

Fitzrovia News

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1986 film tells the story of community action

A film about the history of Fitzrovia and the campaign by local people to restore derelict buildings for social housing and affordable retail premises — and create public open space — has been rediscovered, 35 years after it was produced, writes *Linus Rees*.

The 25-minute film was made for The Fitzrovia Trust by Channel 4 in 1986, soon after the Trust was set up, in order to be used for publicity purposes.

It has footage of many buildings in Fitzrovia undergoing restoration and there are views of Fitzroy Square, Charlotte Street, Percy Street, Candover Street and Riding House Street, and many of the small businesses that add to the character of the area.

Presented by Veronica Hyks, she first gives an overview and history of the area and its many famous former inhabitants before going on to meet local residents.

Nick Bailey (resident and author of 'Fitzrovia') is interviewed in a tailors' workshop on the corner of Charlotte and Windmill streets where they stitched made-to-measure, one-off suits. This was one of a cluster of many premises at the time working in different sectors of what

was known as the "rag trade" and "garment industry". In the 1980s Fitzrovia was particularly known for the production of multiple copies of the same fashions for the retail market in the West End.

Bailey describes the district's development as an area of skilled employment, trade union activity and radical activists. From the 18th century until the 1930s Fitzrovia developed as a dense urban village of craft and service workers living and working in the same area.

Hyks speaks to Andrew Westcott and Mike English of The Fitzrovia Trust who explain how the charitable organisation acquired empty and derelict buildings in Warren Street and put them back to use for social housing and affordable commercial premises.

Judy Dainton was a resident of Tottenham Street and the first chairperson of the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association (FNA). In the film she is seen standing outside the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre explaining how community groups put pressure on the local authorities to recognise Fitzrovia as a distinct community and to improve the lot of people living here.

There are views of Crabtree Fields which was converted to a public park from a parking lot after a campaign led by the Charlotte Street Association.

Roland Collins is interviewed in the park about the role of the Charlotte Street Association and its work in campaigning for social housing and public open space.

The film also features contributions from Nathaniel Goldenberg (retired waist-coat maker), Costas Antoniou (tailor), and H K Chowdury (resident). Max Neufeld (Charlotte Street Association) is listed as a consultant for the film.

You can read more about the film and watch it on our website: cutt.ly/1986-film-fitzrovia

Our winter issue

This two-page edition brings you only a fraction of the articles we publish on our website. See fitzrovia.com for all the stories, and reports on public consultations. You can also subscribe to our free email newsletter, which contains the latest public interest news and public consultations: newsletter.fitzrovia.com

Fitzrovia News is published in print every three months: usually in March, June, September, and December.

This printed newspaper is always available outside Fitzrovia Community Centre, 2 Foley Street. Browse our nearly complete 48 years of back issues at archive.fitzrovia.com

Homes breach short-term let limit

Thousands of homes rented out on short-term lets in Camden exceeded the 90-night limit last year, writes *Julia Gregory*, *Local Democracy Reporter*.

The council found that 35 per cent of flats and houses rented out for short stays broke the rules.

The south of the borough saw the highest number of the 6,215 short-term lets in 2020 — and Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia is a hot spot, according to maps produced in a report by Camden's housing department.

The figures show a drop in the previous year, when 48 per cent of the 7,100 properties breached the limit.

This was before the pandemic saw a huge reduction in overseas visitors and domestic tourism.

Plans for a pilot scheme in Bloomsbury were scaled back last year because of Covid. It had aimed to work with residents to pinpoint short-term lets.

The council took formal action against 26 homes, and an appeal was upheld after using its data and logs from residents.

It handed out 35 planning contravention notices between April and June, and plans to serve enforcement notices to any property breaching the 90-day rule.

Council investigators estimate that

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Short-term lets breach

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travel restrictions will also affect the numbers this year.

Camden's director of housing support services Rhys Makinson explained that "the council is not against short-term lets per se".

He said it can provide an income stream for residents, provide a base for visitors and help locals meet new people.

"The issue is where property is transferred to the short-term let sector."

If a property is not available for permanent accommodation, it can drive up rents, making it harder for people to find a home in Camden.

Makinson told the housing scrutiny committee: "We do take short-term lets very seriously and will take action when they exceed 90 days."

He added: "At a time when around a third of Camden residents rent from private landlords and more permanent homes are needed, properties being used as full-time short-term lets risk adding to the housing shortage and driving up rent."

Landlords use tactics such as listing their property across multiple sites, using different locations and different photos to make it harder for investigators to find the places rented out for too many nights.

The council has short-term let officers tackling breaches and the loss of permanent homes in the borough.

Residents can report any suspected short term lets to planning@camden.gov.uk

News in brief

Westminster Council has announced that it will not go ahead with the planned piazzas at Oxford Circus and other changes to **Oxford Street** until it has carried out a public consultation "with residents and other stakeholders".

Parents and teachers at **All Souls School** are disappointed to hear that Westminster Council intends to reopen **Riding House Street** to motor traffic.

A shop in Fitzrovia has closed down and has had its **alcohol licence permanently stripped** by Westminster City Council after a police raid found drugs hidden in sweet packets. In October police officers discovered large quantities of cannabis at Fashion and Media News off-licence at 39 **Great Titchfield Street**.

Pollock's Toy Museum in Scala Street is working with traditional craft workers to boost its visitor attraction and support the arts. **Emma Carlow**, an artist, designer and maker, has been working with the museum to create a unique collection of souvenirs.

Planning applications

As we went to press there were 44 planning applications registered during November 2021 by **Camden Council** in Bloomsbury ward.

The list includes 10 applications for advertising and 10 applications for planning consent for telecommunications hubs and illuminated screens on Tottenham Court Road; applications for tables and chairs under a pavement licence at 37 Charlotte Street; alterations to a building including a roof extension at 27-28 Windmill Street; alterations to a listed building at 15 Colville Place, and 32 Percy Street; a plant enclosure on a listed building at 21 University Street; and metal railings at the corner of Cleveland Street and Grafton Way. See: planningrecords.camden.gov.uk

Westminster Council validated 17 planning applications during November 2021 in Fitzrovia.

The list includes mostly minor applications, change of use and advertising consents. See idoxpa.westminster.gov.uk

Licensing applications

There were no current licensing applications as we went to press.

Advice for responding

Residents should check camden.gov.uk/public-licensing-register and idoxpa.westminster.gov.uk for the latest applications.

Residents in Westminster can contact licensingadvice.org for free advice, and should also email the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association with a copy of their comments to fna@fitzrovia.org.uk

Residents in Camden should email a copy of their comments to the Charlotte Street Association at csafitzrovia@yahoo.co.uk where they can also seek advice.

Fitzrovia News publishes the latest planning and licensing applications on our website: fitzrovia.com

Camden Site Allocations consultation

Camden Council is seeking the views of residents and community groups on its Site Allocations Plan, a document that identifies possible development sites within the borough and their possible uses.

The final document will become part of Camden's Local Plan to control and shape land development.

See: cutt.ly/camden-site-allocations

Free housing and welfare advice for residents

The Fitzrovia Advice Service, run by Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, is able to help residents in Fitzrovia 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 and email only, three days a week, and for speakers of English, Bengali, Sylheti, Urdu and Hindi.

Contact 020 3984 6364; or email: advice@fitzrovia.org.uk

Neighbourhood listings

Covid-19 advice and vaccine information is available from Camden and Westminster councils. See Camden.gov.uk/coronavirus and Westminster.gov.uk/coronavirus Covid-19 booster jabs are likely to be offered to most adults this winter.

Fitzrovia Community Centre has a Community Café open on Fridays 10am-12pm and Mondays 2-4pm offering a low-cost cup of tea or coffee and a snack. They have books and board games, too. You can find out more about what they offer from their website or by paying a visit to their building at 2 Foley Street or 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. They provide a number of activities. See fya.org.uk or call at Basement 66-68 Warren Street or call 020 7388 7399.

Rainbow Angels Nursery Fitzrovia is a new nursery located at 54A Whitfield Street, Fitzrovia. More information at rainbowangels.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 worship, a soup kitchen for the homeless and those in need as well as rooms for hire. See amchurch.co.uk, call 020 7580 2791, or visit 79A Tottenham Court Road.

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