

Covent Garden Alfresco Framework and Guidelines

DRAFT

Purpose and Background

Covent Garden is a world-renowned destination, recognised for its historic character, vibrant atmosphere and long-established reputation for high-quality experiences enjoyed by both Londoners and tourists alike.

The Piazza at the centre of Covent Garden (London's first planned square) takes both its arcades and name from Italy and was commissioned in the 1630s by the 4th Earl of Bedford. Originally a convent garden belonging to Westminster Abbey, the Piazza was laid out and designed by Inigo Jones and is partly inspired by the Place des Vosges in Paris, completed in 1605. Built in 1830, the Market Building was London's main fruit and vegetable market for many years, now re-imagined as a speciality shopping centre for the past 40 years.

Today, that beautiful historic setting contains a mix of high-quality retail, food & beverage and cultural institutions, attracting many millions of visitors each year and makes a strong contribution to the economic wellbeing of the West End. It is also home to a residential and office community who live and work here because of its vibrancy and dynamism.

With its large number of pedestrian friendly streets and world-renowned Piazza, Covent Garden has gained a reputation as a place to enjoy an exceptional alfresco experience.

Shaftesbury Capital (SHC) as the majority landowner provides extensive stewardship services to the district ensuring high standards of security, cleanliness, greening and maintenance and supplements these services by employing Westminster City Inspectors since 2008.

During Covid Shaftesbury Capital developed a detailed framework and guidelines for the delivery of best-in-class, well managed, alfresco dining, which as a consequence saw alfresco dining extend past the Covid years, unlike some other parts of London. Those guidelines and strict operational management controls, enforced by Shaftesbury Capital and Westminster City Council (WCC), ensures a vibrant offer that respects residential and office amenity.

Maintaining outstanding, carefully managed alfresco spaces helps preserve Covent Garden's distinctive identity and ensures it continues to meet the expectations of the millions who visit each year and ensures its long term success in the face of increasing competition from around London. Alfresco dining has always been a strong feature of the Covent Garden offer but since Covid, demand for this style of dining from customers appears to be much greater. This was evidenced by the overwhelming support for the continuation of the Covid alfresco dining scheme in Covent Garden in the [2021 WCC consultation](#).

As a responsible landowner we are keen to ensure Covent Garden provides the high-quality offer and level of customer service that visitors demand, and now expect, from their visitor experience. This is even more important given the competitive landscape across Central London offering consumers extensive choice with respect to where they choose to spend their time and money. Part of the customer service offer is protecting customers from theft from tables and seating, known as table surfing. Screens and planters play a part in this, for example, in 2025 there were just 3 recorded incidents of table surfing reported by our tenants in central Covent Garden.

In a post- Covid world, and having trialled a new alfresco provision on the South Piazza and which will shortly also be seen in Henrietta St, Shaftesbury Capital feels it is time to replace the Covid guidelines with an updated evolving framework that supports the needs of operators in providing the high levels of service expected by an ever more demanding customer.

Whilst the guidelines set out are primarily for our tenants, the cooperation of all operators of alfresco in the district would be greatly appreciated. We believe that a unified and cohesive operating standard is beneficial for everybody in the district. A supplementary guideline document specifically for SHC tenants will follow this consultation.

Alfresco dining is an important component of an F&B offer by signalling that food and drink is available and also provides an opportunity for customers to rest, extends dwell times and provides a relaxed external environment for people to enjoy the beautiful surroundings and car free environment Covent Garden is now known for. Alfresco dining is an important aspect of inclusivity providing opportunities for access to high quality dining for every customer and especially where historic buildings may present challenges in accessibility and so access to external dining areas may be much simpler for a customer with particular needs

As customer requirements change over time it is anticipated that these guidelines will be regularly reviewed so they remain relevant.

We do not feel that all alfresco across Covent Garden should be identical in look and feel and except in some cases, should reflect the personality of the operator, provided these broad guidelines are followed and a high standard look and feel is maintained within the context of the Conservation Area.

The below map demonstrates which properties are within SHC ownership. This map is accurate at the time of writing. However, is subject to change as the portfolio evolves.

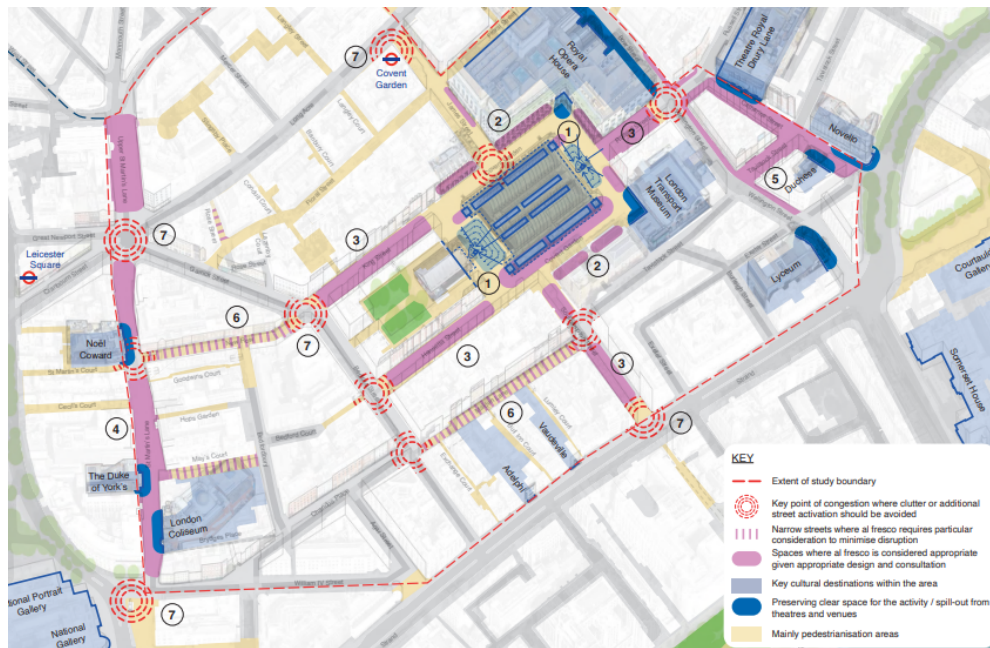


Published by WCC in 2022, Covent Garden Public Realm Framework which recognises the importance of a high quality trading and living environment, provides support for alfresco and greening and included a

detailed look at alfresco provision and can be found here-

https://www.westminster.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/Covent_Garden_Public_Realm_Framework-Feb2022-Screen_0.pdf. Greening is generally supported by SHC indeed it operates its own team of gardeners to look after its own, significant planting. Greening as part of alfresco dining helps with look and feel and supports wellbeing and biodiversity.

The below is an extract from the 2022 Covent Garden Public Realm Framework showing areas that WCC felt are most suitable for alfresco.



In the years since there has been several evolutions of the alfresco provision to better meet the needs of the area such as the removal of screens in the South Piazza and the Henrietta public realm scheme creating the opportunity to move dining back against the building line in this street. However, there has not been an agreed alfresco framework covering the entire enlarged, post-merger, Shaftesbury Capital Covent Garden portfolio within Westminster in a post covid environment.

In August 2025, Westminster City Council adopted the Streets and Spaces Public Realm Supplementary Planning Document (Public Realm SPD), which sets out the Council's approach to the design, maintenance and use of the public realm. The SPD builds upon and provides more detailed guidance in relation to policies within Westminster's statutory Development Plan and the Covent Garden Public Realm Framework. The SPD is designed for Westminster as a whole but recognises that in many respects, Covent Garden is an exception to the norm and non-conformist elements contribute positively to the character of the area

Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this context, the Public Realm SPD forms one material consideration among a wider suite of guidance documents. These include, but are not limited to, the Covent Garden Public Realm Framework (2022) and the Environmental Sustainability SPD (2026), which includes specific objectives relating to urban greening and environmental quality. Decision-makers are required to have regard to the full range of relevant policy and guidance, and the weight afforded to each document is a matter of judgement in the context of the particular application applied for.

Importantly, the long-established presence of alfresco dining within Covent Garden is itself a significant material consideration. The al fresco dining experience has formed part of the character and function of the district for over 35 years, contributing to its vibrancy, distinct identity and international recognition.

This offer plays a vital role in supporting retail and food and beverage operators, while enhancing the experience for visitors and tourists and contributing to the wider economic value and vitality of the West End.

Whilst there are many principles for alfresco that apply across the Covent Garden district there are also nuances in each street and as such this document covers what we feel is supportable, and balances the needs of residents, operators and the large volume of visitors in the context of the Conservation Area.

This document also outlines the roles of both SHC and individual operators for the ongoing successful delivery of alfresco dining in this historic and vibrant destination.

SHC recognises that it has the ability to control alfresco on its private land, however alfresco on the public highway is solely under the direct control of WCC who licence individual pitches and collect a licence fee.

Broad Principles

This section covers aspects of alfresco that we feel should apply across the whole of the Shaftesbury Capital Covent Garden footprint within Covent Garden.

Standards for presentation of alfresco

We would hope that all alfresco within the district will adhere to the following principles. Some F&B occupiers may have made substantial investments into their alfresco operations and as such are not expected to immediately implement the proposed changes. However, any new equipment implemented should meet the standards set out in this document and operators are encouraged to evolve their offerings as soon as reasonably possible.

Compliance and safety

- Operators must comply with all relevant WCC rules and license conditions. An example of typical WCC pavement licence conditions can be found in Appendix 1.
- All alfresco should be placed within the Licenced area only and not allow patrons to move it and thereby impede pedestrian movement or access for wheelchair users.
- Servicing and emergency vehicle access to be maintained at all times.
- On pedestrianised streets, pavements and designated loading bays, should be kept clear during vehicle servicing hours 07 am to 11:00 am.
- All alfresco areas must be kept clean with rubbish regularly removed throughout the trading day.
- Alfresco equipment should not block pavements during servicing and loading periods

Demarcation of dining areas

- Any screens used to enclose dining areas should be integrated into planters and have a maximum height of 1.5m, fixed panes which are not extendable and be combined with planting. An example of this is the current arrangement for Vyta, an image of which can be found in Appendix 2.
- No gazebos should be used around alfresco dining areas.

- No planting over 1.5m should be used to demark dining areas, planting which is too tall can block sightlines to other premises. Taller planting can be supported in some instances, and where it does not block sightlines to adjoining units.
- If a barrier is required to enclose a dining area, then this should be rope and posts and/or planters, unless the pavement width restricts the ability to utilise planters, then Café barriers can be considered.
- Any planters deployed on the public highway should be wheeled versions to allow for ease of movement.
- Any greenery used to demark alfresco areas should be of high quality. Imitation greenery and fake flowers are not supported.
- Where café barriers are used, they should be low height, heavy, durable canvas in colours which are in keeping with the surroundings and not deployed during exceptionally windy conditions.
- Advertising on screens or café barriers is generally not supported. Where it is used, it should be limited to one small sign per pitch elevation.
- Red and white sleepers introduced during covid should no longer be used.
- We are not proposing changes to hours of operation, these and pitch locations are determined by Westminster City Council

Cover for alfresco areas

- If parasols are used, then no full-length sides should be added to them to enclose the alfresco area.
- Parasols are generally supported in pedestrianised streets and those where cycles are permitted. If cover is required in streets open to traffic at all times then these should be provided through awnings.
- All furniture should be of good quality and in keeping with the surroundings.
- Where possible, furniture should be heavy, slatted wooden furniture as utilised in the Market Buildings. Operators can personalise this through cushions.
- Parasols should be canvas or similar, regularly maintained, cleaned and replaced as necessary. Low profile parasols are preferred around the Market Buildings, to maximise sightlines and historically appropriate colours used.
- Parasols which are licenced to be left out overnight should be retracted when not in use, furniture should be either brought in or immobilised to prevent unauthorised use dependent on licence conditions.

Furniture and equipment

- Waiter stations and serveries are supported where these assist in providing a high level of customer service and comply with planning permissions and licence conditions but must be kept clean and secured overnight.
- Decking should only be considered if it provides Equality Act compliant access and if no other accessible solution is readily available. If the level of the pavement does not facilitate suitable alfresco, the preferred method of addressing this would be dropped kerbs or ramps off pavements.
- If heaters are used, these should be electric (low energy).
- Heaters should be switched off when not in use by customers. We encourage operators to consider switching to a green energy tariff.

SHC's role in the successful delivery of alfresco

Whilst each operator is responsible for their own alfresco areas, SHC stewardship teams play a key role in supporting the smooth operation of the district as a thriving destination for outdoor dining.

- The Piazza, Henrietta Street, King Street, Maiden Lane, James St, Rose Street, the majority of Floral Street and the top section of Southampton Street are all pedestrianised for 20 hours a day with a 4-hour servicing window from 7am-11am. This is administered by Shaftesbury Capital security on behalf of WCC.
- SHC has CCTV covering the majority of the areas where alfresco dining takes place. This is monitored 24-7 by the onsite security team.
- The 24 hour security team provide a visible on street presence and work with SHC operators' teams to ensure compliance with guidelines and handle any potential issues.
- SHC funds a team of Westminster City Council City Inspectors who work exclusively within the Covent Garden area and can take enforcement action against both non- SHC operators and SHC operators.
- SHC work with operators to ensure that high standards are maintained and that everybody understands their obligations.
- Providing it is consented through planning or pavement licences, SHC supports our occupiers when they need additional equipment such as waiter stations in order to deliver world class service.

Operators' responsibilities for the successful delivery of alfresco

In addition to ensuring their alfresco areas meet the standards set out elsewhere in this document, all operators should maintain the following operational principles.

- Operators are responsible for ensuring they have the relevant permission from WCC to operate their alfresco dining areas.
- Covent Garden is home to residents and offices and as such operators should monitor customer behaviour and ensure a calm and orderly environment is maintained inside the alfresco area, Including ensuring customers leave in a quiet and respectful manner at all times.
- Operators should ensure customers do not move furniture outside of the designated pitch
- Waste generated by the operation of the alfresco dining should be cleared frequently.
- Alfresco spaces should be kept clean at all times.
- If music is permitted, then this should be within licenced or planning consented guidelines and not over-amplified or played outside permitted hours

Location specific information

Within Covent Garden there are many hyper local nuances to how alfresco could be delivered. This is due to the nature of the environment and differences between spaces available. For example, in

King Street the width of the pavement, coupled with a raised kerb means alfresco can't easily be placed against the building facades. The remainder of this document takes a street by street look at how outdoor dining could be delivered within Covent Garden.

Henrietta street is undergoing streetscape enhancement works and revised planning and licence permissions have relocated alfresco pitches from the roadway to building facades on wider pavements. This change has been made to ensure alfresco pitches are against the facades of the restaurants they

serve which was not the case with the Covid structures, many of which were in remote locations which required food to be carried across both busy pavements and roadways to get to the customer and creating operational difficulties for operators.

Pedestrianised Streets

James Street

A predominately retail street, James Street accommodates the highest level of footfall in the district and provides a connection between Covent Garden tube station and the Piazza. There are three operators offering alfresco near the junction with Floral Street.

In addition to compliance with the broad principles outlined in this document, alfresco operators here should –

- Place alfresco against the building line to ensure maximum space for pedestrian movement.
- Not leave any furniture or equipment on the public highway between the hours of 11pm and 11am.

Covent Garden Piazza

Covent Garden Piazza and the Market Building is the heart of Covent Garden and home to a substantial F&B offer with accompanying alfresco areas. Mostly positioned on private land in a pedestrianised area, the outdoor dining areas here are generally consented through planning permission rather than pavement licences and therefore enjoy a greater degree of permanence than some other areas which helps support a higher quality of customer service and so has different arrangements for removal of equipment outside of trading hours. That being said, the outdoor dining on the Piazza, like all alfresco within SHC's portfolio, is constantly being evaluated and evolved to ensure it is best in class. There are several aspects to consider when designing alfresco provision on the Piazza and these are discussed below.

Parasols

The location of the alfresco areas means that awnings are not an option, and with many customers enjoying a multi-course meal, parasols are needed to provide cover to diners both for shade and rain protection. To ensure consistent quality and visual cohesion, SHC asks all alfresco operators in the Piazza to ensure that their parasols comply with the specifications set out in their permissions. This outlines that all parasols should-

- Be an off-white colour if there is a continuous row of parasols, with no branding, imagery or text on the parasol.
- Be of a module that includes one side that is 3-metres long so that it can be aligned with the column bay of the Market Building.
- Integrate any lighting or heating required for the alfresco area into the parasol.
- Not extend beyond the designated alfresco pitch
- Be secured in the ground with a removable post which can be capped when not in use.
- Be capable of folding without removing lights or heaters.
- Be a slim profile with no valances.
- Be cleaned regularly and replaced as needed.

No parasols (or heaters) should be used in seasonal expansion areas.

There is currently a variety of sizes of parasols throughout the Piazza. SHC proposes to move away from the use of very large parasols in most of the Piazza with a maximum dimension of 3mx2m proposed.

Some operators use fabric to connect parasols and provide a run off for rain water, This is becoming increasingly important with climate change triggering extreme weather events. This is generally supported provided that the connectors are not visibly obvious and do not hang so low as to provide an obstruction. Examples of this can be found in Appendix 2.

The four corner pavilions can potentially support different options e.g. larger parasols and different colour to underside of parasols. The top of the parasol should still be the off-white colour to present a consistent look and feel from distance. However, personalisation will be permitted to the underside in an alternate colour which becomes visible at closer proximity, historic colours are preferred. Appendix 2 contains an image of the parasol currently in use at LA durée as an example of this.

Planting and Screens

During Covid screens were introduced to demark the alfresco areas in the Piazza and other locations and to allow operators to trade when internal trading was not permitted. These have already been removed from the South Piazza but are still in use on the East and West Piazza (see photos in Appendix 3). SHC proposes to move away from the use of sliding screens entirely. Instead, operators will be able to use screens integrated within planters with a maximum height of 1.5m or enclose their dining areas with rope and post barriers and/or planting which does not exceed 1.5m in height. This will allow operators flexibility to demark their dining areas in the way that best suits their needs whilst minimising impact on sightlines throughout the area.

Screens combined with planters have the added benefit of offering protection from theft from customers, otherwise known as 'table surfing'. There has been a radical reduction in theft from table surfing where screens have been utilised since Covid

It is recognised that operators have recently invested in various styles of equipment and so these guidelines may take time to be implemented.

Seasonality

The Piazza and the colonnades which surround it are a very large space and the alfresco provision represents a small proportion of the overall space

The Piazza is a wonderful place to visit, and customers often sit here to dwell and enjoy the experience. There are some customers who simply want to walk around the space, but sitting and walking are equally valid activities, often influenced by weather and temperature and so a seasonal approach is proposed to some alfresco pitches.

Whilst alfresco dining on the Piazza is enjoyed all year round, there is an increased need for capacity during the busy summer months, especially as air-conditioning is not always available internally. As such SHC believe that a seasonal approach to space allocation with some pitches reduced in size during colder months can work well and release space to pedestrians, albeit the presence of ramps with fences book-end the expansion area so an uninterrupted route does not exist. This already happens on the South Piazza where the alfresco pitches are reduced in size in the colder months. The seasonal extension areas will not be permitted parasols or heaters to retain sightlines and with furniture made unusable overnight.

Serveries and Waiter Stations

Many spaces in the Market Buildings are severely compromised compared to modern standards and a large number have their kitchens on a different floor to their entrance, dining and alfresco which means food has to travel over multiple floors and sharing narrow customer staircases in direct conflict with customers. In addition, these constraints can often make it challenging for visitors with young children or disabilities or who are wheelchair bound and therefore rightly expect the same level of service afforded to those who can use stairs. There is only 1 lift in the entire Market Buildings, serving a single operator. In order to remain relevant in a competitive landscape, operators need the flexibility to provide operational support to deliver customers with high levels of service.

This typically means that at minimum waiter stations and menu boards are needed in each alfresco area to facilitate things such as quick cleaning of tables or responses to spills. Most would benefit from serveries or bar areas too. However, SHC recognises that not all alfresco pitches are ideal for this. The pitches on each of the four corners, in SHC's opinion are the most suited to a fully plumbed in bar or servery as has been successfully deployed at Vyta for over 30 years. We support serveries for all alfresco operators on the piazza where previously consented or when it can be demonstrated that it can be sensitively delivered and is required for customer service.

Piazza Highway

The Piazza is also made up of Public Highway which is under the control of Westminster City Council. This operates in much the same way as the privately owned part of the Piazza in that it is pedestrianised for the majority of the day and cleaned by SHC.

Pitches on the highway can be controlled by planning consent or pavement licences, and it is for WCC to determine applications made to them for pitches and equipment.

Equipment on the highway should be capable of being de-rigged or moved at short notice if necessary and should follow the broad guidelines set out above e.g. if planters are used they should be on wheels, ropes and poles are also supported. These pitches are usually permitted by WCC to be in operation during vehicular servicing hours and so it is accepted that they do not impede servicing access or indeed pedestrians.

As supported by recent planning consents there is no need for pitches on private land to be de-rigged overnight, especially in proximity to residential accommodation and where overnight footfall numbers are low, as they are on the Piazza. The long-term location of the pitches in this part of the Piazza does not impact on servicing, pedestrian movement or emergency vehicle access. Operators are still required to make their tables and chairs unusable when not in use.

On the highway land, trading is permitted from 8:00 am, within servicing hours, and so it seems unnecessary to us to request that the pitch is fully de-rigged, a noisy operation, when there are few people around to witness the cleared Piazza and residents will be disturbed. We would ask WCC to reconsider this requirement which would then make it consistent with the approach on the private land as was considered and permitted by Planning Committee in 2024 for Nana and SushiSamba. Operators should still be required to make their tables and chairs unusable when not in use.

Accessibility and Decking

In SHC's view, the Piazza is not a suitable location for decking used to facilitate alfresco dining. With flexible pitch boundaries, access for Equality Act purposes can be provided from the Piazza itself. Most alfresco pitches on the Piazza are fully accessible, the exception is parts of the south Piazza where

alfresco is framed by multiple steps, ramps and fences. To accommodate direct access for wheelchair users and those with mobility scooters, we propose that a single row of tables and chairs are provided adjacent to the final step down from the Market Building and so is accessible from the Piazza, all year round. There should be a clear space at all times on the highway element between pitches to facilitate servicing and emergency vehicle movement as exists today.

Piazza alfresco pitches suggested in the WCC 2022 Covent Garden Alfresco Framework



Henrietta Street

Westminster City Council are in the process of upgrading the public realm on Henrietta Street. This will involve narrowing the carriageway, widening the pavements and creating a flush level surface. In addition to improving accessibility and creating more space for pedestrians, this creates an opportunity to reimagine the way that alfresco dining is provided in the street.

Along with adherence to the broad principles set out in this document, alfresco in this street should-

- Be placed directly in front of operators' premises.
- Be within the alfresco zone marked by the placement of SHC planters along the street.
- Be covered only with awnings from the buildings rather than parasols.
- Be demarked only with ropes and poles or screens integrated within planters, consistent with those provided by Shaftesbury Capital
- Be brought in overnight leaving no furniture or equipment on the public highway between the hours of 11pm and 11am. In accordance with planning permissions, planters provided by SHC with no screens will remain in situ overnight.

Southampton Street between Henrietta Street and Maiden Lane

The section of Southampton Street between Henrietta Street and Maiden Lane is pedestrianised and is home to two different F&B operators with alfresco offers. The two closest to Henrietta Street (The Ivy and Abuelo), had alfresco areas put in during Covid which were enclosed sliding screens and plastic covers. They also had parasols which remained on the highway and decking to help accommodate wheelchair users and offset the significant slope.

Where sufficient pavement space exists, SHC is proposing to move away from the use of screens and decking in this location and towards a more flexible arrangement in line with Henrietta Street. This will improve the sight lines to the Piazza from Strand and Southampton Street and increase the visibility of the F&B units themselves but may require public realm enhancements to deliver this. In addition to the broad principles outlined earlier in this document, alfresco operators in Southampton Street should-

- Only place parasols on the highway where the pavement is too narrow to support an outdoor dining area in front of the restaurant.
- Be mindful of the position of neighbouring alfresco areas in order to avoid creating a chicaned walking route through the street for pedestrians.
- Unless consented by WCC, ensure no furniture or parasols are left on the street between 11pm and 11am.

King Street

King Street has five alfresco pitches in the carriageway which are enclosed by screens and planting. One pitch utilises tall planting rather than simple planters, blocking sightlines to nearby trading facades. Each pitch has a navy, concrete based parasol in its centre to provide cover for diners. Due to the width of the pavements here, moving the alfresco against the building line would not be realistic due to the raised kerb. However, there is an opportunity to refine the alfresco offer to be more in keeping with the wider Covent Garden principles.

We propose removing support for the sliding screens and tall trellises and tall plants from outdoor dining areas on King Street. If operators wish to use screens these should be within planting and a maximum height of 1.5m. This would improve sight lines both within the street and between the Piazza and Bedford Street. The parasols would remain as the location of the dining area means awnings are not an option to provide cover.

If this proposal is taken forward, it means that in addition to the broad principles outlined earlier in this document, alfresco operators in this street should-

- Demark their alfresco areas with fixed height screens within planters with a maximum height of 1.5m, or with rope and post, or planting which is no higher than 1.5m.
- Ensure that no tables and chairs are left on the public highway between 11pm and 11am.
- Ensure that the parasols are closed between 11pm and 11am.

Maiden Lane

This pedestrianised street is predominately F&B with a substantive alfresco offering. There are a range of pavement widths but an almost flush surface means that dining areas can include both pavement and the loading bays. In addition to the broad principles outlined earlier in this document, alfresco operators here should-

- Ensure there is no furniture or parasols left outside pitch boundaries that impede vehicles or pedestrians.
- Screens and parasols requiring non-portable bases are not supported. Unless permitted by WCC, loading bays and the adjacent pavements are to be kept entirely clear for service vehicles and pedestrians during servicing hours 07am and 11am.
- Due to the narrow streets ensure customers do not move furniture outside designated areas.
- Special arrangements apply to Maiden Lane to allow temporary suspension of alfresco pitches to allow theatres the access they need to change sets.

Floral Street (Between James Street and Garrick Street) and Floral Court

A predominately retail street, Floral Street is home to a small number of F&B operators and the gateway to Floral Court which is the ideal location for alfresco dining. There is currently only an alfresco dining area for one restaurant, Lima Cantina located at the Garrick Street end of Floral Street. However, the street could support a small amount of additional alfresco in strategic locations. In particular, for Chestnut Bakery (during pedestrian hours).

In addition to complying with the broad principles outlined earlier in this document, alfresco operators in Floral Street should-

- Place dining areas directly in front of building to ensure maximum space for pedestrians.
- Ensure there is no furniture left on public highway or adjacent pavement during servicing hours 07:00 to 11:00.

The open space in Floral Court is ideal for an alfresco dining area. Whilst there is a walkway through, the court itself is not public land and therefore does not face the same level of restrictions as Floral Street itself. That being said, SHC would still require the occupiers of this space to operate at the highest of standards and within the constraints imposed by the planning permission.

New Row

This pedestrianised street is home to a substantial F&B offer with alfresco on both sides of the street. There is a flush surface with a bollard line set 40cm back from the edge of the pavement. It is important that alfresco in this street leaves adequate space for pedestrians, particularly those who use a wheelchair or have prams.

That means, in addition to the broad principles outlined earlier in this document, alfresco operators in New Row should-

- Where possible provide cover to dining areas only through awnings attached to buildings. This may or may not require planning permission or listed building consent.
- Ensure there is no furniture left on public highway during servicing hours between the hours of 07am and 11am.
- Due to the narrow streets ensure customers do not move furniture outside designated areas.

Bedfordbury

There is a small amount of F&B on Bedfordbury. This street is much wider than the adjacent New Row with less pedestrian traffic. The pavement is narrow with limited opportunities for alfresco against the

building line. SHC believes that the most suitable location for alfresco in this street is in the carriageway as it is wide enough to support alfresco and leave adequate space for vehicle access. This leaves the pavement entirely free for pedestrians.

In addition to the broad principles outlined earlier in this document, alfresco operators in Bedfordbury should-

- Ensure alfresco in the carriageway leaves sufficient clearance for emergency vehicle access.
- Ensure there is no furniture left on public highway during servicing hours between the hours of 07am and 11am.

Non-pedestrianised streets

Whilst much of Covent Garden is pedestrianised, there are streets which are open to traffic 24 hours a day and also have a substantial alfresco offering. In these streets any alfresco offer must leave sufficient space for pedestrians to comfortably pass on the pavement. In addition to adherence to the broad principles outlined earlier in this document, alfresco operators in non-pedestrianised streets should-

- Place alfresco areas against the building, ensuring adequate space remains for pedestrians.
- Provide cover to dining areas only through awnings attached to buildings.
- Due to the narrow pavements, ensure customers do not move furniture outside designated areas.
- Comply with regulated hours under the Pavement Licences.

Appendix 1- Example of WCC Pavement License conditions

1. The Licensee must ensure that clear routes of access along the highway are maintained, taking into account the needs of disabled people, and the recommended minimum footway widths and distances required for access by mobility impaired and visually impaired persons are provided at all times the licence is in operation.
 2. Where the furniture on the relevant highways consists of seating for use by persons, for the purpose of consuming food or drink, the licence holder must make reasonable provision for seating where smoking is not permitted.
- Local conditions valid from 16 April 2025
3. The licence holder shall refrain from placing tables and chairs and other authorised furniture on the highway for so long as may be necessary in the case of a Special Event, when reasonably required to do so by a duly authorised officer of the Council, a police officer or an officer of any other emergency service.
 4. This licence only permits the use of table and chairs or other authorised furniture on the highway in the area designated on the plan attached to the licence.
 5. Any tables and chairs or other authorised furniture for use pursuant to this licence is only authorised in connection with an adjacent premises which is to be used for the sale of food or drink for consumption on or off the premises.
 6. No alcohol is to be sold or consumed from the designated area identified unless that sale and/or consumption is approved under the Licensing Act 2003 which includes any temporary authorisations for the sale of alcohol permitted pursuant to the Business and Planning Act 2020.
 7. This Licence does not allow the use of loudspeakers, amplification or other similar equipment.
 8. All furniture approved for use, including tables, chairs, barriers, and heaters must be safe for public use and must be kept in good repair and condition.
 9. Operators are required to manage their premises and outdoor seating areas in accordance with government guidance.
 10. The Licensee must ensure that good order and behaviour is maintained at all times by people using any tables and chairs or other authorised furniture pursuant to this licence and that no nuisance is caused to residential or business neighbours.
 11. The number of persons seated in the licensed area shall not exceed either the maximum capacity stated on the pavement licence.
 12. All customers consuming refreshments within the licensed area shall be seated.
 13. If a pavement licence is deemed to be granted, the number of tables and chairs or other authorised furniture shall not exceed the number specified in the application form and the licence must not exceed any other limitations on use that have been specified in the application form.
 14. The trading area shall not exceed the dimensions specified on the pavement licence.
 15. All tables and chairs and other authorised furniture shall be removed immediately from the highway when reasonably required by the City Council, Metropolitan Police, emergency services, or any statutory undertaker or utility.
 16. The tables and chairs and other authorised furniture shall not be placed on the highway before the time specified in the licence. At the end of each day all furniture must be removed from the highway by the terminal hour of the licence. Tables and chairs and other authorised furniture must be stored in such a way that they cannot be moved or used overnight.

17. All tables and chairs and other authorised furniture that is used in connection with a pavement licence must be removable which means that it is not a permanent fixed structure and is able to be moved easily and stored away at the end of use for the day.

18. A copy of the licence shall be displayed during the hours of trading in a prominent position agreed by the Council, either in the front window of the premises or nearby so as to be clearly visible from the outside to anyone wishing to inspect it.

19. No fixtures to or excavation of any kind shall be made in the surface of the highway, which shall be left entirely undisturbed.

20. The Licensee shall not use this licence unless it has public liability insurance cover in the sum of not less than £5 million and has provided a copy of that policy to the Licensing Authority.

21. Staff must regularly monitor the licensed area to ensure it is kept clean and tidy. Any litter or waste arising from use of the licensed area must be cleared away as soon as is practicable.

22. If a pavement licence is deemed to be granted, it will be subject to these standard local conditions.

23. The Council reserves the right to add additional conditions to individual licence applications where it is appropriate to do so.

Appendix 2- District Alfresco Images

Ladurée parasol with design on underside



SushiSamba alfresco area with sliding screens



Example of screens within planters as recommended in this guidance.



Example of tall sliding screens and sleepers which are no longer supported.



Appendix 4- Note from Piazza operator on the need for serveries in this location.

The Need for External Service Stations in Covent Garden Piazza

Many historic European cities such as Paris, Milan, Rome and Barcelona successfully integrate well-designed outdoor seating areas within their historic districts. These spaces allow visitors to experience the atmosphere of the city while maintaining high standards of hygiene, safety, and service.

In London and particularly within Covent Garden Piazza outdoor seating exists, but supporting infrastructure remains limited. Due to the historic nature of surrounding buildings and their restricted utility capacity, external service stations are not a luxury but a necessity.

1. Health, Safety & Hygiene

To maintain safe and clean public spaces, a minimum of one service station per 30 visitors within the seating zone is recommended.

These stations would provide:

- Clean napkins, cutlery, and glassware
- Rubbish bins to maintain tidiness
- Sanitising areas with cloths and cleaning products
- Spill-response materials (e.g., cleaning and drying cloths)
- In larger stations, hand-wash basins

Proximity is essential. When staff must carry trays and glassware across crowded pedestrian areas, risks increase:

- Cross-flows between waiting staff, seated guests, queues, and pedestrians
- Increased collision, spill, and trip hazards

Service stations reduce unnecessary movement, allowing faster response times and improving safety. Many stations would also host security cameras to enhance public protection.

Given that historic buildings often lack sufficient internal utility infrastructure, outdoor service points are frequently the only practical solution.

2. Modern Life Requirements

Contemporary visitors expect modern amenities, particularly in high-traffic tourist areas.

External service stations can support:

- Distributed Wi-Fi access points
- Data and electricity connections
- Charging stations for visitors and staff
- Lighting controls for evening operation
- Heating systems for colder months

Busier zones require a greater concentration of such facilities to meet demand effectively.

3. Design & Urban Enhancement

Unified and well-designed service stations:

- Contribute positively to the visual harmony of the piazza
- Integrate greenery and freshness into the public realm
- Support maintenance and pedestrian cleanliness
- Protect historic fabric by centralising operational needs
- Reduce excessive movement across long distances

When carefully designed, these stations enhance rather than detract from the architectural significance of the location.

