

**TAXI
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MORE HOTELS IN PREPARATION FOR 2012 OLYMPICS

Despite the credit crunch London is preparing itself for the 2012 Olympics. The taxi trade will find itself learning more new hotel names as a hotel building boom in the West End is gathering pace ahead of 2012, following the announcement by the developers of the famous Swiss Centre site in Leicester Square of a £200m deal with leading global hotel and leisure company Starwood Hotels.

Westminster City Council has given the go ahead for a series of ambitious plans which will see more than 1000 rooms added to the West End's hotel portfolio.

Glamour and glitz looks set to be restored to 45 Park Lane where a former Playboy club and casino will soon be transformed into a 48 room hotel in one of the capital's most upmarket Mayfair neighbourhoods. The designs have been drawn up by French-born and New York-based architect Thierry W Despont, who has created homes for the likes of Bill Gates and Calvin Klein and collaborated on the Getty Center galleries in Los Angeles.

Councillor Robert Davis, Westminster City Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for planning, said: "We're experiencing a surge of applications for major new hotels, particularly at the top end of the market. Despite the credit crunch I can only see this activity intensifying as come 2012 there will be a premium on top of the range accommodation in the heart of the capital."

At the heart of the capital just a stone's throw from Piccadilly Circus, one of London's most thriving tourist destinations, a 471 bedroom multi-million pound redevelopment is planned for the upper floors of the entertainment and shopping venue the Trocadero Centre by developers Goldfratt on behalf of Ibis Hotels.

At the other end of the price bracket, Claridge's, one of the world's finest luxury hotels is planning a major refurbishment and two storey's worth of extensions, to ensure the Mayfair hotel is prepared to accommodate more visitors during the games.

The historic Cafe Royal is also set to be transformed into a "six star" hotel after the Regent Street building changed hands in a £90 million deal. Israeli developers

Alrov Properties plan to turn the 142-year-old site into a 131-room hotel after signing a 125-year lease with owners The Crown Estate. Cafe Royal has been a London landmark since 1865 and was the haunt of figures such as Oscar Wilde and the venue for black-tie boxing matches. Its patrons have included Edward VIII and George VI and, more recently, Prince Philip, Prince Charles, Princess Diana and the Queen Mother.

Meanwhile developer Soho Estates has been granted permission to create a 19 room hotel in the vibrant area of Soho at 67-70 Dean Street, near to all the excitement and visitor attractions the West End has to offer, and are waiting to hear if they will be granted permission to increase the hotel to 24 rooms.



LORD MAYOR GOES OUT ON PATROL WITH CITY POLICE

Alderman David Lewis, Lord Mayor of London has recently been out on patrol with the City of London Police Special Constabulary on Saturday 6 September.

Lord Mayor David Lewis saw first-hand the challenges faced by the City Police to manage the Square Mile on weekend evenings and the important role played by the Special Constabulary in helping to tackle these issues. He was accompanied by officers as part of Operation Fearless – targeting anti-social behaviour, violent crime and thefts from within licensed premises in and on the fringes of the Square Mile. This included visits to bars, pubs and clubs in the area.

Lord Mayor Lewis said: "Officers and Specials at the City of London Police do an excellent job in controlling order in the Square Mile during busy weekend nights. I am particularly impressed by the way the Specials

are integrated into our regular policing. Together our Force plays a crucial role in maintaining the City's reputation as a world-class venue not only for business but also leisure."

With just over 75 volunteer officers the City's Special Constabulary is a relatively small team but one which is very innovatively deployed in comparison to many police forces. Uniformed patrols on Thursdays and Fridays, the City's busiest nights, make up the core of their work. However, they also work in plain clothes on CID, with the warrants team, and assist with the running of roads policing operations. The Specials also work alongside regular officers at demonstrations or ceremonial events in the City. The Force also boasts several 'specialist Specials' who work in dedicated areas such as the cycle squad, the scientific support unit, roads policing and the Control room.

