



CASE STUDY: REGENT STREET PUBLIC REALM

The Crown Estate

Location: UK



SITUATION

The Crown Estate holds almost the entire freehold to Regent Street and since 2002 has been implementing a £1 billion Regent Street investment programme. With a street frontage of over two kilometres and over 15,000 people employed there, Regent Street also receives more than 7.5 million tourist visits a year. The Grade II listed façades also represent some of the most distinguished architecture in London.

Its 1.5 million ft² of flagship retail space is home to one of the finest collections of international brands in the world, including Apple, Burberry, Banana Republic, Hugo Boss, J. Crew and Anthropologie.

Improving the public realm has been a key element of The Crown Estate's investment strategy for achieving attractive investment returns from Regent Street. The objectives were to:

- Redress the balance between pedestrians and vehicles;
- Remove traffic clutter and barriers;
- Reduce traffic and carriageways;
- Renew street furniture;
- Improve signage and way finding; and
- Floodlight buildings.



Headdon Street © Crown Estates

ACTION

The following public realm initiatives have been adopted in Regent Street:

OXFORD CIRCUS: The busiest crossing in London's West End: used by 43,000 people and 2,000 vehicles per hour. Congestion was a threat. This scheme produced 60% more usable space for pedestrians, allowed them to cross where they want to go whilst maintaining traffic flows.

PICCADILLY CIRCUS: part of the Piccadilly two-way scheme which removed a long standing one way system in Piccadilly, St James's Street and Pall Mall. This system encouraged speeding weaving traffic which made these roads difficult to cross isolating St James's from the rest of the West End. In Piccadilly Circus the redesign respected the symmetrical architecture and allowed pedestrians to cross where they want to go.

CASE STUDY CONTINUED:

The Crown Estate

UK

SWALLOW STREET: one of Regent Street's restaurant quarters. This street was previously an unattractive and smelly service street.

HEDDON STREET: another of Regent Street's restaurant quarters

GLASSHOUSE STREET: transformed from a seedy back street into a pedestrian route worthy of its location just off Piccadilly Circus and adjoining the 5 star Café Royal Hotel

FREIGHT CONSOLIDATION SCHEME: an award winning retail delivery consolidation reduces vehicle movements to the 39 participating stores by 80% and uses two electric lorries

SUMMER STREETS: the closure of Regent Street to traffic on summer Sundays



Swallow Street © Crown Estates

OUTCOMES

The public realm expenditure was originally justified by calculating the extra retail rental growth, over market levels that would justify the projected expenditure. In practice, as shown in the figure below, retail annual rental growth rates have exceeded the market levels by significantly more than the levels necessary to justify improvement expenditure. A detailed analysis, block by block, interestingly shows this extra rental growth on all blocks except one. Here the growth rate is marginally below the market figure. That block is one of the few where no public realm improvements have been undertaken. The improvements also benefit office values but this has been ignored in these assessments.

In addition to these commercial benefits (increased rental value, lower/shorter voids) that are delivered by these public realm improvements, there is also a very clear set of sustainability benefits, including the reduction of noise and air pollution, improved traffic and pedestrian safety, enhanced environment and wellbeing. The freight consolidation scheme has resulted in a reduction in CO₂e in the air around The Crown Estate's portfolio by 15-20 tonnes per annum.

In a recent consumer research survey of 800 visitors and tenants on Regent Street in May 2015, 73% of respondents rated their visit to Regent Street as 'Very Good' on the day, which was an increase from 67% in November 2014.



Piccadilly Circus © Crown Estates

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