



Business, Planning and Transport Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

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Please find below an update on key areas of activity from the Planning and Public Realm portfolio since the Committee last met.

Development Planning

1. Telephone Boxes and advertising

New World has appealed against the recent refusals for their new telephone boxes with dedicated advertising. All the decisions are being robustly defended, however it will be several months before the outcome of the appeals are known. I have also written to the Secretary of State for a second time requesting a meeting regarding the abuse of telephone kiosks for advertising and asking that this issue is looked into as a matter of urgency.

2. Workload and Recruitment

- 2.1** The workload of Development Planning is steady, although it is uncertain whether the level of major schemes will continue into 2018. Many of the current proposals are reworkings of previous consents. There is a trend to modify existing consents to provide more reasonably sized flats in the same building envelope, which is welcome in principle.
- 2.2** Two new planning officers are due to start work in North team this month. Several vacancies are still outstanding however and, given the summer recess, advertisements for four more planning officers were held back until September. Interviews will take place in March.

3. Planning Fees

In my last briefing I reported the Government's proposals to increase planning fees by 20% from June had been put on hold. The matter is currently being discussed with the new ministers in the DCLG and a decision on whether to proceed is likely to be made in the Autumn. If the fees are raised they are unlikely to come into effect until the end of the year.

Planning Policy

4. Neighbourhood planning

- 4.1** Having undertaken statutory consultation on their draft plan earlier in the year the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum are now preparing their draft plan for formal submission to the council. This will be the first neighbourhood plan in Westminster to have reached this stage in the process. Officers have provided detailed comments on the draft plan throughout the process.
- 4.2** At this stage officers will check the draft plan and accompanying documentation to ensure they meet the requirements of the neighbourhood planning legislation. There will then be a further formal stage of consultation and a public examination that will be conducted by an independent person appointed in agreement with the Neighbourhood Forum.
- 4.3** The Mayfair Neighbourhood Forum has undertaken the first statutory round of consultation on their draft neighbourhood plan. The plan was published for consultation for a period of 6 weeks finishing on 1 August 2017. The council responded to the consultation setting out in detail the comments that officers have on the draft plan.
- 4.4** As mentioned in the last briefing officers have also commented on early drafts from Fitzrovia West and the Queen's Park Community Council.
- 4.5** The Northbank BID are considering putting forward an application for a Neighbourhood Area in their area.

5. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 5.1** At time of writing, 221 liability notices have been issued for WCC CIL since charging started on 1 May 2016, for a total amount of **£61,368,039.82**. We have issued 59 demand notices for a total amount of **£11,708,143.52**. Of this sum, we have actually received a total of **£6,083,815.83**; owing to the operation of our instalments policy, the balance of **£5,624,327.69** is payable by the end of March 2018.
- 5.2** On 2 November 2017 I will chair the first Cabinet CIL Committee to discuss the potential allocation of these funds and all Councillors have been invited to think about any projects that could benefit from funding in their local

neighbourhood areas. This follows a report on the governance of CIL funding approved by the Cabinet on 20 February 2017.

6. “Getting the Right Kind of Growth” Consultation update

- 6.1** Officers are currently completing analysis of the results of the “Building Height: Getting the Right Kind of Growth” consultation, drawing together the results of the Council’s own consultation with interested individuals and organisations; face-to-face interviews across Westminster with residents, workers and visitors; and an online London-wide survey with 1000 Londoners to seek their views on building height and growth in Westminster. A report on the results will be presented to the November meeting of this Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

7. Mayor of London’s Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing and Viability

- 7.1** The Mayor published his London Plan supplementary planning guidance on “Affordable Housing and Viability” on 16 August. This is substantially unchanged from the draft that was consulted on earlier in the year. At its heart is a “fast track route” for consideration of applications providing for 35% affordable housing, with reduced requirements for viability evidence and post-permission viability review. It also deals in detail with the Mayor’s preferred approach to assessing viability, and to intermediate and build to rent housing products.
- 7.2** Officers are currently considering the published SPG and the extent to which we should reflect it in the current review of City Plan Policy. We are also looking at whether there are any changes we might consider to our approach to viability assessment in light of what the Mayor has recommended.
- 7.3** The City Council has, of course, already begun to take a more rigorous approach to development viability, as announced by the Leader in her speech to the London Real Estate Forum in June and the “Interim Statement of Our New Approach to Affordable Housing: Application of Adopted City Plan Policies” published at the same time. This made clear our view – which is helpfully reiterated in the Mayor’s SPG – that developers should reflect the level of affordable housing required by City Plan policy in deciding how much to pay for land and that this is the key principle in dealing with viability issues. We have also signalled our intention to introduce post-permission viability reviews to take account of changes in market conditions after consent is given.
- 7.4** Of the other topics covered by the Mayor’s SPG, we have already signalled the Council’s commitment to increasing transparency of viability assessments through a draft supplementary planning document on use of section 106

agreements – we will be taking this through the second round of public consultation required by planning legislation before it can be formally adopted shortly. We have also already announced our intention to give more information about the use of section 106 contributions through the Affordable Housing Fund.

31 August 2017

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers please contact Tom Maksymiw x 5772 - tmaksymiw@westminster.gov.uk