



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

City Plan Sub-Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **City Plan Sub-Committee** held on **Wednesday 25th November, 2015**, Rooms 3 & 4, 17th Floor, City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

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

Also Present: Lisa Fairmaner, Lead Spatial and Environmental Adviser, Charlotte Breen, Principal Planning Officer and Reuben Segal, Senior Committee and Governance Officer

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Anthony Devenish

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 There were no changes to the membership.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Councillor Boothroyd declared that he is Head of Research and Psephology for Thorncliffe, whose clients are companies applying for planning permission from various local authorities. He explained that no current clients are in Westminster and if there were he would be precluded from working on them under the company's Code of Conduct.

3 MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2015 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record of proceedings.

4 (1) POLICY DEVELOPMENT - TALL BUILDINGS AND DESIGN CITY PLAN (2) (REVISION UPDATE - SPECIAL POLICY AREAS

- 4.1 The Sub-Committee had before it a report seeking Members views on Westminster's future approach to taller buildings and draft design policies with a particular focus on alterations and extensions. The report also set out the revisions to the draft Special Policy Area and Policies Map as part of the next pre-submission stage of consultation.

Tall and Higher Buildings

- 4.2 The Committee considered Westminster's future approach to taller buildings with a focus on areas where additional development capacity may be appropriate through higher buildings, and any criteria constraints that may bear on these areas. The committee broadly supported the policy provision that taller buildings should be limited to the Victoria and Paddington Opportunity Areas. The committee considered that taller buildings could be acceptable in the right locations however there were limited opportunities in other parts of the city for such buildings without impacting on heavily residential areas or viewing corridors from parks. The committee also wished to avoid possible 'creep of taller buildings' into such areas.
- 4.3 Given the above-mentioned limitations the committee stated that there was a likelihood that this may lead to a clustering of taller buildings. Members considered that the implications of potential clusters needed to be reflected in the policy together with mitigation measures to avoid negative impacts such as sense of enclosure and shadow lines, reflections and microclimates. It was suggested that weight should perhaps be given to staggering building heights in the immediate vicinity of a taller building to provide a juxtaposition.
- 4.4 Lisa Fairmaner, Lead Spatial and Environmental Adviser, informed the Committee that a question as to whether more space could be provided at base level where there is a higher building design was raised previously in relation to Knightsbridge Barracks. She informed the committee that in some US cities planning policies included a ratio whereby the higher a building projects the more land must be left at ground floor level. The committee was asked to consider whether this provided a potential mitigation to concerns about taller buildings. Members considered that while this was achievable on a greenfield site or when building a new city it was likely to prove difficult to achieve in the city's existing environment.
- 4.5 The committee also provided views on clearer ways of referring to and differentiating between tall and higher buildings in future policy. Members broadly agreed with the approach in the heritage policies of distinguishing tall buildings as being those of around 25-30 storeys and higher buildings as those which are lower than these landmark buildings but still higher than their surroundings. The committee expressed the view that they would not wish to see buildings taller than those that currently existed or were being developed in Victoria or Paddington.

- 4.6 Members reflected on the need for the policy to consider the potential adverse impacts of taller buildings (economic, environmental and social) on sustainable development. It was suggested that the economic record of taller buildings over the long term was mixed. With regard to residential development in higher buildings, members commented that consideration should be given to the implications of incorporating a mix of private and social units as well as the possible impacts for on-street parking provision.
- 4.7 In relation to the issue of greater densification, officers were referred to the fact that this could be achieved through careful design such as the way that the bulk of the building is configured. London County Hall was referenced as a prime example of this.

Design Policies

Alterations and Extensions

- 4.8 Members commented that there were a range of factors which already influenced alterations and extensions to buildings. These included whether a building was in a Conservation Area or had listed status or whether proposals benefited from permitted development rights. National planning policy also required local authorities to help deliver additional living accommodation. Given this, the Committee was of the view that establishing a clear set of criteria in respect of alterations and extensions was challenging.
- 4.9 Whilst it was recognised that the Council would have more control over development due to the large number of conservation areas and listed buildings in the City, members were still unsure whether this would make it possible for the Council to impose a consistent policy.
- 4.10 A variety of views were expressed on individual aspects of the policy as follows:
- 4.11 Roof extensions which disrupt the uniformity of the rooflines – Lisa Fairmaner informed the Committee that as currently worded the policy assesses whether there is disruption to the uniformity to a consistent roofline. Applying the policy strictly was resulting in applications for dormer extensions being refused. This was limiting the ability of families to gain the additional accommodation they required and was leading to residents moving to other parts of London. Members recognised that applications for roof extensions were contentious and had led to disagreements between neighbours. Different arguments are often put forward by residents over which part of the roofline is uniform, that which is infilled or that where there is an absence of extensions. It was suggested that the policy could take its lead from the conservation area audit. One suggestion put forward was that long roof lines should be protected. However, the Committee also questioned whether the Council should resist this at the expense of building taller buildings to meet housing needs.
- 4.12 Subordinate and to the rear – Members commented that defining what was subordinate to an existing building was challenging. Additionally there may be

circumstances where extensions which are not subordinate would be acceptable such as if the proposed extension was sensitive and in keeping with the existing structure. It was suggested that whether an extension was acceptable would depend on the likely impact on neighbouring properties. With regard to rear extensions officers were drawn to the fact that Councillors receive a lot of concerns from residents about the potential loss of daylight and sunlight arising from proposals and these issues should be referenced within the policy. Concern was also raised about the conversion of integral garages into habitable rooms and officers were asked to consider how this could be addressed.

- 4.13 Completed Compositions - it was considered that in order to conserve the historic environment the current approach should not be relaxed to enable more floorspace to be developed. It was put to officers that completed compositions are measurable and failing to protect these weakens the architectural merits of buildings.

Advertisements

- 4.14 The Committee also provided views on advertisements particularly in relation to LED/moving images and flags.
- 4.15 Members noted that large LED/moving images were well established in certain locations such as Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus; however it was difficult to identify other locations in the City where similar sized displays could be acceptable. These would need to be determined on their merits. Concerns were raised that siting moving displays/video by the roadside could have safety implications as they could distract drivers. It was suggested that the emerging policy on LED/video/moving images needed to reflect such issues. A further concern expressed was that advertisements of this nature can generate significant revenue and where introduced temporarily at a development site could influence developers to delay construction to take advantage of the lucrative income stream.
- 4.16 Lisa Fairmaner informed the committee that the theatre and cinema industries would welcome a transition from physical to electronic posters. The committee was content with this change subject to the images remaining static for a number of weeks at a time rather than rotating.
- 4.17 The committee agreed that the current policy of only allowing one flagpole per large building was too restrictive. It was considered that allowing additional flags would not add to street clutter due to the height at which they would be located. It was suggested that proposals for displaying flagpoles and flags should perhaps include Conduit Street, Grafton Street and Mount Street.

Special Policy Areas and Policies Map Revision

- 4.18 The Committee noted the draft special policy area and policies map revision and provided comments on the revision as part of the next pre-submission stage of consultation.

- 4.19 The committee had previously commented that the retention of the East Marylebone Special Policy Area (SPA) relating to wholesale showrooms was unsustainable and noted the proposed deletion of the SPA.
- 4.20 Members considered that it would be fitting to commemorate the area's heritage as a centre for wholesale showrooms with the installation of a related piece of public art. It was suggested that this could be sited in Market Place which would also help to improve the public realm.
- 4.21 The committee noted the revisions to the Portland Place Special Policy Area to which it had no concerns.
- 4.22 Lisa Fairmaner informed the committee about a change to the Harley Street Special Policy Area where the Council would support the provision of new accommodation for patients using medical facilities in the Harley Street Special Policy Area and/or their families. This would be limited and linked to Harley Street medical facilities predominantly the two major hospitals in the area. In response to questions she confirmed that the policy included specific criteria and that proposals for this accommodation were likely from the Howard De Walden Estate. The committee supported the revision subject to the accommodation being ancillary to the use of the medical facilities.
- 4.23 The committee welcomed the revisions to the Savile Row Special Policy Area. Members acknowledged the need to protect the area's role as an international centre of excellence for bespoke tailoring. Lisa Fairmaner informed the committee that the policy set out what other uses would complement and enhance the bespoke tailoring industry. Tailors working in Savile Row had advised that complimentary commercial uses were preferred to residential which had a detrimental impact on the area's commercial environment.

The Meeting ended at 7.43 pm

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE _____