

The Fitzrovia News

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Labour selects West End ward candidates for 2026

The Labour Party in the City of Westminster has selected Sarah Littleton and Tim Lord as candidates who along with existing councillor Patrick Lilley will fight for the West End ward in next year's council elections, *writes Linus Rees*.

All three are on a collision course with Labour's mayor Sadiq Khan, deputy prime minister Angela Rayner, and neighbouring Labour-run Camden Council over the plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street and create a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC).

Littleton lives in the West End, and has worked as an organiser with Rachel Blake MP. She is a former student at the London School of Economics and wants to improve the safety of women and girls in the West End she says.

Lord has lived in Soho for over 34 years and has been chair of the Soho Society for a number of years. "He has worked on issues including safety, regulation of pedicabs, controls on short lets, noise nuisance and better public toilet provision in Soho," says Westminster Labour.

Councillor Lilley has represented Fitzrovia, Mayfair and Soho on Westminster Council since 2022.

"As Westminster's Disability Champion, he fights for accessibility and ensures residents' voices are heard on planning, licensing, and Oxford Street. He entered politics to oppose Conservative cuts and is proud Labour is

now investing in free school meals and safer streets," says Westminster Labour.

Labour took all three seats in the West End ward in 2022 but lost one of those seats to Conservative Tim Barnes in a 2024 by-election, and in April this year Paul Fisher announced he was leaving Labour for the Conservatives.

Labour's West End ward team say they "firmly oppose" the creation of an MDC for Oxford Street saying it is "unnecessary and disruptive".

While their stance puts them at odds with the Labour mayor of London and the party's national leadership, it is in accord with Labour-led Westminster Council and with local residents who fear the displacement of buses and taxis and other motor traffic from the Oxford Street pedestrianisation plans.

"Westminster's own plan would have delivered major public realm improvements while protecting vital public transport links along Oxford Street," say the Labour West End team.

"We are demanding — and confident — that the bus services between Oxford Circus and Tottenham Court Road will be retained, reducing possible traffic displacement to Soho and Fitzrovia. We don't believe there is any practical way of removing buses from eastern Oxford Street," they say.

Labour holds a slim majority with 28 seats on Westminster Council while the Conservatives have 26.

Council elections will be held in May 2026.

Business group seeks more hours and space for eating and drinking

A Fitzrovia business advocacy group is seeking to increase the amount of space for outdoor eating and drinking on offer across the neighbourhood, despite the problem of noise nuisance for local residents and the obstruction of footways it often creates, *writes Linus Rees*.

The Fitzrovia Partnership (TFP), which runs two business improvement districts (BIDs), is in talks with Camden and Westminster councils about "extended opening hours" and using public space for al fresco dining and boozing.

An email sent to business members in May, and seen by *The Fitzrovia News*,

outlines the proposals which have been prompted by Mayor Sadiq Khan's announcement in May of more public subsidy for the hospitality industry.

"The Mayor of London has announced a new £300,000 Summer Streets Fund to support outdoor dining and extended opening hours across the capital. The Fitzrovia Partnership is already in early discussions with Camden and Westminster to explore how this could be brought to life locally," states TFP.

The initiative is being led by TFP's new factotum who is tasked with privatising more of the public realm.

"Our director of policy and place, Marcos Gold, is engaging with both boroughs to ensure Fitzrovia's voice is represented.

"We've successfully delivered similar projects in the past on Charlotte Street, Cleveland Street and Warren Street and know the value they can bring to our members and the wider area," said TFP.

Gold is a newcomer to TFP. He previously worked for other BIDs including the abandoned Hampstead BID.

Camden Council has made permanent a number of outdoor areas in the carriageway. But one streetworker garnered so many complaints about noise and footway obstruction by customers that it was removed.

Westminster Council had rolled out a number of temporary outdoor areas in Fitzrovia and Soho but did not make them permanent due to complaints about noise nuisance from local residents.

Campaign groups ask Historic England to list YMCA building

A heritage charity and a London campaign group have applied to list the building formerly home to the world's first YMCA following its closure earlier this year, *writes Ben Lynch, Local Democracy Reporter*.

The Twentieth Century Society and the ExY Club have filed submissions with Historic England in an effort to protect the Brutalist structure on the corner of Great Russell Street and Tottenham Court Road.

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A spokesperson for the Twentieth Century Society said the listing would ensure that “whatever the future may hold, [the building’s] undeniable architectural qualities would endure.”

The former Central YMCA was closed in February after being sold late last year to real estate firm Criterion Capital.

Central YMCA chief executive Ryan Palmer told its members at the time that due to pressures such as local demographic changes and rising site maintenance costs, “it has become clear that the cost of operations at the Club are now not being covered by the number of members the Club can sustain. Therefore, after much consideration and with the best interests of the charity and our beneficiaries at heart, we have concluded the sale of the 112 Great Russell Street site.”

News in brief

The **Fitzrovia Arts Festival** will be held from Saturday 21 to Friday 27 June.

London Festival of Architecture in Fitzrovia is a series of events and installations revealing the thinking behind the practice of shaping the built environment, and takes place throughout June.

Gresse Street Ltd, part of Great Portland Estates, has applied to Westminster Council for planning permission for the extension and alteration of 1-15 **Gresse Street**, and 12-13 **Rathbone Place**.

Residents living in side streets in Fitzrovia will have to endure more than **two years of lorry traffic** for a construction project on the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Store Street.

Camden Council has brought in new **rubbish and recycling** collection times for businesses and residents on Tottenham Court Road.

This spring has been one of **drought** which means Camden Council’s tree officers are now asking people to help **water newly-planted street trees**.

An application to Westminster Council for permission to use a former stationery shop on Great Portland Street as **overnight boarding kennels for dogs** has raised concern about noise nuisance from **barking hounds**.

The **Woolff Gallery** is to leave Charlotte Street having spent nearly 18 years putting on art exhibitions, and will open new premises later this summer.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has issued a warning of continuing outbreaks of **measles**.

Planning applications

Camden Council planning applications in Bloomsbury ward during May, include: alterations to listed building at 34 Warren St; alterations at 36 Charlotte St, 149 Tottenham Ct Rd; mechanical plant on roof at 1 Stephen St; tables and chairs at 14 Charlotte Pl, 40 Goodge St, and 90 Cleveland St; . See: planningrecords.camden.gov.uk

Westminster Council validated planning applications during May in Fitzrovia West, includes: details and amendments to previous permissions at 51-58 Rathbone Pl and 54-68 Oxford St, 134 Oxford St, and 68-71 Newman St (inc Berners Ms); alterations at 21 Eastcastle St; alterations to a listed building at 82 Margaret St. See: idoxpa.westminster.gov.uk

Licensing applications

Westminster: 4 Great Portland Street seeks extension of existing hours for alcohol and other activities until 2.30am the following morning on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. See: idoxpa.westminster.gov.uk

Camden: 66 Charlotte Street seeks off-sales of alcohol. See: camden.gov.uk/public-licensing-register

Advice for responding

Residents should check Camden and Westminster’s websites for the latest applications.

In Westminster residents can contact licensingadvice.org for free advice, and should also email the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association fna@fitzrovia.org.uk

In Camden email the Charlotte Street Association at csafitzrovia@yahoo.co.uk where you can also seek advice.

It is also a good idea to contact your ward councillors well before the closing dates with your concerns about any planning or licensing applications.

This news-sheet is produced usually four times or more a year and is available from outside Fitzrovia Community Centre, 2 Foley Street. More news, features and comment on our website: fitzroviaanews.com
Subscribing to our free email newsletter: fitzroviaanews.substack.com

Free housing and welfare advice for residents

The Fitzrovia Advice Service, run by Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, is able to help residents with private and social housing problems, housing and council tax benefits, disability benefits, Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance, pensions and Pension Credit, Working and Child Tax Credits, fuel poverty; and help with benefit, passport and other forms.

Advice is available to Camden and Westminster residents by telephone, email and in person, for speakers of English, Bengali, Sylheti, Urdu and Hindi. Contact 020 3984 6364; or email: advice@fitzrovia.org.uk

Cost of living support

Camden has help at camden.gov.uk/find-support-in-camden
Westminster has help at westminster.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support

Neighbourhood listings

Covid-19 vaccine information is available from Camden and Westminster councils. See camden.gov.uk/coronavirus and westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus

Local councillors serving Fitzrovia on the **Camden** side are: Adam Harrison, Sabrina Francis, and Rishi Madlani; telephone: 020 7974 2792. On the **Westminster** side they are: Tim Barnes, Paul Fisher, and Patrick Lilley; telephone: 020 7641 5377.

Fitzrovia Community Centre has activities available, and a community garden. fitzroviacommunitycentre.org
Visit 2 Foley Street, call 020 7580 8680.

All Souls C of E Primary School, Foley Street takes children from ages 3 to 11. See allsoulsprimary.co.uk for more.

Fitzrovia Youth in Action is a local charity for young people. See fya.org.uk or call at Basement 66-68 Warren Street or call 020 7388 7399.

Rainbow Angels Nursery Fitzrovia 54A Whitfield Street. More information at rainbowangels.co.uk

Little Raccoons Day Nursery, Holcroft Court, Carburton Street, Fitzrovia, London W1W 5AL. littleraccoons.co.uk

Age UK provides services for people over 50 years old. In Camden call 020 7239 0400 or visit ageuk.org.uk/camden; in Westminster call 020 3004 5610 or visit ageuk.org.uk/westminster

American International Church offers services including a soup kitchen for the homeless and those in need. See amchurch.co.uk, call 020 7580 2791, or visit 79A Tottenham Court Road.