



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title:

Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date:

Monday 4th March, 2024

Time:

6.30 pm

Venue:

**Rooms 18.01 – 18.03, 18th Floor Meeting Rooms,
Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, SW1E 6QP**

Members:

Councillors:

Paul Fisher (Chair)
Gillian Arrindell
David Harvey
Max Sullivan

Hamza Taouzzale
Laila Cunningham
Jacqui Wilkinson



Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion Part 1 of the Agenda

Admission to the public gallery is by ticket, issued from the ground floor reception. If you have a disability and require any special assistance please contact the Committee Officer (details listed below) in advance of the meeting.

If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Francis Dwan.

fdwan@westminster.gov.uk

Corporate Website: www.westminster.gov.uk

Note for Members: Members are reminded that Officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting. With regard to item 2, guidance on declarations of interests is included in the Code of Governance; if Members and Officers have any particular questions they should contact the Head of Committee and Governance Services in advance of the meeting please.

AGENDA

PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)

1. MEMBERSHIP

To note any changes to the membership.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations by Members and Officers of the existence and nature of any pecuniary or significant interests in matters on this agenda.

3. MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 12th of December 2023.

(Pages 3 - 10)

4. WORK PROGRAMME

To review and approve the committee work programme for forthcoming meetings.

(Pages 11 - 20)

5. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

To receive a report on WCC's Temporary Accommodation, with a view to evaluate monitoring and delivery.

(Pages 21 - 42)

6. OXFORD STREET PROGRAMME QUARTERLY UPDATE

To consider recent developments relating to the Oxford Street Programme.

(Pages 43 - 62)

Stuart Love
Chief Executive
23rd February 2024



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Tuesday 12th December, 2023**, 18th Floor Meeting Rooms, Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Paul Fisher (Chair), Gillian Arrindell, Melvyn Caplan, Robert Eagleton, Alan Mendoza, Ian Rowley and Hamza Taouzzale.

Also Present: Councillor Liza Begum (Cabinet Member for Housing Services).
Officers: Heather Clarke (Director of Housing Needs), Francis Dwan (Policy & Scrutiny Advisor), Chantell James (Housing Project Manager), Andrea Luker (Head of Housing Innovation and Improvement), Gill Matthews (Head of Homelessness Prevention) and Harvey Ross (Homelessness Prevention Manager). External Guest: Karen Green (Regional Service Manager) from the Single Homeless Project (SHP).

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 The Committee noted that Councillors Melvyn Caplan and Robert Eagleton were attending as substitutes for Councillors David Harvey and Max Sullivan.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny meeting held on 26th September 2023.

3.2 RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny meeting held on 26th September 2023 be agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

4 WORK PROGRAMME

- 4.1 The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the amended Committee Terms of Reference, thanked Members for participating in the work programming meeting on the 31st October and reminded Members that the Committee on 4th March 2024 will scrutinise Temporary Accommodation.
- 4.2 Members asked for further clarity on the role of Cabinet Members and Scrutiny going forward.
- 4.3 The Chair thanked officers for their contribution to the briefing held in advance of the meeting and encouraged Members to better attend these going forward.
- 4.4 Actions
 1. To provide more detail on the role of Cabinet Members in Policy and Scrutiny going forward.

5 HOUSING COMPENSATION POLICY

- 5.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing Services, Councillor Liza Begum, introduced the report on Housing Compensation Policy paper providing context on the aims to make the process simpler and more fair. The Cabinet Member briefly detailed how the consultation had run before questions were asked on:
 - Accessibility of the policy: how payments are authorised and what contact tenants can have. Members suggested this should be made as simple and hassle-free as possible.
 - Dissatisfaction of those compensated: the consultation identified that 60% of recipients of compensation were dissatisfied. Members asked whether this would actually change with a new policy in place.
 - Compensation routes: how the different routes to compensation would be made clear to residents.
 - Financial implications: the report outlined that there would not be financial pressure on the housing revenue account (HRA) budget, Members asked for clarity on why this was. Members also asked about modelling for total expenditure against what was previously awarded and asked whether this information was going to be kept going forward.
 - Delays: citing feedback from Stage 2 housing complaints taking a long time, Members asked what the impact would be on awarding compensation for delays.

- **Accountability:** given the awards are paid out from the HRA, Members questioned whether social housing tenants are effectively paying themselves with compensation, whereas charging the contractor gives them increased accountability and can be used as a negotiating tool as well as acting as an incentive to prevent future issues.
- **Simplicity:** how compensation could be fairer and easier to deliver when the application process is kept simple.
- **Compensating those in arrears:** whether the policy would consider situations when a tenant is in arrears and then owed compensation and whether compensation could be deducted from monies owed.
- **Missed appointments fee:** the set rate of £20 for a missed appointment was too low and neither discourages contractors nor compensates residents for the inconvenience. Members questioned ombudsmen recommended compensation levels generally, suggesting they did not go far enough and recommended that the Council consider compensating based on impact, particularly including potential impact on those working in the gig economy.
- **Financial projections:** what the financial projection of successful implementation of the policy would be and what the level of liability would be.
- **Administration:** how the new scheme would effectively be managed, and monies be administered.
- **Monitoring:** how the Council will monitor claims and ensure they are legitimate. Members also asked how the current service would be improved to reduce the burden on the taxpayer and reduce the frequency of situations that merit compensation.
- **Clarity on adjudication:** to avoid the feeling of rough justice, particularly in low level instances that are issued with pre-determined amounts and to make clear that it is not an adjudicated process.
- **Definitions:** within the policy there are exclusions on compensation such as an appointment being delayed for a good reason or minor delays in appointments. Clarity was sought on who decided the legitimacy of these exemptions and how they could be made more objective looking forward.
- **Impact on leaseholders,** whether compensation or provision of emergency works would ever be considered for leaseholders directly adversely effected by issues in social housing, such as leaks from flats above.
- **Data request:** whether data of current contractor performance and the frequency of how often these contracts are reviewed could be provided. Data on the frequency of ombudsman interventions and complaints regarding compensation in Westminster was also requested.

- Access arrangements: how priority is determined when lifts are down or in need of maintenance and how access is maintained, particularly for those with mobility issues.

5.2 Actions

1. To provide financial projections on likely cost of the successful implementation of the new policy.
2. To address the notion of potentially providing compensation to leaseholders directly adversely effected by issues in social housing, such as leaks from flats above.
3. To provide data of current contractor performance and the frequency of how often these contracts are reviewed.
4. To provide data on the frequency of ombudsman interventions and complaints regarding compensation in Westminster.

5.3 Recommendations

1. The Committee recommended that the Council make its Compensation Policy simple and accessible.
2. The Committee recommended that the Council considers compensating based on impact, particularly including potential impact on those working in the gig economy.
3. The Committee recommended that the Council makes clear its Compensation Policy is not an adjudicated process.

6 ALLOCATIONS SCHEME REVIEW

6.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing Services, Councillor Liza Begum, introduced the report on Allocations Scheme Review providing context of the time since the last review, the aims of the revised policy and recognising multiple, variable needs. Karen Green from the Single Homeless Project (SHP) also introduced herself and the work of the floating support service which helps over 750 people. Members then asked questions on:

- Points-based system: the consideration given to moving away from the current points-based system and what benefits that could bring.
- Representative consultation: the degree to which the consultation was configured and designed to avoid biases and ensure a sample composition.
- Dealing with inappropriate suggestions: how the process will deal with suggestions that come in that might not be possible under the relevant housing act legislation.

- Protected characteristics: whether protected characteristics referenced in the scheme were those as legally defined or Westminster's own. Members also asked whether there was any risk that by defining 'global majority' there was a risk of over-aggregating and potentially adding biases.
- Consultation: whether face-to-face consultation with residents was going to form a part of the consultation, to develop more detailed answers and ensure better understanding.
- Presentation of the allocations: how the decision-making process on allocation could be visualised to improve understanding.
- Clarity on outcome: that any revised policy will have no impact on the level of provision available and this should be made clear during consultation and post implementation.
- Considering multiple needs: some Members spoke towards considering multiple needs and actively considering as they may change over time. Others expressed caution citing instances with adult children being present and it might not necessarily be in their interest to keep them in a single property.
- Outcomes: how a renewal of the allocations policy could bring about better outcomes for those on the list today.
- Medical need: how assessments were done in terms of medical need and disability and the associated needs that this might draw up.
- Localism act: how the Council could make the most of flexibilities afforded in the localism act to ensure that particular groups can be identified and supported, such as veterans of the armed forces.
- Quota scheme: clarity on how waiting lists for overcrowding worked with respect to the quota scheme and why properties would not show as available even after many years on the waiting list.
- Residency benefit: how common the notion of a residency benefit was across other local authorities and whether ten years was appropriate. There was also a question about whether this benefit passed equalities impact assessments (EQIAs). Members questioned the fact that time whilst on the housing register did not count towards this benefit and suggested this be made clearer.
- Volunteers: to consider time spent volunteering when assessing point attributed for employment.
- Engagement: the work being done to engage youth groups and educate them of their options when appropriate, especially if considering a son's and daughter's scheme as done in other local authorities. Members also asked whether time as a youth contributed towards the residency benefit.

- Succession and assignment: to improve education on succession and assignment and the proofs required for spouses or children.
- Overcrowding: whether the policy distinguishes between children and adults and how this is done.
- Means testing: whether means testing was performed for children of social housing tenants. Similarly, whether means testing was performed for older people who might be retirement age.
- Fairness: how reallocating will potentially have an effect on some groups that will now miss out and what is being done to ensure that process is fair and people understand why this will happen.
- Open and transparent: once the policy comes into effect the policy should make clear how groups are prioritised and who might miss out. Members pointed out that time on the waiting list was not the most important factor and aspects like that should be made clear.
- Adult children: what consideration was given, particularly with respect to some cultures, that would want adult children to stay at home, regardless of age, until marriage.
- Homelessness: understanding how homeless people living on the street are prioritised differently to those engaged on the homeless prevention system.

6.2 Actions

1. To provide detail on how the consultation is configured and designed to avoid instances of bias and ensure there is as much sample composition as possible.

6.3 Recommendations

1. The Committee recommended that the Council presents the final iteration of the Housing Allocations Scheme with visual aids, such as flow charts, to make the process easier to understand.
2. The Committee recommended that the Council make clear that any revised Housing Allocations Scheme will have no change on the level of provision available.
3. The Committee recommended that the Council makes clearer that time spent on the Housing Register does not contribute towards the ten-year residency benefit.
4. The Committee recommended that the Council considers factoring in cumulative need in terms of allocating and that this can factor in any emerging needs that may appear over time.

5. The Committee recommended that the Council consider volunteer work as a factor when attributing points based on employment.
6. The Committee recommended that the Council improve education around succession and assignments.
7. The Committee recommended that the Council ensures the final version of the Allocations Scheme is open and transparent in how priority groups are determined and makes clear who might potentially miss out.

7 OXFORD STREET PROGRAMME QUARTERLY UPDATE

7.1 The Committee discussed the first quarterly update on progress made regarding the Oxford Street Programme. Members sought information on the financial projections, partnerships formed and rationale for added sites.

7.2 Actions

1. To provide a projection of spending throughout the programme.
2. To provide details of partnerships formed in financing the programme, particularly public realm aspects, and the agreed financial burdens that are going to be taken on by the private sector.
3. To provide the rationale for the inclusion of Grosvenor Square as part of the wider programme and why it is not considered for its own separate public realm scheme.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 No other business was raised, and the meeting was closed at 20.34.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____

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Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Monday 4 th March 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	2024/2025 Work Programme
Report of:	Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Francis Dwan, fdwan@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report asks the Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee (“the Committee”) to discuss topics for its work programme.
- 1.2 This report also considers the work of the Committee since its last meeting on Tuesday 12th December.

2. Formal Meeting Dates for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year

- 2.1 The Committee is advised that this is the last scheduled meeting date for the 2023/2024 year.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Policy and Scrutiny team supports the Committee in creating the work programme and the Committee considers items on those areas where the Council is currently working to develop new policy, where policies previously implemented are ready for strategic review or where scrutiny plays an overall role in assurance. The overall emphasis is to provide scrutiny with maximum opportunity to have impact and influence Council policy.
- 3.4 When drawing up work programmes, the Committee considers the vision and purpose of scrutiny at Westminster.

Scrutiny is a vital function to promote transparency and accountability. On behalf of Westminster's communities and stakeholders, local non-Executive Councillors will endeavour to ensure services in the City not only meet people's needs but enhance lived experiences by:

- 1. Championing the best possible outcomes for communities and stakeholders.*
- 2. Holding the Council, its partner organisations and external bodies to account for decisions taken and the impacts on our communities.*
- 3. Examining Council priorities, actively engaging in policy development and offering constructive challenge prior to decisions being taken.*
- 4. Working strategically across the city to focus our efforts on policy and service areas where scrutiny can make the biggest impact.*
- 5. Demonstrating integrity and commitment by adhering to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.*

4. Work Programme for 2024/25

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to discuss and propose topics of interest for the next municipal year's work programme in 2024/25.
- 4.2 The Committee's attention should be drawn to the Terms of Reference, set out in Appendix 2, which may assist the Committee in identifying issues to be included in the work programme.
- 4.3 The Committee is due to meet on Tuesday 7th May 2024 to discuss items for its work programme after the Cabinet Member Annual Updates held between Monday 15 April to Thursday 25 April. The Committee will use the Updates to help identify possible issues for future investigation by scrutiny.
- 4.4 When considering the work programme, and agreeing an overall programme of scrutiny activity, the Committee should have regard to whether the work programme is achievable in terms of both Officer and Member time, taking into account that the Committee is scheduled to meet four times per year. Members are also reminded that it is advisable to hold some capacity in reserve for any urgent issues that might arise.

5. Task Groups and Single Member Studies

- 5.1 Each Committee has discretion to establish Task Groups and Single Member Studies to examine key issues in more detail. The Committee is asked to consider whether they would like to establish a Task Group or commission a Single Member Study. The Committee should be advised that both Members and Officers will only be able to successfully take part in and support a finite number of Task Groups at any one time.

6. Monitoring recommendations and actions

- 6.1 The recommendations and actions arising from each meeting are recorded in the Recommendation and Action Tracker attached as Appendix 2. Members

are invited to review the work undertaken in response to those recommendations and actions.

7. Committee activity

- 7.1 Since the previous meeting of the Committee on, 12th of December 2023, the Committee has received a briefing note on the Oxford Street Programme including detail on spending projections, financial partnerships and the inclusion of Grosvenor Square (01.02.24), responses to the recommendations made at December's committee (15.02.24) and updates on relevant items published on the forward plan (various).

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact Francis Dwan.

fdwan@westminster.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: Recommendation and Action Tracker

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HOUSING AND REGENERATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

CONSTITUTION

7 Members of the Council (4 Majority Party Members and 3 Opposition Party Members).

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To undertake Policy and Scrutiny activity, in line with the functions set out in Section 1 of Chapter 4 of the Constitution, in respect of matters noted in this terms of reference.

2. To lead Policy and Scrutiny Activity for all matters relating to:
 - Housing services and policies
 - Reducing rough sleeping
 - Housing regeneration schemes
 - Housing delivery and provision in the private and other sectors, and policies which enable this
 - Place-shaping schemes including Oxford Street
 - Any other matter intended to build housing, deliver housing services to residents and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

3. Matters referred to in (2) above which are the responsibility of external agencies, and where the Committee may legitimately act to investigate, including housing associations.

4. Any other matter which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested that this Committee investigates.

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Appendix 3: Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee Tacker

This tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress against the recommendations it has made, requests for information and actions to be completed.

Item	Recommendation Information Action	Detail	Political Lead and Officer Lead	Status	Response
Work Programme 12.12.23	Information	To provide more detail on the role Cabinet Members will play in Policy and Scrutiny going forward.	<i>Policy and Scrutiny Advisor</i>	Done	Proposals for alternative arrangements for information sharing which was shared with Committee Members on 7 th November 2023, has been distributed to the Member who asked. Who had not received it.
Housing Allocations Scheme 12.12.23	Information	To provide detail on how the consultation is configured and designed to avoid instances of bias and ensure there is as much sample composition as possible.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Director of Housing Needs	In Progress	Awaiting response.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council presents the final iteration of the Housing Allocations Scheme with visual aids, such as flow charts, to make the process easier to understand.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	We take on board the committee's recommendations, making the scheme easy to understand is a core aim of the revision. The final version of the Allocations Scheme will be provided in a logical, clear, and understandable format for residents and applicants.
Housing Allocations Scheme 12.12.23	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council make clear that any revised Housing Allocations Scheme will have no change on the level of provision available.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	The introduction to the consultation (which you can view here) makes clear that any revision to the scheme will not change the number of social homes available.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council makes clearer that time spent on the Housing Register does not contribute towards the ten-year residency benefit.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	The consultation asks for comment on the ten-year residency benefit, any change to this will be clearly communicated as part of the new Allocations Scheme as

Appendix 3: Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee Tacker

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PS9010</p> <p>Housing Allocations Scheme 12.12.23</p>					well as any exclusions that operate with regards to accessing these points.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council considers factoring in cumulative need in terms of allocating and that this can factor in any emerging needs that may appear over time.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	As mentioned in the committee report, one of the main changes the review seeks to make is to acknowledge and reflect additional priority for cumulative need e.g., overcrowded households who also present and are assessed with a medical need and how this may increase additional priority in the scheme.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council consider volunteer work as a factor when attributing points based on employment.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	The consultation asks respondents for their feedback on the existing allocation of employment-based points, any changes to the existing arrangements will be considered in light of the responses received through the consultation and this recommendation from the committee will be considered as part of this.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council improve education around succession and assignments.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	We note the Committee's recommendation and will look to include information around succession and assignments through our existing comms with residents.
<p>Housing Compensations Policy 12.12.23</p>	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council ensures the final version of the Allocations Scheme is open and transparent in how priority groups are determined and makes clear who might potentially miss out.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	The overall ambition in reviewing the scheme is that it will deliver greater transparency on how we allocate social housing; including how priority groups are determined and presenting the new scheme within a logical, clear, and understandable format for residents and applicants.
	Information	To provide financial projections on likely cost of the successful implementation of the new policy.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Head of Housing Improvements and Innovation	In Progress	Awaiting response.
	Information	To address the notion of potentially providing compensation to leaseholders directly adversely	Cabinet Member for Housing Services	In Progress	Awaiting response.

Appendix 3: Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee Tacker

Housing Compensations Policy 12.12.23		effected by issues in social housing, such as leaks from flats above.	Head of Housing Improvements and Innovation		
	Information	To provide data of current contractor performance and the frequency of how often these contracts are reviewed.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Head of Housing Improvements and Innovation	In Progress	Awaiting response.
	Information	To provide data on the frequency of ombudsman interventions and complaints regarding compensation in Westminster.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Head of Housing Improvements and Innovation	In Progress	Awaiting response.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council make its Compensation Policy simple and accessible.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	As part of the launch of the new policy we will produce guidance in plain English and in different formats so that it is clear to follow, and residents know what to expect.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council considers compensating based on impact, particularly including potential impact on those working in the gig economy.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	While the main aim of the policy is to provide a consistent approach to compensation, complaints will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that practical solutions can be offered, and individual circumstance considered.
	Recommendation	The Committee recommended that the Council makes clear its Compensation Policy is not an adjudicated process.	Cabinet Member for Housing Services Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships	Done	The introduction to the policy will make clear that refunds and reimbursement payments are awarded as per criteria set down in the policy and are not part of an adjudicated process.
Oxford Street Programme Quarterly 12.12.23	Information	To provide a projection of spending throughout the programme.	Cabinet Member for Economy and Employment Director of Governance Operations OSP	Done	Provided to Members on 01.02.24 via email

Appendix 3: Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee Tacker

<p>Oxford Street Programme Quarterly 12.12.23</p>	<p>Information</p>	<p>To provide details of partnerships formed in financing the programme, particularly public realm aspects, and the agreed financial burdens that are going to be taken on by the private sector.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Economy and Employment Director of Governance Operations OSP</p>	<p>Done</p>	<p>Provided to Members on 01.02.24 via email</p>
<p>Oxford Street Programme Quarterly 12.12.23</p>	<p>Information</p>	<p>To provide the rationale for the inclusion of Grosvenor Square as part of the wider programme and why it is not considered for its own separate public realm scheme.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Economy and Employment Director of Governance Operations OSP</p>	<p>Done</p>	<p>Provided to Members on 01.02.24 via email</p>



City of Westminster

Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting:	4 th March 2024
Title:	Provision and Management of Temporary Accommodation
Report of:	Sarah Warman, Strategic Director Housing & Commercial Partnerships
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cllr Liza Begum, Cabinet Member for Housing Services
Report Author and Contact Details:	Gregory Roberts – Head of Accommodation and Commissioning – grobert2@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Temporary Accommodation is the form of housing that Westminster City Council (WCC) provides to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and who are eligible for assistance under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 1.2 The issue of increasing demand for Temporary Accommodation (TA) is common across the capital with London Councils reporting annual homelessness presentations up by 19% across London at Q2 - 2023/24.
- 1.3 Westminster has seen an annual increase of 40% in households approaching the Housing Solutions Service for assistance and a 50% increase over the year in placements into TA. The main factors that contribute to the demand are:
 - The high rent levels in Westminster and the surrounding areas of London which are significantly above the local housing allowance (LHA) rates and affordability level for many of the people who are now presenting to the Housing Solutions Service (HSS).
 - The limited social housing in Westminster, which reduces the options for permanent rehousing and the move out of TA for many households.
 - The impact of welfare reforms, such as the benefit caps and the level of rent households can afford who claim benefits.
 - The increase in homelessness due to the cost-of-living crisis, landlords leaving the private sector market or increasing the costs of rent above the threshold families and individuals can afford.
- 1.4 Sourcing good quality private sector properties whether to prevent homelessness or for TA in the current market is very challenging. The demand for TA has outstripped the supply of suitable accommodation and has thus required the use of hotel and self-contained apartment accommodation charged on a nightly rate to meet the Council's statutory obligations.
- 1.5 As a result the Council is facing significant challenges and costs in providing TA and supporting the households to move on to permanent housing. The impact on TA occupation increasing during the year is due to several factors detailed in this report.
- 1.6 The provision of TA is a significant financial risk for council, because of the significant gap between the costs of TA currently and the income we receive through the government set TA subsidy regime.

- 1.7 The pressures outlined throughout this report have driven a significant in-year budget pressure for 2023/24. At Quarter 3 the outturn for TA was projected to be higher than budget by £26.1m (with a range of £25.0-£27.7m for the best- and worst-case scenarios).
- 1.8 The 2024/25 budget position is predicated on a need to source additional units of TA to meet the increased demands set out in the paper, end the use of expensive nightly booked corporate hotels and apartments and the loss of existing leased provision.
- 1.9 The Council is taking a proactive and strategic approach within a clearly defined governance structure to address the demand for TA and to improve the quality of accommodation and the prospects of the households in TA. This is detailed at section 7.7 of the report.
- 1.10 Our plan to address the TA pressures consists of the following main actions:
- Directly purchasing properties for use as TA as set out in section 7.3
 - Increasing the supply of suitable properties by working with private landlords, Registered Providers, and other partners to secure more leases and agreements for temporary accommodation.
 - Reducing the demand for TA by preventing homelessness and supporting households to access advice and support earlier in the process and to enable the current system of financial incentives to be broader and more accessible in the early prevention of homelessness to help households ahead of a crisis situation.
 - Improving at pace access to TA and social housing through our void processes, improving turnaround times of this accommodation being off-line and available to let this includes a review of our minimum standards to speed up void works.
 - Reducing the cost and length of stay in TA by managing the placements and allocations more efficiently and effectively. We will use a more transparent and fair system, prioritise the most vulnerable and urgent cases, and review the cases regularly.
- 1.11 This report provides an overview of the statutory duties of WCC to provide TA, the pressures from increasing demand and challenges in identifying and securing supply, the financial cost pressures to WCC and the plans for the future delivery.

Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

The report describes the supply and demand for Temporary Accommodation, how the accommodation is sourced, the make-up of the stock and standards delivered, and households supported.

The Committee is asked to consider how accommodation to meet housing need can best be delivered in the future and how the Committee continues to monitor and review our temporary accommodation strategy and practice, reviewing options that innovative and delivers sustainable solutions to meet the needs of our homeless households and to reduce the expenditure of this provision to the Council.

2. Policy Framework

2.1 The policy framework that determines how TA is allocated reflects the challenges in securing accommodation, which is affordable to households on low incomes, both in Westminster and across London. The Council's overall strategy remains to increase the supply of good quality accommodation available for households in housing need, maximising the availability of this in Westminster and across London.

2.2 WCC has a statutory duty to provide Temporary Accommodation (TA) to the following groups of people where the applicant's immigration status entitles them, and they are:

- People who are homeless and have a priority need, such as families with children, pregnant women, or people who are vulnerable due to age, disability, or other factors with no alternative accommodation that is reasonable to occupy
- People who are threatened with homelessness and have a priority need, and who are cooperating with WCC to prevent or relieve their homelessness.
- People who have a local connection to Westminster (or no local connection elsewhere)

2.3 WCC also has a statutory duty to provide suitable TA, which means that it must meet the needs and preferences of the household, be affordable, be a suitable size, in a reasonable location and comply with health and safety standards.

2.4 The function for determining homelessness duties and the provision of TA is carried out under contract by the Housing Solutions Service (HSS) delivered under contract by the Residential Management Group (RMG) whose parent company is Places for People.

2.5 When a household is placed into TA following a homeless application there are two types of accommodation provided.

- Stage 1 accommodation is generally offered to households who require somewhere else to live whilst HSS try to relieve their homelessness and pending an assessment of a homeless application. It is short-term emergency accommodation which allows for a comprehensive assessment of the household circumstances so that the Council can prevent homelessness wherever possible and consider whether it has a full statutory housing duty under housing legislation. Much of this emergency

accommodation the Council has had exclusive availability for some time with the owners. However, the pressures on supply of all accommodation has increasingly led to the use of short-term nightly booked accommodation for longer periods to meet emergency need and until suitable longer-term accommodation is available

- Stage 2 accommodation is longer term, more settled TA which is provided where we are unable to relieve homelessness and we have a main homelessness duty until the household moves into social housing. This accommodation is either leased from private sector owners through RP partners, directly from private management organisations or purchased directly by the Council.

2.6 The policies that determine how properties are procured and allocated are:

- The annual *Supply and Allocation of Social housing Report* reviews the demand for and supply of social rented housing and low-cost home ownership and considers supply and demand projections for the coming year, The report sets out projected supply and the proposed allocation of social housing for the next year. This reflects the demand from homeless households for social housing.
- The *Accommodation Placement Policy* prioritises homeless households in three location Bands (Band 1 is Westminster and adjoining boroughs, Band 2 is Greater London and Band 3 is anywhere outside Greater London.) Given the limited supply of properties the criteria for Bands 1 and 2 were based around health and welfare needs which were agreed with Adults, Children's Services and Counsel. This needs-based approach helps to ensure those with the highest welfare needs have the best chance of remaining in Westminster with every household having a Personal Housing Plan as a legal requirement.
- The *Accommodation Procurement Policy* sets out the challenges in obtaining sufficient TA, which is affordable to households (within benefit levels) and to the Council (within TA subsidy levels). It includes an action plan to provide sufficient accommodation to meet demand and the principles the Council will follow when procuring private sector properties.
- The Housing Allocations Policy is currently under review with a four-week consultation seeking feedback from residents, stakeholders and other interested parties. A revised policy will be launched later in 2024.

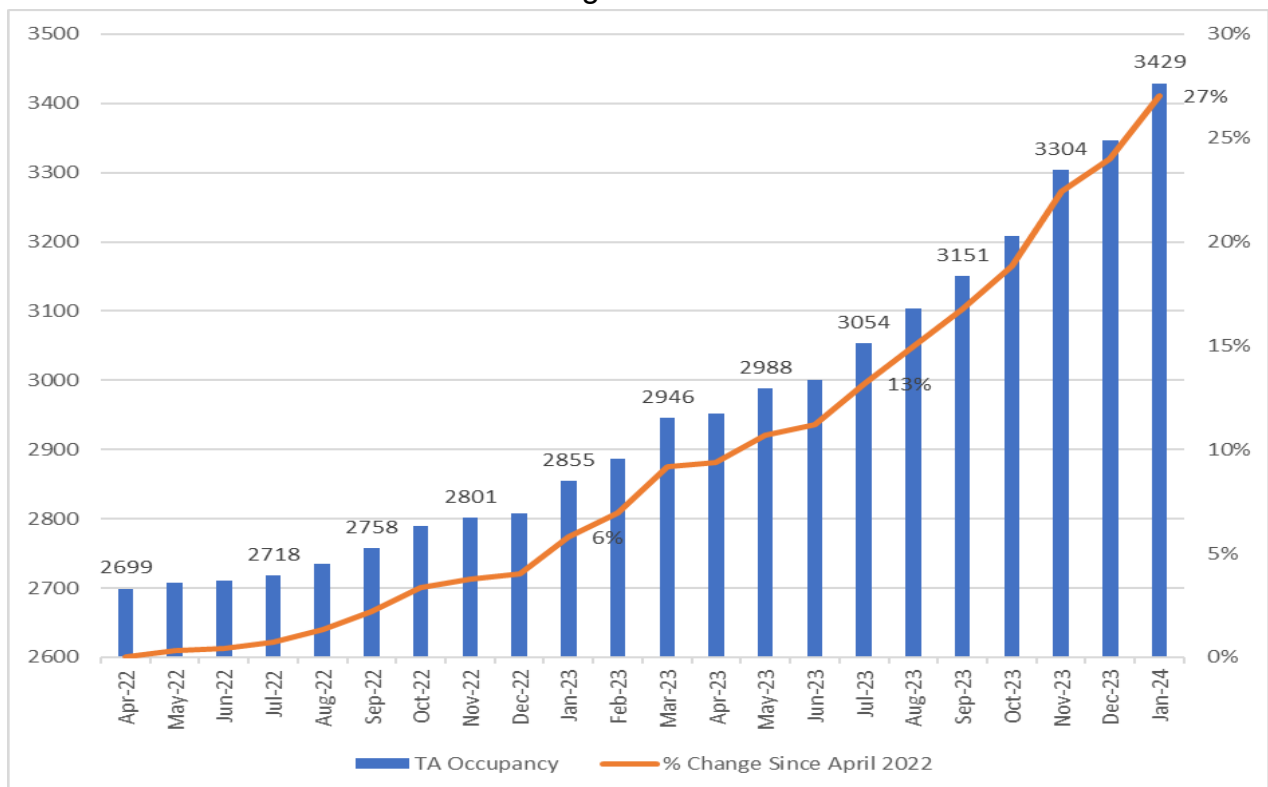
3. Temporary Accommodation Demand

3.1 Westminster continues to experience demand for accommodation as replicated across London as the epicentre of the national homelessness crisis. London Councils estimate that 1 in 50 Londoners are now homeless, with a rapidly escalating homelessness crisis being driven by structural changes within its private rented sector.

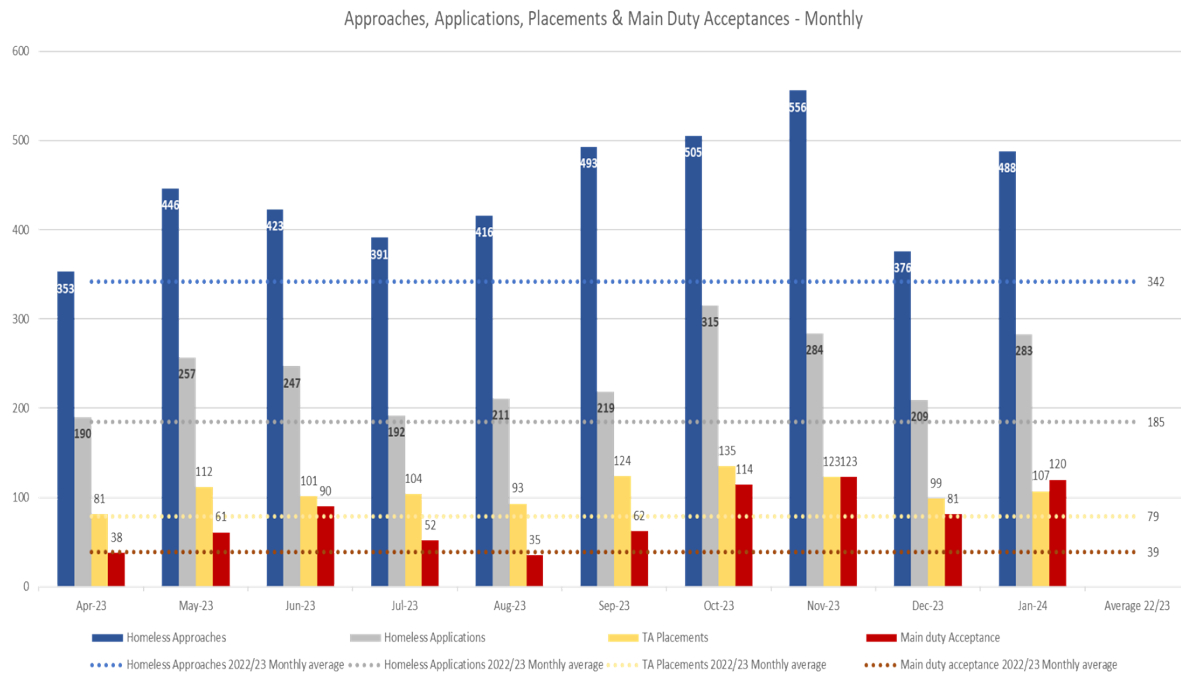
3.2 London Councils report that new private rented sector lets are down 41% compared to the pre-covid average (because tenants are staying longer in properties) and landlords appear to be exiting the market and rents are now more than 20% higher. In addition 17 boroughs surveyed reported that the number of landlords serving notice on TA properties had increased from less than 500 in September '21 to over 8000 in September '23.

3.3 The demand for TA is complex. Most, but not all, households who approach WCC as homeless are placed into TA. This excludes those cases where we can negotiate additional time to stay or prevent homelessness where someone is staying with friends or family or privately renting. In addition to this a very small number will not be provided TA pending a full decision, but this is exceptional.

3.4 The chart below sets out the change in total TA since 2022.



3.5 The information detailed at chart 1, highlights that in January 2024, TA numbers had reached 3429 households reflecting the increasing number of households in housing need who approach the Housing Solutions Service (HSS). This is currently a 27% increase on TA occupation compared to the same period in 2023.



3.6 The Chart above shows the number of households in terms of the numbers of households who approach HSS for assistance, the number of homeless applications, the number of placements into accommodation of new households and the number of households accepted as homeless.

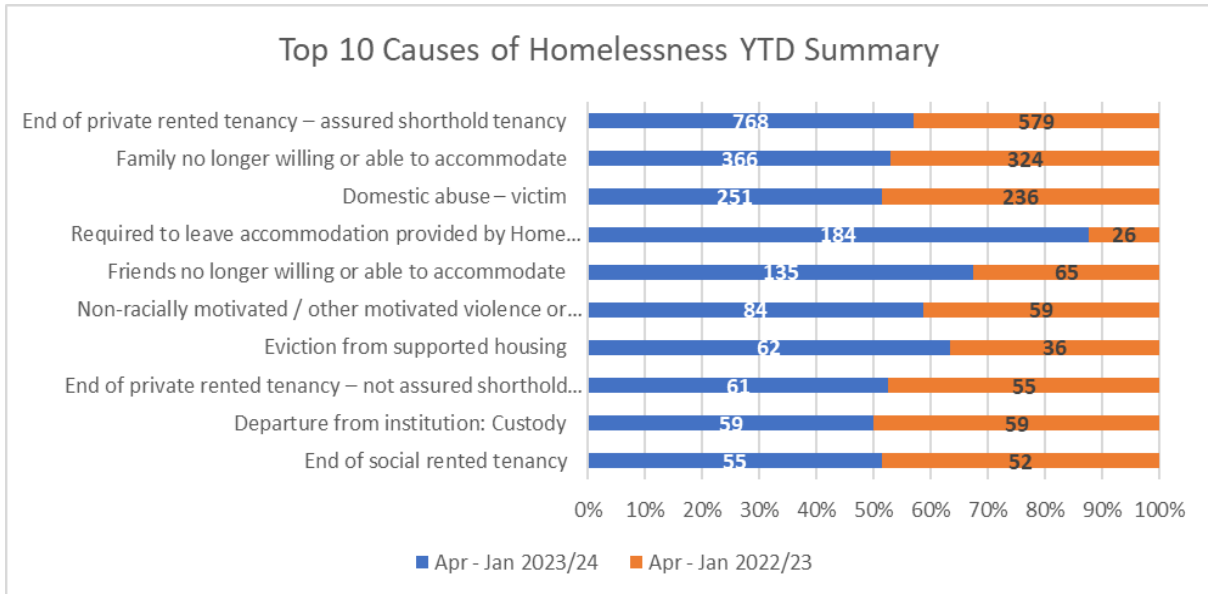
3.7 The dotted lines show the comparable numbers for the 2022-23 and highlights:

- **Approaches** are up 40% since last year on average each month.
- **Applications** are up 45% since last year on average each month.
- **Placements** are up 50% since last year on average each month.
- **Acceptances** are up 171% since last year on average each month.

3.8 The demand for TA has been increasing over the years, due to a number of factors such as welfare reforms, rising rents, lack of social housing etc. The three principal causes of homelessness remain as the loss of a private sector tenancy, friends, and family unable to continue to accommodate and households escaping domestic abuse.

3.9 The largest growth cause of homelessness is where individuals achieving

asylum have been asked to leave home office hotels. This now sits as the fourth main reason for homelessness approaches and has increased over the last year from 26 households a quarter homeless as a result of being required to leave Home Office accommodation to 184



3.10 The principal routes to move out of TA is into social housing. Properties are allocated in line with the Council’s Housing Allocations Scheme with applicants bidding for properties through Choice Based Lettings. The majority of moves of homeless households into social housing will be into smaller units of studios and one beds which accounts for over 60% of available lettings each year. During 22/23, 275 households with a homeless duty moved from TA into social housing and we project to complete 252 moves into social housing at the end of 2023/24. This is against the more than 600 households accepted as homeless during the year as set out in the chart above

3.11 A key focus of the work of HSS continues to be to prevent homelessness whether by challenging private sector evictions, supporting households to find and move into alternative accommodation, work to maintain existing living arrangements and using specialist supported housing services. Typically 50 households are prevented from becoming homeless each month.

4. Temporary Accommodation Supply

- 4.1 There are currently 3429 households occupying TA. These properties are managed by 32 different provider organisations with just over 40% in-borough.
- 4.2 As set out above the requirement for TA to meet the Council's statutory duties has increased significantly whilst the availability of private sector accommodation to meet this has reduced. This is true for local authorities across London who all report significant pressures across their homelessness services. London Councils recently reported to Council Leaders across London that while some of the policy interventions from the November 2023 Autumn Statement will help, much more needs to be done (at greater pace and scale) to address the growing crisis.
- 4.3 Most TA properties are leased for periods of 3-5 years and are generally renewed where demand continues, and properties meet standards. Legal services are currently working to update all agreements. The financial arrangements are set out in section 6 of the report with the principal advantage being that the Council has the ability to offer management and guaranteed rents (albeit below market levels.)
- 4.4 As set out above TA includes stage 1, short-term emergency accommodation used for households who present as homeless and require TA whilst their application is assessed. Much of this emergency accommodation the Council has had exclusive availability for some time with the owners. However, the pressures on supply of all accommodation has increasingly led to the use of short-term nightly booked accommodation, including commercial hotels and apartments for longer periods to meet emergency need and until suitable longer-term accommodation is available. This comprises c. 30% of TA stock
- 4.5 Stage 2 accommodation is longer term, more settled TA which is provided where we are unable to relieve homelessness and we have a main homelessness duty until the household moves into social housing. This accommodation is either leased from private sector owners through RP partners, directly from private management organisations or purchased directly by the Council.
- 4.6 The table below sets out the ownership arrangements for TA

Property Ownership*	In Borough		Out of Borough	
	Families	Singles	Families	Singles
Properties leased from Registered Providers (who have leased them from the PRS)	414	80	232	46
RP and voluntary sector owned**	325	88	52	0
Privately Sector Providers (e.g. directly owned blocks and individual properties and leases of single units)	111	134	998	566
Directly purchased units	152	11	147	12
Regeneration Areas	44	22	0	0
Total	1046	335	1429	624

* Total numbers of households in TA vary and the reports set out in this paper do show small differences in total numbers according to when the chart was developed; all are recent and there are no significant differences in total numbers

** There are also a range of specialist hostels and supported housing for rough sleepers, single homeless, people with mental health problems, young people etc. together with the street outreach services working with current rough sleepers to support them into accommodation. This hostel and supported housing provision is commissioned directly by the Council, using its own and central government funding and is not within the remit of this paper, reflecting its specialised role. At the same time every individual is able to make a homeless application to a local authority, each is assessed according to personal circumstances and many single people living in TA have long histories of homelessness.

4.7 Registered Providers that supply TA to the Council are principally:

- Notting Hill Genesis who primarily lease accommodation in borough from private landlords.
- A2 Dominion who own properties purchased generally in 1990s and early 2000s specifically for use as TA.
- Places for People through RMG as providers of the Council's Housing Solutions Service also have a specific function to source and manage some TA. As a result, RMG leases predominantly out of borough properties from private landlords for use as TA.

4.8 Private Management companies that either lease accommodation from the private sector for use as TA or own properties directly for use as TA, located principally out of the borough e.g., AJ Bush, Theori, Steff and Philips.

4.9 Owners of standalone blocks of accommodation, leased to the Council for TA, e.g. Centrica pension fund own Newman Street block, Abbotts emergency accommodation in Willesden.

4.10 Voluntary sector organisations who own properties for use as TA e.g., Look Ahead on Southwark Bridge Road.

4.11 The challenges of sourcing additional supply, the reduced availability of private sector accommodation for TA households to move into and the increasing

demand pressures set out above has led to increasing use of commercial apartment and hotel accommodation which currently comprises c. 285 households.

4.12 The table below lists the largest suppliers of longer-term TA which comprises over 75% of total stock.

Landlord	Units
Notting Hill Genesis	400
WCC Owned TA (inc. regen areas)	386
AJ Bush	350
A2 Dominion	348
Stef & Philips	274
RMG Ltd	243
Theori Management	239
Centrica	76
Housing Britain	73
Westminster Community Homes	55
Total	2444

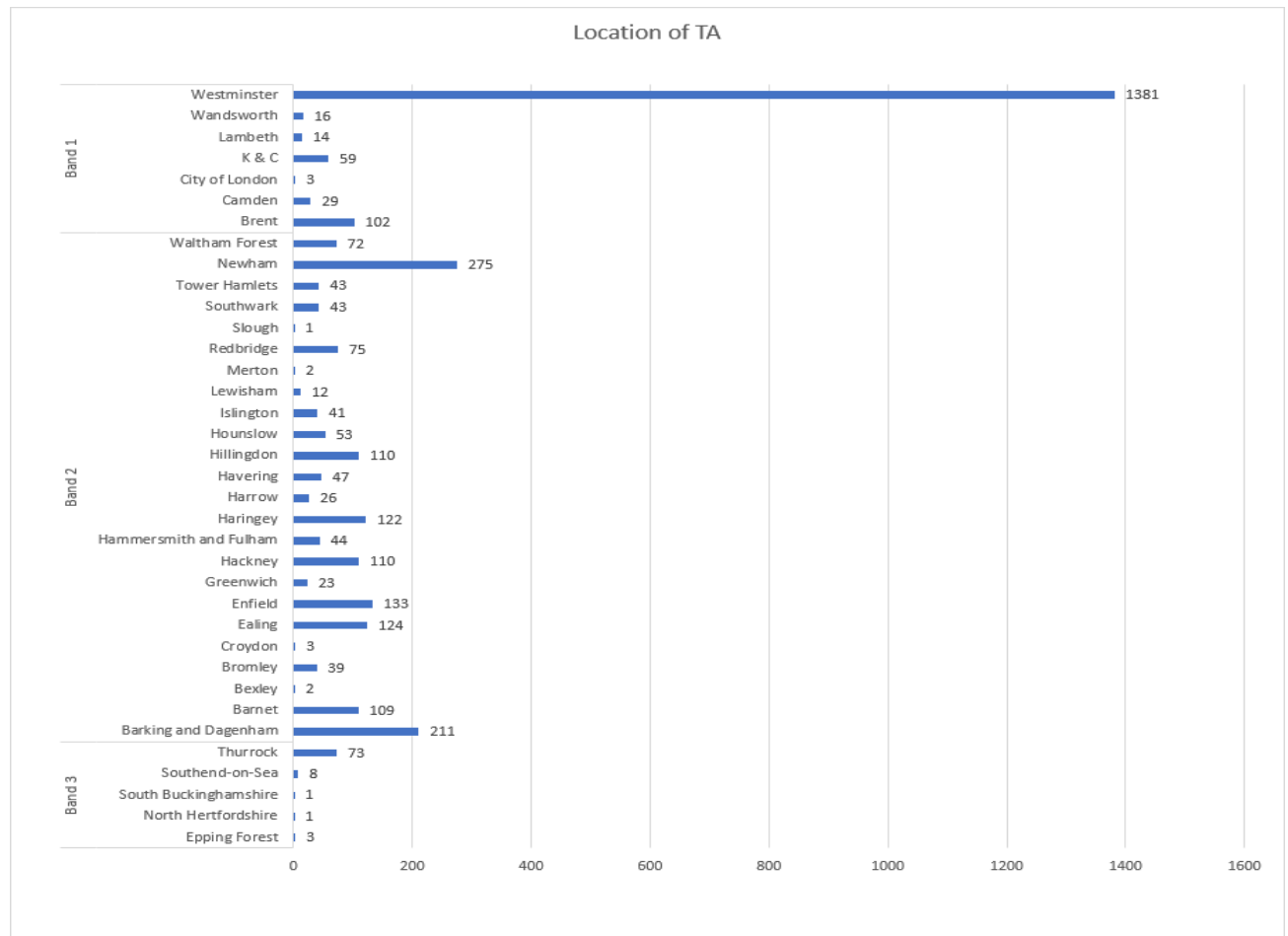
4.13 The following table breaks down current TA by property size. Most TA is family sized units, 2-bedroom properties accounting for over 1500 units and over 1100 properties being 3 bed or larger.

Bed size	Out of Borough	Westminster	Total
Studio/ 1 Bed	518	260	778
2 Bed	811	716	1527
3 Bed	427	303	730
4 Bed	222	78	300
5 Bed +	75	21	96
Total	2053	1378	3431

It is noted that 40% of Westminster's TA is located within the borough and the table below breaks down the current provision by borough. 85 properties are located outside of London, principally in Greys (in Thurrock, Essex) and have

been in use for over 7 years. The provision of accommodation outside of the borough is reflective of the limited availability of private sector housing, particularly family sized, available to be leased and purchased for use as TA. Where we place out of borough there is floating support scheme, set out in section 9

Temporary Accommodation by location



5. Temporary Accommodation Inspections and Standards

- 5.1 The provision of all TA must be suitable for homeless households in terms of size, cost, and location and is a statutory requirement for all local authorities. Every unit must comply with the TA Standards and all the TA Providers are required to meet these standards.
- 5.2 Once a property becomes void as a re-let and let, the TA Provider must confirm that the property complies with standards and as part of the procedure, a certificate of supply is submitted to Housing Solution Service including property details e.g. gas/ electric certificates etc. Providers are also required to take photographs/ videos of vacant properties before letting.
- 5.3 Once a property is let, there is a requirement that properties are inspected by the provider organisation on a regular basis. Such inspections require arrangements to be made with and the consent of the tenant and provides the opportunity both for the household to raise issues they have and for the supplier to identify and address issues.
- 5.4 The Council has adopted the Setting the Standard (STS) grading and inspection system as a Pan-London approach to ensure TA, specifically Bed and Breakfast (B&B), Hostels, Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and studio apartments used by local authorities meet minimum quality standards. The project links together a dedicated central inspections team, with a purpose-built STS IT system to share data across the participating authorities.
- 5.5 The benefits of the programme include annual inspections ensuring that all properties meet a suitable and safe property standard across London, properties are suspended from use until the provider can demonstrate the requirements have been met, official accreditation with the Setting the Standard's guidelines and Performance reports on outcomes.
- 5.6 Officers also receive details of inspections undertaken across other boroughs which is helpful in seeing any quality issues elsewhere for organisations supplying Westminster with properties and whether issues with property quality are more widespread
- 5.7 As part of the HSS contract, there is a team of inspection officers that annually inspect properties per year. This team also responds to specific enquiries and complaints (in addition to the response by the provider organisation themselves).

5.8 In the first three quarters of the year, the HSS inspection team completed 624 inspections. Following the Setting the Standards property inspection grading system each property is graded A-E with grades D and E considered unacceptable and requiring urgent or immediate resolution. The outcome of these inspections are:

Grade A: 52

Grade B: 78

Grade C: 385

Grade D: 46

Grade E: 3

5.9 This means that 8% of inspections failed to meet acceptable standards. Of these failed inspections 21 units had mould and damp listed as the primary issue, 8 units (16%) had fire safety issues (for example free standing cookers missing chains to walls, missing smoke/ fire detectors); and the remainder (41%) were grouped under general property conditions such as window disrepair.

5.10 Where such disrepair is identified the provider organisation is required to complete the remedial works as a matter of urgency and where this is not completed and/or where it is not reasonable for the household to continue to reside at the property then the household will be moved to an alternative property

5.11 With the Setting the Standard inspections c. 25 – 30% of the total TA stock is inspected a year

6. Funding Temporary Accommodation

- 6.1 TA is managed as a trading account reflecting the model set by government for the provision of TA with the Council paying money to suppliers for accommodation and charging households rent for the property, which can be claimed if the household or individual are eligible from Housing Benefit.
- 6.2 The level of charges to households is through a government set formula of 90% of the 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) subject to a cap of £500 per week. up to 2017 this formula also included a management fee allocation of £40 per week, reflecting the costs of property management. This is now paid through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, which is ring fenced for homeless prevention and TA management activities and is annually paid in lump sum by the Department for Housing Levelling up and Communities.
- 6.3 This formula has remained unchanged since 2011 notwithstanding the increase in private sector market and management costs. As a result, given the statutory duty to provide suitable accommodation and the challenges of sourcing this within the current market, there is a trading deficit on TA, which is a direct cost to the general fund.
- 6.4 When negotiating cost levels with suppliers, the core market advantage the Council has is the guaranteed income from a public body. However, the increasing strength of the private rented sector market has eroded this advantage over time with property owners having a wider choice of tenants.
- 6.5 In addition, larger schemes which provide accommodation for several households e.g. Newman Street which provides 76 self-contained studio units for single households, and Frampton Street (managed by Noting Hill Genesis) with the provision of 24-hour staff cover, reflecting the complex needs of the single homeless and the importance of providing a safe environment. Provision of such management is at an additional cost to the Council.
- 6.6 Most properties are leased for periods of 3-5 years and then renewed. The market has made it increasingly challenging to renew leases on existing properties at the same or on similar terms as when a lease was originally taken out, given the alternatives that owners have and the level of private sector market rents. There are significant challenges procuring affordable TA which meets the needs of larger households, particularly when they have mobility issues.

7 Financial context and strategy for 24/25

7.1 The budget for Temporary Accommodation (TA) in 2023/24 is £17.2m. This is broken down as follows:

Funding Source	£m
General Fund Budget	12.3
Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG)	4.9
TOTAL	17.2

7.2 Westminster uses approximately two thirds of its annual HPG grant allocation to fund the provision of TA (along with any one-off in-year grant allocations).

7.3 The pressures outlined throughout this report have driven a significant in-year budget pressure for 2023/24. At Quarter 3 the outturn for TA was projected to be higher than budget by £26.1m (with a range of £25.0-£27.7m for the best- and worst-case scenarios). This is equivalent to gross expenditure of £93.2m (with £49.5m being recovered in rent).

7.4 As part of its Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the Council took steps to mitigate the impact of increased spend on TA in order to meet its statutory duty to set a balanced budget for the next financial year (2024/25). This required an assessment of future demand along with the development of a supply strategy to help the Council manage the cost of TA.

7.5 The 2024/25 budget position is predicated on a need to source additional units of TA to meet the increased demands set out in the paper, end the use of expensive nightly booked corporate hotels and apartments and the loss of existing leased provision.

7.6 Taken in conjunction with the existing pressures in 2023/24, the assumptions above require growth of **£38m** to be added to the General Fund budget contribution for TA in 2024/25. This reduces to **£32m** in 2025/26 (due to the full-year effect of exiting high-cost supply arrangements).

7.7 The assumptions above represent a challenging set of deliverables that will need to be closely monitored. In response to this a Temporary Accommodation Strategic Board has been established chaired by the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships with support from the Director of Housing Needs. Membership includes Executive Director, Finance and Resources, Director of Regeneration and Investment and Director of Assets and Investment.

7.8 Temporary Accommodation Supply Pipeline

As above the Council is committed to preventing and reducing homelessness, improving the outcomes for the households in TA and avoiding the use of expensive commercial hotels and apartments. Some of the activities that the Council is undertaking to achieve this include:

7.9 Acquisitions

WCC has been directly purchasing properties for use as TA since 2014:

- Since 2014 289 properties have been purchased, 159 in borough and 130 out of borough at £112.4m
- The 2021 – 27 programme, has been significantly expanded to purchase a further (up to) 270 properties. This brings the total investment to £178.3m, this includes an £85m uplift in budget agreed in 23/24. The number of properties has been calculated based on market analysis carried out by consultants of the available pool of properties (segmented by bedroom size and price point). Using the information and considering anticipated refurbishment (void) costs the Council has determined the number of properties it can purchase at a given price point to achieve the target acquisition total. It should be noted that this target is heavily caveated by changing market conditions and should be adjusted for the inflationary pressures we have observed since the analysis has been carried out.
- All properties to be purchased in or near to Westminster with the catchment area being defined in the [Cabinet Member Report \(decision date 29 December 2023\)](#). Other properties or bulk purchase opportunities can be considered and funded by this budget but will be subject to a separate consultation process with the Cabinet Member for Housing Services.
- The Acquisitions Team is on course to purchase over 65 homes this financial year (2023-24) and a target of 200 homes available to rent in 2024/25
- To support this, procurement for a new void contractor began in late December 2024. Subject to market interest and acceptable bids, a new contractor will be appointed in late April/early May 2024. In the short term, the team (with procurement advice and support) have made use of the Term Partnering contract in place for the Capital Programme to instruct Axis Europe to undertake void works to make the homes purchased occupiable as soon as possible
- Purchase and void work costs require close management to ensure value for money. Market conditions for purchase remain changeable and scarcity of personnel and materials are driving void works costs up

- Aligned to this, a submission for GLA grant funding shas been submitted to support the purchase of 42 homes. Formal confirmation is expected in February 2024.

7.10 Use of Vacant Regeneration Area Properties

- 99 properties owned by the Council have been identified which are suitable for TA placements on our regeneration sites. These properties are anticipated to be available during 24/25. This accommodation is anticipated to be vacant for at least two years until the sites require clearance and an important source of accommodation to support the pipeline of TA.

7.11 Existing Partnerships

- Through the expansion of provision through existing partnerships the target is to achieve a further 150 properties during 2024/25.
- This will be through a combination of commercial hotel suppliers and registered providers expanding their portfolios on behalf of the Council.

7.12 New Partnerships

- Commercial estate agents are being targeted to secure 75 new leasehold properties during 24/25 with a particular focus on high street estate agents who WCC have not targeted previously.
- Once a household moves into this accommodation WCC will secure a package of support to be provided by existing providers to ensure the tenancy is sustained.

8. The provision of support to households living in Temporary Accommodation

- 8.1 The aim is to secure and place as many households as possible in or close to the borough in line with the TA Placement Policy. The Out of Borough Support Pilot to families in Stage 1, Temporary Accommodation (TA) focuses on the immediate needs of the family caused by relocation. The service will look to focus on issues that may place the security and stability of the family and household at risk, for example, financial capacity, physical and mental health challenges, and domestic abuse but also build familiarity with their new surroundings from locations of supermarkets to localised support.
- 8.2 The offer is designed to develop better multidisciplinary working through the expertise of our existing Housing Solutions Service (HSS) and our contracted Floating Support Service (FSS), ensuring appropriate support to residents in TA as they adjust to their new circumstances enabling them to live more independently.
- 8.3 The household will be supported by a designated family coordinator, who will assess and review the early information of the households' circumstances, consider the cumulative impacts of their placement in TA, location and information relating to their homeless approach, why they have presented to WCC as homeless and to develop a plan to support the settling in process from the offer of TA.
- 8.4 For some households, signposting to local amenities and voluntary services such as CAB may be adequate at this stage of the assessment, but this process may also highlight the cumulative factors of the family's needs, including issues such as travel, health, language barriers, risks of violence and domestic abuse encountered by the adult, all of which together may warrant the family to receive a referral to the SHP Floating Support Service with their consent. If the offer of Floating Support is taken up this will enable increase communication, including face to face and additional support to be put in place ensuring a single point of contact for the family to ensure their support offer is consistent and responsive.
- 8.5 A personal budget -is made available to families to ensure some additional expenses encountered when placement out of borough will be met, and the council can respond to individual circumstances in the early days and weeks of the placement. This is not a financial payment to households but instead provides vouchers to be utilised at a variety of supermarkets. This is to ensure the household's benefits and income is not affected by this source of financial support that will be made available.

8.6 The understanding of the family's circumstances is key to coordinating and recommending actions, so that we can tailor services more easily to the needs of each family. The personalise support can include:

- Provide budgeting advice and income maximisation, including support to obtain Housing Benefit
- Support to access grants and other funding to help families to make applications including food banks, fuel costs etc.
- Support to claim relevant welfare benefits including Universal Credit
- Options for local schools, new placements for children and access to breakfast and after school arrangements for working families.
- Support to access new GPs, NHS registration and services.
- Signposting to voluntary and faith organisations
- Families are allocated a single key point of contact through the coordinator in the HSS to support them while their homelessness application is investigated by HSS, and they settle into Stage 1 TA accommodation.

8.7 Of those that have been placed, 254 families have been contacted by the family coordinator that otherwise would not have been contacted to discuss their personal circumstances, rather than just the progression of their homelessness case work. Of which 73% of those families had two or more contacts to ensure that their support was reviewed on an ongoing basis. There has been in excess of 500 proactive communications to families in Temporary accommodation.

8.8 To address this we have issued £39,500 in vouchers to 217 families at an average of £182 per household. These vouchers have been instrumental to support increasing food costs and provide some respite to families that have incurred additional costs elsewhere.

8.9 Further to this the Housing Solutions Service has strengthened links with Westminster's Housing Benefit officers to make sure that Housing Benefit is in place in all eligible cases.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact:

Heather Clarke – Director of Housing Needs; hclarke@westminster.gov.uk

Gregory Roberts – Head of Accommodation and Commissioning;
grobert2@westminster.gov.uk

Background Paper: Council's medium-term plan for the next four years and proposes the budget for the 2024/25 financial year.

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Housing & Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	3 March 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Oxford Street Programme (OSP)
Report of:	Bernie Flaherty, Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Director for Adult Social Care and Health Westminster City Council
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development
Wards Involved:	West End and Marylebone
Policy Context:	<p>Fairer Economy – A reimagined and revived Oxford Street and West End that delivers a world class offer and experience to residents, businesses and visitors supporting a diverse, resilient and successful economy that delivers growth in Westminster.</p> <p>Fairer Environment – Clean and green our streets with action on air quality, and sustainable transport.</p>
Report Author and Contact Details:	Manisha Patel, Director of Operations, Governance and Oxford Street mpatel@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Oxford Street Programme (OSP) as well as the programme outlook for 2024.
- 1.2 The Oxford Street project has been developed to Stage 2 (initial) design which is due to conclude in April 2024. In parallel, the design for the enabling highways schemes to be delivered by the programme have been progressed including for Wigmore and Mortimer Street with construction planned to commence in Spring 2024. To support the realisation of the desired outcomes on Oxford Street and improve traffic movement in the area, a simplification of junction operation is required at Oxford Circus. The scope of these changes are being investigated through the design process and the first stage of design for the Circus is underway.
- 1.3 Primary programme proposals were consulted on with the public in Summer 2023. This consultation was comprehensive and provided the opportunity to garner feedback on all projects planned to be delivered including Oxford Street and Oxford Circus. This input has been used to influence designs and our continued engagement activity will further feed into designs as they develop. The consultation responses have been summarised in a report that is available on the OSP website ([The Oxford Street Programme](#)).

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1 The Committee's input would be beneficial on the following aspects of the OSP:
- 2.2 To consider the progression of the Oxford Street and Oxford Circus projects along with the development of enabling highways and complementary schemes.
- 2.3 To consider the forward plan for spend for 2024/2025 financial year.
- 2.4 The Committee's feedback is valued and any feedback on other aspects of the OSP is welcome.

3. Background

- 3.1 Following the local elections in May 2022 the decision was made by the administration to focus council funding on improvements required for Oxford Street itself, along with selected side streets. This approach is in accordance with The Fairer Westminster manifesto commitment to revive the West End and get Oxford Street back on track as a global destination.

- 3.2 A Cabinet Member Report on 1st November 2022 set out the revised scope of the programme. Approval was given to progress the Oxford Street scheme design and to develop a new business case to reflect the change of programme scope. The full business case for the Oxford Street and Oxford Circus has been prepared demonstrating high value for money for both projects. The business case and a draw-down of funds to progress design for these projects was approved by Cabinet in September 2023.
- 3.3 In December 2023, Cabinet approved the activation of the final area of the OSP and the commencement of design for the three complementary schemes, namely Davies Street, Grosvenor Square and James Street.

4. Programme Outlook for 2024

Oxford Street

- 4.1 The focus for the Oxford Street project in early 2024 has been the development of the Stage 2 (initial) design. This design stage has further elaborated proposals for the street including defining the approach to surfacing, greening, and lighting. Throughout the process, the team has continued to engage stakeholders including resident and amenity groups, the OSP Advisory Board, contributing members of the New West End Company (NVEC), differently abled groups and individuals, young people, and Council officers on key aspects of the design. The current design stage is expected to be completed by April 2024 and preparations are underway to socialise this update with stakeholders as well as members of the public.
- 4.2 The final design stage for Oxford Street will commence following Cabinet approval for Stage 3 – 6 funds which will be sought in May 2024. Key to successfully progressing design and developing an efficient construction programme, given the complexities and interdependencies on the street, is securing the necessary funding with an agreed timeline, and close collaboration with stakeholders including Transport for London (TfL) and utility companies.
- 4.3 A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was entered into with the local Business Improvement District (BID) – NVEC in September 2023, which outlines the ambition of both organisations to fund the proposed public realm improvement on Oxford Street. The MOU sets the basis for the development of two s278 agreements, and legal commitment, to be signed with NVEC member businesses and confirms 50% third-party funding for the design and build of the Oxford Street project. The first agreement addresses the Stage 2, which has been signed, and the final agreement refers to the remaining design

and the construction of this scheme. As per 5.2 securing this final legal agreement is a key delivery milestone and will allow the programme to progress as planned.

- 4.4 Construction is planned to commence on Oxford Street in Q3 2024/25. Initial conversations have commenced with the OSP design and build contractor, Murphy Carey Joint Venture (MCJV), regarding options for delivering works on the street including reference to the types of closures and diversion routes. A detailed construction phase plan will be engaged upon with stakeholders in advance of works commencing on street including the notification of statutory undertakers through a Traffic Management Order (TMO) consultation.
- 4.5 With close consideration to the climate emergency, the commitment made to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 and a carbon neutral city by 2040, the OSP is seeking to mitigate its carbon impact through all aspects of the project lifecycle including procurement, design, construction and maintenance. Sustainability is at the core of Oxford Street project including enhanced greening, support for active travel, future proofing of public realm interventions, which is outlined in a STAR (Sustainability Tracking and Assessment Rating System) framework of KPIs. An initial carbon assessment has been undertaken on the project (to be refined as the design progresses), which is being used to determine options for mitigating carbon.
- 4.6 Key to the success of the Oxford Street project is a robust and comprehensive management and maintenance plan that aligns with the planned public realm interventions. The current approach to managing the street is a partnership between the Council and NVEC. This joint management has been in place for several years and is proposed to continue, albeit modified to cover the enhanced public realm proposed for the street, to ensure the refurbished street is maintained to a high standard for residents, businesses and visitors. A revised management plan has been in development alongside the Stage 2 design which outlines baseline services and will be refined as the specification is confirmed.

Oxford Circus

- 4.7 The Stage 1 (feasibility) design for the Oxford Circus project has commenced with proposals dovetailing into Oxford Street and future Regent Street public realm changes proposals. Following completion of the initial design, proposals will be shared with stakeholders and the public in advance of commencing Stage 3 (detailed) design to be progressed from Autumn 2024. This socialisation will build upon the programme wide consultation, which included Oxford Circus that took place in Summer 2023.

- 4.8 In Q3 the programme will seek Cabinet approval to continue developing the design for the Oxford Circus project. This report will outline feasibility design proposals and socialisation feedback. Approval will permit the Programme to draw down funds to support Stage 2 and Stage 3 of Oxford Circus design.

Enabling Highways Schemes

- 4.9 The enabling highway schemes are essential highway improvements/changes that seek to enhance traffic movement and capacity in the wider Oxford Street area and support the delivery of the Oxford Street project. These include Marylebone / Fitzrovia, Eastcastle and Oxford Street West schemes and were consulted upon in the OSP consultation in Summer 2023.
- 4.10 Enabling highway scheme construction is planned to commence in the Marylebone/Fitzrovia project area on Wigmore Street and Mortimer Street in March 2024. Designs are being progressed for the remaining Marylebone/Fitzrovia schemes including Eastcastle Street, Margaret Street and Henrietta Place, and for projects in the Oxford Street West area. The intention is to proactively construct the enabling highways schemes in advance of the works starting on Oxford Street, where possible, to provide for greater traffic capacity in the area.

Complementary Schemes

- 4.11 Three complimentary schemes have been identified to be delivered as part of the OSP, and include Davies Street, Grosvenor Square, and James Street scheme. These schemes support the public realm objectives to be achieved on Oxford Street and are of benefit to pedestrian circulation and safety, cycling access and infrastructure. The proposed designs for the complementary projects will be consulted upon with the public and stakeholders.
- 4.12 The development of the Grosvenor Square and James Street schemes is contingent on 50% third-party funding being secured. Design will be progressed once a MOU is entered into with local stakeholders, which is expected to be arranged in 2024. The Davies Street Scheme will be funded through s106 contributions.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The capital expenditure budget approved by Full Council in March 2023 was £124.4m for 2022/23 onwards. The total budget allocation was £127.592m taking into consideration costs incurred prior to 2022/23 which can be utilised by the new programme. Through the preparation of a Full Business Case for the programme in 2023, a review of project costs were undertaken resulting in

the identification of a proposed budget of £148.625m. This is noted in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Proposed Expenditure Budget by Project and Spend to Date

Oxford Street Programme	Expenditure Budget (£000's)	Spend to 31 December 2023 (£000's)
Oxford Street	89,900	3,037
Oxford Circus	25,311	77
Wigmore Street	16,814	917
Mortimer Street		878
Henrietta Place/Cavendish Square		39
Margaret Street		
Park Street/North Audley Square		
Portman Street/Orchard Street		
Berners Street/East Castle Street		1
Grosvenor Square		
Davies Street	-	
James Street	16,600	-
Total	148,625	4,949

5.2 A summary of the programme expenditure budget (by project area) is outlined in Table 1, which shows project spend until 31 December 2023. The figures have been externally and independently provided by a quantity surveyor and includes a risk and contingency allowance.

5.3 The complementary scheme budget expenditure presented is dependent on 50% external funding being secured. This is specifically for the James Street and Grosvenor Square projects (detailed in 6.5). If this external funding is not secured, the project scope will be reviewed accordingly.

5.4 Table 2 show the programme forecast spend. The historic spend includes costs incurred in 2022/23 and comprises contractor and consultant costs, and salaries.

Table 2: Programme Forecast Spend

5.5

Oxford Street Programme					
Actual (£m's)	Forecast (£m's)				
Historic	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	Total
2.308	5.367	38.334	61.599	41.017	148.625

The funding assumptions for the OSP are summarised in Table 3 below. To this end, a MOU has been signed with NVEC for the Oxford Street

scheme and a s278 agreement is to be imminently entered into for the Stage 2 design followed by a final agreement covering the remaining design and the delivery of the works on the street.

Table 3: Summary of OSP Projects and Proposed Funding Strategy

PROJECT	FUNDING STRATEGY
Oxford Street	50% funded by third parties
Oxford Circus	Aspiration to secure third-party funding, currently 100% WCC OSP funded
Enabling Highways Schemes	100% WCC funded
Complementary Schemes - James Street and Grosvenor Square	50% funded by third parties
Complementary Schemes - Davies Street	100% WCC funded (£106 monies secured)

6. Legal and Governance Implications

6.1 The City Council is the highway authority for Oxford Street and the side roads and junctions with it that form part of the revised programme together with Oxford Circus. The Highways Act 1980 provides the Council with the statutory powers to carry out works to improve highways and pedestrian facilities. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended provides permitted development rights that allow highway authorities to carry out necessary work to maintain or improve roads and pedestrian facilities and undertake necessary or incidental work outside but adjoining road boundaries without the need for planning permission.

7. Carbon Impact

7.1 Westminster City Council declared a Climate Emergency and has committed to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 and a carbon neutral city by 2040 and adapting its built environment to be more resilient to climate change. One of the key ways it will deliver this is through the creation of more sustainable streets through the mitigation of carbon impact through design and construction. This includes considering the impact of material selection and sourcing, greening, drainage and providing the conditions to encourage active modes of transport.

- 7.2 Efforts to reduce the carbon impact of all OSP, including complementary, schemes will be considered throughout design including the lifetime carbon footprint of materials. This will also consider where materials are sourced and their transportation, material specification and recycling or reusing existing materials.
- 7.3 MCJV is committed to reducing the carbon impact of their construction activity and propose to use electric tools and vehicles during construction where practicable. Commitments have been made to divert 98% of waste from landfill and reuse 95% of materials.
- 7.4 Greening is proposed as part of the complementary schemes, which will not only allow for the improvement of the streetscape and add to the visual amenity of the streetscape but will be designed to provide shade and respite from heat, helping build resilience to rising temperatures. Enhancement of greening will contribute to the Wild West End network with stepping stones for fauna between green spaces. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be installed as appropriate.
- 7.5 Sustainable travel will be supported through a strategy focussed on enhancing cycle parking including e-scooter and dock less bays that can be used by e-bikes and e-scooters where feasible.

8. Equalities Impact

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is being carried out for all projects to be delivered through the OSP. The draft, initial assessment indicates the proposed public realm improvements will have an overall positive impact on multiple protected characteristics. The EqIA has been published on the OSP website and will continue to be enhanced and developed as the projects progresses.

9. Consultation and Engagement

- 9.1 The OSP team delivered an extensive public consultation campaign for over six weeks in Summer 2023 to consult on the Stage 1 proposals for Oxford Street, Oxford Circus, and the Programme's enabling highways schemes - Marylebone Fitzrovia, Oxford Street West, and Eastcastle Street.
- 9.2 The public consultation and engagement activities used various techniques and tools including a dedicated webpage, newsletters, a questionnaire, postcard drops and in-person meetings, presentations and public consultation session, giving residents, business owners and members of the public several opportunities to engage with the consultation over the more than six weeks of open consultation. A summary of the engagement is provided below:

- a. 1612 questionnaire responses were received
- a. 27 direct emails of written feedback
- c. 180+ attendees of in person meetings
- d. 500+ people engaged at three local markets
- e. 12,800 postcards delivered to local residents
- f. 20,755 views of the OSP website

- 9.3 The feedback received through direct letter / emails and the questionnaire found public support for each of the five schemes included in the Programme as well as the Programme as a whole. In response to the questionnaire's required question: 'Overall, to what extent do you support or oppose the whole programme proposal?', 64% of the 1612 responses were supportive of the Oxford Street Programme. Full results of the consultation have been compiled, analysed and published on the OSP website.
- 9.4 Following the public consultation period, the OSP team continued engaging with key stakeholders on specific aspects of the Programme design. The engagement included discussions with accessibility groups, local neighbourhood associations and residents as well as local landowners and businesses.
- 9.5 The consultation results and all engagement feedback received has been carefully analysed and considered by the OSP team across all enabling schemes, Stage 1 design of Oxford Circus and Stage 2 design for Oxford Street. Where applicable, the team has been influenced by and amended the project design. The influence of the stakeholder feedback has been recorded as part of a 'You Said, We Did' document that will be published at the end of Oxford Street Stage 2 design.
- 9.6 Currently, preparations are being made to share the more detailed proposals developed through the Stage 2 design process of the Oxford Street, with members of the public. The OSP team will update the Programme website which will host the updated proposals, get out the message via online platforms and social media and host an all day, in person event for those who wish to learn more about the Programme and most current proposals from the street from the OSP team and its contractors.

- 9.7 Additional engagement is planned for each scheme within the Programme including the following:
- a. Continued quarterly engagement with the Oxford Street Programme Advisory Board, a group of senior representatives of key stakeholders in the Oxford Street area.
 - b. Engaging Westminster and other local young people to better understand what young people want from Oxford Street (Spring and Summer 2024)
 - c. Conducting a public consultation on two proposals within the Oxford Street scheme area – Balderton Street and Hanway Street / Rathbone Place. (Spring and Summer 2024)
 - d. Conducting a public consultation on amendments to the Marylebone Fitzrovia scheme. These amendments are the result of resident and stakeholder feedback received through the Summer 2023 consultation (Spring and Summer 2024)
 - e. Socialising Stage 2 designs for Oxford Circus (Summer 2024)
 - f. Publicly consulting on each of the complementary scheme at the end of Stage 2 design (TBC).
- 9.8 All OSP engagement is intended for two-way dialogue between the OSP team and stakeholders. The team is also committed to sharing information and updates through a regular newsletter and updates to the Programme’s website (www.oxfordstreetprogramme.co.uk). The Programme will continue to receive questions, comments, and concerns through the OSP email address (oxfordst@westminster.gov.uk).

10. Next Steps

- 10.1 The next steps for the OSP programme include the continuation of the Oxford Street Stage 2 (initial) design and the socialisation of public realm proposals for the street with stakeholders and the public before the commencement of the final stage of design.
- 10.2 A report summarising the results of the programme public consultation in Summer 2023 is available on the OSP website. This will be supplemented by an updated FAQ and ‘You said, we did’ document at the end of Stage 2.

- 10.3 The Stage 1 (feasibility) design is being progressed for Oxford Circus and is planned to commence for the complementary schemes – James Street, Davies Street and Grosvenor Square by Summer 2024.
- 10.4 There are ongoing discussions with delivery partners regarding the securing of funding for the Oxford Street, Oxford Circus, Grosvenor Square and James Street in line with the agreed programme funding strategy.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact the report author
mpatel@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

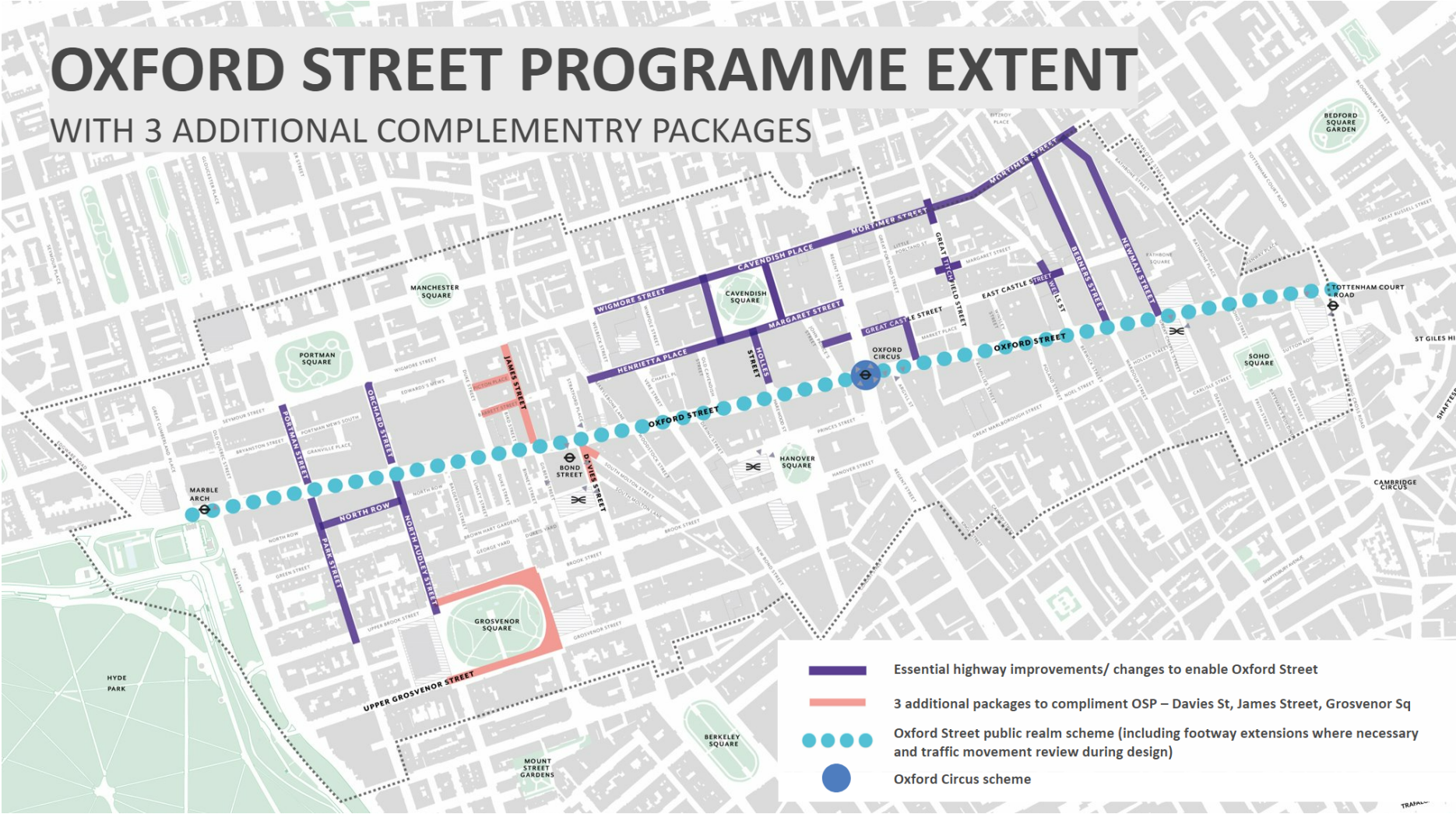
Appendix A – Geographical Extent of the Revised Oxford Street Programme
Appendix B – Oxford Street Programme Consultation 2023 Introduction and Executive Summary

Appendix A – Geographical Extent of the Revised Oxford Street

OXFORD STREET PROGRAMME EXTENT

WITH 3 ADDITIONAL COMPLEMENTRY PACKAGES

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Appendix B - Oxford Street Programme Consultation 2023 Introduction and Executive Summary

Introduction by Cllr Geoff Barraclough and Bernie Flaherty

Oxford Street is recognised around the world as one Europe’s leading high streets but was badly hit by the pandemic and changing shopping patterns. That’s why it’s essential that we deliver practical upgrades and an improved public realm to ensure that London’s premier shopping street remains a destination that we can all be proud of - a great place to live, work and visit.

We ran a public consultation during July and August 2023. This consultation presented proposals for five different schemes within the area of Oxford Street and provided opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors to share their expertise, insights, and views on each proposal. We would like to thank the more than 1,600 people who responded to the questionnaire and the nearly 200 people that attended in-person events.

It was wonderful to see such positive feedback from the consultation, with over 65% of respondents in support of the proposals. After many different plans over the years, we understand and share the public’s desire to get on with delivering improvements to Oxford Street and the wider neighbourhoods.

The questions, feedback, and ideas received through the consultation have confirmed our decision to proceed with the Programme and are already shaping the next stages of design. We have replied directly to the many individuals, businesses and residents’ groups that have posed details questions about the scheme and will include these in a Frequently Asked Questions document that will be published shortly and note the important contributions to the design in a ‘You said, we did’ document.

With the support of so many who participated in the consultation and our partners and contributors within the private sector, we are committed to continuing our investment in one of London’s great icons and economic generators and creating a dynamic and sustainable Oxford Street for all.



Councillor Geoff Barraclough
Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development



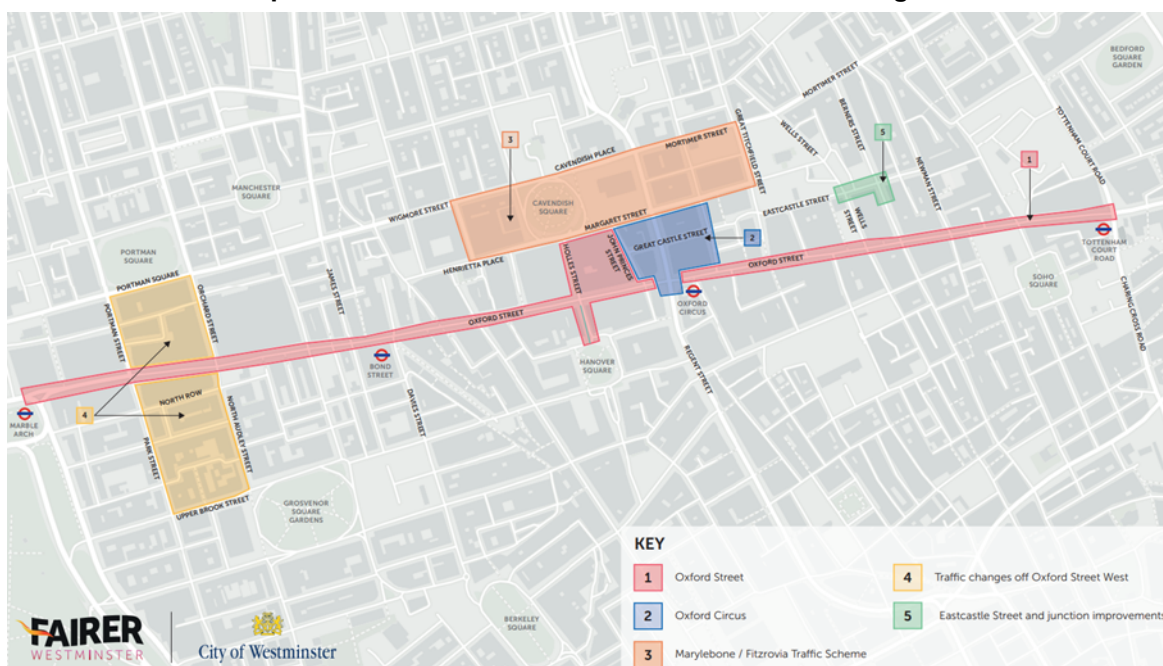
Bernie Flaherty
Deputy Chief Executive Westminster City Council,
Bi-Borough Executive Director of Adult Social Care, and Senior Responsible Officer, Oxford Street Programme

Executive Summary

The Oxford Street Programme (OSP) envisions Oxford Street as a destination for cultural vibrancy and a great place to live, work and visit. Rooted in Westminster City Council (WCC)'s Fairer Westminster Strategy, the Programme proposes an enhanced and attractive public space with wider footways, better seating and lighting, more trees and other planting, clearer signage, and more direct vehicle routes.

The Programme includes five key projects: Oxford Street (by far the largest), Oxford Circus, Marylebone/Fitzrovia, Oxford Street West, and Eastcastle Street junction improvements. These five proposed schemes will work together to help create an attractive public realm that strengthens the global status of the street and ensures the economic future of Oxford Street.

Map of all five schemes within the Oxford Street Programme



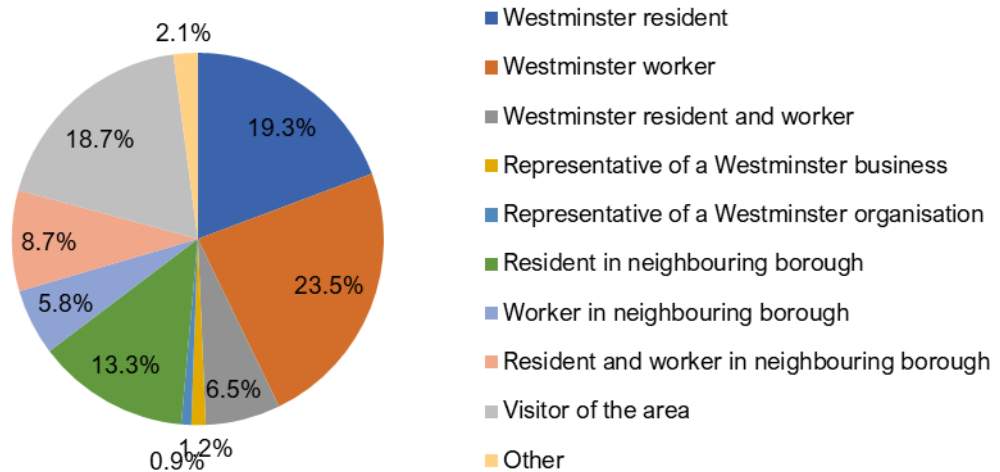
Key to the Fairer Westminster strategy is WCC's commitment to creating a more inclusive Westminster, where our residents are supported, celebrated and at the heart of our decision-making. The Oxford Street Programme itself was developed with stakeholder engagement and collaboration at its core. The Programme team designed the consultation to –

- Clearly articulate the five proposals,
- Extend the Programme's reach into the local community and often unheard populations and begin a conversation between the Programme team and local community members and other key stakeholders,
- Generate interest in the programme and projects aimed to reinvigorate the iconic street,
- Ensure all stakeholders have the opportunity to learn more about the Programme and have their say on the early stages of design,
- Identify, understand, and address key concerns from community members and other stakeholders raised during the process,

- And lastly, if the Programme is determined to continue, build ideas and feedback gathered during consultation into the future stages of design.

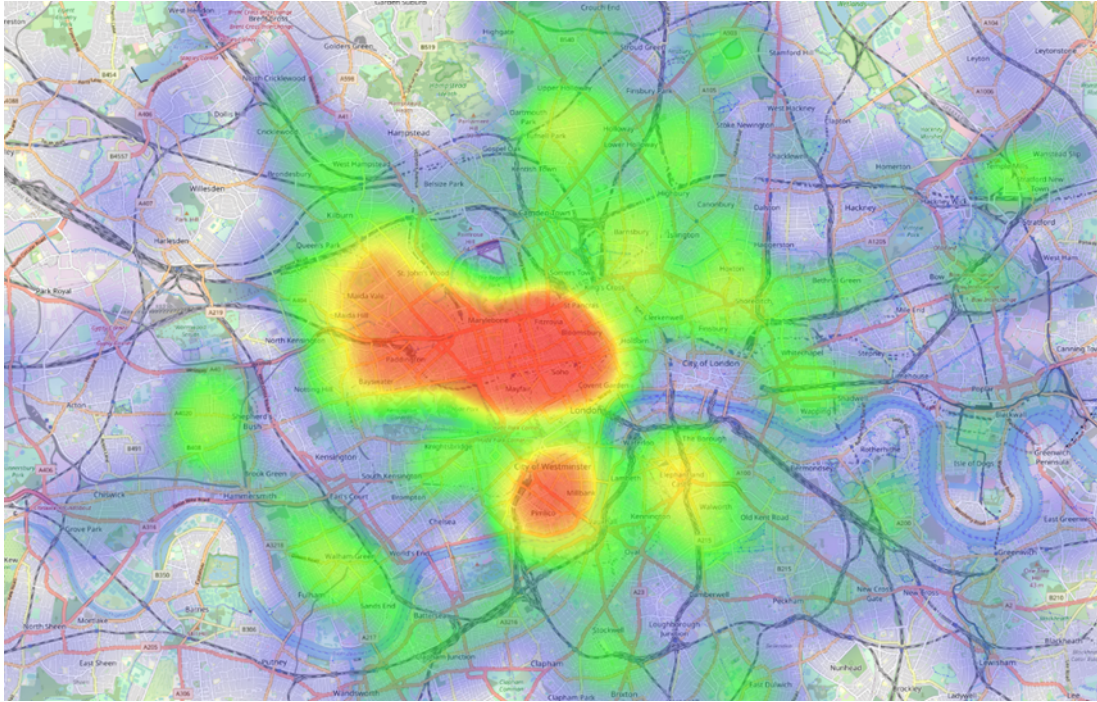
The consultation garnered 1612 questionnaire responses, 27 direct emails, over 180 attendees at in-person events on Oxford Street, engagement with over 500 people at Westminster’s street markets, and extensive online interaction with over 20,700 website views during the six-week consultation in summer 2023. 26% or 416 respondents to the questionnaire were Westminster residents, 30% or 484 respondents work within the City, 19% of respondents (301 people) described themselves as visitors to the area.

All respondents' response to 'Which of the following best describes you?'



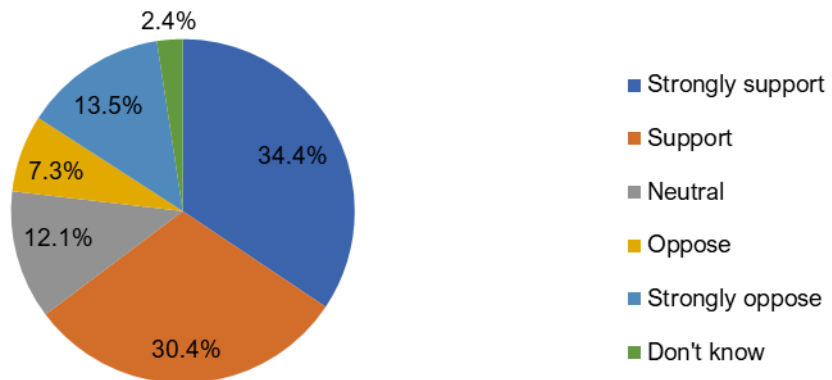
Although the Programme was of clear interest to residents close to Oxford Street and throughout the Westminster borough, the heat map below shows significant participation from across Greater London, another mark of the Street’s importance to the nation’s capital.

Heat location map of respondent’s post code (if applicable)



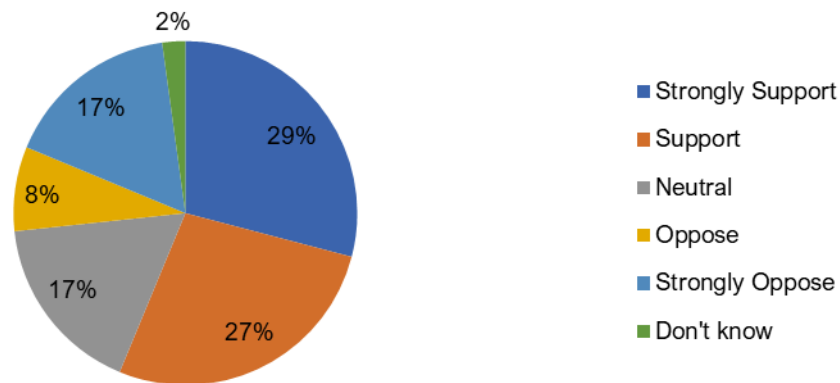
Responses indicate substantial support for the overall proposals, with 64% expressing support, 12% remaining neutral, and 20% in opposition.

All questionnaire respondents' response to 'Overall, to what extent do you support or oppose the whole programme proposal?'



Westminster residents showed significant support for the programme with 57% expressing support for the overall Oxford Street Programme. 24% of residents opposed the proposals overall opposition and 14% of residents responded that they are neutral or did not know their feelings for the Programme.

Westminster residents' response to 'Overall, to what extent do you support or oppose the whole programme proposal?'



Individual project feedback demonstrates support for all five schemes included in this consultation - Oxford Street, Oxford Circus, Marylebone/Fitzrovia, Oxford Street West, and Eastcastle Street.

Oxford Street

The scheme for Oxford Street proposes removing central medians and traffic islands, while maintaining two lanes of traffic from Marble Arch to Tottenham Court Road. The scheme aims to improve accessibility throughout the street by creating 17 new pedestrian crossings and widening the existing ones, along with wider pavements, upgraded pavement materials, improved street lighting, street furniture and areas for pedestrian respite. 1400 people responded to the detailed questionnaire for this scheme. Of those contributors, 66% expressed 'support' or 'strong support' for the scheme, 11% were neutral or did not know and 21% 'opposed' or 'strongly opposed' the scheme. The aspects of the proposals that received the most support are new trees, planting, and the extension of footways.

Oxford Circus

The Programme's proposed scheme for Oxford Circus will expand and upgrade pavements at all four corners of the junction. Several traffic changes – such as restricting turning movements in the Circus, changing traffic flow directions and creating new signalised junctions - are proposed to improve efficiency of vehicle and pedestrian circulation and improve safety within the Circus. The Oxford Circus scheme section of the consultation received 1191 responses, and the greatest percentage of support at 67%. 12% of respondents were 'neutral' or 'didn't know' and 20% of respondents opposed the scheme presented during consultation. In response to questions on specific details of the proposal, respondents were clear – at 79% - that improving pedestrian safety and security measures within the Circus is a top priority.

Marylebone and Fitzrovia

The Programme's Marylebone and Fitzrovia scheme puts forward a plan to convert specific streets in the Marylebone and Fitzrovia neighbourhoods – specifically parts of Wigmore Street, Mortimer Street, Henrietta Place and Margaret Street – to two-way streets to provide more direct routes for vehicles in the area. The scheme proposes a few other changes to traffic, bus routes and cycle infrastructure as well as notable improvements to pedestrian facilities to support safer and more efficient circulation in these neighbourhoods. 56% of the 709 questionnaire responses for this scheme shared their 'support' or 'strong support' for the scheme, while 15% were neutral and 27% opposed the scheme. Additional questionnaire feedback noted significant support for public realm improvements, greening and planting and pedestrian safety.

Oxford Street West

In areas north and south of Oxford Street, in the neighbourhoods of Southwest Marylebone and North Mayfair, the Programme proposes key traffic changes that aim to reduce traffic in these areas. The proposals include reversing traffic on Park Street, North Audley Street, and a small section on the south side of Orchard Street (which will be limited to buses, taxis, and cycles only). This scheme received 824 responses within the questionnaire. 59% of the respondents noted their support for the scheme, 15% were neutral and 23% opposed the scheme. As for the most significant proposal included in the scheme, 27% of respondents were in support or strong support of the traffic reversal on Park and North Audley Streets while 23% opposed the proposal and 37% noted their neutrality for the proposal to reverse traffic on those two streets.

Eastcastle Street

Eastcastle Street sits just north of and runs parallel to Oxford Street and this scheme relates only to area of the street between Wells Street and Berners Street. The scheme offers more options and direct routes to drivers as well as one new and another repositioned zebra crossing for safer pedestrian crossing. These proposals received 50% support from 473 submissions. 30% of respondents opposed the changes to Eastcastle Street and 17% were neutral or did not know their position on the scheme. The most popular element of the scheme is the new zebra crossing on Wells Street, just north of Eastcastle Street, which received 60% support.

Written feedback

Beyond the quantitative data, a total of 126 respondents (35 Westminster residents) provided comments or written feedback which resulted in 341 coded comments. Some consistent themes were identified as recurring across the feedback and the report provides ten themes specific to each project. In summary, the themes revolved around the following key areas:

- **Pedestrianisation:** Respondents frequently voiced opinions regarding Programme considerations for pedestrianisation of Oxford Street and some surrounding areas.
- **Congestion and Displacement:** Respondents expressed apprehension about the potential for increased congestion and displacement of traffic resulting from the proposed changes.

- **Vehicle Access:** Vehicle access was another prominent theme, with respondents expressing a range of opinions regarding how vehicle access should be managed in the Oxford Street area.

Resident's written feedback did not differ much from the written themes received from all groups combined, still, they provided additional emphasis on key areas such as traffic congestion and displacement as well as security and enforcement.

Conclusion and what's next

The consultation process successfully engaged a broad range of stakeholders, demonstrating overwhelming support for the Oxford Street Programme and providing us with meaningful insights from organisations, residents, and the public.

The detailed and nuanced feedback received during the consultation process, and collected in this report, has, and will continue to be critical in refining and progressing each scheme design, transforming the Programme's proposals into inclusive and responsive plans for Oxford Street and its surrounding areas.

The following report outlines the methodology and engagement tools and details the response and feedback of the hundreds engaged through the process.

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