

Growth, prosperity, and importance of London

Soho is a unique place that has constantly reinvented itself over the years. Soho has always been a place of tolerance and inclusion no matter the decade. Through the 60s, 70s, and 80s, Soho remained an underdeveloped area in the middle of the West End and became known as the "sex centre" of the city.

The nostalgia for that is somewhat skewed, depending on who is telling the story.

Residential accommodation was poor and only started improving in the 90s. Pre and Post WW2 multiple families lived above any shop and street level in Soho. We all admire the changes and improvement in living conditions which have not come at the cost of the local culture.

To maintain London's place as a world beating capital it is important to encourage growth and development. The West End is the centre of our capital. It carries the finest art, theatre, culture, hospitality entertainment, and shopping which we must encourage and support to continue to be attractive to visitors world-wide.

Westminster City Council must recognise that growth cannot be restricted to only what a minority of residents will accept.

Alfresco was an emergency measure that undoubtedly saved the Hospitality industry in Soho. It was well run and many people came back to the West End to enjoy street dining.

Without outdoor eating, the country and especially Soho, would have many empty restaurant premises which would still be empty today, awaiting new enterprise.

The small fraction of anti-Alfresco residents repeatedly show footage of the 4th of July, when the entire country was let loose and the streets were packed everywhere. To describe Alfresco using these images is false, and not the pleasant well run and business saving model it was.

Previous councillors had to deal with the pandemic and although they are not known to be the most commercial minded individuals, they acted fast and were proactive and pragmatic to save businesses jobs and livelihoods.

WCC issued 112 licences to trade outside in Soho. Each license was a lifeline and was well run by people who are deemed fit and proper to hold a licence by the Local Authority.

Alfresco dining is an enjoyable experience brings people together and adds vibrancy to the street scene.

Other areas have since embraced Alfresco as a pleasant improvement to the street scene and some areas have made parts of this change into a permanent fixture.

Charlotte Street has removed parking bays and given them over to people.

China Town has used the pedestrianised area for tables and chairs.

Covent Garden has used the cobbled pedestrianised square.

Good for our Visitors but the locals in Soho do not get this choice.

I fear Alfresco has been politicalised and misinterpreted as a vote loser in Soho. Many residents support Alfresco and enjoyed Alfresco.

We need to rally the voice of the majority residents and visitors who voted with their feet when Alfresco saved our Soho.

**John James
Soho Estates**