

5. The Vision





Retail on Chancery Lane



The Silver Vaults

Hidden gardens



The portico façade of the Law Society building

The Vision

Chancery Lane and its surrounding area is genuinely unique within Central London. Historically the street pattern has remained virtually untouched for many centuries, added to which it contains a significant built heritage with buildings or parts of buildings that date from as far back as the 15th century, the oldest being Lincoln's Inn, one of the most beautiful and least altered of the Inns, and Staple Inn which is one of London's few surviving Tudor buildings.

There are many opportunities to attract visitors into the area: its architecture, its links with history and characters from literature, the unique shopping quarter and the local restaurants and cafés. There are also some beautiful open spaces that, with the permission of the various institutions, could be further utilised during daylight hours.

Public Realm Strategy

Improvements to the Chancery Lane streetscape are needed for local businesses, visitors and those that work and live in the area. A cohesive approach to the streetscape design is needed as well as a distinct sense of arrival when approaching and entering Chancery Lane. Creating a high quality street environment will build confidence and enhance the quality of the area, increasing economic activity and investment.

The general streetscape improvements can be achieved by:

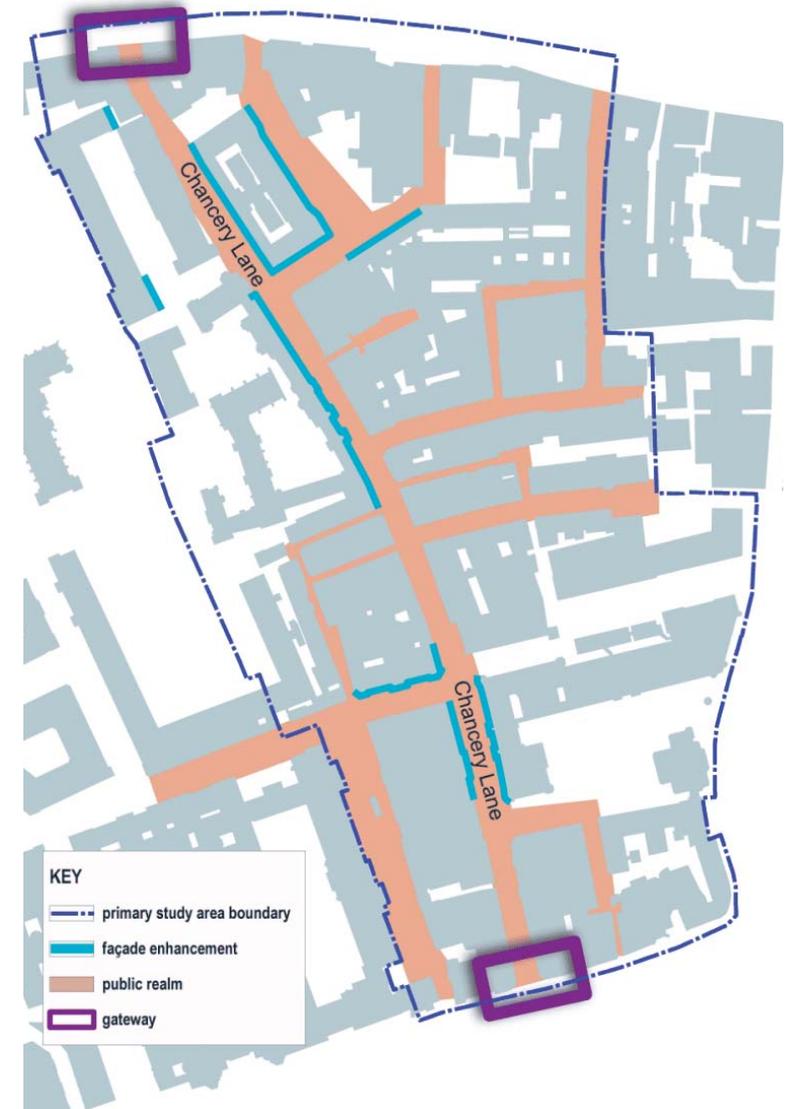
- Improving narrow footways on Chancery Lane
- A simple and cohesive approach to the types of paving materials;
- The removal of street clutter including unnecessary sign boards, posts and bollards;
- Ensuring that the area is accessible to all; and
- Providing simple and comfortable street furniture such as public benches and seating.

The sense of arrival may be achieved by:

- Raised existing carriageway to improve access and also mark the entrances into the street;
- Signs to help users find their way around the area could be placed at each end of the street.

Surface Materials:

Throughout the area the paving materials form an important background to the built environment. As discussed previously the architecture comes in many styles, ages, materials and quality, therefore it is essential that the surface elements should reflect and unify the surroundings and enhance the areas of special character. Small unit granite paving has been used in the area throughout the ages; it is tough and durable as well as providing a high quality finish. Using a silver grey to mid grey colour would also be reflective of many of the colours in buildings. The hard and durable nature of the stone makes it suitable as a high grade road surface where traffic movement and speed is limited.



Strategy diagram showing proposed areas of public realm improvements



Use existing gateway designs as inspiration



Chancery House



Unify the paving

Yorkstone has also been a traditional, durable and attractive paving material in the area over the centuries, although the oldest paviors tend to be the riven type. Recently as part of the City of London and the London Borough of Camden's street scene improvements, Yorkstone has been used along the eastern side and part of the western side of Chancery Lane. It is important that this is carried through on both sides of the street.

Street Furniture:

The design of street furniture, including seating, litter bins, bollards, bicycle stands or tree grills, should reflect their high quality heritage setting, but their design should be simple and consistent. Their placement within the streetscape will be given careful consideration.

Movement Strategy

Vehicular Traffic Movement

Chancery Lane has a medieval street pattern with narrow footways which makes it very busy and crowded for both pedestrians and motor vehicles. Traffic currently moves one way from Fleet Street in the south to High Holborn in the north. Chancery Lane is a recommended quieter road on the London cycle map, but there are insufficient cycle parking facilities.

Recent reductions in traffic flow allow opportunities to enhance pedestrian and cycle routes and create new spaces in this area. A key aspect of the Chancery Lane Enhancement Scheme proposal is to create a pedestrian zone with increased cycle access, on the central section of Chancery Lane between Southampton Buildings and Carey Street. This pedestrian zone would reduce vehicle dominance by restricting or prohibiting motor vehicles. This will create a more pleasant street environment for pedestrians and cyclists and facilitate more vibrant commercial activity in the area.

Car Free Day which was held on a Friday late in September 2008, allowed traffic engineers to study the possibility of restricting a central section of Chancery Lane to motor vehicles. This has been further supported by additional traffic studies which are underway and currently suggest that traffic flows along Chancery Lane are minimal (with 100 to 200 cars per hour).

A proposed closure of the central section of Chancery Lane would enhance the street environment, improving safety for pedestrians who currently are forced to walk on the vehicle carriageway. Cycle movement would similarly benefit from this closure by eliminating conflict with motor vehicles and creating a two way cycle route in place of the current one way route.



Narrow pavements



Pedestrians given priority in the retail area

- Gateways
- Public Spaces
- Proposed Pedestrian Zone
- Direction of Traffic
- Proposed One Way Traffic
- All Other Routes



Proposed Traffic Movement

Implications for the Surrounding Road Network

The proposal to close a section of Chancery Lane, between Carey Street and Southamton Buildings, would require northbound vehicles to find alternative routes via Fetter Lane, Kingsway or Carey Street. Further detailed traffic studies have begun to ensure that traffic can be appropriately accommodated along alternative routes such as these.

While traffic studies suggest vehicle counts are low, to further substantiate these studies it may be necessary to undertake an experimental road closure. This will allow traffic engineers to adequately monitor the impacts and effects of a proposed closure on the surrounding road network. It would also allow planning officers to continue to further engage with frontages along Chancery Lane as well as other relevant stakeholders in the area to substantiate and address their needs for local access in the area.

Two options for the nature of the proposed pedestrian zone in Chancery Lane have been developed.

- A permanent (24 hour) closure of the central section of Chancery Lane with access for emergency vehicles and diversion purposes only when required.
- A timed closure enabling the central section of Chancery Lane to be closed at certain times of day.

During the Public Consultation period, officers will liaise with local occupiers to determine how servicing and delivery requirements can be addressed if the proposed closure were to go ahead. The Public Consultation will also include taxi and coach services as well as specific liaison with Emergency Services, Police and Transport for London to ensure that access can be maintained in the event of an emergency. Traffic studies undertaken to date suggest that volumes of diverted vehicles are likely to be very low. These traffic volumes and movements will continue to be comprehensively modelled and investigated to ensure that they comply with Transport for London requirements and adequately meet the needs of all local users of the area.

The proposed closure of Chancery Lane can be designed with suitable carriageway materials permitting motor vehicles to use Chancery Lane in case of emergency in the surrounding road network (such as Kingsway). Servicing requirements for frontages onto Chancery Lane may also be accommodated in agreement with the Local Authority.

Pedestrian movement:

One of the main objectives of this Scheme is to encourage pedestrians to visit the area. Transport communications are good but the legibility of the streets leading to Chancery Lane is poor. Attractive, pollution free routes where pedestrians are given priority will greatly encourage people to visit and use the facilities that the area offers.

Interconnected north-south and east-west routes have been identified for enhancements that lead from main public transport destinations such as Farringdon Station, Holborn Underground, Chancery Lane Underground and several local bus routes. Proposals to encourage walking will complement the City Heritage Walk and Jubilee Walkway that Chancery Lane is already a part of.

Cycling:

The London Cycle Route runs through Chancery Lane. Generally Chancery Lane and its surroundings are very suitable for cyclists, although cycle parking facilities need to be greatly improved. The proposed pedestrian area in the centre of Chancery Lane will also accommodate a cycle route. Cycle racks are also proposed throughout the area.



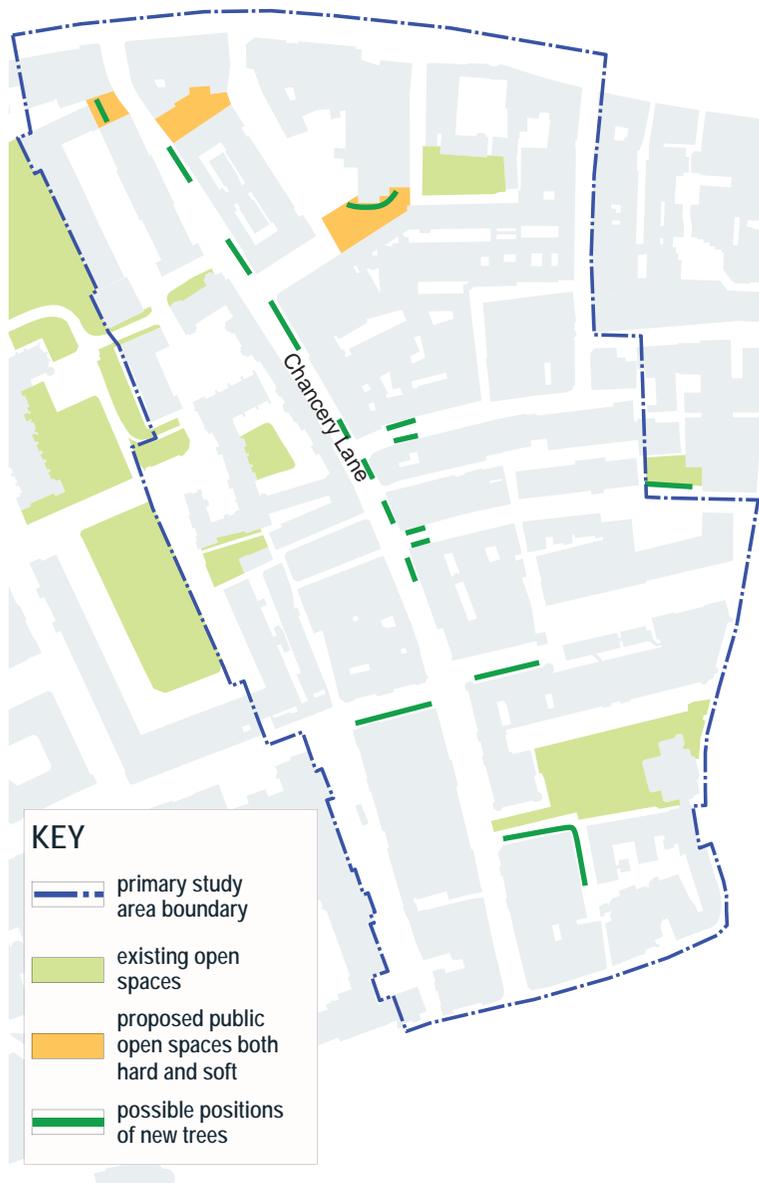
Improve the walkways



Improve the quality of paving



Encourage cyclists



KEY

-  primary study area boundary
-  existing open spaces
-  proposed public open spaces both hard and soft
-  possible positions of new trees

Strategy diagram showing proposed sites for new open space and tree planting

Open Space Strategy

Existing Open Space:

Most of the open spaces associated with Chancery Lane are privately owned and privately managed. The gated entrances, although they are generally open during the working day, by their nature form a barrier to members of the public who visit the area.

New Public Space:

There is potential to create a few small areas of new public space which would be particularly important to the area. The three possible sites are all within close proximity to the London Silver Vaults:

- The car park directly to the north of Chancery House: This site is of historic significance as it was where Preceptory Chapel stood, the foundation of the Knights Templar in the 12th century. A garden with a few trees and a seating area would be fitting for this site as well as being a place that could commemorate its past.
- Pedestrianising the section of road outside 25 Southampton Buildings could create an area that allows for a small amount of seating, this may also be a suitable site for a café / kiosk associated with the London Silver Vaults.
- The existing street closures at Bream’s Buildings and Curistor Street could be enlarged and repaved to create public space with seating, tree planting and cycle racks.



Create new attractive public open spaces



Street tree planting

Street Tree Planting:

There is limited scope for tree planting in this very urban environment. Historically the area had large gardens associated with its various institutions and it is unlikely that Chancery Lane had many, if any, street trees. Introducing street trees where possible into wider pavements created by reducing the size of the carriageway, could provide a green link from the existing areas of green open space.

Further investigation of the location of the underground pipes and ducts would be necessary in order to confirm which spaces would be able to accommodate planting.

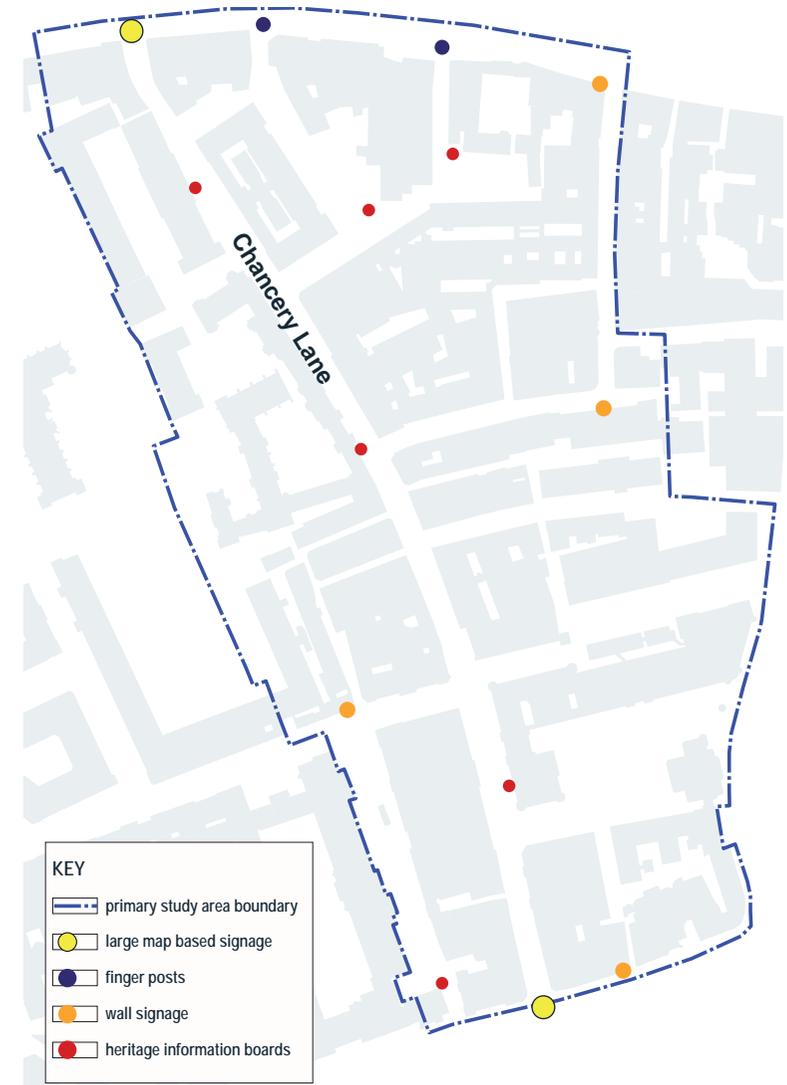
Signage Strategy

Improving the Signage:

Signs throughout the Chancery Lane area will be consistent and easy to read. Any historical signs will be retained although some may need to be moved to ensure that they are in the most visible place. Poorly designed signs and any street clutter that might relate to street signs will be removed. All signs will be easily seen and read by people with visual impairments or those seated in wheelchairs.



Examples of signage



Strategy diagram showing proposed signage improvements



Strategy diagram showing proposed street lighting improvement areas



Create atmospheric lighting



Lighting Strategy

Street Lighting

Street lighting throughout the Chancery Lane area needs to be improved; the design of lamp columns will draw upon the historic lights located in the area or mount to the façades of adjacent buildings. The smaller side streets may be lit by street lights in the style of the traditional lanterns, some of which already exist in the area.

Architectural Lighting

As an added attraction to the evening atmosphere, feature lighting may be carefully designed to highlight some of the unique architectural features on each of the most important buildings, for example the windows, chimneys and porticos; this could be achieved by a carefully designed and appropriate lighting scheme.

Buildings that would benefit from up-lighting might include:

- Lincoln's Inn, Chancery Lane frontage
- Chancery House
- The Knights Templar at the corner of Carey Street
- The Law Society
- Part of Stone Buildings
- The towers of the Maughan Library
- The arches above the shops on the eastern side of Chancery Lane
- The Royal Courts of Justice on Carey Street and Bell Street



The Law Society and the Knights Templar up-lit at night



Up-light key buildings