Safety & Inclusion in the Public Realm

Event Summary

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Event Summary

The purpose of the event was to bring together a diverse range of groups and local representatives to help test elements of the planning application public realm design proposals for One Museum Street and inform the brief for future design development, with a particular focus on safety and inclusivity. This event was held on 25th January 2023 and a wide range of stakeholders representing different groups and needs from across Camden and beyond were invited to take part.

The focus of the discussion was based around understanding different experiences and needs of and within the public realm; identifying opportunities, gaps and great examples of public space - particularly in the local area; testing elements of the public realm proposals and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

Our ambition was to host an open, collaborative and informal discussion where all attendees could speak freely and all views were respected. This was the first in a series of focused conversations we hope to hold with the local community and stakeholders on the topic.

Agenda:
This document summarises the discussion and findings from the session. The session involved a walk around the site before a round-table discussion, which focussed on three topics:

- Safety and inclusion in public space
- Inclusivity, Diversity and Accessibility
- Movement, Connectivity and Safety

Contributors:
- Professor, University of Westminster
- DSDHA/LSA student
- Central District Alliance representative
- Director, Shaftesbury Theatre
- Asian Women's Resource Centre representatives

Facilitators:
Lydia Hyde, Poppy Levison (DSDHA)

Project Team:
Eleanor Wright, Edward Beaver (Simten)
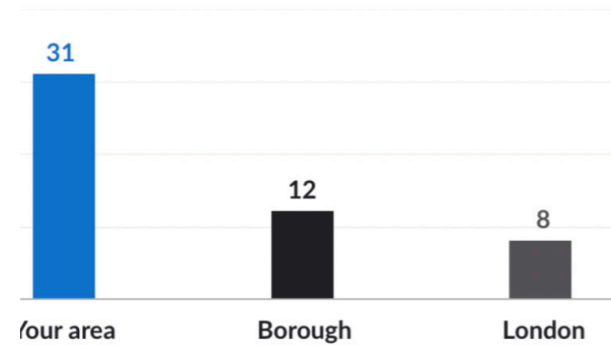Ellie Tucker, Folabi Giwa (LCA)
David Hills (DSDHA)

Above: Site visit before the roundtable discussion (25.01.2023)
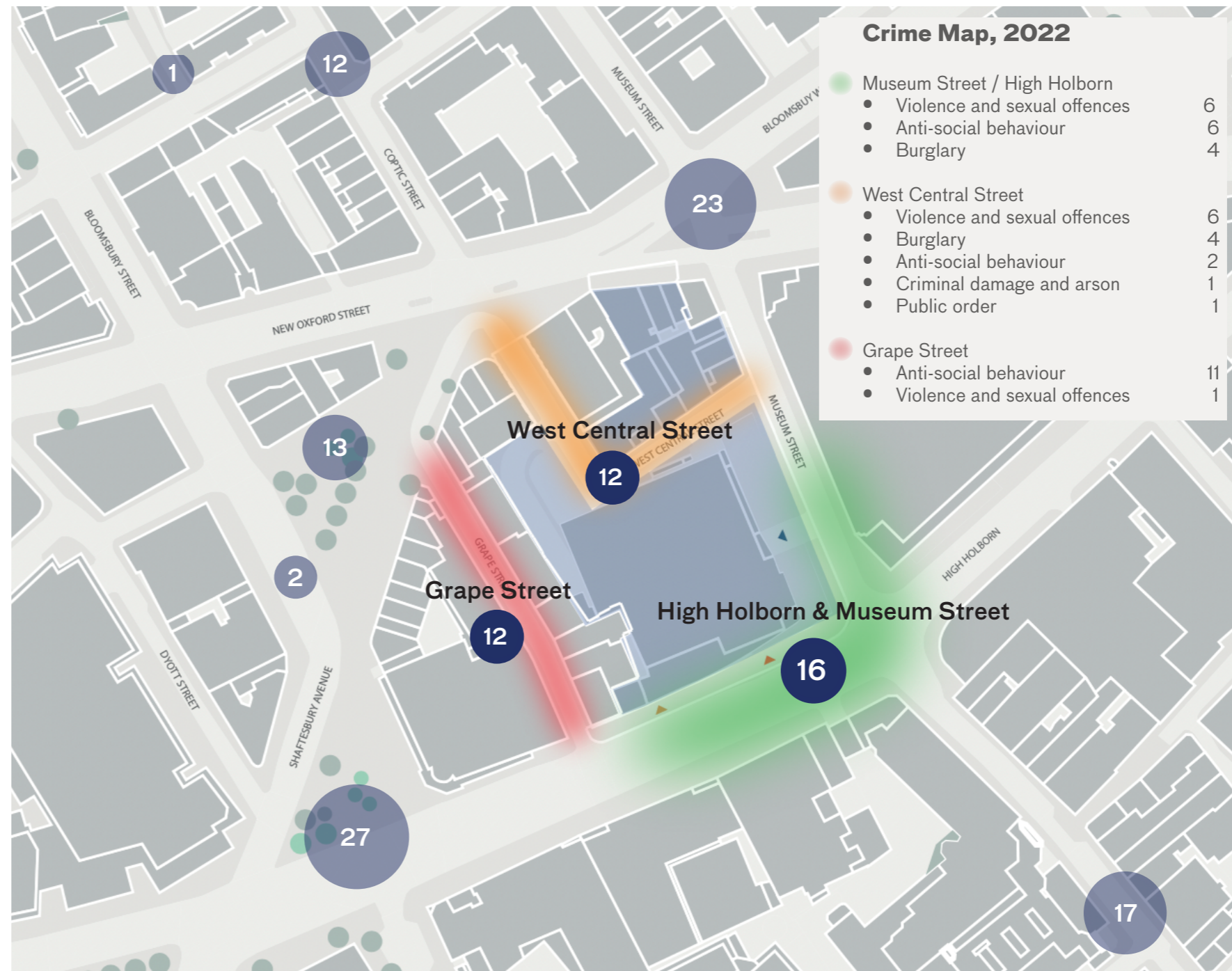
Presentation Slides from the Event

'Safety & Inclusion' in Public Space

The site and surrounding area have a significantly higher crime rate than both the borough and London as a whole. The crime ranges from anti-social behaviour and theft, to violence and sexual offenses.

While this is important information to consider, we also recognise that 'safety' is broader than just crime.

Your area	Borough	London
31	12	8

https://www.met.police.uk/a/your-area/met/camden/holborn-and-covent-garden/

Crime Map, 2022

Museum Street / High Holborn
- Violence and sexual offences — 6
- Anti-social behaviour — 6
- Burglary — 4

West Central Street
- Violence and sexual offences — 6
- Burglary — 4
- Anti-social behaviour — 2
- Criminal damage and arson — 1
- Public order — 1

Grape Street
- Anti-social behaviour — 11
- Violence and sexual offences — 1

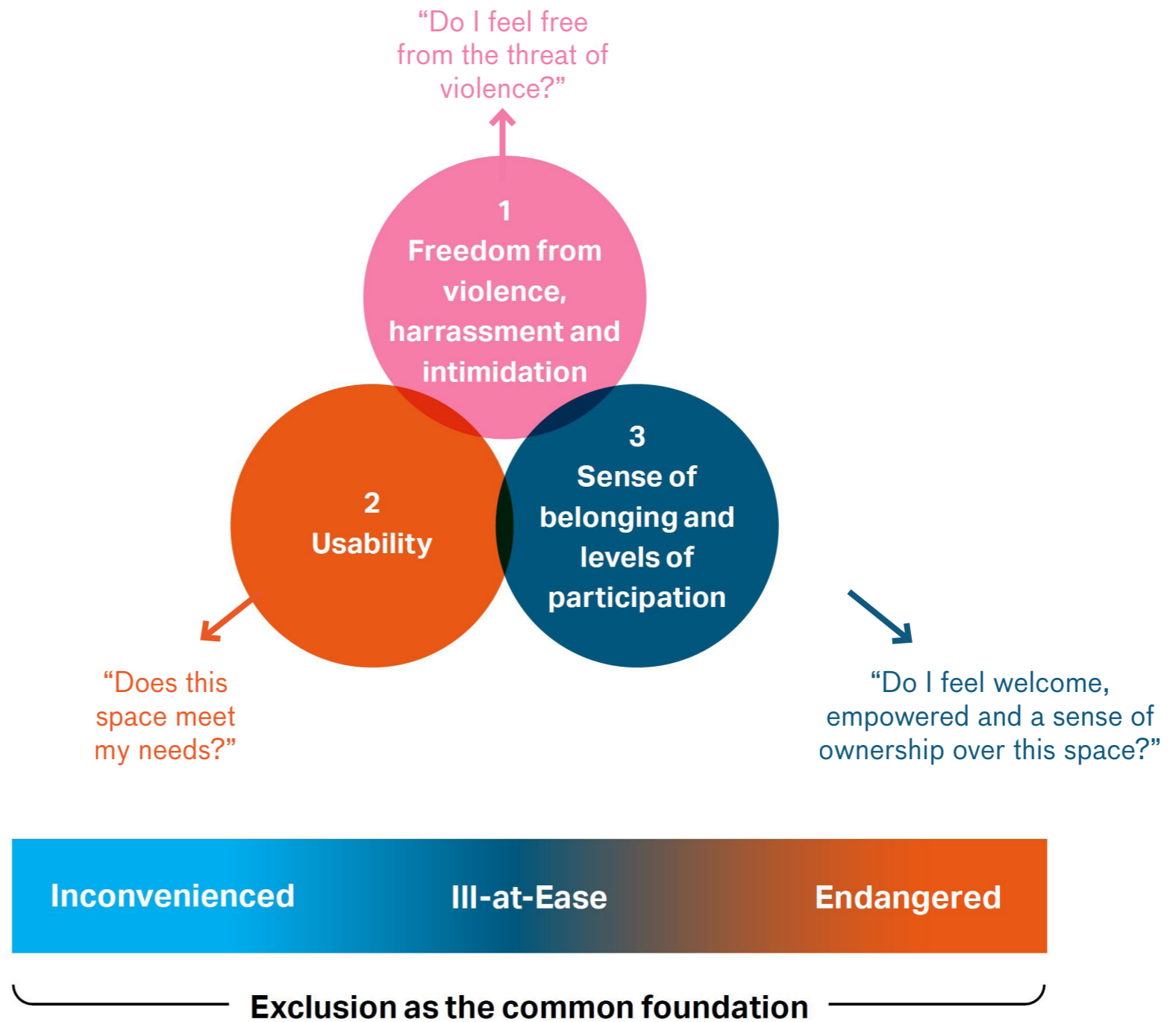Source: www.adt.co.uk/crime-in-my-area

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'Safety & Inclusion' in Public Space

A Spectrum of Experiences

As well as looking at crime, we wanted to ensure the conversation addressed the whole spectrum of safety. To do this we started with an introduction to the definitions of 'safety' and 'inclusion' as described in the Great London Authority's Good Growth By Design document 'Safety in Public Space: Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People'.
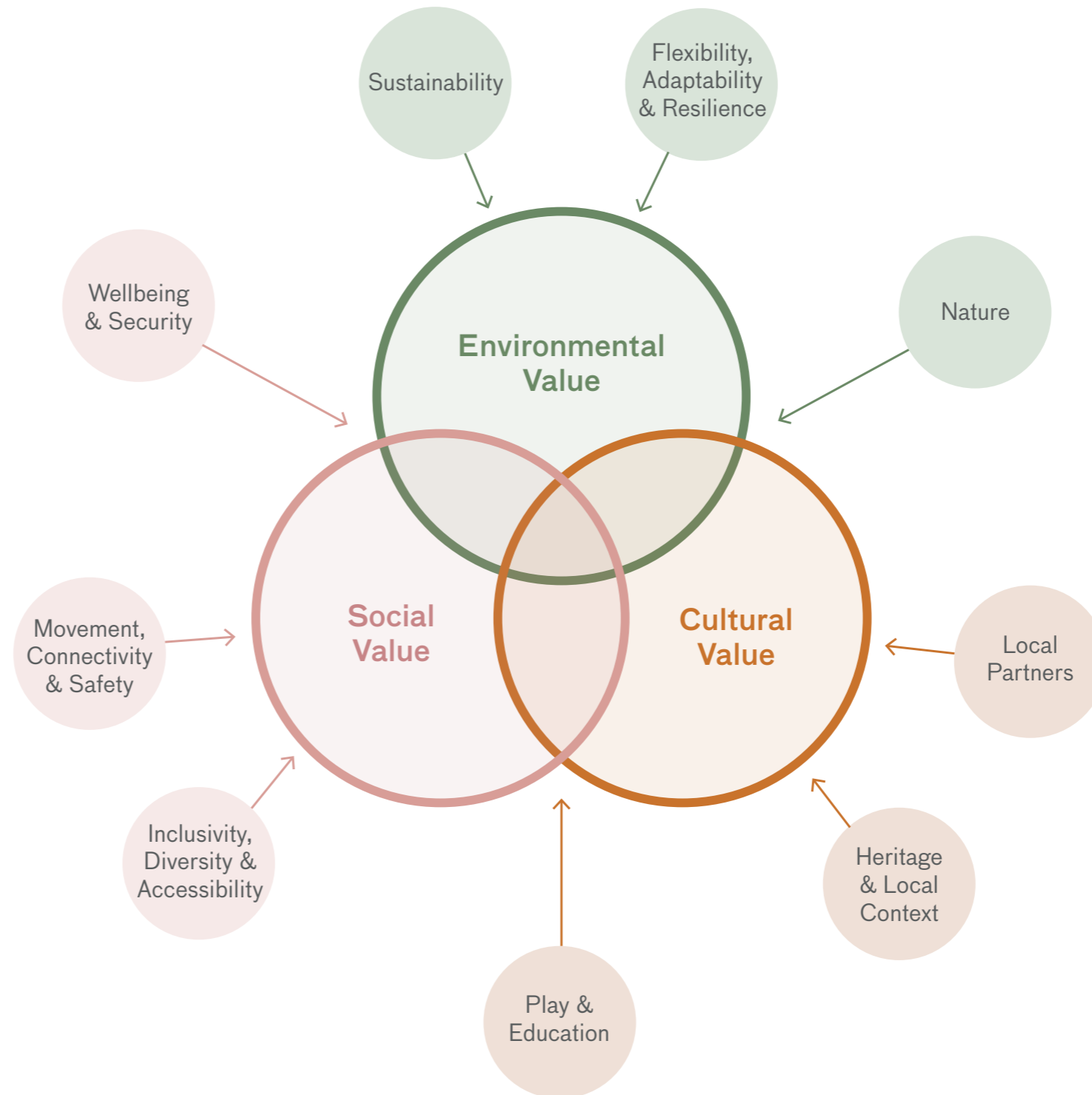
MAYOR OF LONDON

SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACE

WOMEN, GIRLS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE

GOOD GROWTH BY DESIGN

Safety in Public Space: Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People, 2022

"Do I feel free from the threat of violence?"

1 Freedom from violence, harrassment and intimidation

3 Sense of belonging and levels of participation

2 Usability

"Does this space meet my needs?"

"Do I feel welcome, empowered and a sense of ownership over this space?"

Inconvenienced   Ill-at-Ease   Endangered

Exclusion as the common foundation

Presentation Slides from the Event

Public Realm Vision Framework

The Public Realm Framework (right) is used in DSDHA projects to ensure that the approach and design are driven by a shared vision of all involved. The diagram ensures that public realm projects are committed to improving the environmental, cultural and social value of the area. These three categories are split into specific strategies which contribute to improving the associated value statement; this session focused on the 'social value' aspect of this diagram to frame the discussions.

Sustainability

Flexibility, Adaptability & Resilience

Nature

Wellbeing & Security

Environmental Value

Movement, Connectivity & Safety

Social Value

Cultural Value

Local Partners

Inclusivity, Diversity & Accessibility

Heritage & Local Context

Play & Education

Discussion Summary

Inclusivity Diversity and Accessibility

The following pages provide a summary of the three discussion topics with associated questions, responses and key takeaways.

Definition:

Prioritising an inclusive, diverse and accessible public realm; including designing for disability, neuro-diversity, the aging population, those with children and night-time female & gender diverse safety.

Guiding Questions:

• What local public spaces feel safe, accessible and welcoming and why?

• What is missing in the local area?

• What are the differing user needs in public space, and how can the proposal reflect these?

Key Takeaways

• Lighting is key in creating a safe and welcoming environment - consider colour, brightness and position.

• Seating needs to consider a diverse range of users in size, shape and position, to be both inclusive and create a feeling of safety.

• Create green dwell spaces that feel safe at day and night, potentially creating a seasonal strategy on safety.

'There is a need for dwelling space for local workers; somewhere to eat lunch, make calls, chat to colleagues etc.'

'Green spaces create isolation and 'no go' areas for certain groups at night. The scheme should combat this by ensuring planted areas are well lit.'

'Glare from buildings can cause problems in the adjacent outdoor areas.'

'The seating should be designed in a round shape where people can face each other for inclusivity – reference Deafspace, families chatting etc.'

'Seating should provide a solid back to lean on for increased feeling of safety.'

'Seating should be provided at multiple heights for children, women and disabled users.'

'Seating should be designed with armrests for older/disabled/pregnant users, but also provide longer stretches of seating which does not prevent users from lying down.'

'Middle Eastern counties are in the top 5% of safety at night partly because of a more consistent sunrise/sunset (in contrast to the UK where it gets dark at 4.30pm in Winter) – this could be targeted through seasonal safety measures.'

'Benches should be located in areas where the user can see out, but not felt watched themselves (i.e. sitting in a busy café area whilst looking onto activity in the street).'

'Wide pedestrian footpaths will create space for a more diverse range of users.'

'Lighting should balance safety with the comfort of residents. This could be achieved through lighting at street level.'

'Warmer coloured lighting is preferred as it is easier on the eyes and reduces contrast between light and dark areas.'

'Balance the need for lighting with sustainability, energy consumption and light pollution.'

'Implementing good lighting is a baseline requirement for women to feel safe and routes to feel welcoming. This should be assessed to align with sustainability standards.'

'BSI guidance for Neurodivergent People should be considered, e.g. too much contrast or colour in public space can be overstimulating.'

Contributor responses

Discussion Summary

Movement, Connectivity and Safety

Definition:

Increasing pedestrian priority by improving personal safety, comfort, way-finding legibility and connectivity. Encouraging active travel by ensuring ease of access with as few obstructions as possible.

Guiding Questions:

- What safety issues and needs are a priority to consider in this area?

- How can these issues be considered while ensuring inclusivity and accessibility?

- What appetite is there to reinstate London's forgotten walkways? (e.g. Vine Lane)

- How could the proposed routes be more accessible/attractive to increase footfall and encourage visitors to stay in the area?

Key Takeaways

- Create natural surveillance by keeping people in the area through the day/night, through restaurants and affordable housing.

- Consider private security with both a physical presence and CCTV

- Ensure there is no hard border between 'safe' new space and the surrounding streets, which could push issues onto the surrounding areas.

'Providing affordable housing can help with natural surveillance as residents are more likely to be long-term.'

'An increased number of restaurants along Vine Lane would encourage more people to dwell and travel through the area at night, increasing the sense of safety.'

'A response alarm system at street level could be implemented as a pilot scheme to increase female-safety.'

'Providing CCTV and large, clear notices indicating CCTV presence is welcomed as off-putting to potential criminals. CCTV generally welcomed and supported to improve feelings of safety.'

'Large or excessive noise should be discouraged as this can be intimidating to certain user groups.'

'The transition through the project areas and surrounding streets should be designed and managed to avoid borders between safe/unsafe areas.'

'Fairy lights in Vine Lane would continue the atmosphere from Covent Garden.'

'Gating Vine Lane at night could make West Central Street less safe as it would remain a quiet route which is not overlooked.'

'Private security which creates a 'presence' at ground floor use is an effective safety measure. A 24-hour presence in the office buildings would be welcomed.'

'Low confidence in the police is a challenge - practical safety measures (lighting, surveillance etc.) would be well received.'

Contributor responses

Discussion Summary

Wellbeing, Play and Education

Definition:

Creating an educational and leisure strategy which addresses the wellbeing of users in terms of physical, mental, social and emotional health. Different users will have a variety of needs across all times of the day and night.

Guiding Questions:

- What local public spaces offer a sense of wellbeing, play and/or education and why?

- How can quiet routes best dissuade anti-social behaviour? (e.g. lighting, security, activity or gates)

- What opportunities could there be for collaboration with local groups/stakeholders on elements of the public realm? (e.g. design, management)

Key Takeaways

- Create a playful, safe atmosphere through play elements and spaces to informally dwell.

- Cultivate a inclusive environment by celebrating diverse groups, suggestions included public art.

- Retain the unique character of the area - potentially through approach to retail (types of space/affordability)

'Drinking fountains for both pets and humans should be considered.'

'Signalling inclusivity through play/public art/interactive elements should be considered.'

'Consider visual/mental 'barriers' at the end of Vine Lane to stop children running out into the road.'

Successful Case Studies for reference:

- Natural History Museum outdoor play spaces
- The Scoop City Hall

'Different forms of interactive public art and play elements should be considered.'

'The public realm should create an unique environment which complements the existing character of the area.'
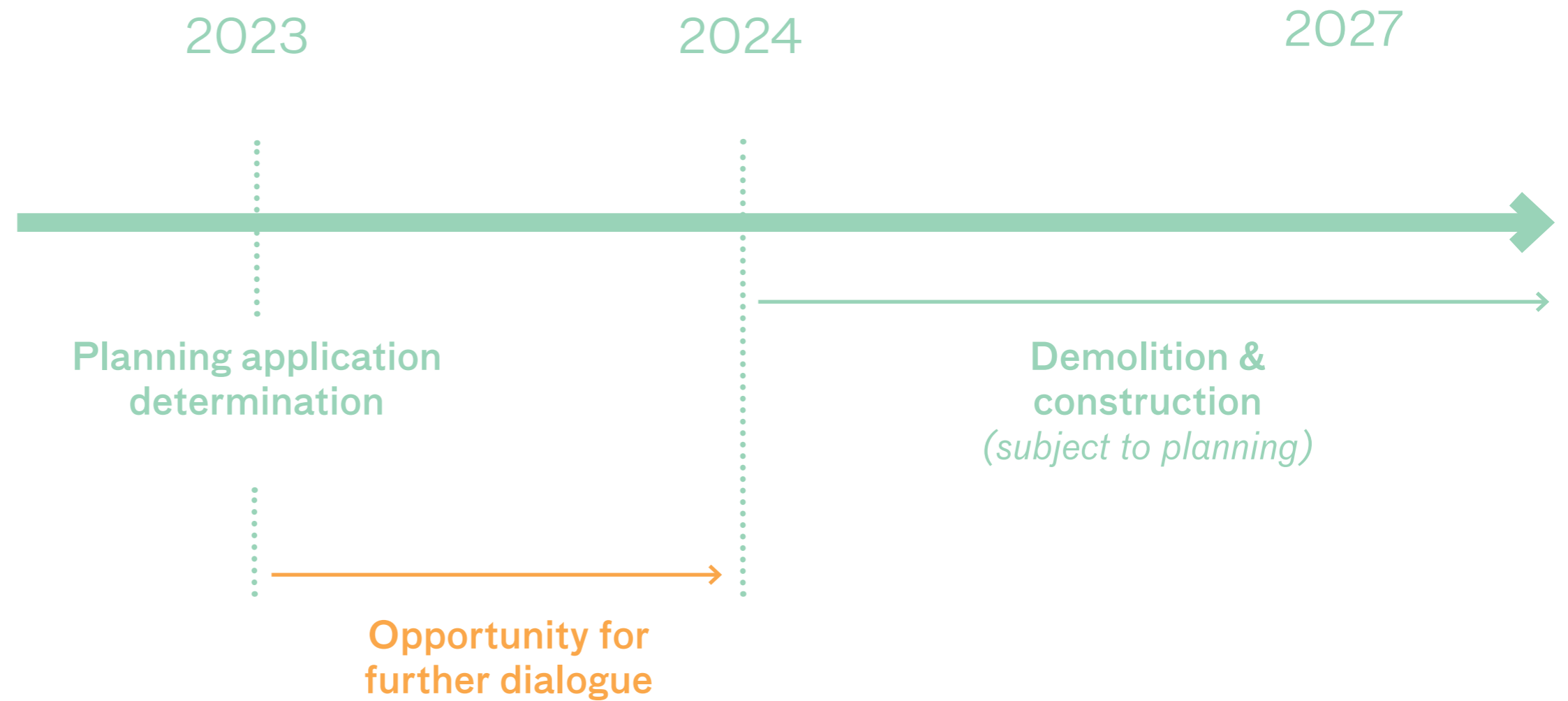
'The scheme could create connections with The British Museum and the area's history (i.e. including suffragettes names on seating).'

'A range of retail businesses should be encouraged'

Next Steps

The diagram opposite outlines the proposed timeline for the project including opportunities for future dialogue.

We would like to thank all of the participants for giving us their time and valuable insights.

2023

2024

2027

Planning application determination

Demolition & construction
(subject to planning)

Opportunity for further dialogue

- Produce feedback summary to share

- Further engagement with local groups and stakeholders

- Explore and scope collaboration opportunities identified

- Design evolution

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