



St James's Park to Golden Square plan and section

which is a service street with solicitors, chambers, flats, occasional pubs, small businesses, a few shops, where the scale drops down from the Strand. The whole street is quite distinct and again there is a symmetry of use across the street and asymmetry across the block. And then another asymmetry occurs when you come up in scale to the much more public situation of the Covent Garden Piazza. Very little survived of the buildings of Inigo Jones's Piazza which was a symmetrical space of substantial scale into which the market was introduced. The church is on the axis of a wonderful central aisle through the Piazza. North is Long Acre, and here is a sectional change which goes from the large scale of the Piazza buildings down a bit to Floral Street which is a service street (I don't know quite what relationship it had to the Piazza originally but clearly a service function) and then up to Long Acre, a major street nearly equal to the Strand. We are beginning to see an alternation of scale and activity which while not universal is often a characteristic of these West End developments of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century origin.

Then we go through a series of warehouse blocks north of Long Acre which are another environment altogether and sometimes the exception to the rule, being asymmetrical across the street. This warehousing served the fruit and vegetable market originally and has now found a new use in housing small professional businesses, or impoverished professional activities (like architects).

And then you get a curious thing in Neal's Yard where the arrangements invert themselves. The service space which would have been for carts and dray-horses, at the back of buildings that looked out onto streets, has become an oasis of traffic-free activity. So the old coral reef, the old structure has suddenly been reinterpreted and inverted in a very positive way to create another kind of place.

Monmouth Street and Shaftesbury Avenue form the boundary to this area. This part of Shaftesbury Avenue is curiously without local transactions and dominated by large impersonal office buildings and to the north backs onto a desolate hinterland. Character changes again to small intensely used service streets off Charing Cross Road which are abruptly terminated by St Giles Circus. A terrible thing happened when Centre Point took out the end of the block of St Giles High Street, and joined onto the intersection of Oxford Street and Charing Cross Road. Consequently the fabric has been absolutely destroyed and amputated. The amputation is hidden by advertisements: commercial bandaging on the end of the block. It's that kind of disruption without any healing, which makes our modern interventions so crude, unresolved and ghastly. Which is not to say that you can't find places for this type of building. I actually rather like Centre Point, but the problem is contextual, a question of congruity – whether or not it should be there. Even if one were to argue that it should be there, there should be ways between the planning process and architectural process of establishing an environment for a total change of scale and of use.

The second section is of a very different sort and runs from St James's Park up to Golden Square in Soho again. The proposition gets a bit rough to the north of Regent Street, but what's interesting about thinking about London in this way is that you start to ask questions which produce very unexpected answers. Nash's intention was to have another 'Carlton House Terrace' on the other side of the Mall, a proposal which would have made the North boundary of St James's Park rather different. In other words the Mall was going to be a ceremonial axis to the Palace, like a great boulevard in St Petersburg. Carlton House Terrace has the rhetoric of facing the Park, but it is not entered from the Park side. A lot of