

Council Meeting: 7th November 2018

Briefing Note

Subject: Oxford Street debate – Context Paper

West End Partnership

Formed in 2013, the West End Partnership (WEP) brings together senior public service and private sector leaders, institutions, academic experts and resident representatives. It was created to be the mechanism to enable the West End to 'speak with one voice' where possible in order to ensure the long term success of this vital area of Westminster and the capital. The West End generates more taxes for the Exchequer than any other part of the UK and it is one of the largest job markets in the UK.

The WEP had been focused on monitoring the improvements to the West End, for example the Bond Street project as well as West End jobs and how they could be supported and expanded. The WEP were heavily involved in the development of the former Oxford Street project and the TIF (Tax Increment Finance) bid to Government seeking funds for Oxford Street and Strand Aldwych, which was not successful. In June 2018 the Council took the full scale pedestrianisation of Oxford Street off the table as an option and the Cabinet approved the development of a fresh Place Strategy and Delivery Plan for the Oxford Street District.

Oxford Street District- context

Oxford Street welcomes 100m visitors per year and is recognised worldwide as a leading retail destination. It is estimated to generate £13 billion for the national economy by 2021. It also lies at the heart of a district with some of London's most characterful neighbourhoods that are home to thousands of residents.

In order to maintain the global reputation and status of Oxford Street; and to ensure the long-term success of the District, the council must confront the challenges that it faces. These include the changing nature of retail; the introduction of the Elizabeth Line, estimated to bring a further 1.5 million people to the district every year from autumn 2019; poor air quality; congestion; crowding and safety and; specifically how these issues affect residents across the District. Addressing all of these issues is of paramount importance.

The Council's overall ambition is: to strengthen the world-renowned status of the entire Oxford Street District; to ensure it will be a great place to live, work and visit and; to secure its long-term future. Working with residents, key stakeholders and partners the Council is committed to delivering over 90 projects.

Place Strategy development

It was understood that Oxford Street and the surrounding district required a comprehensive review to act as a base for all future measures and improvements. Since July 2018, the Council has worked on the development of a new draft Place

Strategy and Delivery Plan for the entire district. Since the summer, the Council undertook a review of the responses from the previous consultations. A series of engagement meetings with over 50 stakeholder groups; including local residents, ward Councillors, businesses, landowners and other interested parties were also arranged during this period. The knowledge and understanding gained through these exercises and, the analysis of the wealth of existing technical information have helped to inform the development of the draft Place Strategy and Delivery Plan.

The strategic aim is to improve the District end to end, from Marble Arch to Tottenham Court Road, with proposals developed around nine zones that reflect the different neighbourhoods and character of each area.

The strategy proposes twelve area wide principles which, taken collectively, will work together to create a great district. They are as follows:

- Make the district inclusive, accessible and liveable
- Support economic growth across the district
- Design for flexibility
- Build from existing and connect the whole district
- Prioritise pedestrians and value every space
- Make the district better for cycling
- Create beautifully designed streets, gateways and a diversity of public spaces across the district
- Enrich the cultural life and identity of the district
- Take every opportunity to add additional trees and planting, creating new green spaces and revitalising the garden squares
- Take immediate steps to address management
- Improve safety
- Improve air quality and manage freight and servicing movements

There are also three principles specific to Oxford Street:

- Diversify land use and extend the life of Oxford Street
- Make Oxford Street spectacular
- Embrace Oxford Street's role as an important transport corridor for the West End

The full draft strategy is 140 pages, but the key features that the draft strategy are proposed as follows:

- Traffic will remain on Oxford Street as it is a key transport corridor.

- Managing traffic along the length of the street will be undertaken in a flexible way e.g. different parts of the street will have restrictions at different times of day.
- The priority will be for pedestrian space with the aim to widen all footways and narrow the carriageway by removing bus laybys.
- Opportunities for improving existing public spaces will be developed, including greening the District as much as possible.

Public consultation

The draft Strategy promotes a set of 15 overarching place based principles with over 90 suggested projects to help deliver the ambition for District. The Cabinet has approved that the draft Place Strategy can be presented to its residents, stakeholders and partners for their view as part of a formal public consultation process.

The consultation will run from Tuesday 6th November to Sunday 16th December 2018 (6 weeks) and will allow for multiple ways to engage and respond to the Council's proposals, including a dedicated website www.osd.london, face to face exhibitions and presentations to resident groups and key stakeholders. All responses will help to inform the final Place Strategy and Delivery Plan that will be subject to Cabinet decision in early 2019, with implementation to follow thereafter.

Phase 1 work

Currently, the Council is working on Phase 1 of the Oxford Street District programme. The Phase 1 works will address a number of underlying footway and highway maintenance issues in readiness for the opening of the Elizabeth Line, now due to open in autumn 2019. The two elements of Phase 1 of the Oxford Street District programme are:

1. Oxford Street maintenance works covering: carriageway; drainage; street lighting; signage and; footway condition.
2. Improvements to address the increased number of pedestrians using the street as a result of the opening of the Elizabeth Line stations at Tottenham Court Road and Bond Street.

Funding

The new Capital Strategy – subject to approval by Full Council on 7th November - includes a budget of £150m for Oxford Street District. That Cabinet has also approved expenditure of up to £2.5m for the development of the strategy and the project.