



City of Westminster

Cabinet Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	9th July 2018
Classification:	For General Release
Title:	Oxford Street District – Project Approach
Wards Affected:	West End, Bryanston and Dorset Square, Marylebone High Street, Hyde Park
Key Decision:	Cabinet
Financial Summary:	This report seeks the financial approval of £727,000, made up of a reallocation of £327,000 of council's own revenue and £400,000 from the 2018/19 Local Implementation Plan (LIP) allocation.
Report of:	Barbara Brownlee, Executive Director, Growth, Planning and Housing Deirdra Armsby, Director of Place Shaping and West End Partnership

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the City Council's approach to developing a district wide solution for the area spanning Tottenham Court Road to Marble Arch, and including the surrounding neighbourhoods to the north and south. This area will be referred to as the Oxford Street District. Precise boundaries will be considered as the project evolves.
- 1.2. Following two public consultations on the transformation of Oxford Street West and subsequent public statements from the Leader of the City Council, the previously proposed full scale pedestrianisation of Oxford Street West has been withdrawn from any future consideration. This report outlines how a new project to transform the Oxford Street district will meet the ambitions of the City Council, our residents, partners and stakeholders. This will take the form of a place based strategy and delivery plan¹.
- 1.3. The City Council is currently reviewing safety interventions required in advance of the opening of the Elizabeth Line stations at Tottenham Court Road and Bond Street, currently scheduled for 9th December 2018. Transport for London's passenger demand forecast indicates that from December 2018 passenger numbers using Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road (Elizabeth Line) stations increase by 17% and 37% respectively. These passenger predictions rise to 57% and 81% respectively by 2021. The Oxford Street safety scheme interventions will be the subject of a separate report to the Cabinet Member for City Management and Communities in July 2018. That report will outline the investment needed to undertake safety works prior to the opening of the Elizabeth Line on 9th December 2018 and throughout 2019/20 leading to the line being fully operational by 2021.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To endorse the new approach for the Oxford Street District Project as detailed in this report;
- 2.2. To agree the Governance outlined in this report;
- 2.3. To approve the revenue funding of £727,000, made up of a reallocation of £327,000 of council's own revenue and £400,000 from the 2018/19 Local Implementation Plan (LIP) allocation, for the development of a place based solution and a set of feasibility/concept options for the district; and,
- 2.4. To note plans to bring forward necessary safety works and governance associated with the development and implementation of the specific Oxford Street safety scheme ahead of the opening of the Elizabeth Line and during 2019, which will be subject of a separate Cabinet Member Report.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1. The Leader of the City Council on 7th June announced that there is a need to be hugely ambitious to ensure the district's long-term success by future proofing Oxford Street and the surrounding area so it remains the pre-eminent, retail focused, outdoor shopping destination in the UK.
- 3.2. In December 2017, the Leader and Deputy Leader issued eight pledges to residents, created to assure residents that the City Council would safeguard their amenity by insisting that no scheme would be approved that failed to meet their concerns. Feedback from residents in the consultation report (temporarily published March 2018²), confirmed that 61% of Westminster residents did not support the partial pedestrianisation of Oxford Street (Orchard Street to Oxford Circus). Subsequent statements from the City Council, made clear that the scheme consulted upon had not achieved a local consensus.
- 3.3. In these circumstances, the City Council considers it necessary to devise other solutions that will transform the district and meet concerns expressed.
- 3.4. The previous project structure to devise a solution for Oxford Street was developed within a joint team with Transport for London. This produced a significant body of information about the district. Going forward, the City Council will lead the project and consequently a new governance and operational structure is needed as outlined. We will continue to liaise and work closely with residents, stakeholders and partners (Mayor/Greater London Authority, TfL and New West End Company) to develop new solutions.
- 3.5. Resources are needed to provide staffing and commissions to facilitate work to devise a new solution(s).
- 3.6. Work on the options to ensure a safe street and district prior to the opening of Elizabeth Line is currently being progressed and will be presented for decision to the Cabinet Member for Environment and City Management in July 2018. This will advise the Cabinet Member of any required works aimed at ensuring the street and district is safe given the increase in forecast passengers associated with the gradual impacts of the Elizabeth Line opening.

4. Background, including Policy Context

- 4.1. Oxford Street is at the heart of the West End within the Central Area Zone (CAZ), one of only two International Shopping centres identified in the London Plan. To enable the street and the district to be equipped for the future, it is clear that a radical uplift is required.
- 4.2. Since 2015, officers from the City Council have worked in close partnership with Transport for London and more lately the Greater London Authority to better understand the Oxford Street district. The partners commissioned comprehensive surveys and studies to build an evidence base in order to develop a series of options for the district.

- 4.3. There have been two public consultations on the proposals to transform Oxford Street. The first consultation launched in April 2017 and sought views in respect of issues and aspirations for the district. The second consultation was launched in November 2017, and proposed a scheme on Oxford Street West believed to address the issues and aspirations of the first consultation. In December 2017 the City Council set out its eight pledges to local stakeholders, as it had become aware of a lack of support for the proposed scheme. The pledges established markers to safeguard the concerns of local residents and businesses in respect of the consulted scheme. Whilst there was general support for the proposals, it was clear that local Westminster residents and some other stakeholders were not supportive of the plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street West. Other stakeholders had concerns regarding accessibility to and from the district as well as through it. The management of the district and its pedestrianised streets and spaces were raised by both businesses and residents as another concern.
- 4.4. A temporary publication of the results of consultation (March 2018)³ bore out the validity of the City Council's view that the Oxford Street West pedestrianisation did not have local support. 61% of Westminster residents responding did not support the proposals. Notwithstanding the valuable work carried out by the joint team, forming a comprehensive evidence base, the solution presented did not generate local consensus.
- 4.5. There is a necessity to vastly improve the overall experience for residents, workers and those visiting the district and this will be the focus of a new project. The City Council will now develop a place based strategy and a set of corresponding solutions for the Oxford Street District.
- 4.6. In terms of the Policy context, relevant are City for All, Westminster City Council's adopted City Plan, the London Plan and related Strategies.

5. Project Development

- 5.1. Given this background, the City Council considers that different solution(s) should be devised. There is a strong consensus about creating a vastly improved experience on Oxford Street and its surrounding areas. This in turn will foster some of the conditions to improve the economy and performance of the street, make it fit for the future and a better neighbour for residents in the wider district.
- 5.2. The City Council is currently reviewing safety interventions required in advance of the opening of the Elizabeth Line stations at Tottenham Court Road and Bond Street, currently scheduled for 9th December 2018. TfL's passenger demand forecast indicates that from December 2018 passenger numbers using Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road (Elizabeth Line) stations increase by 17% and 37% respectively, rising to 57% and 81% respectively by 2021. However, overall the number of passengers arriving across all four stations on Oxford Street is increased by 9% (December 2018) and 28% (2021). This takes into account the forecast reductions in passenger numbers at Oxford Circus and Marble Arch in this period.

- 5.3. The safety interventions being worked up will be the subject of a separate report to the Cabinet Member for City Management and Communities in July 2018. The report will outline the investment needed to undertake safety works prior to the opening of the Elizabeth Line on 9th December 2018 and throughout 2019 leading to the line being fully operational by 2021.
- 5.4. This new approach will build on the evidence base compiled to date and when necessary supplement it. A key part of the evidence base is the feedback from residents, both formally and informally.
- 5.5. The City Council will now develop a place based strategy for the Oxford Street District. A place based strategy and delivery plan for the Oxford Street District will describe the issues, priorities and vision for the area developed with local residents and stakeholders. It will give details on a range of realistic projects that will help deliver the desired immediate and longer-term change.
- 5.6. The development of a Place Based Strategy will formulate an informed position in relation to place shaping and public realm on Oxford Street and its surrounding district, culminating in a delivery plan. It is envisaged that this project development will comprise of four stages that will take place in conjunction with the development and implementation of the Oxford Street safety scheme

Table 1: Development of a Place Based Strategy

Stage	Timescale
1. A comprehensive audit and engagement with residents and other stakeholders to establish issues, priorities, vision and projects for the district.	July to August 2018
2. The production of a Place based strategy to inform the development of preferred solutions for the district.	September to October 2018
3. Public consultation.	November 2018
4. Adoption of the Oxford Street District Place Strategy and Delivery Plan by Cabinet.	January 2019

Table 2: Development and Delivery of Oxford Street Safety Scheme

Stage	Timescale
1. Development and design of Oxford Street safety scheme.	June to August 2018
2. Start of works for Oxford Street safety scheme.	September to October 2018

6. Stakeholder Engagement

6.1. The Council's community engagement strategy aims to align activity with the business goals of the organisation and actively help to deliver the City for All ambitions of:

- Setting the standard for civic leadership and responsibility that is more open, transparent and inclusive
- Spreading opportunity and fairness across the city, with policies that are fit for purpose in order to deliver responsible growth
- Ensuring Westminster is a world class city by working with businesses to act responsibly and to secure opportunities for future generations

6.2. This programme will utilise the council's model for engagement to provide Councillors, officers, partners, stakeholders and residents with a structured and effective means to conduct engagement on this major project. It is by working together with everyone who has an interest in the future success of the Oxford Street District that the best solution will be brought forward.

6.3. As such, the Council will ensure it has a robust and comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan for both the Oxford Street safety scheme (works starting in September 2018), and the development of a place based strategy and solution(s), ahead of the public consultation in November 2018. It is vital that we reach out to a wide range of local residents and businesses, as well as understand what will appeal to the many people that live or work in the district and the thousands of visitors who come in to the area each day. This work will also draw on the lessons from previous activities.

6.4. Feedback from the consultations has indicated that the council must:

- Help people to understand the purpose of any proposed improvement and feel confident that it will deliver the agreed vision;
- Clearly communicate the ways that any solution will directly benefit the local community and businesses that will be affected most;
- Clearly set out the wider benefits of any schemes across the district that looks to address the needs of a modern successful city and changing retail habits;
- Support the sense of pride, by responding positively to changing pressures by seeking insight and input from partners and local stakeholders in order to shape plans; and,
- Be realistic about timeframes and communicate clearly what is happening at all stages.

6.5. A key piece of additional feedback was to ensure that information regarding any proposed changes to this massively complex district is presented in an accessible way that everyone who wishes to engage in the process can understand and get involved with it.

- 6.6. In the previous consultations, there has been extensive pre-engagement with all relevant stakeholders to request their input in to the formal processes and this will continue with the development of an Oxford Street place strategy.
- 6.7. According to the consultation, respondents said that they found out about it via the following channels for communication were e-mail, social media, press, online and direct mail. This suggests that an engagement strategy that is based on complementary digital and social channels should reach the most potential respondents. It must offer people and organisations multiple opportunities to be informed and to be able to directly engage with the project team and the details of the fresh scheme at key milestones during its development. This will also mean additional opportunities for face to face contact, including a more consistent local presence.
- 6.8. The approach should be to drive interest to a new dedicated website that will allow people to access easily digestible information and to share their views as to how to improve the district and to comment upon plans as they become available.
- 6.9. There will also be direct engagement with established local amenity societies, resident and other groups, including business representatives.
- 6.10. The City Council is confident that through our usual engagement with major retailers, the Great Estates and businesses we will clearly understand not only their objectives, but also the aspirations of their customers and employees. This means we will gain an excellent insight into what elements of a place based solution for the district must deliver to ensure the support of residents, businesses, Londoners, visitors and workers alike.

7. Governance

- 7.1. The project will report to a Strategic steering group of Cabinet Members made up of (i) the Cabinet Member for Place Shaping and Planning, (ii) the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Education and Community and, (iii) the Cabinet Member for Environment and City Management, meeting at key milestones throughout the project. As well as exercising strategic management of the project, this group will determine other critical engagement, for example with London Borough of Camden, once established.
- 7.2. A senior officer Project Board will oversee the delivery of the development of the place based solution to the agreed programme.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The comprehensive activities described in this report will be funded from an approved revenue budget for the Oxford Street project. This is made up of a reallocation of £327,000 of council's own revenue and £400,000 from the 2018/19 Local Implementation Plan (LIP) allocation. The safety scheme funding requirements will be subject to the Cabinet Member decisions on this matter programmed for July 2018.
- 8.2. Future allocations for the development of the place based strategy and district wide solutions will be subject to a further Cabinet Report in autumn 2018, including any additional revenue and capital expenditure to effectively manage and maintain the district.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The Director of Law has considered this report and is satisfied that there are no additional legal implications other than those set out in the report.

10. Staffing Implications

- 10.1. There will be staffing implications proposed by this report. A separate report to the Cabinet Members for Planning and Place Shaping, and Environment and City Management will be issued in summer for consideration.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1. This report highlights the approach that the City Council is adopting in relation to the development of a place based strategy for the entire Oxford Street District and the development of a set of solutions that will address the principle aspirations of our local stakeholders and our partners. The project will devise solutions that seek to enable the district to be future proofed to withstand the changes in retail, expectations for a world class environment and that the commercial activity is a good neighbour.
- 11.2. We are confident that through our engagement process and the development of a comprehensive place based strategy and associated district wide solutions, the project will address some of the key concerns that came out of the recent public consultation.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:

Oxford Street Project Team on oxfordst@westminster.gov.uk

¹ A place based strategy and delivery plan for the Oxford Street District will describe the issues, priorities and vision for the area developed with local residents and stakeholders and will give details on a range of realistic projects that will help deliver the desired immediate and longer-term change. (see section 1.2)

² 'Have your say on the Transformation of Oxford Street' Consultation Report, published (13th March) and subsequently withdrawn (19th March). Further 52 responses were received following the reopening of the consultation from 20th March to 6th April. (see section 3.2)

³ See 2 above.