

Fitzrovia News

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Business rates revaluation winners and losers

Shops, restaurants and hotels in Fitzrovia will pay significantly less in business rates from this spring while occupiers of office premises will see their rate bills increase, according to new research carried out by a local business group.

But do the findings stand up to scrutiny?

In November, the Valuation Office Agency updated the rateable values (RV) of all business, and other non-domestic, property in England and Wales, with the new RVs coming into effect from this April.

The Fitzrovia Partnership Business Improvement District says its research reveals the impact the revaluation will have on local businesses.

“We have done a lot of research on what that means for businesses locally,” wrote Lee Lyons, chief operating officer of the Fitzrovia BID, in an email to its members.

“I know that this is not exact for each business but to give an indication of our

findings we have seen the following: office spaces are up in RV circa 25 percent, shared office space (co-working) is down c15 percent, retail and hospitality is down c25 percent with the exception of hotels which are showing the largest reduction up to 50 percent of rateable value.”

However, when *Fitzrovia News* looked at the new RV for a sample of shops and small businesses in the neighbourhood we found the savings to be more modest — and a number of retail premises are actually due to pay more in rates from April.

We found that Tesco Goodge Street, Lidl Tottenham Court Road, and Sainsbury’s Tottenham Court Road will all have an increase in their RV of between one and three percentage points. Planet Organic Tottenham Court Road will see its RV rise by 19 percent.

Marks and Spencer and Argos will see their RV fall by nine and 10 percentage points respectively, and Currys PC World will see the biggest fall with an 18 percent drop in RV.

Most of the small businesses we looked at will pay between four and 10 percent less from April. But a small pharmacy on Great Titchfield Street is due to pay six percent more.

The Fitzrovia Partnership told *Fitzrovia News* that they focused on its 250 or more members — mostly business with an RV above £160,000 — but they also included some other businesses.

Lyons told *Fitzrovia News* that their research included “the wider Fitzrovia as we are working with several businesses on the Westminster side of the area, hence giving a more holistic indication of the rates review”.

Fitzrovia News looked at 23 businesses in Fitzrovia commonly used by local residents for their regular shopping. We also included a sample of small businesses providing services as well as some cafes and restaurants.

Half a century of local news

In March 1973 — 50 years ago this month — the first community newspaper for Fitzrovia was published by a group of volunteers known as the Whitfield Street Study Group, based at what is now the nursery on Whitfield Street. The building was called the Whitfield Gardens Centre and the *Tower* community newspaper was just one of a number of activities hosted at the small community centre.

That first free newspaper was a four-page tabloid printed in black and white — and contained more news than our current offering. It would go on to be published every two or three months until 1979.

In November 1980 it was relaunched as *Fitzrovia Neighbourhood News* and published from the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre in Tottenham Street. In January 1987 its name was shortened to *Fitzrovia News*. During this time it was edited by neighbourhood workers Dave Ferris, Mairi Mills and Nicola Charalambous.

After another break it was produced again in December 2004 led for the first time by a paid editor, Michael Lawler, thanks to grant funding and additional advertising. This series was published usually two or three times a year and ran until February 2007 when production was again halted after the grant funding ran out.

In the autumn of 2007 it was relaunched with new enthusiasm and printed in full colour for the first time. Led by a team of Mike Pentelow (editor) Pete Whyatt and Linus Rees, it continued to be published every three months for 13 years. Sadly, in April 2020, Pentelow died at the relatively young age of 73. The last full colour 16-page issue rolled off the presses in June 2020 filled with tributes to him.

Since September 2020 *Fitzrovia News* has been an online first publication with a two-page, A4 printed edition published every few months.

We are (still) slowly completing the 50 year archive of every issue. See: archive.fitzrovia.com

More news over page. ►

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News in brief

Westminster Council has refused permission to change a shop unit at **100-102 Oxford Street** to an adult gaming centre because the business would undermine the street as a globally recognised shopping district.

Extinction Rebellion activists held a protest at Barclays Bank on **Tottenham Court Road** on Tuesday 14 February to draw attention to the bank's continued investment in fossil fuel.

Camden councillors Richard Cotton and Pat Callaghan joined **Streets Kitchen's** early morning outreach from Camden Town to **Tottenham Court Road** tube station in October 2022 and met more than **100 people sleeping rough**.

A male tabby **cat** was found abandoned in a cardboard box outside Irvine Court in **Whitfield Street** on Tuesday 14 February. The **RSPCA** is appealing for anyone who has any information about him to call them on 0300 123 8018 quoting reference 01028674.

A despairing family is calling for work to be done urgently to sort out problems with a smelly, overflowing sewer at their Fitzrovia home — months after they raised the issue with **Clarion** housing association bosses.

An artistic-political group called **Artists for Democracy** had a gallery in a squatted building at 143 **Whitfield Street** from January 1975 to August 1977. Now a new exhibition at the **Horse Hospital** revisits the collective organisation.

Rita Furzey

We were saddened to hear that Rita Furzey died very suddenly at the end of 2022. She lived in Great Portland Street, was a long-time resident and a well known personality in the neighbourhood.

Licensing applications

48 Margaret Street, Westminster. Seeks sale of alcohol from 10am to midnight from Sunday to Wednesday, and 10am to 1am the following morning from Thursday to Saturday; and late night refreshment from 11pm to midnight from Sunday to Wednesday, and 11pm to 1am the following morning from Thursday to Saturday. Deadline 15 March.

1947 Restaurant, 33 Charlotte Street, Camden. Seeks to extend the hours for the sale of alcohol until 1am from Monday to Wednesday, 1.30am Thursday to Saturday; and for the sale of late night refreshment until 1.30am Monday to Wednesday, and 2am from Thursday to Saturday. D/L: 10 March.

Planning applications

Camden Council applications during February 2023 in Fitzrovia East. In the list is: change of use from Restaurant to a Restaurant/takeaway at **33 Goodge Street**; tree works at **Fitzroy Square**; installation of air con units at **9-10 Windmill Street**; alterations to a listed building at **26 Fitzroy Square**, and **22 Torrington Place** (Heals Building); tables and chairs at **12 Charlotte Street**, **53 Warren Street** and **114 Tottenham Court Road**; amendments to a previous permission at **31-37 Whitfield Street**; and updated drawings for alterations to a service door at **40 Whitfield Street** including reduction in size of the Goodge Street Tesco store.

See: planningrecords.camden.gov.uk for details and the latest applications.

Westminster Council applications in February 2023 in Fitzrovia West. Includes: two-storey extension at **108 Gt Portland St**; redevelopment at **30-32 Mortimer St** (also **Bywell Place**); use of premises as a restaurant at **22-24 Gt Portland Street**; use of part of **19 Newman Street**, which includes **14 Newman Passage** as a private members club and spa (as part of The Mandrake hotel at 20-21 Newman Street).

See: idoxpa.westminster.gov.uk for details.

Advice for responding

Residents should check Camden and Westminster's sites 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.

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

There is more news about public consultations on our website: fitzrovia.com

You can also keep up with the latest news by subscribing to our free email newsletter: fitzrovia.com

fitzrovia.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 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

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: Paul Fisher, Patrick Lilley, and Jessica Toale; 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. 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 54A Whitfield Street. 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 a soup kitchen for the homeless and those in need. See amchurch.co.uk, call 020 7580 2791, or visit 79A Tottenham Court Road.

Saturday morning gardening. Contact friends@crabtreefields.org.uk