

Princes Circus

London Borough of Camden

A
Design Proposal
Princes Circus, London

B
View from New Oxford
Street



A



B

The problem

Pedestrian movement around Princes Circus today is impeded by fast-moving traffic and complicated pedestrian crossings. The public spaces are fragmented, unattractive, and confusing both for people who live and work in the area.

Many people – especially tourists – fail to make the short journey between Covent Garden and the British Museum via Princes Circus because the space appears uninviting and impenetrable. Instead, they take the Underground, resulting in a 30 minute train journey instead of a 5 minute walk. Low levels of pedestrian movement have blighted the local economy and encouraged drug dealing and other anti-social activities.

Our contribution

Space Syntax was asked by Camden Council to redesign Princes Circus to address its present failings. The resulting proposals turn the unpleasant traffic junction into a major route between Covent Garden and Bloomsbury.

The designs emerged following careful analysis and detailed observation studies which showed that, although Princes Circus is strategically located, it forms a barrier to movement through the area. However, with the creation of a new pedestrian link between north and south, Princes Circus can become a focus for everyday pedestrian activity in the local area. In the new design, traffic is reorganised to flow down the sides and across the bottom of the spaces, rather than through the middle of each. This allows the creation of a more effective network of pedestrian routes. A clear landscaping concept – a north-south “catwalk” between two anchor spaces – provides the framework for the lighting and signage strategy.

The outcome

The Space Syntax design concept has helped marshal the interests of residents and businesses in the local area, including the British Museum.

The design itself has been adopted by local landowner, Legal and General which is redeveloping its St Giles Court site on the south-west side of Princes Circus. The southern part of Princes Circus – to the detailed design of landscape practice West 8 – will be delivered as part of Legal and General’s planning contributions.