

Economic Development, Education and Place Shaping Policy Scrutiny Committee

Date: Monday, 11 November 2019

Portfolio: Place Shaping and Planning

The Report Of: Councillor Richard Beddoe, Cabinet Member for
Place Shaping and Planning

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1. The City Plan

- 1.1 Formal consultation on the new City Plan took place over June and July this year. The new draft Plan is the result of a complete review of the adopted City Plan (2016) and Unitary Development Plan policies (2007) and will create a single, up-to-date local plan to manage development in Westminster. It also revisits the strategic direction of Westminster's planning policies and ensures the City Plan is aligned with the Council's City for All objectives and is fit for purpose into the next decades. Our draft City Plan contains numerous new proposed planning policies which I have outlined in my previous Policy and Scrutiny Committee reports.
- 1.2 The scale and ambition of the Plan received positive comments from a range of stakeholders. More flexible policies relating to retail are seen as reflecting a positive and pragmatic approach to the problems the high streets face. Many stakeholders welcome the setting of a higher housing target to deliver much needed homes, as well as a higher affordable housing target. Consultees have also welcomed the improvements we have made to policies following feedback gained at the previous stage of consultation at the end of 2018.
- 1.3 Officers have reviewed all the responses submitted to the formal consultation and have suggested minor modifications to the Plan in response to the consultation feedback, where these changes help to better explain the application of the policies and provide clarity.
- 1.4 The Plan will be discussed at Full Council on 13th November 2019, where I will recommend it is submitted to the Secretary of State to begin the formal examination in public process. Upon submission to the Secretary of State, an independent planning inspector will review the Plan and determine whether the Plan is sound. Assuming the Plan is found to be sound, we will adopt the new City Plan in early 2020.

2 Oxford Street

- 2.1** Since the last update, both a Programme Director and a Contractor have been appointed. These appointments will accelerate delivery and ensure that the programme for 2020 is maintained. The team have been working on a number of strategic workstreams to plan for the delivery of the Oxford Street Place Strategy and Delivery Plan. Key workstreams include the development of a street trading masterplan for the district, traffic and air quality modelling, a freight behaviour change programme and the development of a management plan for the district.
- 2.2** The development of the design-related work packages is also in progress, with projects such as Ramillies, Berners and Sustainable Streets gaining momentum.
- 2.3** Stakeholder engagement has been a priority for the Council throughout the various projects. Since my last report to the committee, there have been two Oxford Street District Zonal Working Group meetings with stakeholders including representatives from resident groups, businesses and local landowners. During July the update to the groups was focussed on the management plan and in October the update included a programme update with some headline results related to the traffic modelling.
- 2.4** Both of the working group sessions were positively received by stakeholders with positive support for the engagement approach on the strategic workstreams and on the detail related to the work packages.

3 Planning Review

- 3.1** An evaluation of public speaking has been conducted to review its success following its introduction six months ago. The opportunity to address Planning Applications Sub-Committees has been widely embraced by both supporters and objectors alike, affirming that the introduction of public speaking, which has afforded greater accessibility and transparency to the planning decision making process, was a positive one. There is typically at least one speaker for each application included on a Sub-Committee agenda.
- 3.2** A live recording system has been selected and installed in the committee rooms. Several test runs have taken place to test the process, with a focus of ensuring a positive experience for anyone watching online.
- 3.3** The Planning Review programme team are in the final stages of options analysis looking at the ways in which earlier engagement with local community stakeholders and Ward Members can be achieved.
- 3.4** A review of all non-statutory planning fee charges is taking place along with a broader investigation into Pre-Application, Planning Performance and Planning Review Agreement activities, to determine the true cost of this service.
- 3.5** An options analysis is currently ongoing to determine whether to pursue independent design review panels; the result will be reported at the next Policy & Scrutiny committee.

4. Queensway

- 4.1 Phases 1 and 2 which incorporate the western footway of Queensway between Porchester Gardens and No. 71 Queensway are complete. The works included the widening of the footway and the realignment of the kerb line as well as changes to the zebra crossing outside the Bayswater Road tube station.
- 4.2 The Traffic Management Order (TMO) for phases 3, 4 and 5 has been made. Works are due to begin shortly.

5. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 5.1 As of 30th September 2019, the Council has collected £60.123 million of CIL since the Charging Schedule came into effect in May 2016. This represents a further £3.494 million collected since the July 2019, in my last report.
- 5.2 Cabinet CIL Committee met on 9th October 2019 and agreed to allocate a further £11.089 million to a range of infrastructure projects under the Council's 'strategic' portion of CIL put forward by the various service areas of the Council to support growth from development.
- 5.3 The Committee agreed in principle the allocation of £0.731 million from Westminster Neighbourhood CIL Portion. Of the fifteen bids put forward, twelve projects were allocated this funding for: (1) Fitzrovia, (4) Hyde Park and Paddington, (1) Kensington, (1) Marylebone, (1) Notting Hill, (1) Belgravia, (1) Heart of London Business Improvement District, (1) Seven Dials Trust and (1) Northbank Business Improvement District.
- 5.4 To date, the Council has allocated £33.968 million of this portion of its CIL funds to infrastructure projects.

6. Mayfair Neighbourhood Plan

- 6.1 The Mayfair Neighbourhood Plan is the second neighbourhood plan to be formally examined (following the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan which was 'made' in December 2018). The independent examiner found the Plan (with agreed modifications) to meet the legal test and to be consistent with Westminster's City Plan.
- 6.2 Preparations are underway for a referendum of local residents and businesses, before the plan can be formally 'made'. If 'made', the plan will be used alongside the Council's own planning policies and the London Plan in determining planning applications in the Mayfair Neighbourhood Area.

7. Other Neighbourhood Plans

- 7.1** Three other neighbourhood plans have recently been formally consulted on by neighbourhood forums: Pimlico, Fitzrovia West and Soho. The Council have provided comments on these draft neighbourhood plans and await formal submission when the Neighbourhood Forums are ready to do so.

8. Strand Aldwych project

- 8.1** Following the consultation on the Strand Aldwych project at the beginning of the year, the feedback has been taken into account in the further development of the designs. Designs are now being developed through RIBA Stage 3. The consultant design team are looking at all aspects including highway and landscape design, architectural lighting, accessibility, utilities and structures.

9. Harrow Road Place Plan

- 9.1** Westminster Council is collaborating with local residents and stakeholders to develop a Place Plan that aims to deliver a modern, sustainable, open and green High Street.
- 9.2** Westminster Council submitted an application to the GLA's Good Growth Fund requesting £2.3 million of match funding to bring forward projects relating to the Place Plan. The application sets out our plan to work collaboratively with key stakeholders such as the Canal and Rivers Trust to bring forward the proposals. Our proposal focuses on two key areas – Maida Hill Market and the Canalside, building on the success of Co-mooring.
- 9.3** Place Shaping have now begun engagement work to create a Maida Hill Market Strategy.
- 9.4** Westminster Council also partnered with a FinTech (Dozens) for a 2-month research exercise. Holding conversations with people that work, use and live upon Harrow Road, they explored how innovative methods taken by technology companies to address challenges faced by High Streets could be of value locally. Ten ambitious but actionable recommendations have been identified that Westminster Council will now look to develop in more detail.

10. Paddington Place Plan

- 10.1** Place Shaping officers are currently setting up the process, governance and engagement strategy for a Paddington Place Plan.
- 10.2** As one of the borough's primary opportunity areas, the Place Plan will tie together the existing development, planning policy and key development sites outlined in the emerging City Plan (2019 – 2040), through a holistic vision for Paddington. Following this, the plan will propose a series of strategies and design proposals that will deliver immediate and longer-term change, reflecting and responding to the area's remaining challenges and opportunities.

11. Victoria Place Plan

- 11.1** As part of the Victoria Place Plan, Westminster Council and the wider Project Sponsors - Victoria Business Improvement District (VBID), the Greater London Authority (GLA), Transport for London (TFL) and Network Rail (NR) – are in the process of appointing a consultant team to develop the Victoria Station Environs Strategy.
- 11.2** The core objective of this commission is to develop a concept level masterplan that helps create a facilitatory planning context for future development around and above Victoria Station.