



City of Westminster

Planning & City Development Committee

Date: 26 October 2022

Classification: General Release

Title: Update on Partial City Plan Review

Report of: Director of Policy and Projects

Financial Summary: The resourcing of the Partial Review to the City Plan will be met from existing budgets, and where there is a financial risk should the scope of the review be expanded, from corporate funding or reserves.

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the Partial Review to the City Plan which was launched on 7th October, running to 18th November 2022. It explains the scope of the review and role of the Planning and City Development Committee in the preparation of the Plan.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

3. Scope of the partial City Plan review

- 3.1 The City Plan 2019-2040 was adopted in April 2021 and work on a new Site Allocations Development Plan Document began shortly thereafter. Once adopted, the Site Allocations Development Plan Document would have equal weight to the City Plan. Rather than provide 'thematic' policies as per the City Plan, it would provide site specific guidance on how key named development sites that can help meet our housing and commercial growth targets, and need for supporting infrastructure, should be developed. It would likely include guidance on what types of land use are supported, how much new floorspace we think a site can reasonably accommodate, and design considerations such as how the development should respond to the townscape and heritage value of the surrounding area.
- 3.2 Following a change in political administration in May 2022, the Council has a new vision for the city as set out in the Fairer Westminster Strategy. To better align with key commitments set out in the Strategy regarding affordable housing delivery and responding to the climate change emergency, a partial review of the City Plan to

address these issues as a priority, and to incorporate Site Allocations, has been agreed.

3.3 The first stage in this revision, known as a Regulation 18 consultation, sets out a statement on the scope of the revision to the City Plan and invites comment from stakeholders (including landowners, developers, amenity societies, neighbourhood forums, and statutory consultation bodies such as the Mayor of London, neighbouring boroughs, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) on what the content of those policies should be.

3.4 Undertaking a review of a local plan is a time and resource intensive activity. If it included a wider scope than that proposed (i.e. revisiting additional policies), it would result in a considerable delay in adopting the new policies, their application and ultimately in the meantime have an impact on development decisions. Given the current City Plan was only adopted last year, it was decided in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development to focus the partial review only on those policies which are not considered fit for purpose in the context of the Fairer Westminster Strategy. Therefore, the scope of the review is as follows:

1. Updates to Policy 9 on affordable housing to deliver more affordable housing

Our policy currently seeks a greater proportion of intermediate (60%) compared to social (40%) housing, but we want to explore options to redress this balance with the objective of delivering a greater quantity of affordable housing as social, particularly on public land if it is shown to be viable.

In order to meet the high affordable housing challenge the City faces we also want to explore options and viability implications of requiring affordable housing from small sites below the current size thresholds set out in adopted Policy 9.

2. A new policy prioritising retrofit and refurbishment of existing buildings where appropriate

We acknowledge that sometimes demolition is the only route and although there are higher embodied carbon costs associated with this route initially, it may derive larger carbon savings in the future, along with wider social and economic benefits. But we want to achieve a better balance between sustainability and growth and have a more effective tool to assess whether the social and economic benefits outweigh the environmental cost of demolition and subsequent contribution development makes to climate change.

3. The inclusion of Site Allocations to guide the development of key sites that make a significant contribution to growth targets and other policy objectives

Incorporating Site Allocations into the City Plan Partial Review offers cost and time efficiencies over progressing as a separate document, given that it will remove the need for separate consultation activities, examination and evidence base. It also ensures this important work in helping shape how key sites are developed, and providing greater certainty to developers and our communities, is not delayed until after the City Plan Partial Review is complete.

3.5 For the reasons explained above, the Regulation 18 consultation asks for views, evidence and ideas on these policy areas only – it does not invite comment on other aspects of the adopted plan which are not within the scope of the review.

4. Next steps and engagement with PCD

4.1 To publicise consultation on the City Plan Partial Review

- A dedicated web page ([City Plan consultation | Westminster City Council](#)) explaining what we are doing and why, has been set up, with a direct link from the Council's homepage;
- All consultees on the Council's planning policy database (which includes landowners, developers, amenity societies, neighbourhood forums, and statutory consultation bodies such as the Mayor of London, neighbouring boroughs, the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) have been directly notified of the consultation;
- Engagement with other teams within the Council is ongoing throughout the consultation period; and
- Workshops/roundtable discussions are being arranged with neighbourhood forums and amenity societies, the development industry (Westminster Property Association), the Westminster Commission and Historic England.

4.2 Once the consultation has closed, the responses will be used to form or revise policy wording, based on any necessary evidence base which will be commissioned. The Council will use the period between Regulation 18 consultation and the formal Regulation 19 consultation (expected towards the end of 2023) for on-going engagement with stakeholders as policies evolve. This will likely take a range of formats including questionnaires, meetings, and workshops. This will help build consensus as the plan is progressed and before the next round of formal consultation (which would be the last opportunity for stakeholders to comment before independent examination).

4.3 A detailed paper will be presented to the Planning and City Development Committee's March 2023 meeting with findings of the Regulation 18 consultation. The PCD Committee will be invited to comment on the proposed direction of travel for the policies within the scope of the partial review, taking into account results of the consultation and emerging findings of any evidence which has been commissioned by this date.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The costs associated with the preparation of the City Plan revision, including commissioning of evidence base and public examination are to be met from the existing Policy and Projects planning policy budget. However, risks are involved should the scope of the plan review be expanded following pressure through consultation responses to include a greater number of policies, which will require commissioning of relevant evidence base and a longer examination - leading to greater Planning Inspectorate costs. In the event of this cost rising in excess of the planning policy budget, additional funding will be sought corporately or from reserves.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires local planning authorities to notify stakeholders of its intention to prepare a local plan and invite representation from them. The publication of the Regulation 18 Statement and launch of consultation satisfies this regulation. Section 26 of the Planning and Compulsory

Purchase Act 2004 requires that revisions to development plan documents (DPDs) go through the same statutory procedures as new DPDs.

- 6.2 Legal officers have reviewed this report and are satisfied that all legal requirements have been met to date.

7.1 Equalities Impacts

- 7.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 regulations, a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - including a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - prepared in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive EC/2001/42, is required for all Development Plan Documents. This stipulates that all local plans and spatial development strategies must be informed through an appraisal which considers how specific economic, social and environmental objectives will be met.
- 7.2 To meet these requirements for the City Plan partial review, an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) will be prepared to assess the likely impact of draft policies on environment, sustainability, health and equalities. The IIA process is iterative, re-assessing policies as they evolve and informing policy decisions.
- 7.3 The equalities implications of the policies in the draft City Plan as they are developed will therefore be assessed as part of an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA). This will assess whether draft policies will have a positive, neutral or negative impact on any of the groups with protected characteristics under the 2010 Act and the Public Sector Equalities Duty and make recommendations on policy wording as necessary.
- 7.4 Completion of the IIA is an iterative process, so the document will be kept updated as the plan proceeds through its consultation stages and on to examination, ensuring that any equalities issues that arise as modifications are made to the plan will be identified and can be considered.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report and are invited to submit their comments on the public consultation by the closing date of 18th November 2022.

<p>If you have any questions about this report, or wish to inspect one of the background papers, please contact: Kimberley West (kwest@westminster.gov.uk).</p>
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Background Papers:

[Cabinet Member Report](#)

[Regulation 18 Statement](#)