



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

City Plan Sub-Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **City Plan Sub-Committee** Committee held on **Thursday 21st July, 2016**, Rooms 10A & 10B - 17th Floor, Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6 QP.

Members Present: Councillors Peter Freeman (Chairman), David Boothroyd, Tony Devenish, Jonathan Glanz and Andrew Smith

1 MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes to the membership.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Boothroyd declared that he was Head of Research and Psephology for Thorncliffe, whose clients were companies apply for planning permission from various local authorities. The only project in Westminster on which Thorncliffe had been engaged was a scheme for Future54 in Leinster Square; he was precluded from working on it under the company's code of conduct.

In respect of item 4 Councillor Boothroyd declared that as the Future54 application had already been submitted, it would not be affected by any future change in policies.

Councillor Boothroyd also declared that 'The Collective' referred to in paragraph 7.1 of the report had in the past been clients of Thorncliffe.

Councillor Devenish declared that he was a Planning Chairman for the Greater London Authority.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting on 25 November 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record of proceedings.

4 CITY PLAN HOUSING POLICIES

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Principal Policy Officer - Policy, Performance and Communications setting out some of the current general issues around housing in Westminster and the future direction of strategic planning policy.

Kimberley Hopkins, Principal Policy Officer, and Andrew Barry-Purcell, Place and Investment Policy Manager, joined the Sub-Committee for the debate on this item and answered members questions in connection with the report.

Members were invited by the Chairman to provide their initial thoughts on the report and the following points were raised:

- It was currently difficult to conduct a review of the Council's evidence base for housing policies until the regulations to implement key aspects of the Housing and Planning Act had been published. It would have to be reviewed and updated as the regulations came out. It was also considered that the housing need area that would be used to set policy needed defining and the approach to assessing viability assessed. It was agreed this was an area that needed including in the policy but further guidance from the Mayor was likely to be forthcoming and would have to be taken into account.
- Housing policy was changing significantly, with further change likely in the future. Conducting a policy review was a sensible option, but it was agreed that a phased approach which took account of when details would be available from the Mayor and Government was sensible. Reviewing the evidence base would be a key step in revising the policy and interest was expressed into whether it would be a root and branch investigation into the housing approach or a case of fitting the existing policy into the changed circumstances. It was expected that there would be further policy changes coming from the Mayor regarding viability assessments and tall buildings. Following Brexit considerations concerning possible changes to population projections also needed to be considered.
- Concern was expressed that homes were being built that did not always cater for resident's needs. There was a particular need to ensure that planning policy addressed viability issues to ensure resources available for affordable housing maximised delivery. One area suggested for attention was parking policy - providing underground parking in housing development when the Council's policy should be to discourage car use in central London could mean that money that could have been spent on affordable housing as spent instead on the costs of providing parking. Further clarification was required on how the sale price discount for starter homes would operate and, in particular, whether it would apply only to the first sale or would be available to future sales also? Another issue that needed considering was the level of developer interest in the new "co-living" housing products available whether they would work in Westminster?

In response the Sub-Committee was informed that these were challenging times as the scale of change to housing policy and delivery being faced currently had probably not been seen within a generation. As such the report had tried to provide a

background briefing on the issues faced in developing policy for the City Plan. The Housing and Planning Act covered a wide range of housing issues; however there was a lack of clarity due to the related Regulations not having yet been published. A consultation document on starter homes had been circulated, to which the council had responded, but it was possible that greater clarity would be available later than had been originally expected. The Mayor was also engaged in renewing the London Plan and would probably take a different direction to the previous Mayor. For these reasons, the delivery of affordable housing was an area of particular uncertainty. Consideration was being given to the scope for provision of delivering affordable housing out-of-borough; the legal issues regarding this needed setting out as conflicting legal advice had been received. It was noted that this was likely to be something the Mayor would be considering in response to the need to replace high value council housing sold to support extension of the right to buy.

There was also uncertainty about migration flows in the light of withdrawal from the European Union and more widely. In recent years out-migration from London had recently slowed down but how this might change in the future – and the impacts this would have for Westminster - were uncertain.

It was explained that regarding the discount on starter homes Government had indicated that there would be a taper for a period of not more than eight years where if the property was sold within this period some of the discount would have to be repaid. A concern was raised about this model and a preference for a carried forward discount model was suggested to help future generations (a point the Council had made to Government) but it was acknowledged that there was currently a high degree of uncertainty in this area.

The Mayor and Government had both stated that they would produce guidance on viability. The Sub-Committee was advised that the Government might be considering a mandatory approach to viability.

Concerning higher and tall buildings the Sub-Committee noted an officer/member steering group had been set up which was looking at the issues raised at the last meeting of the Sub-Committee and a process of public engagement would also be instigated later in the year.

It was suggested that the issues surrounding car parking in Westminster could be revisited at a later meeting.

In response to the question regarding the “co-living” housing products being brought to the market it was recognised that there were many different types available. Work was underway to consider the policy issues they raised, particularly relating to design, the effect they would have on the amenity of the area in which they were built and the quality of the management. It was confirmed that there had been considerable interest from developers in taking forward these products in Westminster.

The Sub-Committee recognised that housing and land costs in Westminster were very high. As such much of Westminster was unaffordable to many people and the costs meant it was very difficult to deliver the number of units required. Therefore it was essential to look at different models of delivery and be flexible on how they were

delivered. The importance of preserving existing communities was highlighted along with the need to ensure affordable housing was still provided in the borough.

Members suggested that it would be helpful for a programme to be produced detailing all the housing and planning policy issues being considered. It could contain a timeline that would highlight key dates and would specify which issues were reliant on the DCLG or the Mayor.

The Sub-Committee discussed the issues surrounding the development of super-large flats in Westminster and whether they should be discouraged. It was confirmed that this was an element of the policy that was being assessed. A change in policy was also being looked into that would require the development of any super-large flats to include a payment in lieu of lost development opportunities in order to discourage them. Members did consider that it was important not to produce too many extra policies especially as few super-large flats were built.

Following a detailed discussion the members considered that it was best to manage the housing policies City Plan revisions through a two stage approach i) addressing housing need, delivery and quality polices and, later, ii) updating affordable housing.

The Sub-Committee suggested that at the next meeting an outside expert be invited to attend to provide an alternative viewpoint of the issues around housing in Westminster.

5 DRAFT UPPER VAUXHALL BRIDGE ROAD SITE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY FRAMEWORK (DOF)

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Principle Policy Officer - Policy, Performance and Communications setting out a summary of the Development Opportunity Framework (DOF) for The Queen Mother Sports Centre and surrounding area and agree the approach to public consultation.

Kimberley Hopkins, Principal Policy Officer, and Andrew Barry-Pursell, Place and Investment Policy Manager answered members' questions in connection with the report.

The Sub-Committee was in agreement that this was an area of opportunity and broadly supported the principles for redevelopment set out in the draft. Concern was raised however about the nearby adjacent residential area. It was essential that there was a clear demarcation between the opportunity area and the residential area which reflected the different design of the two areas.

The value of soft market testing for any development was emphasised. The importance of ensuring effective communication with local residents, residents associations and Ward Councillors at an early stage was also stressed. The general principles set out in the document were supported but it was vital to ensure they were presented in a format which made them accessible to everybody. The Sub-Committee also requested that the maps within the framework needed to be clearer and provide more context for people unfamiliar with the area.

The Sub-Committee was pleased to note the proposals for redevelopment of the sports centre but noted that the needs of local users of the facility during any development would have to be accommodated, with a requirement that local residents be advised of the proposals at the earliest opportunity.

Members requested that a work programme be developed providing a scope of the work to be undertaken for 2016.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the Council's DOF set out the guidelines for the eventual developers of the area, rather than setting out redevelopment proposals itself. It was intended that it would be issued for public consultation in autumn 2016.

It was agreed to bring an update on the DOF, including the comments made during consultation, back to the Sub-Committee at a future meeting.

The Meeting ended at 7.29 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____