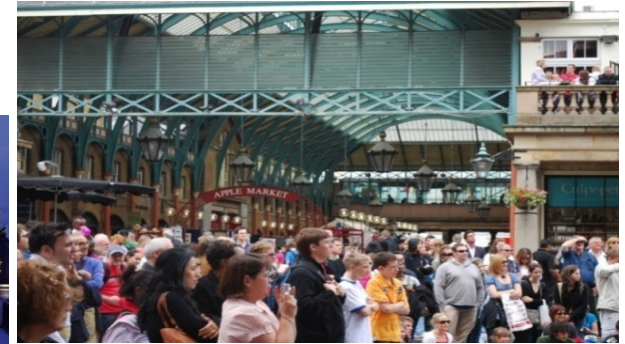


# THE WEST END

## DEVELOPING WESTMINSTER'S LOCAL PLAN



# FOREWORD

## CLLR ROBERT DAVIS

In 2012, Westminster City Council convened the independent West End Commission to review, explore and set out recommendations for the continued and future success of the West End of London. The Commission reported in early 2013, and a partnership of local and regional agencies and business and resident stakeholders has been formed to address the challenges raised and deliver change .

Conceived as the starting point for our response to the strategic issues and opportunities highlighted by the West End Commission, this booklet differs from others in this series as it brings forward fresh thinking around our approach to the West End and invites an open and forward-thinking debate around its future.

The West End is incredibly successful, but we must work to ensure it remains one of the greatest places in the world for culture, entertainment, shopping, eating out, working and living. The West End is made up of distinctive and unique places, borne out of their layers of history: it is that eclectic mix and small-scale reinvention which makes the West End the destination of choice. We need to plan proactively to meet the West End's challenges: bringing forward more floorspace to meet the demands for housing and a whole range of businesses through sensitive development; providing the infrastructure and networks needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and managing the pressures generated by success to enable the West End to function properly. A strong West End economy will support a strong London, and UK economy.

This booklet brings together detailed data and analysis on the West End economy, its spatial dimensions and its changing infrastructure needs. It then poses a range of challenging questions about the future of the West End: how we plan for the future, what governance structures and policy responses are needed, what we want a future West End to look like – its extent and make-up, all with a view to harnessing strong, sustainable growth for the West End and its fringe areas.

We are now inviting your comments on these issues and look forward to working with you to ensure that the new planning policy framework for the West End provides a framework for the future.



**Councillor Robert Davis DL**  
**Deputy Leader, Westminster City Council**  
**Cabinet Member for Built Environment**



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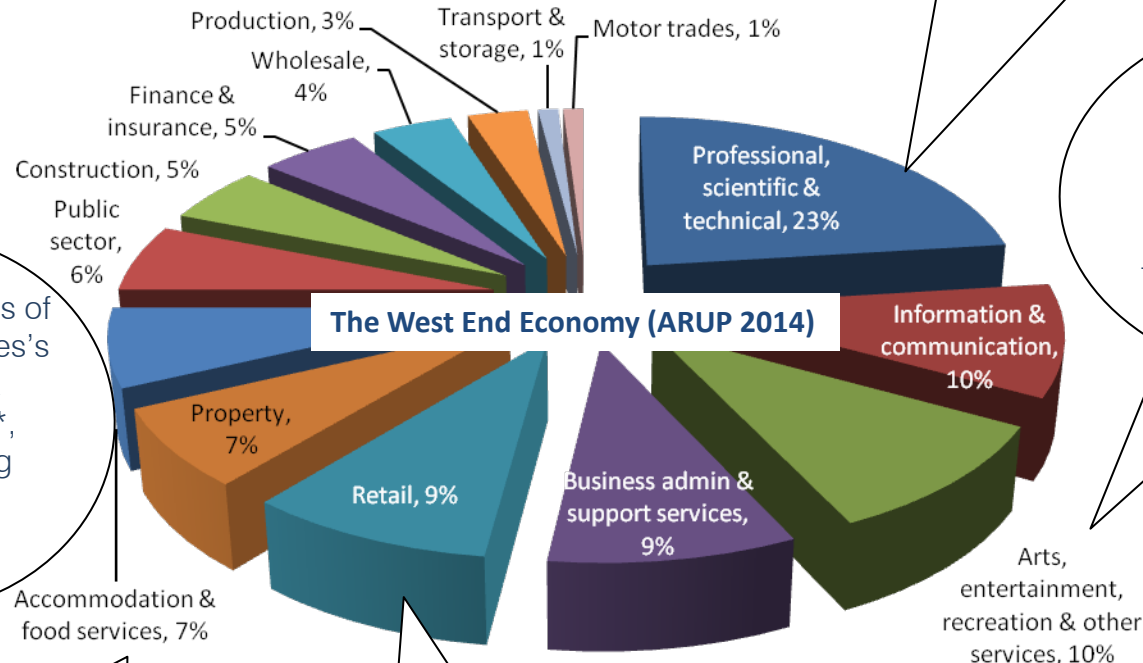
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# DEFINING THE WEST END

*“There is no single definitive definition of this unique urban area”*

West End Commission Final Report (2013)



A huge range of business premises accommodating hedge funds, creative industries, tech and digital firms, real estate firms and advertising companies to name a few, creating one of the most productive and attractive business districts

30 museums and galleries, including the British Museum\*, National Gallery and National Portrait Gallery, all of which are in the top 10 visitor attractions in the UK.

With over 3,000 licensed premises, the West End has the largest and most diverse offer of restaurants, theatres, bars, pubs, casinos and clubs in the UK.

40 theatres, concert halls and the Opera House, Coliseum, 20 cinemas and the iconic red carpet premiers of Leicester Square.

2,000 shops, including Oxford Street, Regent Street, Bond Street, Covent Garden, Soho, Leicester Square, China Town and Carnaby Street.

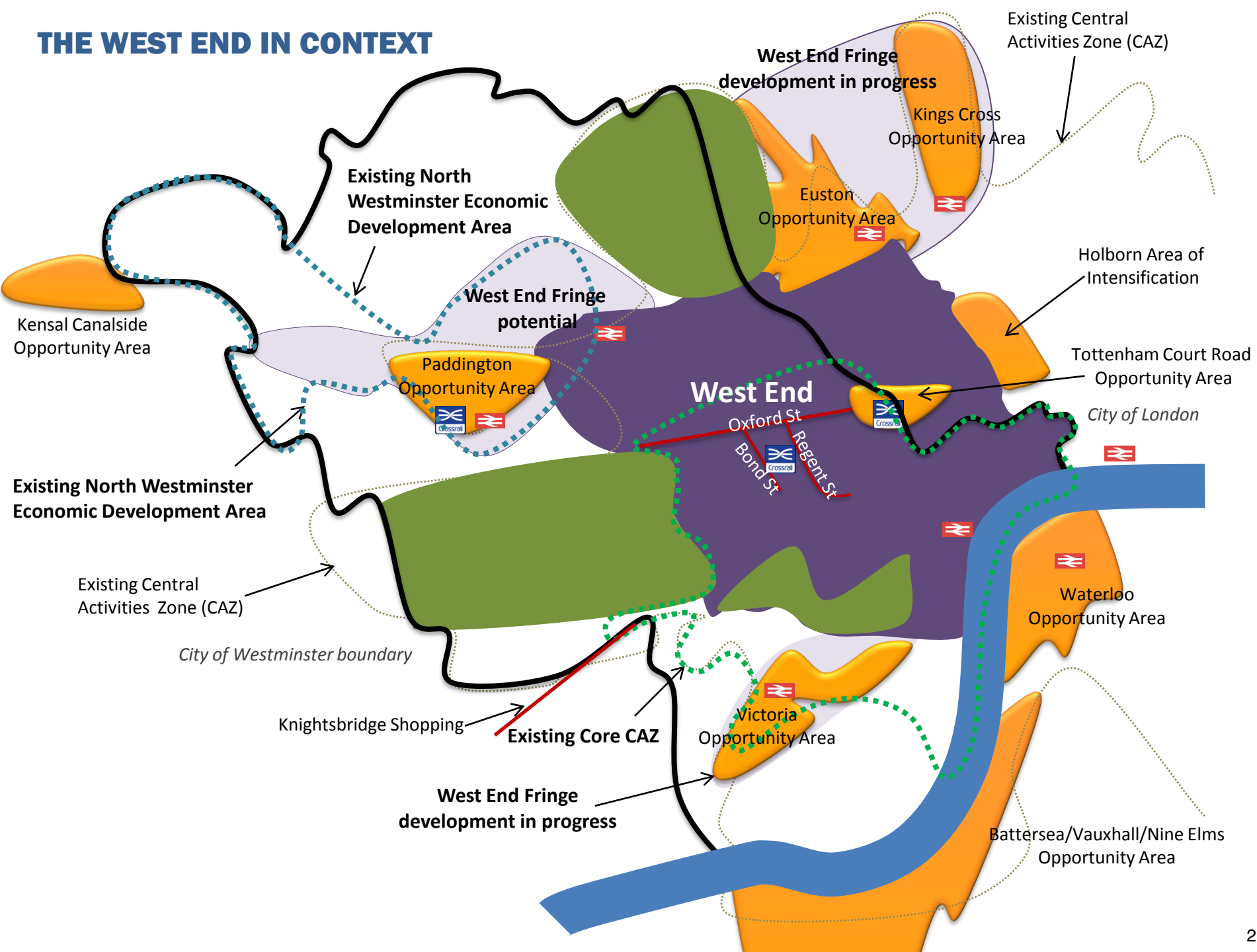
Eating out in one of the 2,500 restaurants and bars, 17 of which are Michelin starred, extending to Park Lane, Embankment, and as far north as Charlotte Street

The electoral wards of West End, St James's and Holborn & Covent Garden\*, accommodating nearly 40,000 residents

\* Including the London Borough of Camden



# THE WEST END IN CONTEXT



# REASONS FOR SUCCESS

## Access to skilled labour

- Westminster has the highest level of employment of any London borough with 673,000 jobs in 2011, with the next largest, City of London, trailing with 430,000. The vast majority of this is in Westminster's Central Activities Zone: the West End, Victoria, Paddington and the commercial parts of Knightsbridge/Belgravia. Part of the West End lies within the London Borough of Camden, which has 342,00 jobs overall, of which about 50,000 are within the West End.
- Westminster (and Camden) compare favourably with London in terms of employment levels, however there are wards within the borough but outside the West End where unemployment is high. Of the 20,600 working age social housing tenants in Westminster, 9,100 are without work, some 55.9%.

## Connectivity

- The West End is the best connected place in the country, including international access by air or rail. There are 20 tube stations, and a further 5 on the edge of the West End.
- These include 5 stations that are also major rail hubs.
- Over nine million bus journeys per week start and/or finish in central London, including around 1.4 million passengers travelling to, from or along Oxford Street (about three-quarters of those are getting on or off).
- Over 15,000 taxi passengers are carried along/set down/picked up in Oxford Street every day.
- 19% of all Barclay cycle hire is to/from the West End.
- The completion of Crossrail in 2018/19 and major improvements to Thameslink will further improve accessibility. Crossrail is projected to increase entries/exits from Tottenham Court Road by 25% and Bond Street by 31%.

## Mixed economy

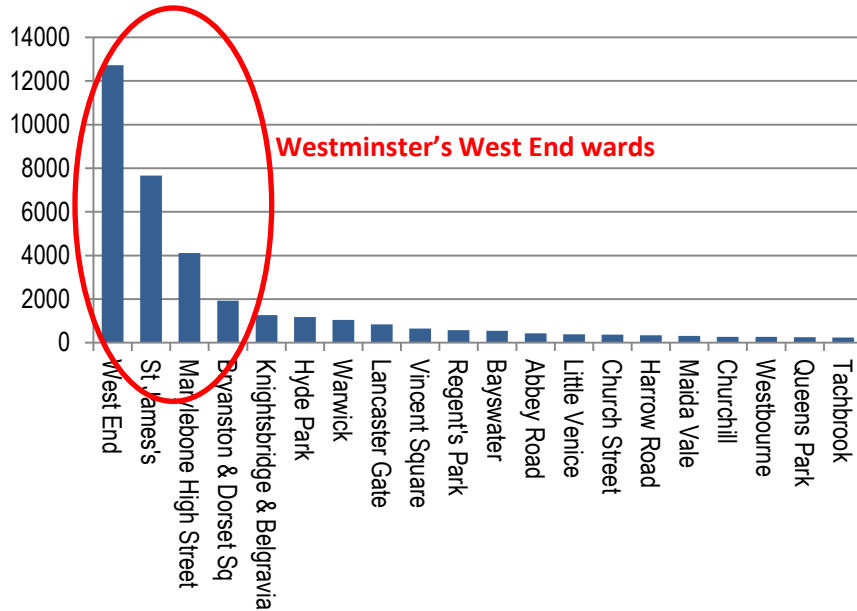
- The profession, scientific & technical sector comprises 23% of the West End's GVA, with no other sector exceeding 10%. This is an extremely diverse and therefore resilient economy influenced by the range of businesses, from Global HQs to the 85% of businesses of <10 employees. This diversity also adds to the attractiveness of the area for living, working, visiting and investing.
- One of the major reasons of success is the economics of agglomeration: there is a concentration of sectors and enterprises that benefit from being close to each other and these benefits outweigh disbenefits such as high rent. The density of particular sectors is crucial, and it is easy for interventions to upset the "ecology".
- The agglomeration also applies to retail: the West End has 1.675m sqm of which 842,000sqm is comparison (compared to a 'major city average' of 250,000sqm). Comparison retail works on being able to make comparisons between what different shops have to offer.

## Human scale

- Unlike some global cities, the West End celebrates its history, maintaining both the historic grain and urban patterns and conserving and adapting individual buildings to create a rich urban tapestry. This, and the mix of uses, maintains the human scale and many spaces within the West End retain an intimate feel because of it, such as the streets of Soho.
- This human scale is also evident in the multitude of spaces, each with a very different feel and often just a few streets away from each other. Some of the charm is also the 'accidental discovery' of these unique places which lie in the spaces between more obvious landmarks.

# THE WEST END ECONOMY

## VAT Registered Businesses (2013)



*"After an extremely successful 2013, the Core West End's overall outlook remains very positive, particularly when viewed in a wider London or even Global context. In JLL's latest global research report, London ranks second globally on the new City Momentum Index."*

London's West End Review and Outlook (2014) New West End Company and Heart of London Business Improvement Districts

*"The West End of London is a major economic asset"*

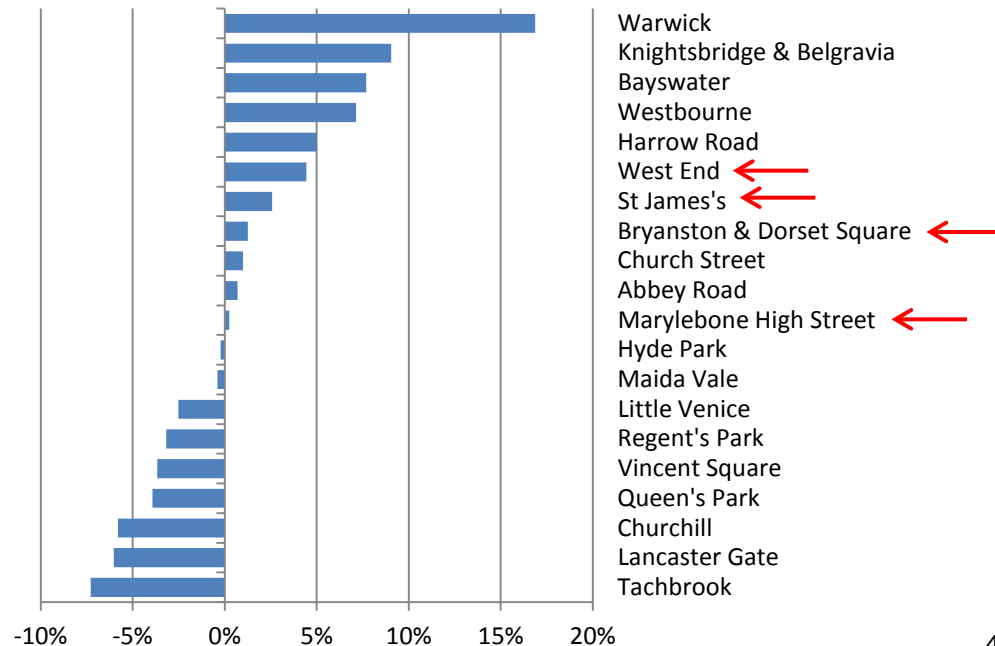
West End Commission Final Report (2013) West End Commission

*"The West End is one of the most productive and attractive business and residential districts in London. At a global level it continues to compete very successfully"*

West End Partnership Vision (2014) ARUP

*The wider West End (including Camden) generated £43bn GVA at the last estimate. Since this time, Westminster's total GVA has increased from £46bn to £55.7bn, and is now 4% of total UK GVA, and 18% of the GVA for London as a whole. With the West End's strong economic performance, it will have been a key contributor to this increase.*

## Westminster's Employee Change 2011 - 2012 (2013)



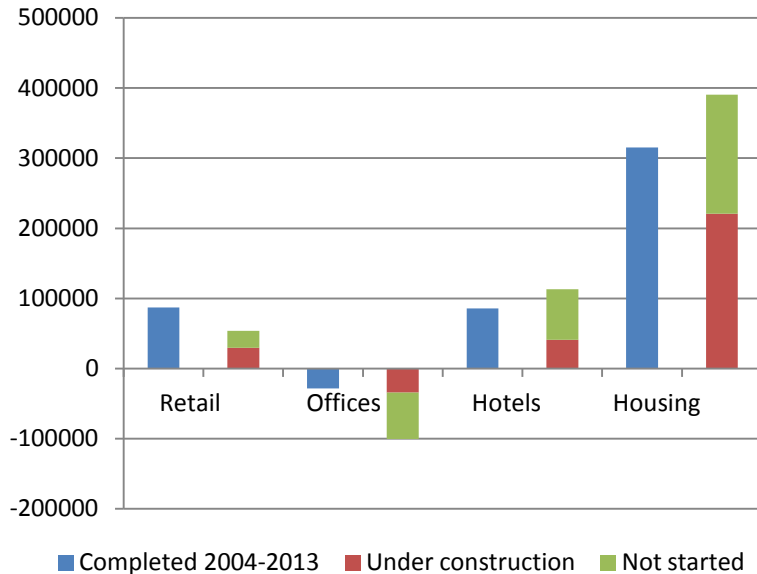


# THE WEST END ECONOMY continued

*The wider West End accounts for some 64 per cent of the combined economic output of Westminster and Camden, and its economy is larger than that of the City of London. The wider West End also sustains a higher level of employment than the Square Mile, supporting 575 thousand jobs.*

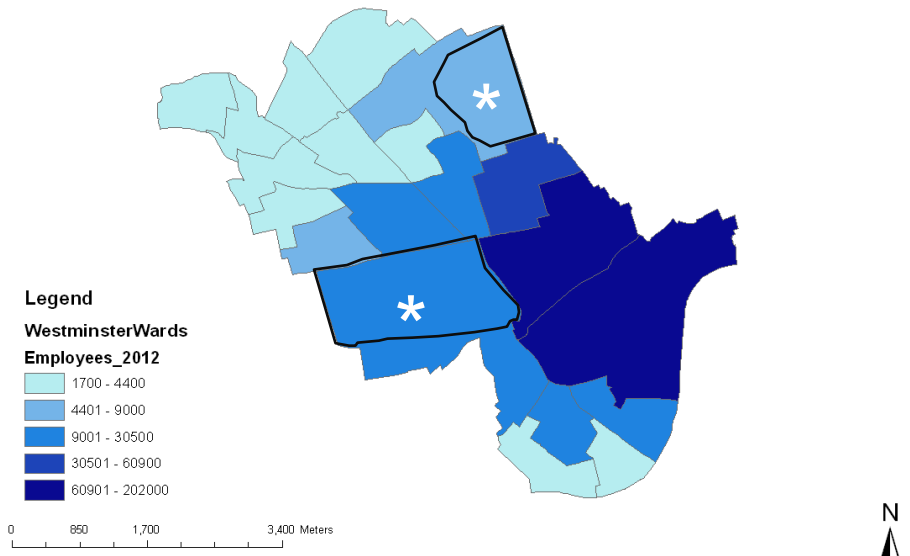
West End Partnership's Vision for the West End (2014) ARUP

## Floorspace growth/loss for key land-uses in Westminster's West End Completed 2004-2013 and Pipeline



## Westminster's Employee Distribution

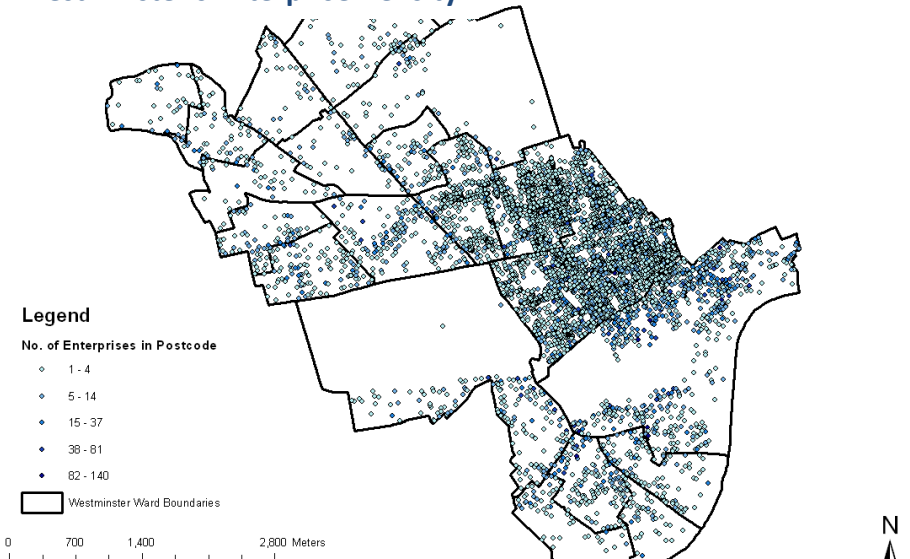
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the Intelligence Unit on 0207 641 3975



NB Those wards shown with an asterisk above are largely Royal Parks (black outline) and the employment density of the *built* areas of those wards is significantly higher.

## Westminster's Enterprise Density

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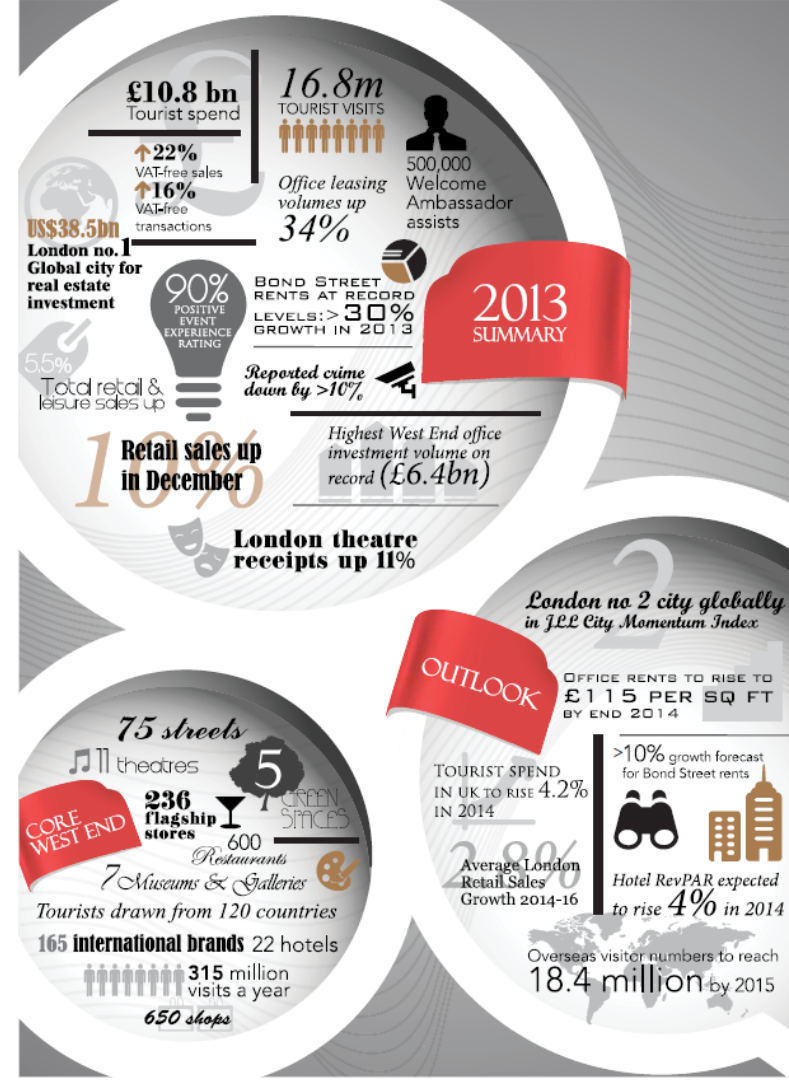
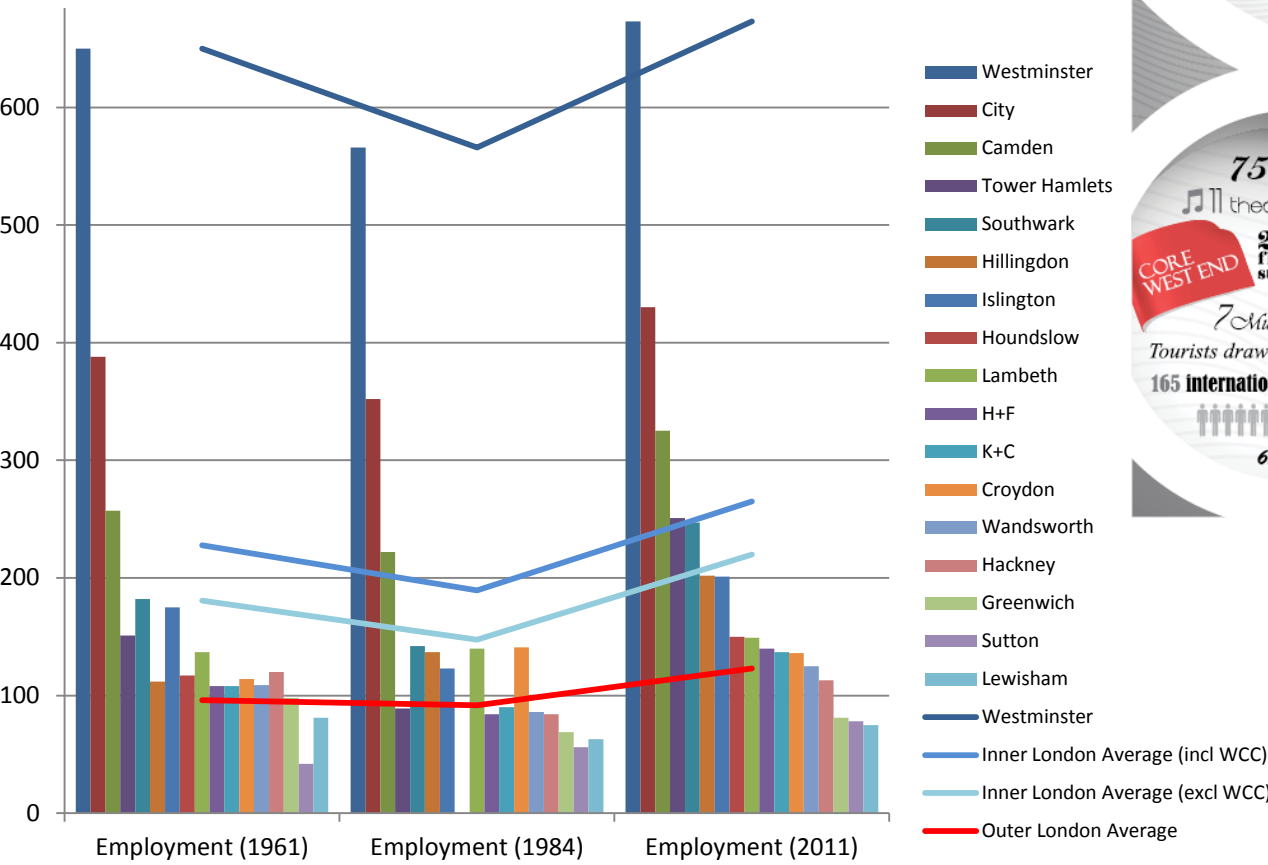
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# MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Since 1961, roughly half of the London boroughs grew more than Westminster in terms of absolute jobs. These include (in order of jobs *growth*): Tower Hamlets (Canary Wharf), Hillingdon (Heathrow), Camden (Kings Cross/Euston), Southwark (South Bank), Bromley and the City.

Over the past 50 years, successive governments have pursued two very different approaches to employment growth across London. Up until the 1980s, national policy was dominated by a focus on employment growth in the outer London boroughs, which worked against the inner London areas including the West End. There was also a declining residential population in Central London. This was coupled with a huge structural shift in the economy from manufacturing to services.

Since the early/mid 1980s, a renewed focus on central London and the development of newly freed up manufacturing sites, particularly the former docks, has enabled central London to recover quite strongly.



from London's West End Review & Outlook (2014)

# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The GLA have provided projections for Westminster's employment growth from the current 673,000 employees to 750,000 in 2036, an increase in 77,000 jobs.

Alternatively, Westminster could aim to retain its share of the London-wide growth projections, growing at the same rate as the London average. This would give a target of 771,000 for 2036, an increase of 98,000 jobs. We could also be ambitious and aim to secure employment growth to match London's (working age) population projected growth rate. This would mean an extra 105,000 jobs. This would be a target of about 778,000 jobs by 2036, similar to maintaining our current share of jobs.

To give some idea of what that might look like physically, following the GLA growth projections we would need about 1.4 million sqm of additional office floorspace over the 20 year period. If this is added to the housing floorspace we will need to deliver over the same period, we would need to increase our growth by about 12% above historic delivery rates. However, greater efficiencies in building use can also mean that more jobs can also be accommodated within the existing floorspace of offices.

Retaining Westminster's share of London's employment growth would need about 3.9 million sqm (including housing), about 22% higher than past growth. To match London's working age population growth, about 4.1m sqm of commercial floorspace would be needed, or about 25% more floorspace than past delivery rates would suggest.

In addition, historic delivery has been about three quarters housing. These targets would require a greater amount of the floorspace to be commercial, between 45% and 60%.

The London Office Policy Review projections are based on 49% of Westminster's jobs being office based in 2031 (or an increase of 3%), so it can be assumed that the other jobs are in shops, restaurants, bars, leisure, medical and educational institutions.

Put another way, across London, almost half of the additional jobs are projected to be in the Professional, Real Estate, Scientific & technical activities sector. A further quarter is in the Administrative & support service activities sector. Both these sectors rely on office-based accommodation.

Information & Communication and Accommodation & food service activities each account for 20% of the increase in jobs (N.B the proportions exceed 100% as there are job losses in other sectors of - 37.5%). Information and communication accommodate offices but may be looking for a slightly different offer, discussed in more detail on page 15. Accommodation and food service have different requirements, and their potential growth is discussed on page 16.

Across London as a whole, retail and arts/entertainment show very modest growth projections (2% and 5% respectively), but within the West End consumer spending could double by 2036. There were a significant number of retailer openings in 2013, prime rents on all major shopping streets reached record levels and there was unprecedented levels of interest for core West End space from leisure operators (New West End Company & Heart of London BID Area). There is no policy constraint on retail across most of the West End, with the exception of streets in Marylebone and Fitzrovia that are not currently of a commercial nature. Retail is a requirement in any development in Oxford, Bond and Regent Street.

Arts and entertainment are discussed in detail on page 16.

There is a significant housing pipeline for the West End (see page 5 above) and this is undoubtedly 'growth'. However there is evidence that housing development is displacing employment floorspace. This is discussed in more detail on page 14.



# MAINTAINING SUCCESS AND GROWING THE WEST END ECONOMY

## Global competitiveness

- Westminster has maintained about 15% -16% share of London's GVA since the late 1990s, but the City's has grown from 12% (1997) to 14% (2011). However, the City's GVA is less resilient during recession cycles.
- The City's capacity to grow has been into its fringe and upwards. The potential for the West End to utilise a similar strategy is discussed in pages 13, 17 and 18.

## Managing the burdens of success

- Success brings challenges such as congestion, inflation, intense competition for land, crime and disorder and stronger competition from other places.
- Many of the options for addressing these issues (such as those presented in the West End Commission Report) fall outside the role of planning such as business rate retention, the work of Business Improvement Districts etc. Within planning, the Community Infrastructure Levy and planning obligations can address *some* of the impacts. These are discussed in more detail later in the booklet.

## Growth and development

- The majority of jobs growth in the West End is expected to be in professional, scientific and technical services. However, there is also expected to be growth in food and accommodation, wholesale and retail.
- Westminster and Camden's Opportunity Areas are projected to provide 9% of employment growth and 2.3% of housing growth compared to London's Opportunity Areas as a whole. However, they comprise just 1% of the land. Although there is no constraint on development in terms of jobs or homes, there is an opportunity to review the capacity of these areas to ensure we are being sufficiently aspirational.
- Local skills need to match these areas of growth to enable local residents to access these jobs.
- There is also a significant pipeline of housing growth, but the right balance is needed between housing and commercial floorspace as discussed on page 14.

## Diversity

- As well as supporting the recognised clusters in the West End, encouraging a greater role in business incubation and allowing both large and small businesses to flourish is required for continued success.
- There are questions around the ability for start-ups, creative industries, digital and tech companies to compete for floorspace in the West End. However, these occupiers are crucial to the unique feel of the West End. These are dealt with in more detail on the pages 15 and 18.

# MAINTAINING SUCCESS AND GROWING THE WEST END ECONOMY

## Climate change and utility networks

- The West End needs to work towards dramatically improving energy security, using low carbon, local energy solutions. The development of district heating, combined heat and power networks and hydrogen fuel cells, together with retrofitting efficiency measures are the most appropriate systems given the building typology.
- Significant greening measures and better urban drainage will also be crucial for the future. Disused underground carparking could provide significant water attenuation capacity for relatively little investment, learning lessons from Dutch counterparts.
- The West End is particularly susceptible to over-heating due to the urban heat island effect. Greater resilience is needed to minimise the impact of future heatwaves including loss of life, cost to the economy and the ability of infrastructure and networks to cope with these conditions.
- Ultra-fast broadband is essential to support the West End's economy, particularly for digital, media, tech and many other creative industries.

## Movement and transport

- West End's streets and alleys must accommodate many functions and significant pressures.
- Many streets in the West End suffer from severe overcrowding, such as the 520,000 weekday pedestrians on Oxford Street, or 250,000 pedestrians crossing Leicester Square each day.
- Collisions, although falling, remain a significant concern with 56.4 collisions per km for Oxford Street and 27 per km on Regent Street, compared to an average of 1.6 collisions per km on other London roads.
- Preparing for Crossrail and Crossrail 2, freight consolidation and addressing congestion, particularly in Oxford Street, must all be part of the future of a successful West End.

## Diversity of communities

- The West End does have established communities, including local primary schools, sheltered housing for the elderly, an active local housing association, a children's centre, a mosque and numerous other places of worship and many other community facilities. There is also a long-established LGBT community and many LGBT businesses. There is a broad representation of different ethnicities and ex-pat communities, most obviously Chinatown.
- West End's social housing tends to be rented rather than bought under Right-to-Buy.
- Any growth needs to respect the existing communities and support them, tackling deprivation and inequalities.



# CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

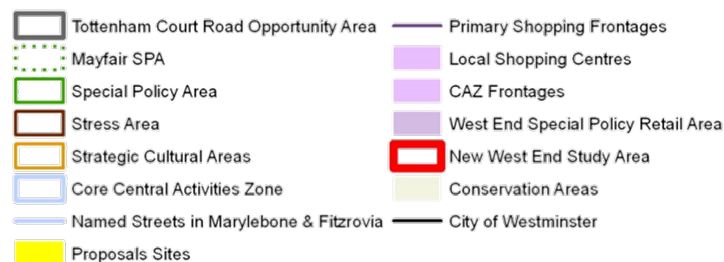
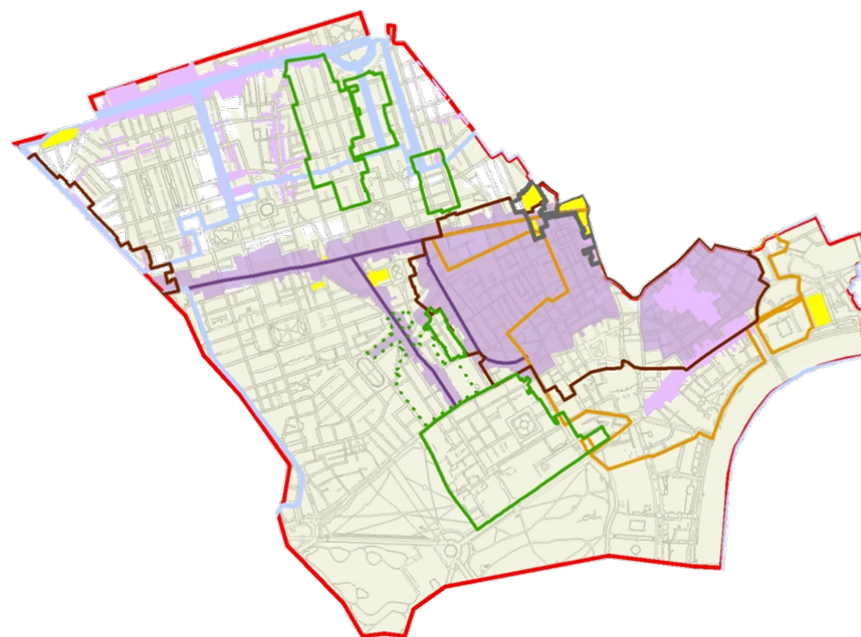
The West End is not currently recognised as a specific policy area.

Much of the West End lies within the Core Central Activities Zone (CAZ), but this designation excludes much of Marylebone and Fitzrovia, and it also includes Victoria, parts of Belgravia and parts of Knightsbridge. Within Marylebone and Fitzrovia there are designated 'Named Streets' which are similar in character and function to the Core CAZ and have a similar policy regime. There are also a number of designated retail areas in Marylebone/Fitzrovia, which similarly have a more commercial character.

In the Spatial Strategy and Implementation booklet we are asking if the separate Core CAZ designation should be removed. Here we are asking if a new West End designation should be added.

There are a number of other policy designations that already apply across the West End. The West End Special Retail Policy Area and other Special Policy Areas are shown in more detail on page 12. The Stress Area relates to entertainment uses and is discussed on page 16. Strategic Cultural Areas also cover parts of Knightsbridge and Millbank, and are areas identified by the Mayor of London and are areas where we direct arts, cultural and tourist attractions, and hotels.

A number of non-statutory Action Plans were prepared for parts of the West End including Soho, Covent Garden, Oxford, Regent & Bond Streets (ORB) and Chinatown. These action plans remain extant and are a focus for local aspirations and investment.



## KEY QUESTIONS

1. *Should the West End be separately designated in the City Plan with a bespoke policy approach?*
2. *If so, what would the policy approach be? How would it be different from the framework of policies and designations above?*
3. *Should any of the other designations already covering the West End be renewed in the light of any new 'West End' policy?*
4. *Is the extent of the Strategic Cultural Area right? Are other parts of the West End equally appropriate for this recognition?*



# LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The West End has complex governance arrangements: one of the key areas of concern of the West End Commission.

At a regional level, the Mayor and Transport for London are key to the success of the West End.

Locally, the West End spans two local authorities: the City of Westminster and the London Borough of Camden.

At a neighbourhood level there are designated Neighbourhood Areas for Mayfair, Soho, St James's, Marylebone and Fitzrovia (Fitzrovia West within Westminster and Fitzrovia East within Camden). Applications for the neighbourhood forum have been received for each area except Marylebone, and Mayfair and Soho have been granted neighbourhood forum status. Interest has also been expressed in forming a neighbourhood area around Covent Garden, Vincent Square/Millbank and the North Bank areas. The Covent Garden area covers parts of Westminster and Camden.

The West End also has 4 Business Improvement Districts: New West End Company, Heart of London, North Bank and Baker Street. These BIDs have different aspirations and priorities, but also have common interests.

In response to the West End Commission, the West End Partnership was established to provide a coherent governance and incentive system. The partnership has one representative from a neighbourhood area (Soho) and one from an emerging areas (Covent Garden).

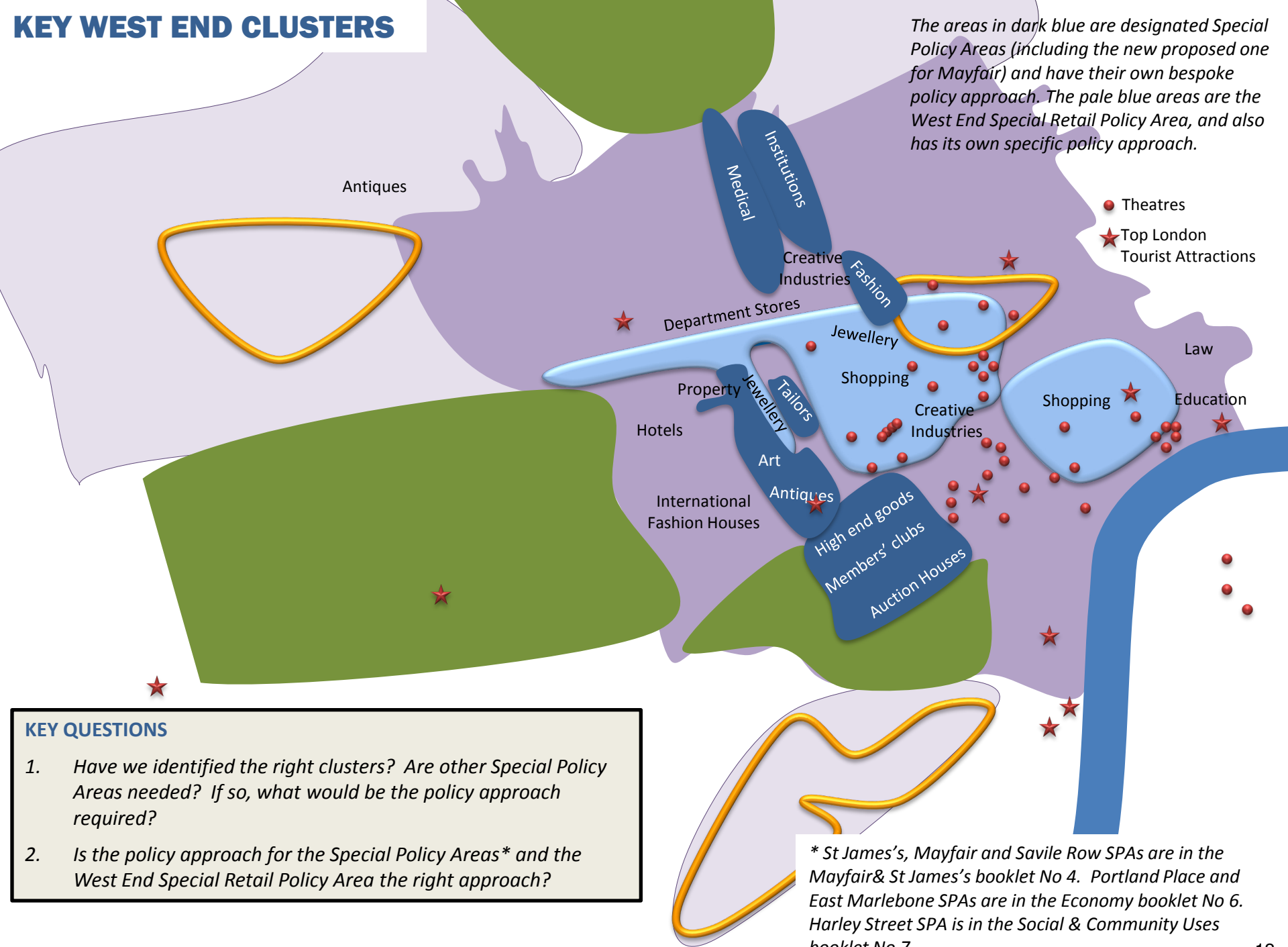


**Designated Neighbourhood Areas**

## KEY QUESTIONS

5. *In conjunction with the questions on the previous page about designating the West End separately, should an Action Area Plan be prepared for the West End with its own policy framework? This could be jointly developed by the City of Westminster, the London Borough of Camden, the Mayor of London and Transport for London and have the same statutory weight as the policies in the City Plan.*
1. *How would this relate to development of the fringe areas of Victoria, Paddington, Euston, Kings Cross and North Westminster and the wider Westminster and Camden areas? How would it address the West End at the centre of London and other neighbouring boroughs?*
2. *What are the ambitions of the various neighbourhood forums for their areas, and how can these be provided for?*

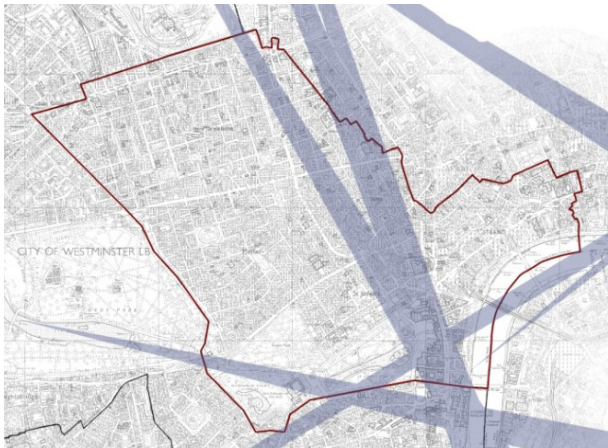
# KEY WEST END CLUSTERS



# MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL OF THE WEST END

There is an almost insatiable demand for new floorspace in the West End across *all* land uses. In order to compete globally, strong signals should be given that Westminster is open for business in the West End, and that we embrace growth and change.

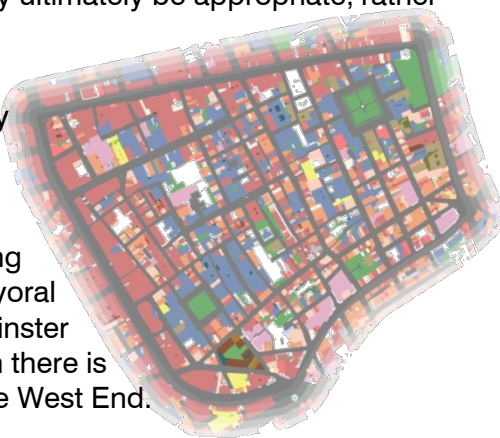
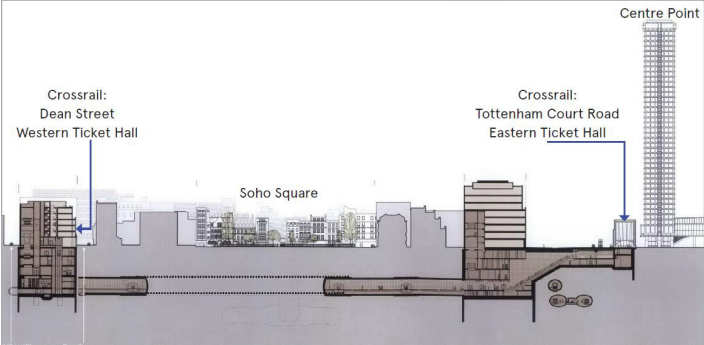
The existing policy approach is that there are very few absolute limits on the scale of development with the exception of the London-wide protected viewing corridors (shown in purple) which set upper limits. Scale and density are more about townscape, the feel of a place, its history and its future.



Consideration needs to be given to what the West End can realistically accommodate. Different areas will be suitable for developments of different scales. Whilst enabling development potential to be realised it would equally be a travesty if, say, the intimacy and fine grain of Soho, characteristics that make it so successful, were inadvertently destroyed in efforts to meet the market demand for space.

The current approach of gradually pushing up heights may be inefficient – area-based analysis could allow us to visualise what heights may ultimately be appropriate, rather than only benchmarking against neighbours.

Regardless of the development capacity, the reality is that the West End cannot meet demand absolutely within its boundaries. Of particular concern is the relationship between the West End's economic competitiveness and the demand for housing. Floorspace figures on page 14 show housing pushing out other uses, especially offices. The proposed Mayoral target of 1,068 new homes to be delivered in Westminster each year must also be taken into account, although there is no requirement for this housing to be delivered in the West End.



## KEY QUESTIONS

1. *Is a the right balance between meeting floorspace need and protecting the unique qualities of places met by the current approach to decision-making?*
2. *The West End Partnership has initiated the development of a model to look at potential future development and pre-planning for the West End. Could area-based analysis and even design guides help decision-making and signpost where there is unrealised potential? What role could the existing framework of Conservation Area Audits play in this work?*
3. *Are there any specific areas outside the designated Opportunity Areas where greater development potential should be highlighted and pursued?*
4. *How can the decision-making process deal with 'adequate' proposals, that do not warrant refusal but equally do not maximise development opportunities?*



# MAINTAINING MIXED USE AND DIVERSITY

The West End (Westminster only) has seen the loss of 183,400sqm of office floorspace over the past 10 years (shown in green). There is almost 200,000sqm of office losses still in the pipeline (purple). This issue is explored in detail in the Mixed Use booklet, available to download by following the web link at the back of this booklet. However, it is noted that these are not the biggest losses, which have been to the south between Victoria and the river.

As can be seen from the diagram below, the office losses are a range of unit sizes, but a substantial proportion of them are small offices (under 500sqm). Across Westminster, almost 70% of the office losses are small offices, but of these over 80% were originally built as housing.

The diversity of the West End is one of its key strengths. There is evidence that this diversity is being lost, and the character of the West End may already have been irrevocably altered in some areas. An example of this is the fringes of Soho where new development and public realm improvements have changed the character of some streets, making them more related to surrounding retail areas than the mixed use of Soho.

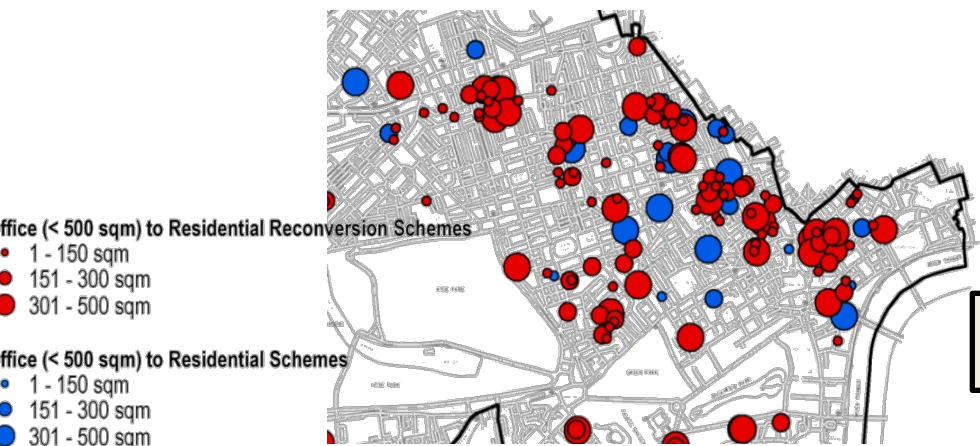
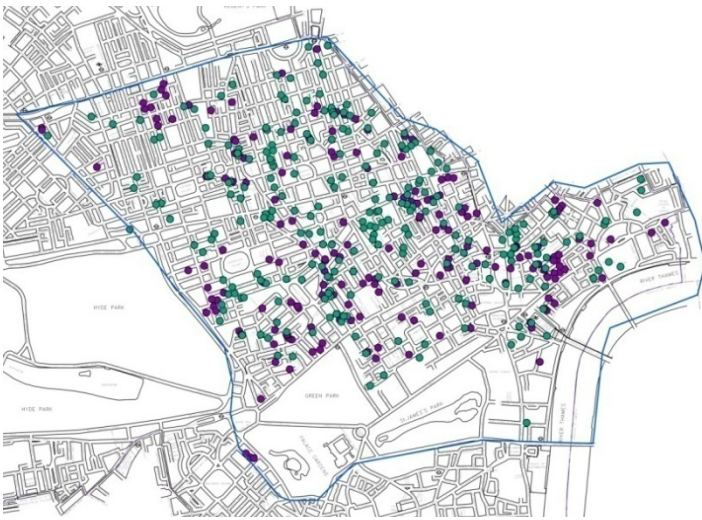
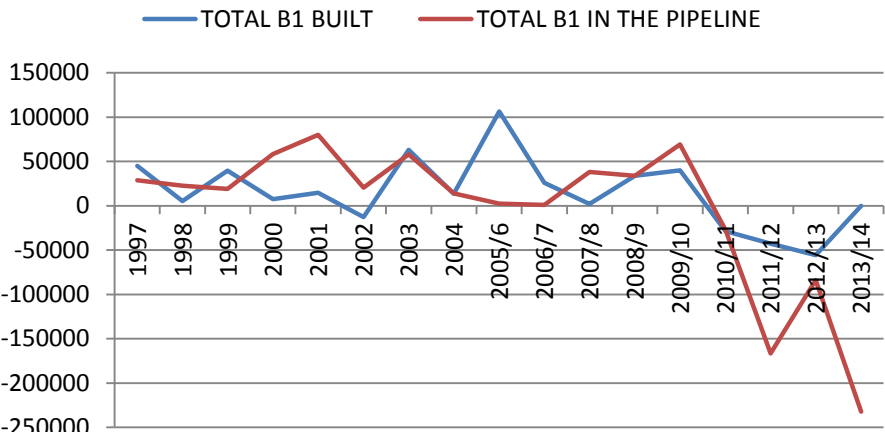
**KEY QUESTIONS**

1.

*Is a specific intervention needed in the West End to maintain diversity of offer? If so, what should be targeted? Small offices? Small retail units? Office to residential conversions? Do different areas need different responses?*

2.

*If so, what mechanisms, thresholds etc could be applied? What evidence supports this? Should the intervention be to control large, small, or both?*



Examples of new policy mechanisms are set out in the Mixed Use and Office to Residential booklet

# CREATIVE AND DIGITAL INDUSTRIES

The West End is the historical home of the Creative Industries and remains their first choice location. There are 90,000 employees in the creative and digital industries<sup>1</sup> in Westminster: 8% of the whole of the UK. This makes up 14% of the total employment, equal with Islington, and less than Camden and Hammersmith & Fulham (although in absolute numbers, Westminster has double the next borough, Camden.)

The sector grew by 29% in the 10 years since 1999, out-performing London (20%) and Great Britain (22%) growth. However, the sector suffered during the recession and sub-sectors such as architecture, advertising and music & visual and performing arts suffered significant losses. Tech<sup>2</sup> showed the greatest growth in London 2008-2013, growing 26% or 24,500 jobs. In 2013, take-up of office floorspace by creatives reached historic peak of 370,000sqm (the 10 year average was 175,000sqm). Looking to the future, the creative industries are expected to grow by 60,800 jobs by 2020, needing about 680,000sqm of office floorspace across London across London.

There is evidence that the creative industries are moving to less central locations and regional government is making significant efforts to attract them e.g. Media City in Salford. This principally relates to a typical cost ceiling of £50 psqft, compared to Q4 2013 prime rents in Soho of £87.50 psqft. Business rates are also currently significantly more expensive than areas such as Kings Cross and Southbank, although business rate re-evaluation in 2017 will significantly reduce the current advantages.

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. *Is there a potential difficulty in creative and digital industries accessing floorspace in the West End? Is there a continued role for these industries in the West End? If so, should the planning system intervene and how?*
2. *Should we allow the loss of wholesale showrooms, including in the East Marylebone Special Policy Area, to change use to studios? If so, what controls would be necessary to ensure operation similar to the Great Western Studios management model, supporting creatives. Would market values support this?*

It is noted that the West End has relatively low vacancy rates\* and is operating successfully. However, there is a fear that the market itself will not retain the rich mix of businesses in the West End and that this will detract from the West End in the long term as it loses its special character. A significant loss of diversity is widely recognised as detrimental to the West End in terms of financial resilience and the character and feel of areas such as Soho, which in itself generates investment and drives up rents. However, it is noted that despite a “*steady drift of occupiers from the West End to other markets*” commentators do not predict a mass exodus of existing occupiers<sup>3</sup>.

Creative companies are looking for short leases, flexible office space, collaboration spaces, large flexible floorplates and vertical connectivity in larger spaces and most importantly, super-fast broadband. Incubators and similar spaces are also highly valued at a macro level.

Not all creative industries seek ‘alternative’ accommodation, and a number of significant recent deals have placed them in buildings designed for corporate tenants. Smaller firms also choose accommodation to reflect their main clients. ‘Big Data’ companies, where the most significant growth is expected, whose main clients are corporate will gravitate towards similar office space, while others will look for the more typical ‘edgier’ locations.

We currently protect wholesale showrooms in the East Marylebone Special Policy Area. These uses are under considerable pressure from higher value uses. However, they contribute to the special character of this part of the West End in particular, and more widely, and benefit from the Central London location. However, alternative employment floorspace may be of equal value. Great Western Studios in North Westminster provides a successful model of floorspace for small creatives, particularly start-ups, with a high concentration of fashion and design businesses.

1 Referring here to computer programming, consultancy and information services  
2 Tech refers to technological equipment such as computers, biotechnology, telecommunications, electrical machinery etc Low vacancy rates are measured against an 8% availability rate which is the point at which there is considered to be a wide choice of accommodation and a tendency for rents to fall. Vacancy rates in the West End are between 50% and 15% of this benchmark, indicating a restricted supply and the evident rent increases in many areas.

3 CBRE Creative London 2014

# DINING, ENTERTAINMENT AND THE EVENING & NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

The West End dining and entertainment offer is exceptional. It is this that makes the area one of the most popular locations in the world for business. With over 3,000 licensed premises and diverse cultural and entertainment sectors including Theatreland, the West End accommodates the largest entertainment offer in the country, if not Europe, attracting large numbers of visitors, providing jobs, and pumping money into the local economy. Some streets in the West End are busier at 3am than they are at 3pm.

As noted on page 7, there is anticipated to be significant growth London-wide in the food and visitor accommodation sector. This sector is a significant provider of employment in the West End and any growth would need to also be reflected in these sectors.

Alongside this success are a number of costs, particularly relating to crime and cleansing/maintenance of the public realm and residential amenity. Evidence shows that evening uses (broadly ending by 1am) are significantly less costly than night-time uses which go beyond this time.

The West End Commission considered that these externalities would be best met by measures that fall outside the planning process. However, the Food, Drink, Tourism, Arts and Culture booklet published in February 2014 suggests refinement of our existing policy on entertainment uses to differentiate between evening and night-time uses.

Hotels are already considered appropriate across all of the West End, except in predominantly residential streets. Restaurants, cafes, pubs, bars and other entertainment uses are more restricted.



Parts of the West End are already designated ‘Stress Areas’, primarily around Covent Garden and Soho. A more stringent approach is taken in these areas because there is already an over-concentration of these type of uses which cause significant amenity problems.

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. *Given the projected jobs growth in the accommodation and food sectors (page 7), are we being encouraging enough towards this type of floorspace?*
2. *A significant policy change is already proposed to differentiate between evening and night-time uses in the Food, Drink, Tourism, Arts and Culture booklet . What would this mean for the West End? How can we support potential growth in jobs without the potential disbenefits already experienced?*
3. *Are there any planning interventions other than those already proposed that could help address some of the externalities of the West End’s attraction to visitors and tourists?*
4. *Should further provision be made to bring forward hotels? In what locations?*



# A WIDER WEST END?

Many of the features of the West End economy arise from an constrained supply of available floorspace. In many respects, the low vacancy rates and high values are indicative of the successfulness of the area.

However, it is also important to ensure that development opportunities are maximised to enable the West End to successfully compete with other international cities and other parts of London and the UK. The continuing success of the West End cannot be taken for granted.

Broadening the influence of the West End into fringe areas will ensure that the unmet demand remains local and reinforces the pre-eminence of the West End, rather than dilute it. This strategy has been successful in the growth of the City of London over the past 20-30 years.

**Paddington** A recognised fringe West End market driven by large pre-lets and characterised by late cycle rental growth.\*

**Victoria** A well-connected market that caters for both private and public occupiers, offering large floorplates at affordable rents.\* This is a future Crossrail 2 station.

**Kings Cross & Euston** An emerging area within the London Borough of Camden that is attractive to traditional West End occupiers.\*

**North Westminster** Currently part of the North Westminster Economic Development Area, but Crossrail could provide the critical mass necessary to overcome the severance issues of the Westway (together with a targeted programme of public realm works) and secure greater commercial development. The potential role of North Westminster in relation to the West End is discussed on the following page.

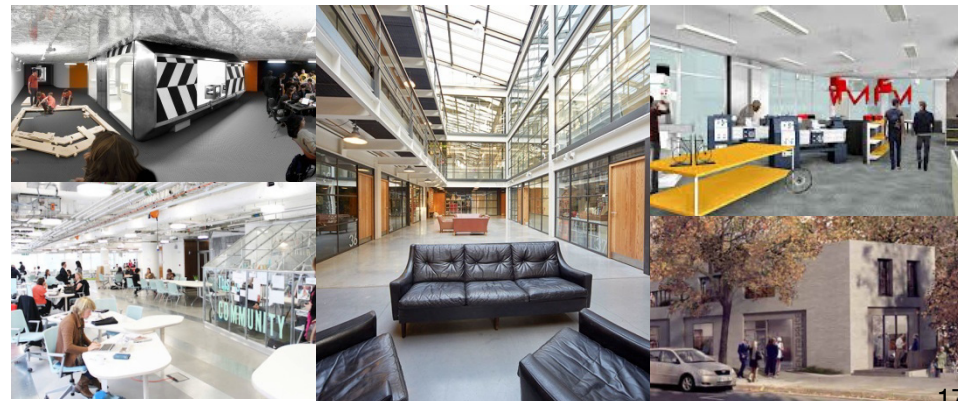
\* Henderson Global Investors



## KEY QUESTIONS

1. *If employment is to grow significantly in the West End, where should this growth go?*
2. *To what extent can higher levels of growth be accommodated within the traditional West End area in a balanced and sustainable form?*
3. *What other opportunities exist to grow the West End outside its existing boundaries? What role can Victoria, Paddington, Euston\*, Kings Cross\* and North Westminster make? Is there a role for parts of the North of the borough such as the area around Church Street? If the West End is separately designated, even in a different plan, how should the role of these areas be addressed?*

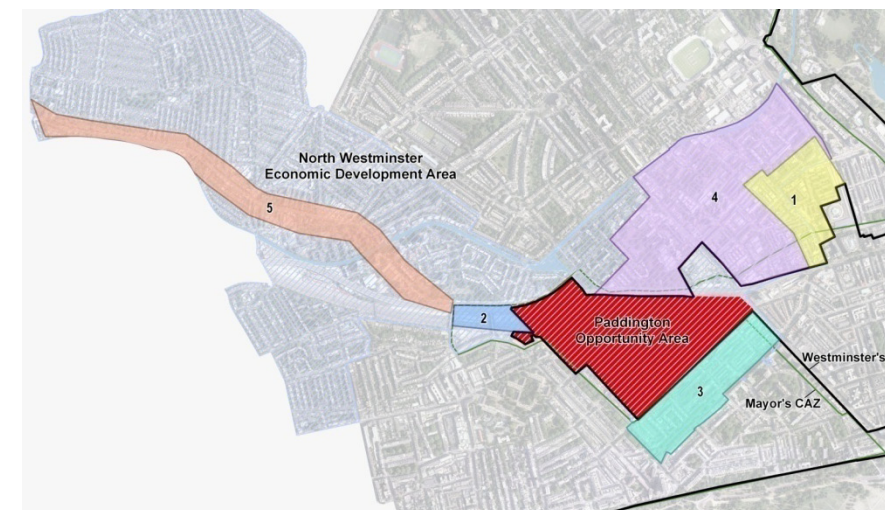
\* London Borough of Camden





# WHAT SORT OF GROWTH?

While the development potential of the 4 established Opportunity Areas is obvious, there is more flexibility about the potential of North Westminster. In our Spatial Strategy and Implementation booklet No 16 we asked about whether the existing Paddington Opportunity Area should be extended further to the north, as shown in the map below.



**Housing-led capacity** Development in the West End does not contribute 30% of all housing as affordable, usually because of viability issues caused by high existing use values, and capacity constraints because of important townscape and heritage considerations. There is a crucial need for a range of housing to support West End businesses and contribute to the pool of available labour. These areas, and the North Westminster Economic Development Area more generally, provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to add to the existing local communities and create one or a number of cohesive, mixed communities on the fringe of the West End. This would include other floorspace such as social/community uses and employment floorspace, but on a smaller scale. It is already provided for in the policy for the North Westminster Economic Development Area (see the Economy booklet No.6).

**Commercial-led capacity** There are opportunities within these areas to contribute prime A large floorplace office floorspace with good access to Paddington and Marylebone. If a critical mass of such offices could be achieved, this would essentially extend Paddington over the Westway and across to Marylebone. However, it would obviously be important to retain the pockets of distinctive character. There would, however, be overlap with established provision in the other West End fringe areas.



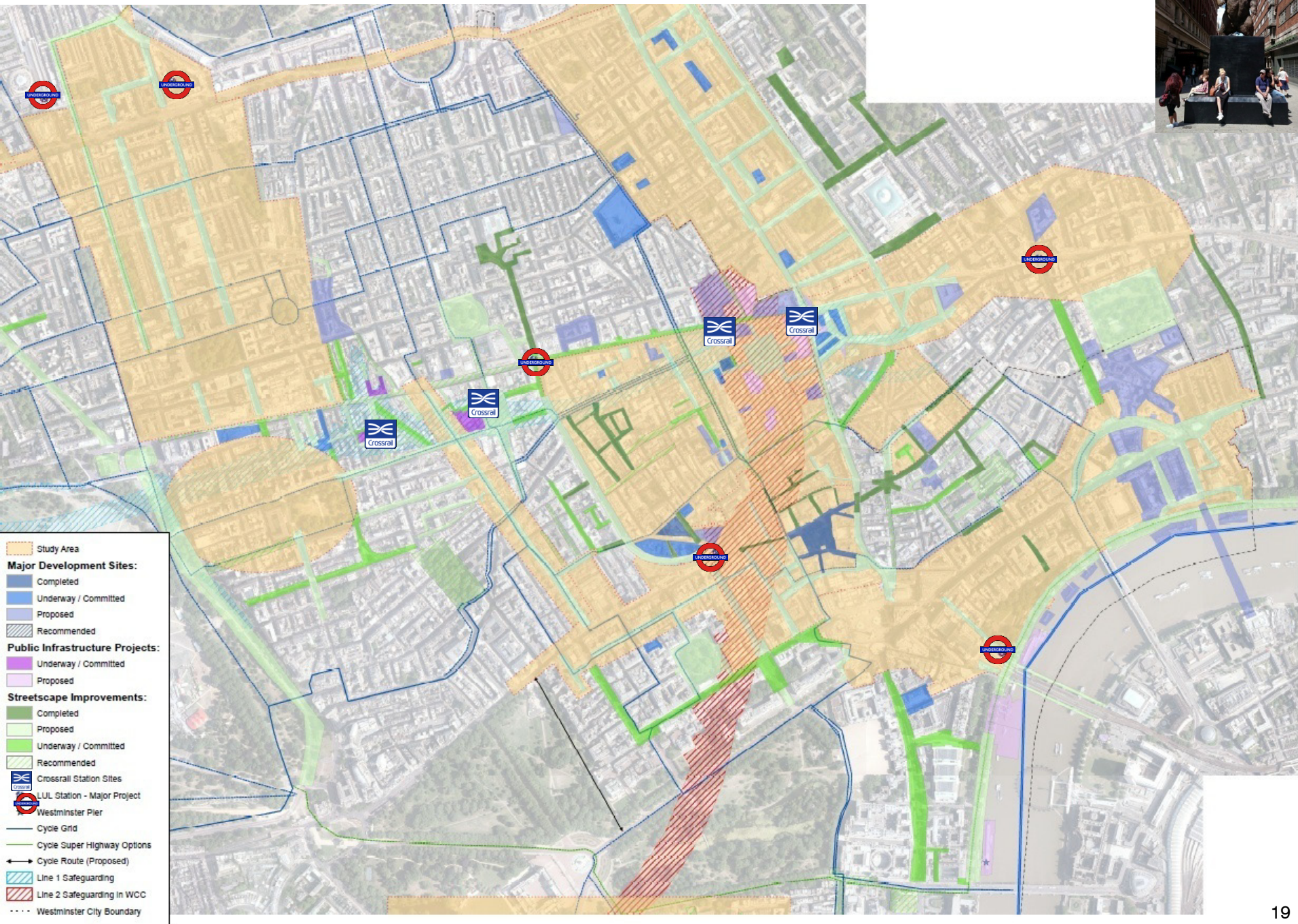
## KEY QUESTIONS

1. Which of the 5 areas shown in the map have potential to provide overspill capacity for the West End? Should any other areas be included?
2. What is the most appropriate role for this area? Is there a role for all three, and where should the balance be struck between different types of floorspace? What is the relationship with existing housing regeneration proposals and/or emerging neighbourhood forums? (Marylebone, Church Street, Hyde Park & Paddington, Little Venice and Maida Vale and Westbourne neighbourhood areas may all be affected)

**Commercial-led capacity – alternative models** One of the key concerns about the West End is the loss of small offices, the loss of more affordable commercial floorspace, and loss of business diversity within the West End which will erode its special character and part of what makes it so attractive. Whilst these issues need to be tackled within the West End itself, it also suggests a role for the North Westminster fringe. The council lobbied for and supported the re-provision of Great Western Studios. It is also actively pursuing a wide range of enterprise and start-up spaces as part of wider estate regeneration programmes. Great Western Studios and Workspace Group report a significant unmet need for alternative and affordable workspaces. This type of provision offers a unique selling point which differentiates it from the other four fringe areas and compliments the West End. These types of businesses look for places which are edgy, a destination in its own right offering more than just commercial floorspace, and capitalising on the proximity to the centre.



# PUBLIC REALM





# PUBLIC REALM

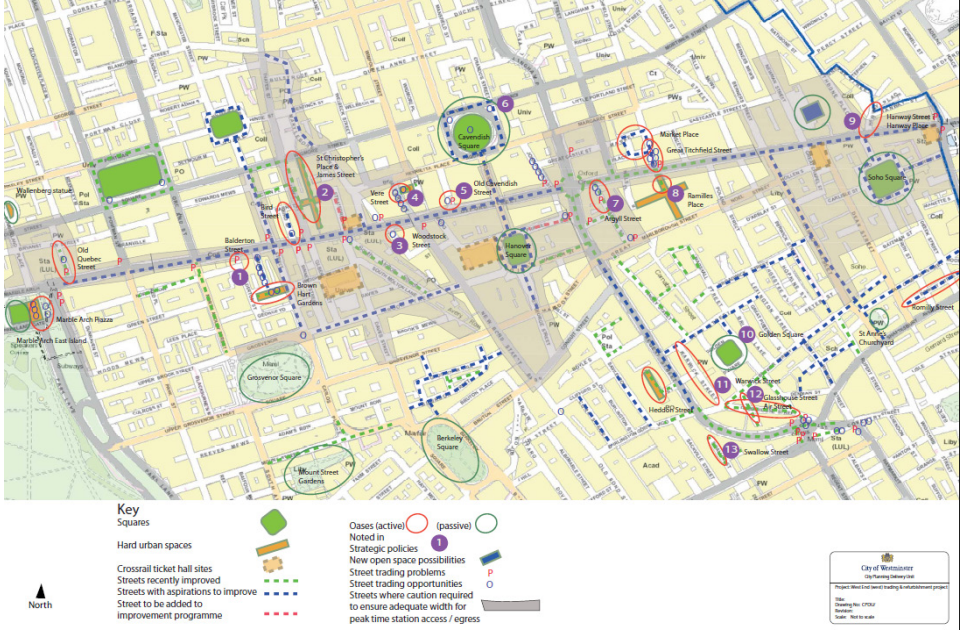
There has been a huge amount of activity in the recent past, starting with World Squares for All and Hungerford Golden Jubilee Footbridges at the turn of the century, and most recently the completion of Piccadilly 2 Way Phase 1, Oxford Circus diagonal crossing and the complete overhaul of Leicester Square. This will continue, with emerging proposals for Baker Street 2 Way, for example and many smaller schemes.

There are significant and on-going programmes of works also associated with Section 106 (planning obligations from new development) and Section 278 (highways legislation that enables private investment in the public highway). These are set to continue, including one off works e.g. the repaving of Regent Street , as part of a coordinated programme to improve the physical operation of the highway particularly for pedestrians.

The funding for these schemes needs to be reconsidered with the development of Westminster's Community Infrastructure Levy. In the meantime, Section 106 funding, including the unique development and use of public realm credits continue to support significant public realm improvements alongside development.

There is also continued work on area assessments, with the Soho Public Realm Study recently completed. These will focus on preparing for the impact of Crossrail e.g. improvements to the setting and pedestrian environment in Bond Street and the intention to upgrade both east and west Oxford Street. This will provide improvements for pedestrians and other road users and we will be looking at issues such as freight consolidation and implementation of the cycle grid which starts later this year. Other emerging schemes include The Strand/Aldwych following the success of Long Acre and continuing work around Covent Garden.

Future development pressure needs to maintain and enhance the public realm to address growing need and continue to prioritise pedestrians. Development will continue to accompany a coordinated approach across the whole area. Close joint working between the City of Westminster, London Borough of Camden, Transport for London, and the other neighbouring boroughs, together with our private sector partners has been crucial and will obviously continue.



## OTHER NETWORK ISSUES

### TRANSPORT

The City Plan prioritises pedestrians above all other modes of transport: absolutely crucial in the management of the highway in the West End which is under extraordinary pressure.

There has been on-going concern about congestion in Oxford Street, including buses and other traffic, and accommodating the exceptional pedestrian flows. This issue is discussed in detail in the Transport booklet which can be downloaded using the web details at the back of this booklet.

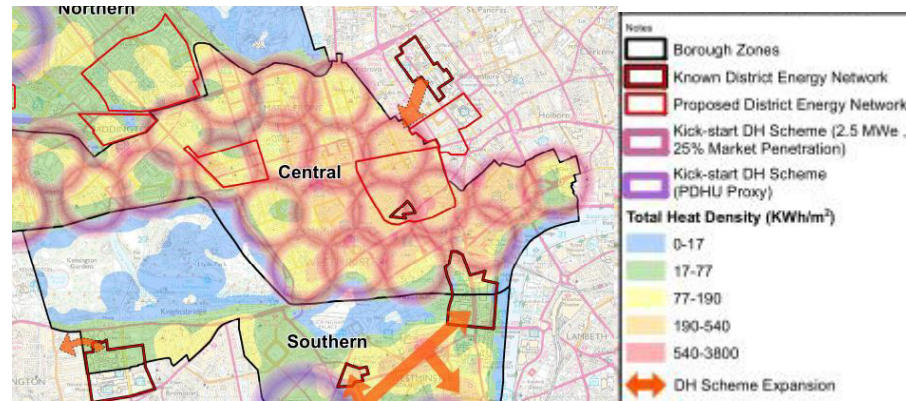
The City Plan already supports freight consolidation (Policy S42) and the Transportation booklet adds further detail and emphasis. This is essential to reduce traffic, emissions and disruption to residents, and supports the fine grained mix of uses so integral to the character of the West End.

Consideration also needs to be given to zero-emission vehicles operating in the area. Existing strategic policy supports and welcomes this (and would support funding from development), but the programme itself will need to be implemented outside the planning process.

Consideration also needs to be given to the potential for late-night and all-night services. A one hour extension of services is already under consideration by Transport for London for the Victoria and Jubilee lines. These matters lie outside of the scope of the City Plan, but need to be raised as key issues for the future of the West End.

### ENERGY

The Energy and Climate Change booklet addresses this in detail. Importantly, district energy systems are supported, and the council's District Energy Masterplan identifies the West End as a key zone for district energy with both high heat densities and a high frequency of new development. Two district energy networks are already proposed within the West End. However, it is most efficient for capacity to be built in at the development stage wherever possible to reduce cost, minimise disruption, and optimise the on-site design solution. Opportunities also exist for energy from organic waste.



Parsons Brinkerhoff 2013

### HIGH SPEED BROADBAND

This is crucial for the global competitiveness of the West End, and to support increasingly web-based industries. The City Plan already highlights the issue, but the solution will need to come from a partnership approach with a clear long-term strategy for delivery.

### KEY QUESTIONS

1. Are there other areas in which the City Plan can contribute towards meeting the current and future needs of the West End?
2. What contribution can be made by Westminster's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)? Should the CIL raised by West End development be ring-fenced for the West End?
3. Should the West End have increased policy requirements for local energy generation to help tackle the pressing need for a more resilient energy supply, in the face of increasing development? Should there be a requirement for new development to support high speed broadband?



# Have Your Say

This booklet is part of the informal consultation for developing the statutory policies in Westminster's local plan. It builds on previous consultation on the City Management Plan. Further information can be found at [www.westminster.gov.uk/planning-policy](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/planning-policy).

This booklet only includes the proposed policy. However, the Westminster's local plan will include supporting text. This can be downloaded here, or for a hard copy, please telephone 020 7641 2503.

This supporting text includes:

- Introductory text, setting out the background to the topic.
- Policy application: guidance as to how the policy will be applied, including details of how things will be measured or calculated etc.
- Reasoned justification: this is an explanation required by law to accompany a policy, setting out why a policy is applied.
- Glossary definitions: the statutory definitions used for terms that are included in the policies.

If you wish to discuss the issues raised in this booklet with somebody, please telephone 020 7641 2503.

To comment on anything in this booklet, please email [planningpolicy@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@westminster.gov.uk) or write to us at:

City Planning  
11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Westminster City Hall  
64 Victoria Street  
London SW1 6QP

Your comments will form part of the statutory record of consultation and will be made available on our website and to the public. Your contact details will not be made available, but we will use them to stay in touch with you about future policy development. If you do not want us to stay in touch, please let us know in your response.

# Reading List

West End Commission Final Report (2013) West End Commission  
Soho Public Realm Study (2014) Publica  
Local Economic Assessment (2014) Westminster City Council  
At A Glance: Central London Office Market Q1 2014 BNP Paribas Real Estate  
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Westminster Creative Industries Programme Statistical Update (2011) Burns and Owens Partnership Ltd  
Westminster's Creative Industries (2007) GVA Grimley LLP & Burns and Owens Partnership Ltd  
Creative London: How technological innovation, work and play are changing office workplace strategies of creative industries (2014) CBRE  
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Overseas investment guide to Central London Offices (2012) Henderson Global Investors  
Westbourne Green: The Proposals (2014) Westminster City Council  
Dolphin Living (2014) Dolphin Square Foundation  
Decentralised Energy Masterplan for Westminster (2013) Parsons Brinkerhoff  
Theatreland Strategy (2008) Westminster City Council, English Heritage, The Society of London Theatre and The Theatres Trust  
Chinatown Action Plan (2003) Westminster City Council  
Covent Garden Action Plan: working for the future of Covent Garden (2004) Westminster City Council  
Oxford Street Regent Street and Bond Street ORB Action Plan (2008) Westminster City Council. Published by Westminster City Council/Transport for London/New West End Company  
Soho Action Plan: Your thoughts in action (2007) Westminster City Council  
<http://civicenterprisefund.co.uk/portfolio/great-western-studios/>  
<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/co-working-spaces-incubators-and-accelerators>