ESRC-AHRC Cultures of Consumption programme

Shopping Routes: Networks of Fashion Consumption in London’s West End 1945-79

Department of Geography, Royal Holloway

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Victoria and Albert Museum
‘Every decade has its city. During the shell-shocked 1940s thrusting New York led the way, and in the uneasy 50s it was the easy Rome of La Dolce Vita. Today it is London, a city steeped in tradition, seized by change, liberated by affluence … . In a decade dominated by youth, London has burst into bloom. It swings, it is the scene’ 

(Time April 15 1966: 32).
Piazzadilly!
Proposals for Piccadilly Circus: 1957-1974

- March 1957 LCC gave general approval to Monico proposals
- October 1958 redevelopment plan for Piccadilly Circus by LCC
- May 1960 Public Inquiry refused Monico Application
- November 1968. *Covent Garden Area Draft Plan* GLC, City of Westminster and London Borough of Camden
- March 1971 Publication of Westminster’s *Aid to Pedestrian Movement* proposals
- 1972 Westminster City Council proposals
- 1974 GLC announces policy of ‘least change’

- 1984 ‘Cosmetic’ urban improvements to traffic flow, street furniture etc.
PUNCH
PLANS
FOR
PICCADILLY

Some fresh thoughts on rebuilding the Hub of the Empire

1. (above) The Classic

2. (right) The Mediaeval
3. The Contemporary

4. The Four-Leaf Clover (for luck)
LONDON belongs to us

POLITICIANS HAVE FAILED US
Join the People's MARCH from St. Paul's Church, Cannon Garden, 2pm, Sunday afternoon 3 pm.
& RALLY TRAFALGAR SQ. 1st APRIL 1973
• ‘Chewing Gum House’. The furore over developer Jack Cotton’s 1950s plans.

• ‘Colossal possibilities, demanding faith’: the metropolitan fantasies of comprehensive development.

• Piazzas, citizen-pedestrians and ‘living at peace with the motor car.’

• ‘The shopper on whose pocket the prosperity of the area depended.’ Consumption and comprehensive redevelopment
‘Chewing-gum house’
Jack Cotton’s Monico café site proposal 1957
‘Chewing-gum house’
Jack Cotton’s Monico café site proposal 1957
‘The Monster of Piccadilly’
‘Chewing Gum House’
Bernard Levin also felt the existing Circus ‘strikingly bereft of anything architecturally meritorious’ and that ‘Piccadilly Circus is a mess and a ruin, and if it were knocked down tomorrow London would lose nothing and gain a good deal.’
2. ‘Colossal possibilities, demanding faith’: the metropolitan fantasies of comprehensive development.
Holford’s 1962 Plan
Holford’s 1962 Plan
Holford’s 1968 Plan
An imaginary view of the new Piccadilly at upper-deck level, looking north from the Criterion. On the left is the County Fire Office, then the façade of the new Monico building, then the decked covered concourse of the new London Pavilion building. Far left is the plan of the area with Stage One complete.
Sir William spares more than a thought for the pedestrian

By ROBERT HARLING

Not many of the names of the planners of our own time will be saluted as are the names of Nash or Wood of Bath, to name a pair. Our planners today work on too limp and niggardly a scale.

Yet, nuclear press-buttons permitting, the name of Sir William Holford should be remembered and saluted by at least a few among the crowds who will stand in Piccadilly Circus on the New Year’s Eve which takes us from this century into the twenty-first. Here, at last, is a plan which never forgets, in any of its clauses, to treat people as human beings and not merely as digits in an urban computing machine.

Sir William’s revised scheme for Piccadilly Circus adds several imaginative touches to his earlier scheme, published in January, 1961, and the pedestrian has most cause to bless the name of Sir William. The Illuminations Tower, the New London Pavilion and other buildings have made the headlines, but, underlying all these architectural innovations, is evidence that Sir William and other planners (notably those dealing with the knightsbridge-Sloane Street development) are more determined than at any time in the past 30 years to take greater thought and care for the pedestrian, that almost outmoded individual in our community. We
Aid to Pedestrian Movement (1971)
6. Sketch of an elevated system in the Covent Garden Area. Shows how the system plays an important role in the activity of the pedestrian spaces at deck level. This would certainly induce pedestrians to window shop from the new system.
30. Regent Street showing a possible form of redevelopment incorporating an elevated pedestrian deck, adopting the line of the Regent Street traffic route beneath. The system has been inserted at a mezzanine level allowing shopping frontage and access to shops at this level as well as deck level, with vertical access to the bus stops at ground level.

The sketch and section are based upon proposals which have been made for the future redevelopment of Regent Street.
4. ‘The shopper on whose pocket the prosperity of the area depended.’ Consumption and comprehensive redevelopment.
‘In a decade dominated by youth, London has burst into bloom. It swings; it is the scene. This spring, as never before in modern times, London is switched on. Ancient elegance and new opulence are all tangled up in a dazzling blur of op and pop. The city is alive with birds (girls) and beatles, buzzing with minicars and telly stars, pulsing with half a dozen separate veins of excitement.’
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Conclusion
Covent Garden Comprehensive Redevelopment Plan

- Published 1968
- Abandoned 1974
- Protests about small businesses as well as ‘community’
- Subsequent ‘success’ in terms of retailing and urban consumption, rather than the accommodation of a local community.
Leon Rosselson: Plan (1974)
That's not the way it's got to be
People before property
We want a meeting place and not a traffic jam
Let Eros speak for all of us
London's streets belong to us
No to the profits and the Piccadilly plan.