

From: [Les Moran](#)
To: [Neighbourhood, Planning: WCC](#)
Subject: Fitzwest Neighbourhood plan
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Dear Westminster City Council

I am a resident of Fitzrovia and have lived in the neighbourhood for over 20 years. I welcome the Fitzwest neighbourhood plan.

The COVID 19 public health crisis has offered dramatic evidence of how one of the major problems in the area can be changed for the better -the dramatic reduction of traffic and pollution in all its various forms. It offers an experience of the 'new normal' that should be one of the key goals for the development of the area.

I heartily support the Fitzwest plan with regards to the proposals for improving a diverse portfolio of residential properties. The plan draw attention to the damaging effects of absent owners, short term accommodation, Air BnB, on the sustainability of the neighbourhood. I welcome their proposals for a more robust approach to planning and development. But would urge stronger measures to limit new developments. Repeated destruction of the fabric of the area through development and more specifically the development of new building institutionalises degradation of the area for short term profits. The mid term impact of COVID 19 will mean that Oxford St and its environs as an international shopping destination of central office location are fatally flawed objectives. Building a diverse and attractive neighbourhood that values smaller scale projects is something that urgently needs to be given priority. Neighbourhood not cookie cutter bland international brand led shopping emporia will make the area more attractive to visitors and more sustainable.

With this in mind I disagree with the Fitzwest proposal that the area immediately north of Oxford St should be the area in which retail and entertainment developments are concentrated. In some parts entertainment is already over represented -the corner of Newman St and Mortimer St is an example. The push for longer opening hours, noise pollution, crowded pavements with drinkers making it impossible to pass on the pavement already threaten to kill residential use. A more active approach to planning to restrict concentrations of businesses and all the negatives that flow needs to be adopted. Building residential capacity with mix stock, building neighbourhood, with diversity are approaches needed to create a healthier and more sustainable area.

One important weakness with the Fitzwest plan is the limited vision put forward for reimagining traffic flows through the area. Through routes need to be restricted. Road narrowing schemes need to be given a greater priority across the area as a whole. Parking provision needs to be shifted towards resident only use with due provision for parking relating to services and service providers. Connected to this is the need for a higher profile and greater sensitivity to the need to promote cycling. Again the COVID 19 experience has highlighted the massive potential of cycling in the area. More dedicated cycle parking for local residents who have little space for cycle storage is needed. Greening and pedestrianisation projects also need to be cycle sensitive and cycle aware.

Another weakness of the Fitzwest plan is the limited vision for the greening of the area. Road narrowing and the incorporation of pop up flower gardens and smaller green areas needs to be promoted more. Pop up gardens funding by local businesses can be used to encourage a more positive street scape. They also provide opportunities for the creation of parking bays that will add more diversity to the streetscape especially in streets not suitable for trees.

Now is not the time to reboot pre COVID 19 plans. A rare opportunity has been provided that has opened a window on new possibilities. Failure to acknowledge that and to take it forward will be a legacy that will haunt the area for many generations.

Yours faithfully

Leslie J Moran