Majority background are more likely than white people in all areas to say that specific change or improvement would encourage them to stay and go out in the evening and night-time.

<u>Feeling safe in Westminster after dark:</u>

2.45 The following question and results relate to identifying how safe respondents felt in Westminster after dark.

Q. 25. How safe or unsafe do you feel in Westminster in the evening and night-time?

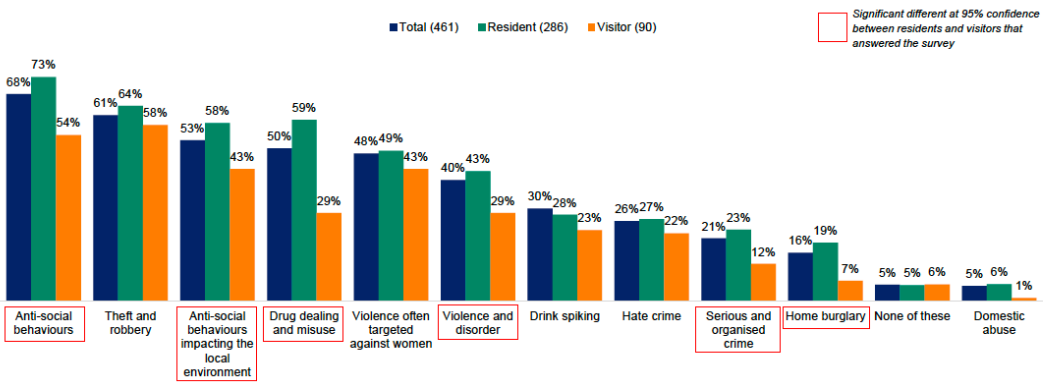


- 1 in 4 respondents do not feel safe in the evening and night-time in Westminster.
- Residents are more likely to feel unsafe in the evening and night-time than visitors.
- Men say they feel safer than women when in Westminster during the evening and night-time (54% vs 41%).
- Women are more likely than men to be concerned about theft and robbery, gender-based violence, drink spiking and home burglary.
- People from a Global Majority background are more likely to be concerned about hate crime than white people.
- People aged 55+ are more likely than other age groups to be concerned about anti-social behaviours (both social and environmental)

<u>Specific safety concerns when going out in Westminster after dark:</u>

2.46 This question and results shows the key safety issues the respondents were most concerned with.

Q. 26. Thinking about Westminster in the evening and night-time…which of the following safety issues are you concerned about?

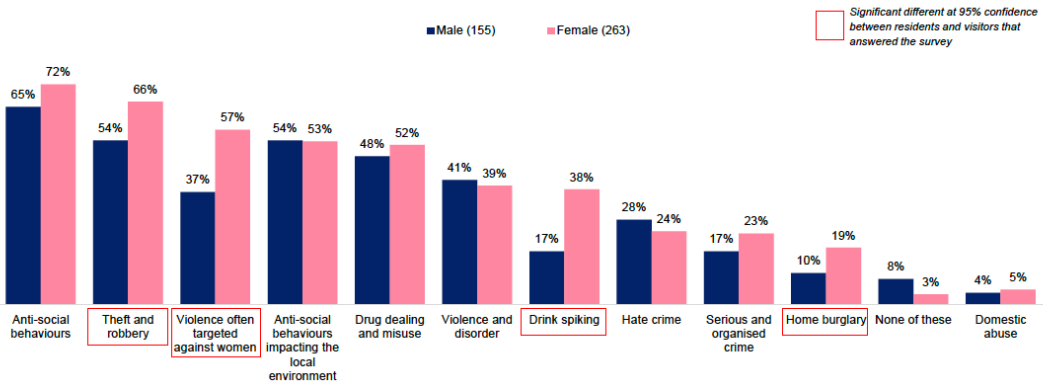


- Anti-social behaviour is the biggest safety concern in Westminster's evening and night-time, followed by theft and robbery, which mirrors the findings within the Council's Cumulative Impact Assessment 2023[1].
- Visitors are less concerned than residents about a range of issues, such as anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and misuse, violence and disorder.

<u>Women's safety concerns in Westminster after dark:</u>

2.47 The following questions and the results were focused on responses from women and their safety concerns.

Q. 17. What do you like about Westminster in the evening and night-time
Q. 18. What do you dislike about Westminster in the evening and night-time?
Q. 24. What would improve your experience of visiting or going out in Westminster between 6pm and 6am?
Q. 26. Thinking about Westminster in the evening and night-time…which of the following safety issues are you concerned about?



- Women are more concerned than men about a range of safety issues, particularly theft, robbery, gender-based violence, and drink spiking.
- Feeling unsafe due to disorderly and anti-social behaviour linked to alcohol and drugs. Women express concerns about aggression, fights, shouting and rowdy behaviour.
- Fear of safety when walking alone at night, with inadequate lighting contributing to this feeling.
- Several provided specific instances of crime and street harassment, such as being chased, robbed, or curb crawled.
- Presence of drug users and dealers, with drug taking in public spaces contributes to feelings of insecurity.
- Issues related to the presence of rough sleepers, homeless encampments, and begging contribute to feeling unsafe.

[1] Westminster City Council's Cumulative Impact Assessment 2003 was produced under the provisions of section 5A, Part 1, Licensing Act 2003 in relation to the licensing of alcohol, entertainment and late-night refreshment premises. The Cumulative Impact Assessment 2023 can be viewed via this link: https://www.westminster.gov.uk/licensing/licensing-policy-and-strategy/cumulative-impact-assessment

- Women feel there has been a decline in visible policing, which has negatively impacted their sense of safety. As a result, there are requests for more police presence on the streets in the evening and night-time.
- Poorly lit areas contribute to feelings of insecurity with requests for better street lighting to enhance safety.
- Concerns about cleanliness, including litter, graffiti, and unpleasant smells. Notable mention of urine in certain areas and the lack of cleanliness contributing to an unsafe atmosphere.
- Specific mentions of feeling unsafe due to bicycles, e-scooters, and pedicabs.

Men's safety concerns in Westminster after dark:

2.48 The following questions and the results were focused on responses from men and their safety concerns.

Q. 17. What do you like about Westminster in the evening and night-time
Q. 18. What do you dislike about Westminster in the evening and night-time?
Q. 24. What would improve your experience of visiting or going out in Westminster between 6pm and 6am?

- In comparison to women fewer men identified safety concerns, but these are similar to those identified by women.
- Anti-social behaviour: some concerns about drunkenness and rowdiness, particularly in areas with high concentrations of bars and pubs.
- Homelessness and Begging: homeless people and begging lead some men to feel unsafe after dark.
- Traffic and transport: several mention safety concerns about traffic and cars, particularly with regards to speeding and bad driving at night.

Business responses:

2.49 Business responses to the survey mostly came from SME licensed premises based in Soho or the West End operating in the hospitality sector, generally closing between 9pm and 6am. The challenges these businesses identified in the survey cannot be generalised to all licensed premises in Westminster, particularly those based in other areas and/or operating in other sectors.

Sector, business size, location, and operating times:

2.50 **Sector:** Most of the 40 businesses that answered the survey operate in the hospitality sector (22), with arts, entertainment, and recreation making up the bulk of remainder (8).

2.51 **Location**: The majority of responding businesses are based in the West End, mainly in Soho (30). Other businesses were spread across Edgware Road, Victoria and Knightsbridge.

2.52 **Operating times:** Almost all were licensed premises, with a spread of closing times across the evening and night-time, mainly between 9pm and midnight (16) midnight and 6am (17).

2.53 **Size:** Most (26) were SME, with between 11 and 250 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees. The rest were split between small businesses of 2 to 10 FTE employees (6) or large with over 250 FTE employees (8).

Challenges from operating in the evening and night-time and support required:

2.54 Issues relating to crime and safety are the main challenges faced by businesses that responded to the survey when operating in the evening and night-time.

2.55 Businesses particularly highlight the issues of customer theft as well as dealing with various forms of anti-social behaviour.

2.56 There is a strong desire to see greater police presence or more effective policing to deter crime and tackle safety issues.

Changes to Westminster's approach to licensing, planning, and/or othe regulation:

2.57 Businesses would like for Westminster City Council to have a more positive attitude toward licensed premises and called on the Council to work more closely and proactively with licensed businesses to encourage a vibrant evening and night-time economy balanced with tackling a range of issues relating to safety and security.

2.58 Businesses answering the survey also called on Westminster to work with its police partners and local venues to address crime and safety concerns.

Night-workers responses:

2.59 Workers who answered the survey were generally positive about working in the evening and night-time. Evening and night-time workers appreciated the atmosphere of Westminster after dark as well as the quietness of working later than most. The workers that answered the survey also feel their skills match their employment and they are paid a fair wage / salary.

2.60 However, working in the evening and night-time comes with a range of considerations around safety and transport and is associated with negative impacts on mental and/or physical health, namely related to issues with sleep and social / family life.

Industry, location, and reasons for working after 6pm:

2.61 Most evening and night-time workers that answered the survey are occupied in the arts, entertainment, and recreation (13) or the food and hospitality sector (10), with the remainder in industries such as transport, health and social work, and wholesale and retail.

2.62 The majority of evening and night-time workers that answered the survey had workplaces in either St. James's (15) or the West End (15). Others were spread between Marylebone, Pimlico South, Knightsbridge & Belgravia. Many provided invalid postcodes or refused to provide their workplace location (13).

2.63 Most work past 6pm due to work shift patterns (23) or to improve their career (8). Others work in the evening and night-time for other reasons, including occasional evening work events or not being available during the day.

2.64 The main consideration for evening and night-time workers who answered the survey relates to personal safety (both when commuting as well as when at work). Most report feeling safe whilst working (33), although this is not the case for all.

2.65 Food and drink at work is also a key consideration and most evening and night-time workers say they can take breaks in a safe environment (19).

2.66 Transport is also an important consideration. Both availability (16) and accessibility (15) as well as cost (13) and most report they can access suitable and accessible public transport to and from work (20).

Health:

2.67 Working in the evening and night-time has a negative impact on the mental and/or physical health of a significant number of workers who answered the survey (20).

2.68 These mainly relate to:

- Sleep – altering sleeping patterns, lack of sleep, difficulty switching off.
- Social life / family time – maintaining work life balance, missing out on time with family / friends.
- Personal safety – particularly related to commuting to and from work.

Working in the evening and night-time:

2.69 When asked to rate how they feel overall about working in the evening and night-time, workers gave on average 6 out of 10 (where 0 is extremely negative, 5 is neither positive nor negative, 10 is extremely positive). Most also feel they receive a fair wage/salary (33), and almost all say their work matches their skillsets (42).

What do evening and night-time workers like about working in the evening and night-time?

2.70 Evening and night-time workers responded with the following main responses as to why they liked about working in the evening and night-time:

- Atmosphere: many workers enjoy the vibrant atmosphere of Westminster after dark.
- Quietness: on the other hand, some appreciate the quieter streets and reduced congestion on public transport compared to daytime.
- Transport links: good transport links and ease of getting home, particularly for those working in the evening.
- Social opportunities: the ability to socialise, meet friends, and the availability of food and drink options are valued by those working past 6pm.

What do evening and night-time workers dislike about working in the evening and night-time?

2.71 Evening and night-time workers responded with the following main responses as to why they diliked about working in the evening and night-time:

- **Safety concerns:** respondents sometimes feel unsafe due to the presence of drunk people, homeless individuals, petty crime, and poorly lit areas.
- **Transport issues:** difficulties with late-night transport, such as unreliable taxis and buses, long commutes, and expensive transport.
- **Cleanliness:** evening night-time workers dislike seeing piles of rubbish, open drug use, and public urination.
- **Homelessness:** the prevalence of homeless people and people begging is another concern for evening and night-time workers.

3. In Person Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 In the period between October 2023 and January 2024, we held 11 formal and informal discussion groups, engaging with 142 individuals overall. Those included 5 BIDs, 5 community groups and the MET Police. Each discussion group lasted from 1-1.5 hours, captured by a WCC officer, and focused on 4 questions included below.

3.2 Although the questions are looking at improvement and support, throughout the discussion participants focused on discussing the current situation.

1) How can we improve safety and feelings of safety?
2) How can we further empower and celebrate our diverse communities and culture?
3) How do we support the successful growth of Westminster's evening and night-time, whilst ensuring the needs and desires of the whole community are considered?
4) How can we ensure Westminster's evening and night-time is accessible to all and provides a positive impression as a place?

3.3 The community groups have been linked with other engagement aimed at increasing participation levels of representatives from north of the borough particularly Church Street, Queen's Park and Westbourne wards, as well as Global Majority individuals. Detailed information on groups and number of participants can be found below.

BID/Community Group Name	Number of Participants
Marble Arch BID	25
Paddington Now BID	16
Shaftesbury BID	3
HOLBA BID	10
Harley Street BID	12
London Chinatown Chinese Association	8
Marylebone Library Coffee Morning	3
Women's Group Mary Smith Pantry	7
Kulan Somali Organisation Women's Group	20
Mosaic Trust	30
MET Police	8
SUMMARY:	**142**

Main Themes Summary:

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

3.4 The BIDs' responses highlighted urgent issues with anti-social behaviour and crime, particularly in areas like Victoria, Soho, Edgware Road, and Marble Arch, along with concerns about shoplifting and staff safety. Rough sleeping and poor

street conditions also need addressing. There is a push for better infrastructure, including pedestrian priority streets, widening pavements, and improving access at key tube stations. Transportation improvements, like reliable late-night public transport and better e-bike parking, are crucial. The BIDs emphasised the need for a cohesive approach to planning and licensing, more cultural venues in Paddington, and resolving conflicts between events and resident concerns. High living costs and transportation issues are affecting local staffing, with support for night tube services and financial aid for night workers.

Community Groups and Police

3.5 Community Groups: Focused on improving street lighting and building stronger partnerships with TfL and the Police to boost safety. They called for enhanced police-community relations, better safety education, and increased policing in residential areas. Concerns about drug use and homelessness were highlighted, particularly in Victoria, Edgware Road, and Harrow Road. There's also a need for more inclusive community spaces and affordable, culturally sensitive programs, especially for night workers and marginalised groups. Improved communication through community newsletters was also recommended.

3.6 The Police: Noted resourcing issues affecting their response times and public trust. They emphasised the need for better collaboration with businesses, encouraging crime reporting, and improving street lighting to enhance safety.

<u>Question Specific Responses</u>

3.7 The following question was posed to each group relating to improving safety and the feeling of being safe:

Q1. How can we improve safety and feelings of safety?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

3.8 Key issues mentioned were anti-social behaviour and crime in areas like Victoria, Soho, Edgware Road and Marble Arch. Businesses, particularly in Paddington, Victoria and Leicester Square raised concerns about levels of petty theft and shoplifting and the relationship between themselves and the police. The increase in shoplifting and violence toward staff has raised serious safety concerns for employees who are at risk. Additionally, all Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) mentioned rough sleeping as a key area needing improvement to enhance the overall sense of safety. Areas like Edgware Road were often referred to as examples of 'broken window' scenario due to poor street lighting and number of vacant buildings. There is also a call for increased CCTV coverage in areas known for high crime rates.

Community Groups and Police

3.9 Key improvement areas highlighted by community groups included enhancing street lighting and strengthening partnerships with organisations like TfL and the Police to increase feelings of safety. Many participants emphasised the need to improve the relationship between local communities and the police, ensuring that people feel comfortable reporting crimes. Community groups often highlighted the need for more policing in residential areas due to issues not only from the law enforcement but also from local neighbourhood watches. Additionally, an increased need for education on personal safety for both local communities, especially the night workers. Drug use and homelessness were recurring concerns, especially in areas like Victoria, Edgware Road, and Harrow Road.

3.10 The Police representatives acknowledged resource challenges that impact their ability to respond promptly, which has contributed to declining trust between the police, businesses, and residents. They also stressed the need to improve relationships between businesses and the police, encouraging businesses to report crimes, cooperate with officers to collect CCTV data, and help in crime detection. Similarly to other groups, Police representatives mentioned the importance of improving the street lighting to improve the general feeling of safety.

3.11 The following question was asked about empowering and celebrating diverse communities and cultures.

Q2. How can we further empower and celebrate our diverse communities and culture?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

3.12 Overall, the responses highlight the importance of celebrating and expanding the already diverse cultural landscape, while addressing challenges in organising events. There is a strong desire to promote local businesses, enhance public engagement and support the unique demographics for each borough's area. Paddington has been identified as an area with need for increased number of cultural venues and events, with a conflict between businesses wanting to hold seasonal events in available outside areas but facing pushback from residents on the noise and disturbance. BIDs representatives praised Soho for its cultural importance for the LGBTQ+ community and pointed to more opportunities to use its potential in embracing cultural diversity of the borough.

Community Groups and Police

3.13 Participants from the community groups emphasised the need for more inclusive and accessible community spaces and activities, particularly for night

workers, children, and marginalised groups. There is a strong demand for affordable and culturally sensitive programs, such as language-specific social groups, youth clubs, and mental health support, with a focus on evening and night-time activities. Areas like Church Street, Harrow Road and Westbourne Park has been mentioned as possible focus areas for those aspects. Areas like Marylebone were also mentioned as lacking evening and night-time activities. Additionally, all community groups highlighted the need for better communication and awareness through newsletters or community messages to ensure engagement from residents.

3.14 The following question was asked of all groups and sought to understand how we support successful growth of our evening and nigh-time whilst balancing the needs and desires of our wider community:

Q3. How do we support the successful growth of Westminster's evening and night-time, whilst ensuring the needs and desires of the whole community are considered?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

3.15 A significant challenge identified by several BIDs was connected to the high living costs and expensive transportation costs, leading to difficulties with hiring local staff. The businesses highlighted a strong support for night tube services and providing financial assistance to night workers. Many participants pointed out that licencing issues were a major barrier to economic growth, with calls for more flexible licensing practices. Initiatives like al-fresco dining and pedestrian priority streets were also mentioned regarding the West End and nearby areas. There is also a call for identifying and utilising outside spaces to make the area more attractive to visitors, which could help stimulate further growth.

Community Groups and Police

3.16 Community groups emphasise the need for inclusivity in relation to economic growth in Westminster's evening and night-time economy. Residents highlighted initiatives like outdoor dining which enhance the area's atmosphere. Community groups in the north part of the borough also mentioned the importance of practical support, such as availability and costs childcare, to enable greater participation in employment and training. Participants also called for local businesses to engage with local youth through apprenticeships and mentoring to address unemployment. Overall, the focus from community groups was on balancing economic growth with social support for local communities.

3.17 The following question sought to identify how we can ensure our evening and night-time environment is accessible to all and provides a positive place for people and creates a lasting impression.

Q4. How can we ensure Westminster's evening and night-time is accessible to all and provides a positive impression as a place?

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

3.18 The BIDs' discussions highlighted the need on improving physical infrastructure, such as pedestrian priority streets, widening pavements and ensuring step-free access at key tube stations like Oxford Circus. Overall, transportation improvements were of great importance for a number of BIDs, with calls for more reliable late-night public transport and better e-bike parking. A better alignment between planning and licensing permissions was also a focus, with the aim to create a more cohesive approach to development.

Community Groups and Police

3.19 Among the community groups, many commend the overall quality and reliability of public transport, concerns were raised about the high costs, especially for low-income families. Several tube stations were pointed out as needing step-free access, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities and families with buggies. Community groups also raised concerns about the disabled facilities across the borough, including parking bays and dockless bikes parking spaces. Additionally, safety was a recurring theme for each of the community groups, with suggestions for improving bicycle lanes and increased visibility of cyclists at night.

4. On Street Research

4.1 The "Westminster After Dark On-Street Research Report, September 2024," produced by Walnut Unlimited on behalf of the council, offers an in-depth analysis of how the city's evening and night-time environment is utilised by residents, workers, and visitors. Covering the hours between 6 pm and 6 am, the report captures the behaviours, experiences, and perceptions of individuals engaging with Westminster during these times. The research serves as a key piece of evidence to guide the development of the councils "Westminster After Dark Strategy," which aims to enhance the safety, accessibility, inclusivity, and vibrancy of the area after dark. Through comprehensive data collection, the report identifies patterns of use, satisfaction levels, and potential areas for improvement, providing the council with essential insights into how to shape future policies and initiatives to better cater to both locals and tourists.

4.2 The report is structured to deliver key findings on the usage of Westminster after dark, the quality of the user experience, and perceptions of safety and available services. By combining direct feedback from on-the-ground surveys with a demographic analysis of respondents, it offers a detailed snapshot of public sentiment across different user groups. The data also reveals how satisfaction varies by location within Westminster, comparing experiences in the West End, Edgware Road, and Victoria. The insights gleaned from this study are intended to help the council address existing concerns and capitalise on strengths to ensure that Westminster remains a desirable destination for evening and night-time activities.

4.3 Outlined below is an expanded summary of the key sections and findings from the report. The full report from Walnut Unlimited is available via the council's website at www.westminster.gov.uk/westminster-after-dark.

Approach

4.4 The report investigates Westminster's three key areas, West End, Edgware Road, and Victoria, using intercept interviews conducted with 771 individuals. The sample was stratified into three groups: residents, workers, and visitors. The fieldwork took place from 12th August to 29th August 2024, during both weekdays and weekends to capture a range of experiences. Interviews were conducted face-to-face by paired interviewers for safety and efficiency, covering the hours from 6 pm to 10 pm.

Sampling and Demographics

4.5 The sample profile aimed to reflect the natural flow of people using the Westminster area in the evening and night-time. The largest share of interviews (51%) occurred in the West End, while Edgware Road and Victoria accounted for 25% each. The respondents consisted of 140 residents, 199 workers, and 432 visitors. The demographic breakdown showed that 54% of respondents were male, and the majority (60%) were between the ages of 18

and 34. About 15% of visitors were international, highlighting the area's attraction to both domestic and international tourists.

Key Findings

4.6 Westminster Area Usage:

- Frequency of Use: The majority of respondents (71%) were out in Westminster at least one to two days a month, with residents and workers frequenting the area most days of the week. Visitors, while less frequent, were still regular, with 52% visiting at least once a month.
- Activity Types: The most common evening activities in Westminster included dining at restaurants and cafés (40% of users), traveling to or from work (28%), and going to pubs or bars (21%). There were clear differences by user type—residents predominantly engaged in grocery shopping, workers were often commuting or dining, and visitors were primarily dining or sightseeing.

4.7 Satisfaction with Westminster After Dark:

- Dining and Transport: Restaurants, cafés, and public transport services received the highest satisfaction ratings. Around 86% of users rated dining options as good or very good, and public transport received a similar rating from 83% of respondents.
- Cultural and Retail Experiences: Theatres, cinemas, and non-grocery shops were also rated favourably by users. However, amenities such as public seating and toilets were rated poorly by 38% of respondents, making them the least satisfying aspect of Westminster's night-time offer.
- Variation by Area: The West End was rated the highest for its variety of cultural and entertainment options, while Victoria was praised for its amenities, likely due to its transport hub. Edgware Road, on the other hand, was most frequently associated with grocery shopping and local services.

4.8 Experience of Westminster After Dark:

- Overall Experience: Most users rated their night-time experience positively, with 20% giving it a 9 or 10 out of 10, and 61% rating it between 6 and 8. Visitors, especially international ones, were the most positive, while residents and workers were slightly more critical, with 16% and 12% respectively rating their experience poorly.
- Positivity Drivers: Key drivers of positive experiences included the vibrant atmosphere, variety of activities, and the fact that many people were around. The West End was the area where users noted the most positives, such as its buzz and cultural diversity, while Victoria's cleanliness and safety were highlighted as positive factors.
- Dislikes: The most commonly cited issues were how busy and expensive Westminster was, especially in the West End. Concerns about safety and security were also raised, particularly in Edgware Road, where a significant number of respondents mentioned feeling unsafe.

4.9 Safety Concerns:

- Perceived Safety: Safety was a major theme throughout the report. About 72% of respondents felt safe between 6 pm and 9 pm, but this percentage dropped sharply later in the night. By midnight, only 22% felt safe, and by 3 am, just 16% felt secure.
- Gender and Time: Women were significantly more likely to report feeling unsafe after midnight compared to men. Workers and those in Edgware Road also reported higher levels of unease. More than one-third of respondents in Edgware Road felt unsafe between 9 pm and midnight, with these figures rising after midnight.
- Reasons for Feeling Unsafe: The presence of crime, rough sleepers, and a lack of visible policing were cited as key factors contributing to the feeling of insecurity, especially after midnight. The West End was generally perceived as safer earlier in the evening, while Edgware Road consistently reported the highest levels of safety concerns across all time periods.

4.10 Availability of Services:

- Restaurants and Cultural Venues: The majority of respondents felt there were enough restaurants, cafés, and cultural venues (theatres and cinemas) to meet their needs. Approximately 76% of users agreed that Westminster had the right number of restaurants and cafés.
- Amenities and Green Spaces: In contrast, 54% of respondents felt there were too few amenities such as seating and public toilets. Green spaces were also deemed insufficient by 29% of users, particularly in the West End.
- Differences by User Type: Residents were more likely than visitors and workers to express dissatisfaction with the number of amenities and grocery shops, especially in Edgware Road.

4.11 User Priorities:

- Top Priorities: Safety emerged as the top priority for users when out in Westminster after dark, with 55% citing it as the most important factor. This was followed by a range of dining options (31%) and the availability of pubs and bars (21%). Transport services to and from home were also deemed crucial by 17% of respondents.
- Variations by User Type: While safety was important to all user groups, women and workers prioritised it more than others. Visitors placed more emphasis on dining and cultural experiences, while residents sought more grocery stores and local services.

4.12 Areas for Improvement:

- Safety and Security: When asked what they would like to change about Westminster after dark, 25% of respondents mentioned safety and security concerns, particularly in Edgware Road and among workers and younger age groups.

- Environment and People: Issues such as homelessness, anti-social behaviour, and cleanliness were more frequently cited by residents. Edgware Road users were particularly concerned about these issues.
- Amenities: The lack of public seating, toilets, and green spaces was a recurring issue for all user types, with more than half of the respondents feeling that these facilities were insufficient for night-time use.

4.13 Differences by Location:

- West End: This area stood out for its wide variety of activities and venues. Users in the West End reported both the highest levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction due to the area being busy, expensive, and overcrowded.
- Victoria: Users in Victoria appreciated the feeling of safety and the cleanliness of the area but noted fewer options for entertainment and dining compared to the West End.
- Edgware Road: This area had the most reported safety concerns and fewer attractions for visitors, although it was seen as a hub for grocery shopping and local services.

Conclusion

4.14 Overall, the report presents a detailed picture of how Westminster is used after dark. Despite many positive aspects, such as a vibrant atmosphere and diverse activities, concerns over safety, particularly after midnight, and a lack of amenities were recurring themes across all user groups and areas.

5. Westminster Resident and Amenity Association / Societies Members Questionnaire

5.1 The questionnaire was aimed at collecting additional feedback from Westminster Amenity Society Forum (WASF). It was distributed to WASF members on the 5th of August and closed on 15th of September.

5.2 The respondents were asked the following open-ended questions:

1. *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the positive aspects?*
2. *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the negative aspects?*
3. *How, if at all, would you like to change your local area in the evening and night-time?*
4. *What, if anything, would encourage you to go out more in your local area during the evening and night-time? You may want to think about what currently stops or prevents you from going out.*
5. *Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your local area in the evening and night-time?*

5.3 For questions 1 - 4, respondents were asked to provide responses in regard to four specific time frames between 6pm-6am.

The time frames were:

a. *6pm-9pm*
b. *9pm-12am*
c. *12am-3am*
d. *3am-6pm*

5.4 Question 4 received a low number of respondents, with between 15-20% response rate (depending on the time frame) of the total number of respondents. It has been identified that there was an issue on the survey provider side which affected some respondents' ability to provide answers. Instead, many respondents included their response to Question 4 in Question 5. Where this is the case, we have used this information to analyse responses to Question 4.

Demographic Information

5.5 The survey was completed by 146 respondents, with a fairly equal gender split: 43% female, 40% male and 17% preferring not to disclose. Most respondents identify as 'English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British' (53%). In terms of working status, 40% were employed full-time, and 25% were retired. Over half identified as straight or heterosexual (55%), while 33% did not disclose their sexual orientation. The majority reported no disability

(68%), though 1 in 10 respondents experienced some level of limitation due to disability.

Key Findings

Time frame 6pm-9pm

(1) *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the positive aspects?*

5.6 More than half of the respondents highlighted Westminster's **diverse hospitality and cultural offerings** as a key positive aspect of the area during the evening. Nearly a quarter of participants also notes the vibrant atmosphere and overall **ambiance** as an important aspect of their local area. 82% of respondents provided feedback to this question.

(2) *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the negative aspects?*

5.7 The most frequently mentioned concern related to **large crowds and busy pavements**. More than 1 in 4 respondents mentioned that high foot traffic, particularly around pubs and restaurants. Respondents highlighted that this issue leads to accessibility challenges, especially for families with children and people with disabilities.

5.8 Additionally, nearly 1 in 5 respondents identified **noise** as significant issue during this time frame. Noise was often associated with high traffic flows, outdoor drinking, and general anti-social behaviour. Many of the respondents linked this issue with **crime**, which was noted to escalate as the night progresses and impact the general feeling of safety among respondents. However, nearly 1 in 10 respondents reported no negative aspects during this time period.

(3) *How, if at all, would you like to change your local area in the evening and night-time?*

5.9 15% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the current state of their local area, indicating that they would not like to see any changes during this period. A similar proportion of respondents (18%) mentioned that reducing the **number of licensed venues** as well as enforcement of **stricter regulations** around licensing could improve their local area. Some of the suggestions from respondents were the need for better enforcement of limits on crowd sizes and noise levels at hospitality venues, particularly pubs and bars.

5.10 Additionally, respondents suggested that **increased presence of police and security** would enhance their experience in the area. Around this aspect, respondents mentioned both uniformed and plain-clothed officers, as well as more ward-specific security to ensure timely response to emergencies.

(4) *What, if anything, would encourage you to go out more in your local area during the evening and night-time? You may want to think about what currently stops or prevents you from going out.*

5.11 Respondents highlighted two key challenges. Firstly, noise disturbances, were consistently mentioned as a deterrent to being out during this time period. Respondents also mentioned **lack of available activities** that would compel them to be active. Additionally, similarly to previous question answer there was a clear call for **enhanced safety measures.** Many respondents were keen to see stricter enforcement of **noise regulations** as well as an increased policing.

Time frame 9pm-12am

(1) *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the positive aspects?*

5.12 Three-quarters of respondents shared their thoughts on the local area during this time frame, with responses echoing similar themes for the 6pm-9pm period. **Hospitality and cultural offerings** were mentioned as the most positive features, with many respondents specifically highlighting venues they enjoy in their local area. Many respondents mentioned the link between **the presence of open businesses and an increased feeling of safety.** Areas like Victoria Street and Soho were frequently mentioned, with positive comments around the variety of hospitality options available.

(2) *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the negative aspects?*

5.13 The most frequently mentioned issues within this time period were **noise**, mentioned by 31% of respondents, followed by **anti-social behaviour / crime as well as crowds and busy pavement**. Similarly to the 6pm-9pm time period, respondents highlighted issues connected to vertical drinking outside pubs and bars, as well as poor crowd management leading to groups of intoxicated people causing disturbances. Additionally, respondents who mentioned **noise** also highlighted the nuisances caused by speeding cars, pedicabs and general traffic levels and their impact to their local area.

(3) *How, if at all, would you like to change your local area in the evening and night-time?*

5.14 Nearly 1 in 5 respondents mentioned that **reducing the number of licensed venues** or imposing **stricter regulations** on their operations, would improve their local area during the period. Similarly to the previous time period, 16% of respondents called for an **increased presence of police and** security to address the issues around crime prevalence and anti-social behaviour. Respondents also highlighted the need for **improved control over noise levels**, with the focus on music from bars and pubs as well as speeding cars.

(4) *What, if anything, would encourage you to go out more in your local area during the evening and night-time? You may want to think about what currently stops or prevents you from going out.*

5.15 Based on the responses to this question as well as the additional comments provided, two themes emerge**: a lack of feelings of safety and noise disturbances**. Many respondents expressed a reluctance to engage in activities during this time frame, due to safety concerns and crime levels. Respondents also indicated **that lack of police visibility** impacts their decisions to engage with activities during this time period.

Time frame 12am-3am

(1) *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the positive aspects?*

5.16 For this time period, 70% of respondents provided feedback. Nearly 1 in 5 respondents appreciated the **quiet and peaceful environment** between 12am-3am. In contrast to earlier time frames, fewer respondents (8%) mentioned the hospitality offerings, and only 1% highlighted the area's vibrancy as a positive during this time. A small proportion of respondents indicated they **have no experience** of the area during these hours, while a percentage (16%) did not **identify any positive aspects.**

(2) *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the negative aspects?*

5.17 The most frequently mentioned negative aspect, mentioned by 34% of respondents, was **noise.** Respondents highlighted issues caused by late-night parties and intoxicated individuals leaving venues, with many responses connecting these issues to **sleep disruptions** and negative impact on their health. Additionally, over 20% of respondents expressed concerns about **anti-social behaviour, crime prevalence and lack of police**

5.18 Almost one in ten respondents identified **the limited night-time offerings** as a negative aspect, with some respondents expressing a desire for **more late-night businesses** to remain open to support the local economy. A similar number of respondents argued that **no businesses should operate** during this period in their local area.

(3) *How, if at all, would you like to change your local area in the evening and night-time?*

5.19 Respondents called for implementation of measures to reduce noise, including mentions of **stricter regulations on late-night venues and increased noise control policies.** Respondents also highlighted the need for **more security and police presence** in order to address crime and anti-social behaviour during this time period. Compared to earlier time frames, the desire for changes was significantly higher, with 15% of respondents calling for improvements, up from just 4% in previous periods.

(4) *What, if anything, would encourage you to go out more in your local area during the evening and night-time? You may want to think about what currently stops or prevents you from going out.*

5.20 Based on the limited responses, the findings often mirror answers to the previous questions. Two themes emerge: a lack of incentives to go out during this period and a strong desire for increased policing and feeling of safety, often linked to concerns about noise. Many respondents expressed frustration over noise caused by traffic noise and intoxicated individuals leaving local venues and heading to transport links.

Time frame 3am-6am

(1) Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the positive aspects?

5.21 Similarly to the 12am-3am time period, more than 1 in 5 respondents mentioned the **quiet and peaceful environment** as a positive aspect. Respondents also pointed out the **early delivery sounds** and highlighted the importance of peaceful sleep for residents in their local area. Some respondents noted that noise disruptions during this time can negatively impact sleep, which they highlighted as essential for their health and well-being.

5.22 A portion of respondents (16%) noted that there were no positive aspects of their local area during this time, while some mentioned they had no experience of the area at this time. For this early morning time period, a significant number of respondents (30%) did not provide any feedback

(2) *Thinking about the evening and night-time of your local area, what do you think are the negative aspects?*

5.23 Key themes during this time frame were **noise and crime prevalence**. Many respondents mentioned their concerns about disturbances from late-night noise, which affected their ability to sleep. Crime was also frequently mentioned as a negative aspect with a number of respondents mentioning **lack of feeling of safety** during the early morning hours. Additionally, **rough sleeping** was noted as an issue by some respondents, linking it to the overall safety concerns in the area.

(3) *How, if at all, would you like to change your local area in the evening and night-time?*

5.24 Respondents highlighted a need for **improved waste collection services**, with suggestion to try and minimise noise from cleaning and waste operations during the early morning period. Additionally, there was a call for an **increased presence of police and security** to address issues around crime and feelings of safety in the area.

(4) *What, if anything, would encourage you to go out more in your local area during the evening and night-time? You may want to think about what currently stops or prevents you from going out.*

5.25 Two themes emerge which were: nothing that would encourage them to go out during this time period and secondly, more policing and general increased feelings of safety. Many highlighted the need for enhanced police presence especially after midnight, which was attributed to the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Other comments

5.26 While we integrated comments into the Q4 responses across the document, the primary additional comments centred around two key themes. **Noise and anti-social behaviour** were most frequently mentioned, particularly in relate to late-night hours. Many respondents raised concerns over disturbances caused by intoxicated individuals, loud late-night venues and traffic noise. In relation to the noise issues, respondents highlighted the need for **stricter enforcement of noise control and better crowd management**.

5.27 Second key theme was connected to **feeling of safety and crime prevalence**. Respondents pointed out safety as key factor, with responses highlighting the need for increased police presence, especially after midnight. Respondents raised concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour levels linking them to **lack of visible policing and security.**

6. Summary of Westminster Women's Night Safety Audit

6.1 The summary report was produced by Night-time Economy Solutions (NTES) on behalf of Westminster City Council as part of the Council's Night Safe Programme. As these were conducted just before and around the start of the Westminster After Dark engagement work these audits have been included as they provide specific information on the perspective of women using our evening and night-time environment.

6.2 The Westminster Women's Safety Audit is a comprehensive study commissioned by Westminster City Council, with the goal of improving safety for women and girls within Westminster's evening and night-time economy (NTE). The audit reflects a broad effort to address safety concerns through targeted research, stakeholder consultations, and data collection, and it makes a series of important recommendations for enhancing security, accessibility, and inclusivity in Westminster's vibrant NTE. Below is an expanded, in-depth exploration of the document's key components:

Purpose and Aims

6.3 The primary objective of the Westminster Women's Safety Audit is to ensure the safety and well-being of women and girls within Westminster's NTE, which covers a broad range of activities, venues, and public spaces. Key aims include:

1. Safety Evaluation: Conduct a detailed assessment of how women perceive and experience safety when navigating the NTE, focusing on residents, employees, and visitors. The evaluation involves direct engagement with stakeholders and a comprehensive analysis of existing conditions in Westminster.
2. Promotion of Continuous Improvement: Develop a sustainable framework for continuous enhancement of safety measures. This framework includes measurable outcomes, enabling tracking and assessment of ongoing interventions to ensure long-term safety improvements for women and girls.
3. Understanding Women's Experiences: Gain a nuanced understanding of women's lived experiences, emphasising the risks and challenges they face in the NTE. This is critical to forming solutions that are responsive to the actual condition's women face.
4. Identifying Key Safety Concerns: Pinpoint specific areas of vulnerability, including physical infrastructure, social behaviour, and institutional oversight, that may endanger women during evening and night-time activities.
5. Recommendations for Action: Provide concrete, actionable strategies that can be implemented by Westminster City Council and relevant stakeholders to address identified concerns and ensure a safer, more inclusive night-time environment.

Methodology

6.4 The audit's methodology is rooted in a multi-pronged research approach that seeks input from diverse sources to ensure a thorough understanding of women's safety challenges. The main methodologies used include:

6.5 Surveys were conducted on consumers, businesses, other stakeholders, people using the evening and night-time environment via on street interviews and overnight audits:

- A consumer survey attracted 255 respondents, of which 235 were considered valid for further analysis after filtering out respondents who had no direct experience of Westminster's NTE.
- A business survey gathered insights from 96 respondents, though only 57 of these respondents were actively involved in businesses operating within the NTE.
- Street Interviews: Conducted in March 2024, these interviews provided face-to-face engagement with 103 women to discuss their real-time experiences and perceptions of safety.
- Stakeholder Interviews: 11 detailed interviews with key stakeholders, including licensing officers, business improvement district (BID) representatives, and the Metropolitan Police, provided additional qualitative data on institutional and regulatory perspectives.
- Overnight Audits: Conducted on three separate occasions (in March and May 2024), these audits focused on specific areas of Westminster, including the West End and Victoria. The audits aimed to assess environmental factors affecting women's safety, such as lighting, security presence, and transport accessibility, by observing night-time conditions first-hand.

Context of the Evening and Night-Time Economy (NTE)

6.6 Westminster’s NTE is a critical part of the local economy, generating around £3 billion annually. The NTE includes pubs, nightclubs, restaurants, theatres, cinemas, music venues, and other public spaces like parks and squares. Despite its vibrancy, the NTE poses specific challenges for women, including risks associated with alcohol consumption, overcrowding, and crime.

6.7 In 2022, Westminster's NTE contributed significantly to the UK economy, both in terms of employment and revenue. However, safety issues in the NTE, particularly those related to women’s safety, need to be addressed to ensure the continued success and appeal of the area.

Key Findings

Usage and Public Perception:

6.8 The audit revealed distinct patterns in the usage of Westminster's NTE, with notable gender and demographic trends:

- Evening Usage: The early evening hours are typically dominated by women, families, and mixed-gender groups, particularly in restaurant settings. However, as the night progresses, the demographic shifts towards younger, predominantly male groups engaging in alcohol-led activities.
- Perceived Safety: Survey respondents (especially women) expressed concerns about safety after dark, with many highlighting drunk and rowdy behaviour, poor street lighting, and a lack of visible security as factors contributing to feelings of insecurity. This is especially pronounced after 9 p.m., when the NTE becomes more densely populated, and foot traffic decreases after midnight.
- Non-Alcohol Activities: While many respondents enjoy cultural activities such as theatre and dining, women expressed a desire for more non-alcoholic options, especially later into the night. The current landscape of Westminster's NTE is heavily alcohol-centric, limiting appeal for more diverse demographics, such as families and older adults.

Public Infrastructure:

6.9 The following results were found associated with public infrastructure during the evening and night-time.

- Lighting: The audit found significant inconsistencies in street lighting across Westminster, with areas like Carnaby Street and Regent Street being well-lit, while others—such as Leicester Square and Soho—remain poorly illuminated. Dark alleyways, unlit squares, and poorly maintained public amenities create environments where women feel unsafe, particularly when walking alone.
- Public Facilities: Public toilets, seating, and pedestrian infrastructure were found to be insufficient or poorly maintained in many areas. Public toilets are often closed at night, and the lack of visible, clean, and well-lit facilities increases the risk of anti-social behaviour, such as public urination, which exacerbates feelings of insecurity.
- Wayfinding and Signage: Survey respondents indicated that better street signage, clearer wayfinding, and enhanced CCTV coverage would significantly improve their sense of safety. The audit also noted that some public maps and signage were poorly illuminated or difficult to read, particularly after dark

Transportation:

6.10 Transportation emerged as one of the most critical concerns for women’s safety in Westminster:

- Preferred Modes of Transport: Women surveyed indicated that they feel safest using taxis or private cars late at night. Public transportation, especially walking and cycling, is perceived as less safe, with concerns about insufficient lighting, the presence of predatory behaviour, and overcrowded transport hubs.

- Pedicabs: Unregulated pedicabs were identified as a major safety risk, with numerous concerns raised about their involvement in illicit activities, including drug dealing. Pedicabs are often seen as unsafe, and respondents expressed the need for stricter regulations and oversight.
- Public Transport: Overcrowding on buses and the Tube, particularly late at night, contributes to feelings of insecurity. Women expressed concerns about unstaffed stations and the lack of a visible security presence at major transport hubs like Victoria and Leicester Square.

Crime and Safety:

6.11 Crime and safety concerns were seen as a significant concern, especially considering the increased levels of recorded crimes associated with sexual assault and other types of violence against women and girls during the evening and night-time.

- Crime Rates: Westminster has seen an increase in police-recorded crimes, especially theft, drug-related crimes, and alcohol-related violence. Sexual offences have also been a concern, though reports of such crimes have decreased slightly in recent years. Despite these declines, street harassment remains a persistent problem, with two-thirds of women in Westminster reporting personal experiences of harassment.
- Alcohol and Safety: There is a strong correlation between alcohol availability and violent crime in Westminster's NTE. Around 59% of violent crime in the borough is estimated to be alcohol-related, and this figure rises when considering sexual offences, where perpetrators and victims are often under the influence of alcohol.
- Safety Concerns: Respondents highlighted that after midnight, feelings of safety drop significantly. Poor lighting overcrowded public spaces, and the presence of drunk individuals were among the top factors contributing to insecurity. Homelessness and drug use, particularly in areas like Soho, were also highlighted as concerns.

Recommendations

6.12 The audit provides a robust set of recommendations designed to address the findings and ensure Westminster's NTE becomes safer, more inclusive, and more appealing to all. The recommendations are categorised based on importance, cost, and timescale for implementation:

Structural and Partnership Changes:

6.13 Working Group Formation: Establish an Night-time economy working group, which includes key stakeholders such as the Westminster BIDs, the Police, and local businesses, to coordinate safety improvements. This group would focus on implementing the audit's recommendations and track progress.

6.14 Licensing Reforms: A review of alcohol licensing, with an emphasis on reducing the concentration of all-day alcohol licenses, is recommended to

mitigate the risks posed by excessive alcohol consumption in Westminster's Night-time environment.

Infrastructure Improvements:

6.15 Lighting Enhancements: Immediate improvements in street lighting are critical, especially in poorly lit areas like Soho and Leicester Square. This includes upgrading existing lighting systems and installing new, creative lighting solutions in key public areas.

6.16 Public Toilet Management: Better signage and extended opening hours for public toilets, as well as regular maintenance and enhanced safety features (e.g., lighting, CCTV), are essential for making public spaces safer for women at night.

Transportation Safety:

6.17 Pedicab Regulation: Westminster should work with Transport for London (TfL) and other agencies to regulate pedicabs, including licensing, safety checks, and setting clear operational standards to prevent their misuse.

6.18 Dedicated Taxi Ranks and Pick-Up Points: The creation of well-lit, CCTV-monitored taxi ranks and designated Uber pick-up points will provide safer transport options for women and reduce the risk of encountering unlicensed or unsafe drivers.

Safety Campaigns and Initiatives:

6.19 Women's Safety Campaigns: Initiatives such as "It's Her City Too" should be expanded, with new campaigns aimed at raising awareness about women's safety, bystander intervention strategies, and anti-harassment policies.

6.20 Safe Spaces: More "safe spaces" should be established in Westminster's NTE, where women can seek refuge if they feel unsafe. These spaces should be clearly marked and easily accessible, particularly in busy nightlife areas like Soho.

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour:

6.21 CCTV Expansion: Increased CCTV coverage across crime hotspots is crucial for deterring criminal activity and providing evidence in cases of assault, theft, or harassment.

6.22 Increased Police Presence: A higher police presence in known problem areas, especially during peak hours on weekends, is essential. Training for security personnel and staff at nightlife venues should also be enhanced to better handle situations involving intoxicated individuals and potential violence.

Conclusion

6.23 The Westminster Women's Safety Audit offers a comprehensive evaluation of the safety challenges faced by women in Westminster's NTE. Its findings reveal that while Westminster is a thriving hub of nightlife and cultural activities, substantial improvements are needed to ensure that women feel safe and included when navigating its public spaces. By implementing the audit's recommendations, Westminster City Council and its partners can create a safer, more vibrant NTE that is inclusive and welcoming to all, regardless of gender, age, or background.

6.24 The audit serves as a crucial blueprint for making long-term improvements that will support Westminster's transformation into a global cultural destination, ensuring that women and girls can enjoy the city's nightlife free from fear or danger.

7. Summary of the Victoria Women's Safety Audit

7.1 Report produced by Night-time Economy Solutions on behalf of Westminster City Council as part of the Council's Night Safety Programme.

7.2 The Victoria Women's Safety Audit report, commissioned by Westminster City Council and Victoria Business Improvement District (BID), provides an in-depth analysis of women's safety in the Victoria area during evening and night-time hours. This comprehensive audit highlights both positive aspects and areas for improvement, offering detailed recommendations aimed at enhancing the safety and well-being of women and girls in Victoria. Below is an expanded summary of the key findings and recommendations based on the document:

Purpose and Aims

7.2 The primary goal of the Victoria Women's Safety Audit is to evaluate the safety conditions for women and girls in Victoria during the evening and night-time economy (NTE) hours. Similar to other safety audits in Westminster, this study seeks to assess how women navigate the public realm and how businesses, services, and infrastructure can be improved to create a safer environment.

7.3 The key objectives of the audit include:

- Assessing Women's Safety: Conduct a detailed evaluation of the specific risks and safety challenges that women face in Victoria's NTE, including how these risks differ for visitors, residents, and employees.
- Promoting Continuous Improvement: Establish a framework for ongoing safety enhancements, allowing for regular assessment and tracking of improvements based on recommendations.
- Understanding Women's Experiences: Gain a deep understanding of how women interact with the NTE in Victoria, including their perceptions of safety and the specific locations or interactions that present risks.
- Identifying Key Safety Concerns: Highlight the physical locations and social behaviours that pose significant risks to women's safety during night-time hours.
- Offering Targeted Recommendations: Provide actionable recommendations to all relevant stakeholders, including local businesses, public authorities, and security services, aimed at improving safety for women and girls in Victoria.

Methodology

7.4 The Victoria Women's Safety Audit utilised several research methods to gather data on the conditions of women's safety in Victoria, including:

- Overnight Audits: The audit was conducted on Saturday, May 20, 2023, and involved a thorough examination of public spaces, businesses, and transportation hubs during night-time hours. These audits provided insight into the effectiveness of existing safety measures and areas for potential improvement.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Input was gathered from local businesses, safety initiatives, and authorities such as Pubwatch and Super Pubwatch. These stakeholders were asked to provide insights on venue governance and the general safety protocols in place.
- Observational Analysis: The audit also involved observations of public infrastructure such as lighting, pedestrian routes, and overall activity in the area. This allowed the auditors to evaluate how well the existing infrastructure supports women's safety.

Key Findings

7.5 The audit revealed several critical findings that shape the overall picture of women's safety in Victoria. These findings are divided into several categories:

Venue Governance and Business Practices:

7.6 Inconsistent Venue Governance: The audit found disparities in how different venues manage their safety protocols. Some establishments displayed strong governance, with well-trained staff and robust safety measures, while others were poorly managed, with inactive or inadequately trained security personnel. This inconsistency can result in varying levels of safety for patrons, particularly women.

7.7 Training Deficiencies: One key issue identified was the lack of comprehensive safety training for venue staff. The report suggests that venues should enforce standardised training on conflict resolution, emergency procedures, and safety protocols for all employees, especially those working during night-time hours.

7.8 Engaging Businesses: Businesses in Victoria were found to be inadequately engaged with safety initiatives such as Pubwatch, leading to weaker safety enforcement in some venues. The audit underscores the need for greater collaboration between businesses, safety bodies, and local authorities to ensure that safety protocols are uniformly applied across all venues.

Homelessness and Public Safety:

7.9 Impact of Homelessness: Homelessness in public areas was highlighted as a major safety concern for women, especially in areas like Victoria Street and Lower Robert Street. The presence of homeless individuals, combined with poor lighting and a lack of public realm management, contributes to feelings of vulnerability among women, particularly at night.

7.10 Coordination of Outreach Programs: Efforts to address homelessness have faced challenges, including ineffective coordination between charities and the provision of services. Some charities were reluctant to cooperate in streamlined efforts, resulting in inconsistent assistance. Additionally, providing tents to the homeless has, in some cases, contributed to safety issues such as sexual assaults occurring within these makeshift shelters.

7.11 Lack of Enforcement: The absence of Public Safety Officers (PSOs) dedicated to homelessness issues has created enforcement gaps. The audit suggests considering community notices and better enforcement mechanisms to manage public spaces and provide support for vulnerable individuals.

Public Infrastructure and Urban Planning:

7.12 Poor Lighting and Underutilisation of Public Spaces: One of the most significant issues raised by the audit is the lack of adequate lighting in key areas like Christchurch Gardens and Lower Robert Street. Dimly lit or unlit areas create unsafe environments for women navigating these spaces at night.

7.13 Vibrancy and Engagement: Victoria's NTE was described as lacking vibrancy, with few options for evening activities. This sterile environment, compounded by the dominance of large commercial businesses and vacant properties, makes the area feel less inviting for women. The audit calls for diversifying evening activities and enhancing the public realm to foster a more engaging and secure atmosphere.

7.14 Waste Management Issues: Problems with waste collection, particularly around West End theatres, were identified. Waste bins were often left unattended, contributing to an unattractive and potentially unsafe environment.

Transportation and Movement:

7.15 Victoria Station's Role: Despite being one of the busiest transport hubs in the UK, Victoria Station and its surrounding areas lack engaging services and activities, leading to a quick dispersal of commuters and tourists. The station primarily serves as a commercial hub, and more efforts are needed to encourage longer stays and economic activity, particularly in the evening.

7.16 Pedestrian Safety: Certain shortcuts, such as those through car parks, are frequently used by pedestrians but are poorly lit, increasing the risk of crime. Areas like King's Scholar's Passage were identified as hotspots for criminal activity, including drug use and dealing.

Recommendations

7.17 The report presents a series of recommendations to address the findings and improve the safety of women in Victoria. These recommendations are structured by their importance, cost, and timescale for implementation.

Enhancing Venue Governance:

7.18 Training and Protocol Standardisation: All venues should implement standard safety protocols and ensure that staff receive comprehensive training on women's safety, conflict resolution, and emergency response. Regular safety audits and clear reporting systems should be established to ensure compliance.

7.19 Collaboration Between Stakeholders: Improved communication and coordination between local businesses, safety initiatives, and authorities like Pubwatch should be prioritised to create a unified approach to venue safety.

Addressing Homelessness and Public Safety:

7.20 Support Services: Strengthen collaboration with outreach programs and support services to address the needs of homeless individuals in a more organised and impactful manner. Urban planning strategies should be employed to transform areas prone to homelessness into safer, more vibrant spaces.

7.21 Public Safety Officers: The introduction of PSOs dedicated to homelessness and street-level concerns would provide more consistent enforcement and safety management.

Improving Public Infrastructure:

7.22 Lighting Upgrades: Immediate improvements to street lighting in areas such as Christchurch Gardens and Lower Robert Street are necessary. Creative lighting solutions could also be employed to make public spaces feel more welcoming and safe.

7.23 Revitalising Public Spaces: The report suggests transforming underutilised public spaces into vibrant hubs of activity. This includes developing diverse evening activities, enhancing walkways, and improving the visual appeal of areas like Victoria Street to encourage greater engagement.

7.24 Waste Management Overhaul: Regular waste collection and better management of public bins, particularly around theatres, are recommended to enhance the cleanliness and attractiveness of the area.

Transportation and Movement:

7.25 Safe Pedestrian Routes: Key pedestrian priority areas, including shortcuts through car parks, should be made safer with better lighting, signage, and CCTV coverage. In particular, King's Scholar's Passage requires a significant overhaul to reduce criminal activity and enhance safety.

7.26 Encouraging Longer Stays: The creation of diverse evening activities, such as events and cultural offerings, could help retain tourists and commuters in

Victoria longer, contributing to economic growth and a livelier, safer atmosphere.

Conclusion

7.28 The Victoria Women's Safety Audit provides a detailed examination of the safety challenges faced by women in Victoria during the evening and night-time economy. The report highlights the need for improvements in venue governance, public infrastructure, and engagement with homeless populations to create a more vibrant and secure environment. By implementing the report's recommendations, Westminster City Council and Victoria BID can enhance safety, making Victoria a more welcoming and inclusive destination for all.

8. Summary of Stakeholder Assembly Report

8.1 Report produced by Six till Six on behalf of Westminster City Council and partially funded via the Mayor of London's Business Friendly Licensing Fund.

8.2 Westminster City Council's Fairer Economy Plan commits to developing Westminster After Dark' – the Evening and Night-time Strategy for Westminster. The aim has been to bring together various stakeholders, each with their own interests, such as those that own a business here or that live, work in or visit the borough, to decide on a shared vision for the evening and night-time in Westminster. We hope that by ensuring all of these different groups are involved, the vision that is developed is one that feels right and fair to all. The outcomes of this assembly will help the council and our partners to develop a strategy that provides opportunity for all in a fair way."

8.3 Westminster is the hub of London's Evening and Night-Time (ENT) and plays a prominent role in shaping the capital's ENT landscape, being home to world-leading entertainment, dining, cultural and shopping experiences. It is a crucial part of the local economy with over 80,000 people employed in licensed premises in Westminster, contributing £3.7billion to the economy.

What's An Assembly?

8.4 An Assembly is an approach that brings together a diverse group of individuals, who are selected through specialist software to represent the social distribution of a given area. Members are invited to participate for a time-limited period to discuss and think about a clearly defined question and make recommendations on what should be done about a specific issue. The Westminster After Dark assembly was made up of a cross-section of residents, businesses, visitors, students and night workers.



8.5 The Assembly format enables this representative sample of the population to put forward a set of collective recommendations based on informed decision-making, focusing on the best outcome for the whole community, rather than the most popular or most frequently heard thoughts and suggestions.

The Question Considered

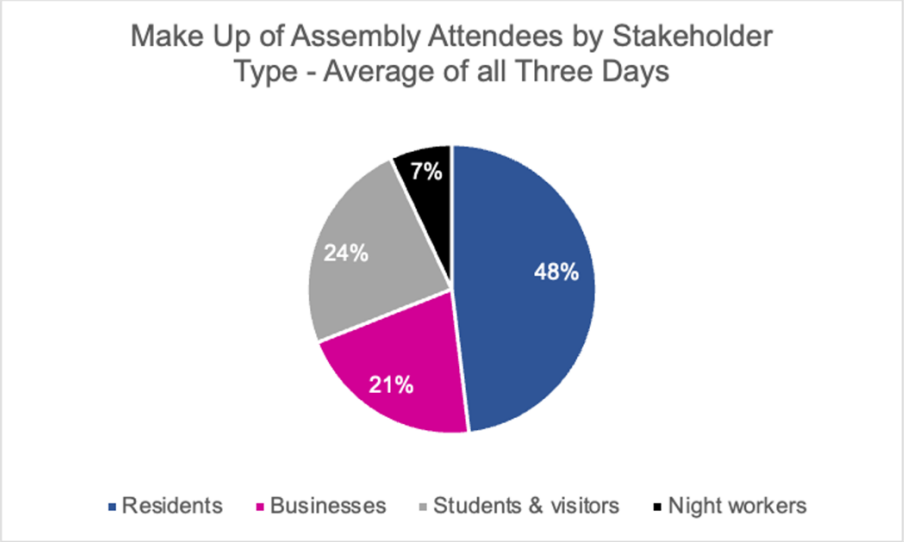
"How can we support and enhance Westminster's world class evening and night-time, whilst meeting the needs and aspirations of our residents, visitors and post-6pm working community?"

8.6 Four key Themes (Strategic Pillars) Were Explored

- Safe and Secure - *How can we improve safety and feelings of safety*
- Accessible and Positive Places - *How can we ensure Westminster's evening and night-time is accessible to all and provides a positive impression as a place.*
- Community and Culture - *How can we further empower and celebrate our diverse communities and culture*
- Economic Development and Opportunities - *How do we support the successful economic growth of Westminster's evening and night-time in a way that protects residents from adverse impacts.*

Assembly participants representative of Westminster

8.7 The following charts shows the make-up of the assembly members as an average across all three days.



	Invited		Day 1 actual		Day 2 actual		Day 3 actual		
Stakeholder type	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	No.	% of total	Ave each day
Resident	25	50.0%	21	48.8%	21	51.2%	20	47.6%	20.7
Business	13	26.0%	11	25.6%	8	19.5%	8	19.0%	9
Student/visitor	12	24.0%	11	25.6%	9	22.0%	11	26.2%	10.3
Night worker	5	10.0%	3	7.0%	3	7.3%	3	7.1%	3
Total	**55**		**46**		**41**		**42**		**43**

Ethnicity			Gender		
	Invited	Actual		Invited	Actual
White	46%	36% (17/47)	Female	43%	49% (23/47)
Global Majority	51%	38% (18/47)	Male	51%	36% (17/47)
Other / Mixed	6%	15% (7/47)	Identify as other	6%	2% (1/47)
Prefer not to say / N/A	0%	11% (5/47)	Prefer not to say / N/A	0%	13% (6/47)
Sexuality			Disability		
	Invited	Actual		Invited	Actual
Straight / Heterosexual	71%	58% (27/47)	No disability	66%	66% (31/47)
LGBTQI+	17%	19% (9/47)	Yes, limited a little	26%	15 % (7/47)
Prefer not to say / N/A	12%	23% (11/47)	Yes, limited a lot	6%	4% (2/47)
Age			Prefer not to say / N/A	2%	15 % (7/47)
	Invited	Actual	Faith		
Under 18	14%	4% (2/47)		Invited	Actual
18-24	6%	11%* (5/47)	Christian	37%	34% (16/47)
25-34	20%	21% (10/47)	Muslim	14%	9% (4/47)
35-44	20%	19% (9/47)	Hindu	3%	2% (1/47)
45-54	11%	17% (8/47)	Jewish	3%	4% (2/47)
55-64	20%	4% (2/47)	Other	3%	4% (2/47)
65-74	6%	13% (6/47)	No religion	29%	28% (13/47)

75+	3%	2% (1/47)	Prefer not to say / N/A	11%	19% (9/47)
Prefer not to say / N/A	0%	9% (4/47)	*Worker age question was 0-34		

8.8 The Stakeholder Assembly was conducted over three consecutive Saturdays. The following outline sets out what was covered on each of the days.



The Assembly's Vision

8.9 Three proposed visions were presented to the Assembly. These were discussed, debated and refined, resulting in the following vision put forward by the Assembly:

"To ensure all who visit, study, live, work or invest in Westminster have a voice and feel listened to, safe and supported, whilst providing facilities and opportunities after 6pm that maintain its status as a global destination, offering a unique, vibrant, culturally rich and positive experience for all."

8.10 The vision is supported by the following overarching principles, agreed by a majority of the participants:

1. Ongoing collaboration between all stakeholders becomes our way of working.
2. Communication helps prevent frustrations from escalating.
3. Westminster belongs to us all. We are lucky to have this gift to share and can expect everyone who shares in it to treat it with respect.
4. We recognise the needs and aspirations in each area of the borough may be different.
5. Mediation, collaboration and compromise need to be considered to find balance.
6. When people come to London, they come to Westminster. It needs to cater for diversity and be open to all people, regardless of capability and background.
7. The views of organisations and individuals should be valued, recognised, respected and catered for in a balanced way, seeking representative and proportionate decision-making and consultation, rather than just those of the loudest and most active voices and groups.

8.11 The principles and actions below were agreed upon by a majority of assembly participants for each theme.

Safe and Secure principles and actions

Principle 1: Everyone can play a part in making Westminster safer.

Actions
Connect all organisations open after 6pm with opportunities to improve the effectiveness and speed of their response to harassment and other safety concerns.
Greater collaboration is needed between all organisations operating between 6pm and 6am to join up and identify opportunities to amplify each other's work to improve safety.

Work collaboratively with partner organisations and the private sector, such as door teams, to identify opportunities to increase uniformed presence at night.
Create easy opportunities for anyone to gain the knowledge and skills needed to support potential victims when witnessing an incident without compromising their own safety, effectively creating a larger community of “better bystanders” in Westminster.
Adopt an early intervention approach through education and behavioural change campaigns aimed at reducing negative behaviours towards women and communicating what is acceptable and what is not.
Direct efforts and activity at targeting behaviour and driving change amongst perpetrators or potential perpetrators, rather than victims or potential victims.
Explore options with the relevant BIDs and other partners to address the higher levels of crime and ASB that can occur in the locations that do not have a BID in place.

Principle 2: Safety is important for all, and the challenges facing different groups are higher**.**

Actions
Strive towards continually improving safety and feelings of safety for women and girls.
Research the reasons why other communities may feel unsafe, for example LGBTQ+, Black, Asian, youth, the elderly, those with specific needs - and explore solutions.
Review approaches to begging prevention, including addressing root causes, to identify any further work that could be achieved.
Improve promotion and availability of services supporting vulnerable people including substance abusers, rough sleepers and those involved in prostitution or who are subject to modern slavery or who have been trafficked. These issues need to be more fully understood in Westminster to ensure responses are effective.

Principle 3: Publicity, prevention and action are all important to improve safety and feelings of safety.

Actions
Promote and educate people on what constitutes/can be reported as crime or ASB, how exactly to report these issues, what can be expected after they

have been reported and how to escalate the concerns if satisfactory action has not been taken.
Actively promote how the evening and night time is policed, to enhance understanding by everyone in the community.
Partners in Westminster should communicate better with neighbouring boroughs to ensure a coordinated approach to safety. Data transparency between boroughs should be explored as part of this work.

Principle 4: The public realm after dark needs to feel safer.

Actions
Ensure CCTV is in place in public areas of Westminster such as on-street and on the tube network to enable effective monitoring of all areas where this is required, and that it is monitored and working.
Review lighting options in dark areas to improve safety and feelings of safety, especially where people go running or park bikes, and around parks.
Explore simple measures that can improve feelings of safety and feelings of safety at night, e.g. lit shop fronts, no roller shutters, avoiding big disparities in lighting levels, providing people with whistles.
Consider the impact of developments on safety - e.g. Paddington Basin development being locked at 10pm forces pedestrians to use surrounding poorly lit streets.

Principle 5: Travel and transport at night should feel safe and be safe.

Actions
Review transport link improvements with a focussed and needs-based approach, e.g. targeting currently irregular evening and night time provision.
Consider how to improve passenger safety and feelings of safety for evening and night time journeys, including the very end part to our front doors, which can often feel the least safe part.
Make transport affordable, to ensure that people do not make travel choices which compromise safety, for example walking home alone at night.

Principle 6: Safety initiatives are widely adopted and promoted.

Actions

Effective promotion, elevated visibility and better clarity on the safety schemes available is needed, to ensure they are known about, their specific purpose is understood, and they are used by any who needs to use them.
Promote the positive effect that operating safety schemes such as Ask for Angela and/or being spike aware have on customer confidence and driving consumer behaviour, to encourage even more businesses to operate them and embed ongoing staff training programmes on these schemes.
Identify best practice safety initiatives from other locations to explore what else could be adopted in Westminster.
Lend full weight to the excellent Safe Havens initiative through promotion, a recruitment drive for more sign ups, by identifying and removing any barriers to signing up and actively seeking out different types of spaces that could be Safe Havens e.g. stations.

Accessible and Positive Places principles and actions

Principle 7: Westminster is inclusive, diverse and accessible.

Actions
Support access to equality, diversity and inclusion training for all organisations and all roles. The welcome on the door is a particularly important element in this ambition.
Continue to promote Westminster as a destination that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion, specifically highlighting any work carried out on this agenda.
Identify a senior individual to act as an accessibility advocate for Westminster, ensuring this agenda has an ongoing, consistent focus.

Principle 8: Public spaces are positive places to be.

Actions
Lighting should be well considered as to how it makes a space feel at night, and how it helps users to navigate the city after dark whilst being mindful of environmental impacts.
Seasonality affects how accessible and positive Westminster is and this should be considered - for example, in winter light could be used more effectively at night to highlight Westminster's key features and encourage a broader range of uses, for example by enabling families to use playgrounds after dark.

Consider how appropriate and maintained toilet provision could be made available to avoid street urination issues and how streets can be kept clean more consistently.
Review availability of public bins and increase on-street recycling opportunities to reduce litter, as well as positioning of bins on pavements to address people having to walk on the road.
Identify opportunities to address the issue of narrow pavements, which can create a stressful pedestrian experience. Consider pedestrian priority streets or restricting cars where this is possible.
Thought should be given as to how to support wayfinding and signposting safe routes appropriately after dark.
There is a need for more green spaces and more accessible spaces at night, including outdoor seating. Thoughtful uses of small spaces such as flower beds, bike racks and benches should be pursued.

Principle 9: Buildings and spaces are appealing and accessible.

Actions
Open historic buildings and other spaces in Westminster further into the evening and night. Ensure all diversity and accessibility needs to these spaces are supported as much as possible, including the provision of disabled toilets and baby changing facilities.
Make more information about the accessibility of Westminster and its spaces available online, being mindful of digital exclusion.
Support event organisers and venues to create space and activities tailored for neurodiverse people and those with different access needs.
Many kerbs are steep drops; flattening them would help avoid falls/injuries and assist safer cycling.

Principle 10: Public transport is a viable option for everyone.

Action
Ensure all public transport is more regular at night, runs later and is accessible to all - physically and economically, and expand the current provision to provide public transport options to currently unserved locations.
Identify improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure (lighting etc.) to facilitate active travel after dark.

Capitalise on the potential to grow the night tube network, being mindful of impacts such as noise from trains and people entering and leaving the stations. The Elizabeth Line may be a good place to start.

Principle 11: On-street issues and nuisance are dealt with effectively and at the earliest opportunity.

Actions
Improve current reporting mechanisms, ensuring that it is clear how to report each type of concern, that response times and actions taken are improved, and that outcomes are visible and reported back to the complainant.
Educate everyone on the way issues are prioritised by the statutory partners, e.g. if an issue is ongoing, it is best to keep reporting it as this provides the evidence that it needs attention.

Community and culture principles and actions

Principle 12: Community and cultural activities are well promoted.

Actions
Improve the promotion and awareness of community and cultural events and how people can get involved, to make sure everyone feels included.
Better promotion of local groups and businesses.
Improve multi-channel communication and engagement with young people including through social media.
Develop appropriate communication opportunities to promote Westminster's cultural offer, ensuring organisations and groups are able to contribute content for inclusion and promotion.

Principle 13: Spaces meet the needs of all sections of the community.

Actions
Support the availability of indoor and outdoor spaces to meet the needs of all sections of the community and consider empowering volunteer investment.
Utilise empty spaces better and streamline processes to enable people to use space for these events. Appointing a dedicated co-ordinator for community investment would assist with this.

A creative approach to finding spaces for the community and to hold events is needed - for example rooftops, commercial or public buildings not currently open or underused post 6pm e.g. libraries. Engaging property owners e.g. Church of England, Crown Estate, Grosvenor Estate.
Balancing the sharing of space across different users - for example, spaces and experiences for families, youth, tourists, different communities and cultures.
Identify barriers to young people and community groups and explore how these can be reduced, to encourage emerging promoters and creatives to put on events.

Principle 14: Community and culture is inclusive and accessible to all.

Actions
Communities should have their own spaces that they can flourish in - greater awareness of what is available is needed.
Youth engagement and provision of opportunities are paramount to create a lasting sense of community and culture.
Financial accessibility to culture and to the community should be carefully considered, especially now that Arts Council England has prioritised investment outside of London.
Going cashless needs careful consideration so as to not prevent anyone accessing the evening and night time.
Identify ways to spread cultural and community events into areas outside of Soho and the West End and identify spaces in which these activities can be hosted, ensuring they are accessible to the community both physically and financially.

<u>Economic development and opportunities principles and actions</u>

Principle 15: Curate spaces and opportunities within Westminster for the benefit of all.

Actions
Explore potential to audit empty units with landowners to understand why they’re empty, incentivise these being put back into use and identify alternative uses e.g. small business pop ups, start up opportunities.
Create a registry of social enterprises and other businesses and their needs to match them to avenues of support for their needs, e.g. if they need space, aim to match them to empty units.

Consider how to address financial barriers to engagement with the cultural offer e.g. a discount scheme for residents, young people, tourists and other groups.
Economic development and opportunities need to be considered borough-wide, including noise and disruption of developments, with specific approaches taken for specific areas – it's not just Soho.
Planning should add more social value to the area.
Review how developments and opportunities could be communicated and consulted on to secure a more balanced, representative range of views from the wider community, rather than the loudest groups and individuals.
Include the youth voice in conversations about developing Westminster as a place.
More collaboration between residents, businesses and the council, including more co-produced space, would support innovation.
Identify ways to celebrate and reflect the history, community and culture of Westminster in the offer.
An exclusive benefits and discounts scheme for residents in the borough could further cement positive relationships with the evening and night time.
Consider how upskilling and education opportunities could be made available in the evening and at night, for example with workshops to learn new skills.

Principle 16: Support businesses in the borough to flourish and strengthen relationships between businesses and residents, enhancing mutual understanding.

Action
Improve engagement with businesses by fostering a business network across the borough with opportunities to share ideas and best practice and learn from businesses outside of Westminster.
Consider how mediation and brokering open communication could be used to facilitate better conversations amongst different groups and achieve

swifter and more positive outcomes to any issues, applying compromise and fairness to everyone concerned.
Support businesses to upskill their staff in appropriate topics and provide employment, apprenticeship and mentoring opportunities.
Encourage markets to be open later, working in close partnership with any local residents to ensure any impacts of noise and cleaning are mitigated.
Recognise that the level and type of noise and other adverse impacts varies based on many factors and seek tailored rather than blanket approaches to reduce these where necessary.
Aim to achieve balance through a vibrant, appealing, diverse offer with levels of activity that lend themselves to making all feel welcome and safe, without unfairly impacting on residents and other neighbours such as neighbouring businesses.

Principle 17: New concepts and ideas are encouraged and made possible.

Action
We should support innovation and diversification to keep the offer fresh, inclusive and vibrant with an increased focus on health. For example, more support for independents, encouraging low and no alcohol, healthy options and arts and cultural spaces.
SWAD Summary of engagement findings- V1.1 KS July 24treamline application processes required to do business, to reduce the administrative burden. Planning and licensing in particular should go hand in hand.
Consider how business rates incentives could be used to encourage small businesses to start up and to become well established, increasing the diversity of the offer.
Cater for young people, different cultures and communities - Westminster belongs to everyone.
Supporting local people, such as local artists, to benefit from opportunities in Westminster should be a focus.

9. Analysis of key findings from all engagement sources

9.1 The Westminster After Dark engagement process has brought together a broad spectrum of stakeholders to provide insight into the development of Westminster's night-time strategy. The consultation was designed to capture diverse perspectives from residents, visitors, businesses, cultural advocates, and workers, addressing the multifaceted nature of Westminster's evening and night-time economy. As the city continues to grow as a global destination for culture, leisure, and commerce, this engagement process has sought to understand the key priorities and concerns of those who live, work, and visit Westminster after dark.

9.2 This analysis of the engagement findings is structured around four strategic pillars: Safe and Secure, Accessible and Positive Places, Community and Culture, and Economic Development and Opportunities. Each theme represents a core element of the night-time economy, encapsulating the essential areas of safety, inclusivity, vibrancy, and growth that are critical to Westminster's long-term vision.

9.3 The following report synthesises feedback from a range of engagement methods, including surveys, public consultations, in-person discussions, and stakeholder assemblies. The findings reflect areas of broad agreement, as well as points of divergence, where conflicting views on Westminster's future after dark have emerged. This analysis not only identifies key areas of consensus but also highlights the complexities of balancing economic vitality with residents' quality of life, promoting cultural diversity, and ensuring safety and accessibility across the borough.

9.4 The insights gathered from this engagement process will play a critical role in shaping the Westminster After Dark strategy, ensuring that it is inclusive, reflective of community needs, and positioned to create a thriving and dynamic night-time environment for all.

Safe and Secure

9.6 <u>Key Findings:</u>

- Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB): Crime, particularly drug dealing, anti-social behaviour, and theft, are top concerns raised by stakeholders, especially in high-footfall areas like Soho, Covent Garden, and Edgware Road. Drug-related activity is particularly worrying, with residents reporting a sense of insecurity, exacerbated by rising petty crime (e.g., phone snatching) and increased levels of street harassment.
- Lighting and CCTV: Poor lighting and insufficient CCTV coverage were widely mentioned. Areas around Soho, Leicester Square, and Edgware Road were noted for their poorly lit streets, which contribute to residents' and visitors' fears. Better lighting in public spaces, particularly around

public toilets and alleyways, is a recurring suggestion. Stakeholders also recommended expanding CCTV coverage in high-crime areas, specifically as a deterrent to ASB.

- Noise Pollution: Noise is a key issue for residents, particularly from late-night venues, vehicles (e.g., pedicabs and rickshaws), and groups of intoxicated people. Areas like Soho and Covent Garden are frequently cited as being overly noisy, with repeated complaints about the disruptive nature of these activities on residents' sleep and peace.
- Police Presence: There is a perceived lack of visible police presence at night, particularly in hotspots like Victoria, Leicester Square, and Edgware Road. Many respondents believe that an increased police presence would deter crime and improve feelings of safety. Business owners, in particular, express concerns about staff safety due to the prevalence of shoplifting and violent confrontations with customers.

9.6 Stakeholders' Focus:

- Residents: Residents are especially focused on improving security and reducing ASB. They frequently mentioned feeling unsafe after dark, particularly due to rising crime and noise levels. Their recommendations focus on increased police patrols, more CCTV, and better street lighting, particularly in residential areas near nightlife hubs like Soho and Covent Garden. They also want stricter enforcement of noise regulations, particularly on licensed premises.
- Businesses: Business owners, particularly those in the hospitality and entertainment sectors, are concerned about the impact of ASB on both their customers and staff. While they support measures to improve safety, such as increased police presence and better lighting, they are wary of overly strict noise regulations and licensing restrictions, which they fear could stifle the vibrancy of areas like Soho and Carnaby Street. They argue that late-night activities are crucial to Westminster’s economy and cultural scene.
- Visitors: Visitors share concerns about personal safety, particularly the risk of theft and harassment. They highlighted the need for more pedestrian priority areas, which they believe would reduce traffic-related dangers and create safer, more welcoming spaces for visitors to enjoy Westminster after dark.

9.7 Areas of Agreement:

- Safety Enhancements: There is broad agreement across all stakeholder groups on the need for enhanced safety measures. Residents, businesses, and visitors all support the expansion of police patrols, CCTV, and improved street lighting, particularly in high-crime areas like Soho, Covent Garden, and Edgware Road. These measures are seen as essential for creating a safer, more enjoyable environment after dark.
- Pedestrianisation: There is strong support for pedestrian priority streets in key areas like Soho and Oxford Street. Stakeholders believe this would reduce traffic congestion, make the areas safer for pedestrians, and create more opportunities for outdoor dining and cultural events.

9.8 Conflicting Views:

- Residents vs. Businesses: Residents are highly concerned about noise and ASB, particularly in areas with a high concentration of licensed venues. They seek stricter licensing enforcement and closing times to reduce noise and disturbances. Business owners, on the other hand, argue that late-night venues are essential for economic vibrancy. They fear that over-regulation could harm Westminster's night-time economy, particularly in Soho, which is famous for its nightlife.
- LGBTQ+ Advocates vs. Residents: Cultural advocates, particularly from the LGBTQ+ community, want to preserve the vibrant, inclusive nightlife of areas like Soho. They are concerned that efforts to reduce noise and enforce stricter policing could stifle the unique character of Soho, which is seen as a cultural hub for the LGBTQ+ community. Residents, however, feel that the rowdiness and disruption of nightlife activities are negatively affecting their quality of life.

Accessible and Positive Places

9.9 Key Findings:

- Pedestrianisation and Traffic Management: There is strong support for pedestrian priority streets, particularly in Soho, Oxford Street, and Covent Garden, where vehicular traffic poses safety risks, especially after dark. Many respondents advocate for expanding pedestrian zones, which would reduce congestion and allow for more outdoor seating and cultural activities. However, some stakeholders raised concerns about the impact of pedestrian priority streets on access to public transport and late-night workers who rely on taxis or private vehicles.
- Public Amenities: The lack of public toilets, seating, and well-maintained public spaces is a significant issue for both residents and visitors. Toilet facilities were described as inadequate, poorly maintained, or closed at night, contributing to public urination problems, particularly in Soho. Stakeholders are calling for the council to install more well-lit, clean toilets that remain open during the night.
- Cleanliness and Public Spaces: Many stakeholders expressed concerns about the cleanliness of Westminster's streets, particularly in Soho and Covent Garden, where littering, graffiti, and the smell of urine are common complaints. There is a desire for cleaner, safer public spaces that are accessible to everyone, including families and people with disabilities.

9.10 Stakeholders' Focus:

- Residents: Residents are focused on the need for cleaner, safer public spaces and better public amenities, particularly in high-traffic areas like Soho and Covent Garden. They want more pedestrian priority streets to reduce noise and improve safety, but they are also concerned that too much outdoor seating could exacerbate noise issues.

- Visitors: Visitors share many of the same concerns as residents but are particularly focused on improving accessibility. They want more pedestrian priority areas, cleaner streets, and better-maintained public toilets. Visitors also suggested that more seating areas and green spaces would improve their experience of Westminster after dark.
- Workers: Night-time workers expressed concerns about the availability of transport and clean, safe public spaces where they can take breaks. They support pedestrian priority streets but are keen on ensuring that public transport remains accessible, especially for those who work late hours.

9.11 Areas of Agreement:

- Pedestrianisation: There is strong agreement across residents, visitors, and workers that pedestrian priority streets would improve safety and enhance the night-time atmosphere. Areas like Soho, Oxford Street, and Covent Garden are seen as key targets for pedestrian priority streets, which stakeholders believe would help reduce traffic and create a more pleasant environment for cultural and social activities.
- Public Amenities: All stakeholder groups agree on the need for more public toilets, seating, and cleaner public spaces. The current state of public amenities is seen as insufficient, and there is widespread support for improving their availability and condition to make Westminster more welcoming after dark.

9.12 Conflicting Views:

- Residents vs. Businesses: Businesses generally support outdoor seating as it contributes to a lively night-time economy. However, residents, particularly in Soho, are concerned that this could lead to more noise and disruption, particularly late at night. Residents want stricter controls on outdoor seating to prevent further disturbances.
- Transport vs. Pedestrianisation: While most stakeholders support pedestrian priority streets, there are concerns about how it might affect late-night transport. Night-time workers and visitors who rely on taxis or private vehicles fear that pedestrian priority streets could limit access to key areas, particularly after public transport shuts down.

Community and Culture

9.13 Key Findings:

- Cultural Diversity: Westminster's diverse cultural offerings, particularly in Soho and the West End, are highly valued by all stakeholder groups. There is broad support for promoting cultural inclusivity, with calls for more non-alcoholic venues, family-friendly activities, and cultural events that cater to a wider range of demographics. However, stakeholders expressed concerns that Soho's character has shifted post-COVID, becoming more tourist-oriented and less reflective of its historic role as a cultural hub for the LGBTQ+ community.

- Inclusivity: Stakeholders from marginalised groups, including the LGBTQ+ community and Global Majority residents, want to see more support for inclusive cultural spaces and community-driven events. There are calls for the development of more culturally sensitive programming, particularly in areas like Church Street, Harrow Road, and Westbourne Park, which are often overlooked in Westminster's night-time cultural offerings.
- Cultural Shift: While many stakeholders appreciate the vibrancy of Soho's nightlife, there is concern that it has become more commercialised and less inclusive, particularly for local communities. Some residents feel that Soho has lost its local character, shifting from an LGBTQ+ hub to a tourist-driven destination.

9.14 Stakeholders' Focus:

- Cultural Advocates: Cultural stakeholders, particularly from the LGBTQ+ community, want to preserve the historic and cultural significance of areas like Soho. They are concerned that increased regulation (e.g., noise restrictions and policing) could stifle the area's inclusive atmosphere. There is strong support for more non-alcoholic venues and inclusive events that cater to a diverse audience, particularly during late-night hours.
- Residents: Some residents, particularly those in Soho, are concerned that the area's cultural shift towards tourism has come at the expense of the local community. They are calling for more family-friendly activities and community-driven events that would cater to a broader range of people, including older residents and families.
- Businesses: Business owners in Soho and Carnaby Street recognise the need to maintain the area's unique cultural identity, but they also support efforts to attract tourists and boost the local economy. They want a balance between preserving local culture and promoting economic growth.

9.15 Areas of Agreement:

- Cultural Inclusivity: There is broad agreement on the need to promote cultural inclusivity and create a more diverse range of cultural offerings. Residents, cultural advocates, and business owners all support the expansion of family-friendly and non-alcoholic venues, as well as more culturally sensitive programming that reflects the diversity of Westminster's communities.

9.16 Conflicting Views:

- LGBTQ+ Advocates vs. Residents: LGBTQ+ advocates want to preserve the vibrant, inclusive nightlife of areas like Soho, which has long been a cultural hub for the LGBTQ+ community. They are concerned that increased policing and noise restrictions could diminish the area's character. Meanwhile, residents feel that the commercialisation of Soho has made it less liveable, with increasing noise and crowds detracting from their quality of life.

Economic Development and Opportunities

9.17. Key Findings:

- Economic Vitality: Westminster's night-time economy is viewed as a critical driver of growth, particularly in the hospitality, entertainment, and tourism sectors. Areas like Soho and Carnaby Street are seen as crucial to the local economy, with businesses advocating for extended operating hours and flexible licensing to attract more visitors and boost spending.
- Balancing Growth with Quality of Life: Stakeholders recognise the need to balance economic growth with the quality of life for local residents. While business owners want to expand late-night activities to increase revenue, residents are concerned that extended operating hours will lead to more noise, ASB, and disruption.

9.18. Stakeholders' Focus:

- Business Owners: Business owners are keen on expanding late-night venues and promoting pedestrian priority streets to encourage more foot traffic and spending. They support flexible licensing practices and are concerned that overly strict regulations could harm Westminster's reputation as a global destination for nightlife and entertainment.
- Residents: Residents, particularly in Soho and Covent Garden, want stricter controls on licensing and operating hours to reduce noise and disruption. They feel that Westminster's night-time economy should be managed in a way that does not negatively impact their quality of life.

9.19. Areas of Agreement:

- Economic Growth: Both business owners and residents agree that economic growth is important, but they differ on the best way to achieve it. There is broad support for pedestrian priority streets and outdoor seating as ways to enhance the night-time experience, but these initiatives must be carefully managed to avoid negative impacts on residents.

9.20. Conflicting Views:

- Businesses vs. Residents: Business owners support flexible licensing and extended operating hours, while residents want stricter controls to limit noise and ASB. Businesses fear that strict regulations could harm their ability to attract visitors and remain competitive, while residents worry that too much focus on economic growth will degrade their quality of life.

Conclusion

9.21 The findings from the Westminster After Dark engagement process provide invaluable insight into the diverse needs, expectations, and concerns of those who live, work, and visit Westminster after dark. Throughout the engagement, while there are common aspirations for a safer, more accessible, and vibrant night-time economy, there are also significant challenges in balancing the sometimes-competing priorities of different stakeholders.

9.22 Across all themes, there is widespread agreement on the need to enhance safety and security, particularly through better lighting, increased police presence, and the expansion of CCTV in high-risk areas. These safety concerns were echoed by all groups, though the specific areas of focus, ranging from drug-related ASB to noise pollution, differ depending on whether respondents were residents, business owners, or visitors. However, the consistent call for improved safety measures underscores the importance of addressing this issue comprehensively.

9.23 The desire for accessible and positive public spaces is another area of consensus, with stakeholders advocating for cleaner streets, more public amenities, and pedestrian priority streets to create a more welcoming night-time environment. However, conflicts arise around the balance between economic development and residential peace, with residents concerned about the impact of extended opening hours and increased outdoor seating, while businesses push for a more flexible regulatory approach to boost economic vibrancy.

9.24 When it comes to community and culture, the findings highlight the importance of preserving Westminster's unique cultural identity, especially in areas like Soho, which plays a vital role as a hub for the LGBTQ+ community and other diverse cultural groups. Yet, there are also concerns that the character of Westminster's night-time economy is shifting toward a more tourist-driven focus, potentially marginalising local communities and their cultural contributions.

9.25 Finally, the theme of economic development and opportunities reveals the competing priorities between those who champion Westminster's growth as a global cultural and economic hub and those who advocate for protecting the quality of life for residents. Business owners are eager to maintain and grow the late-night economy, while residents seek stricter licensing regulations to mitigate noise and ASB. Finding a balance between these perspectives will be key to ensuring that Westminster's night-time economy remains both economically vibrant and socially responsible.

9.26 In conclusion, the engagement process has highlighted both the opportunities and tensions within Westminster's evening and night-time economy. Moving forward, the challenge will be to create a Westminster After Dark strategy that accommodates these varied perspectives, fostering safety, inclusivity, cultural vibrancy, and economic growth, while addressing the legitimate concerns of the borough's residents. By integrating these insights into the strategy, Westminster can evolve into an internationally renowned destination that remains welcoming, vibrant, and sustainable for all who live, work, and play after dark.

City of Westminster

Westminster After Dark: Analysis and summary of stakeholder engagement

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