



Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

Date: Monday 2nd March 2015

Briefing of: Cabinet Member for the Built Environment

Please contact: Matt Greet x 2852
mgreet@westminster.gov.uk

1. Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.1 The City Council continues to experience a huge level of interest in neighbourhood planning, far greater than any other London borough.
- 1.2 Once neighbourhood areas have been designated, communities in these areas will be able to apply to become the designated neighbourhood forum for that area for the next five years. As a representative neighbourhood forum, these groups will be able to undertake neighbourhood planning and produce their own statutory neighbourhood plan.

Designated Neighbourhood Forums

- 1.3 Westminster designated the first neighbourhood forum in Mayfair in January 2014. At the Forum's request, officers are now engaged in helping them form their various working groups, most recently providing statistical information on local land use to help inform the drafting of their plan. The Forum have undertaken informal consultation within the neighbourhood area, and are beginning to work up a potential vision and associated objectives.
- 1.4 Neighbourhood forums in Soho and Church Street Ward were designated later in 2014. Belgravia and Notting Hill East Neighbourhood Forums were designated in October 2014.
- 1.5 Since the Committee's previous meeting, the St. James's and Fitzrovia West Forum were designated on 5th February. Officers are meeting with the St James's Forum on 2nd March to discuss next steps and a similar session with Fitzrovia West Forum is being organised.

Neighbourhood Forum Applications

- 1.6 Public consultation on the Pimlico Neighbourhood Forum finished in October 2014 and officers met with its representatives on 1st December to discuss potential recommendations.

- 1.7 Consultation regarding the application received for Marylebone Neighbourhood Forum concluded on 21st January and officers are currently analysing the responses before presenting the results to me. Representations regarding the proposed Victoria Neighbourhood Forum closed recently on 20th February.
- 1.8 Consultation on the Maida Hill Forum commenced on 25th February and will continue until 10th April. At the time of writing, additional information was being sought on the Churchill Gardens Estate Forum application, but it was hoped that this would be resolved in time to also commence consultation on 25th February.

2. Westminster's City Plan – consultation booklets

- 2.1 Officers are continuing to take forward work on the detailed City Management policies which will be incorporated with the Strategic Policies to form Westminster's City Plan – a unified local plan for the City. This builds on previous work on the City Management Plan initiated in 2007. We have also taken the opportunity to review the City Council's strategy more broadly and ask key consultation questions in the latter booklets around how to achieve the desired growth in a Westminster context.
- 2.2 The Committee was updated on previous policy booklets in June 2014, whilst the Energy and Heritage, Views & Tall Buildings booklets formed a substantive item on the Committee's agenda on 10th November 2014.
- 2.3 I formally signed off the Spatial Policy & Implementation and Mixed Use & Office to Residential Conversion policy booklets prior to Christmas and consultation on their content closed on 27th February.
- 2.4 The final tranche of City Plan policy booklets – Energy, the West End, Affordable Housing and Heritage, Views & Tall Buildings – were published for public consultation on 12th January and submissions are being received up until 31st March.

3. Development of a Westminster Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 3.1 CIL is a new levy which is the government's preferred vehicle for replacing significant portions of section 106 contributions. It can be charged on developments in a local authority's area with the money raised being used to pay for the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development.
- 3.2 Officers continue to work on responding to the outcomes of the PDCS stage consultation, as well as meeting with BNP Paribas Real Estate to discuss the comments received and to establish a work programme and timetable going forward.

4. Crossrail

- 4.1 **Crossrail Line 1:** Tottenham Court Road station's new enlarged ticket hall officially opened to Northern line customers on 12th January 2015. The works are part of a £1bn investment towards a new Crossrail station, and to upgrade the tube station and build a direct interchange with Crossrail. The new ticket hall is nearly five times the size of the previous one and upon completion of the station upgrade in 2016, it will be six times larger and serve both the Central and Northern lines. In 2018, customers at this station will be able to interchange with new Crossrail services. Work at the station continues.
- 4.2 **Crossrail Line 2:** Crossrail Line 2 (CRL2) is a further proposed sister line to the one already underway. It will run through central London and into Surrey and Hertfordshire, adding capacity to London and the south east rail network and promoting growth and regeneration along the route. In the City of Westminster CRL2 will include a new station at Victoria and will link to Crossrail Line 1 at Tottenham Court Road (Dean Street ticket hall).
- 4.3 The proposed Regional Route option is being jointly progressed by TfL and Network Rail and is the Council's preferred option, subject to detailed design outcomes.
- 4.4 The Department for Transport (DfT) are currently reviewing the CRL2 safeguarding and a public consultation took place between November 2014 and January 2015.
- 4.5 On 29th January the City Council submitted an initial officer level response to the DfT on the revised safeguarding, setting out the detailed impacts and concerns in Victoria and Soho for consideration. The Council's response is subject to review by Cabinet Members and a final response will be submitted to the DfT in due course.
- 4.6 Whilst continuing support for CRL2, there are a number of issues on which we will be discussing impacts and options with TfL to ensure residential amenity, continuation of business and the best package of transport measures will be provided.
- 4.7 In Soho the use of the Soho Curzon Cinema on Shaftsbury Avenue as a construction site has generated public concern and there is a high-profile campaign underway to protect the cinema from demolition, led by the Save Soho group. Officers will work with TfL to consider alternative sites or the relocation of the cinema use. TfL are proposing to hold a community meeting in Soho in mid-March to address these concerns.
- 4.8 Further in Soho the City Council will strongly resist the use of Soho Square as a construction site, given the huge impacts of Crossrail Line 1 on Soho Square and the importance of the Square and Gardens as a public amenity.
- 4.9 In Victoria is now clear that CRL2 will require the use of Victoria Coach Station's Departure Hall site to allow the site to be used for construction works and a permanent ventilation shaft. TfL will therefore need to find new locations for the Coach Station before any CRL2 works can commence here.

- 4.10 The City Council has been involved in early discussions with TfL officers and senior level discussions with Daniel Moylan and Michele Dix and we have requested to continue to meet with TfL at regular intervals as the CRL2 scheme develops. The construction of Crossrail 2 is expected to start from 2020.

5. Victoria Area Schemes

- 5.1 London Underground's Victoria Station Upgrade (VSU) works are progressing as planned, with the new northern ticket hall due to open in 2016, alongside Phase 1 of Land Securities' mixed use Nova scheme.
- 5.2 TfL are reviewing options for the relocation of Victoria Coach Station (VCS) to make way for Crossrail Line 2 works to the Departures Hall Site in the early 2020s and for the removal of some buses from the front of the mainline station at Victoria.
- 5.3 Whilst Network Rail continue to develop their Masterplan for improvements within the Station, their bridge strengthening works to Ebury, Elizabeth and Eccleston Bridges are due to start in June this year.
- 5.4 Together these works will allow for further consideration to be given to the future of the Inner Ring Road around and through Victoria to improve traffic flows and enhance the pedestrian experience.

6. Victoria – Nine Elms Bridge

- 6.1 Wandsworth's appointed consultants have approved a number of expressions of interest following their Bridge Design Competition from a range of as yet unidentified high profile, international architectural practices.
- 6.2 The consultants arranged a public exhibition of the resulting design submissions to be held at the Westminster Boating Base on 23rd-24th February and at the Rose Centre in Wandsworth on the 27th-28th. Images are also be posted onto the competition website www.nepbridgecompetition.co.uk
- 6.3 Whilst officers continue to reiterate the Council's serious concerns about the proposed bridge, a number of South Westminster residents have accepted invitations to take part in a Residents' Review Panel to consider the applications and make recommendations to a Jury Panel before a winning team is chosen by Wandsworth Council in the summer.
- 6.4 The exact location of where this bridge is proposed to be located has yet to be selected and much work still needs to be done on this key point, which will also then have a significant impact on the potential bridge design.
- 6.5 This is not a live development project and Westminster City Council officers continue to reiterate our strong objections to the proposals. We have already received letters of objection to the bridge from the Westminster Boating Base, local residents and Churchill and Tachbrook Ward Councillors.

7. Thames Tideway Tunnel

- 7.1 The Thames Tideway Tunnel is a proposed new 16 mile-long sewer project required to protect the tidal river from increasing pollution.
- 7.2 Officers attend monthly meetings of the Strategic Relevant Authority for the Thames Tideway Tunnel, at which they are helping to develop the Strategic Freight Transport Framework for the River Transport Strategy for the Project.
- 7.3 Thames Tideway Tunnel has submitted its first application to discharge condition PW19 (noise monitoring) within the Development Consent Order(DCO), and processes are being set up to meet the requirements for processing applications as set out in the DCO.
- 7.4 Officers attend quarterly meetings of the Thames Tideway Tunnel Forum, the Thames Tideway Tunnel Planning Forum and the Thames Tideway Tunnel Interboroughs Forum.

8. Garden Bridge

- 8.1 A full planning application for the Garden Bridge was submitted by TfL on behalf of the Garden Bridge Trust, on 29th May 2014. The application was approved by Lambeth Council on 11th November 2014 and by my Planning Applications Committee on 2nd December 2014. The Mayor of London gave his approval to the Garden Bridge project before just Christmas.
- 8.2 The Trust plans to begin building the bridge later this year, pending raising their target funding, with an anticipated opening in 2018.

9. Change in Cabinet responsibilities

- 9.1 Following Cllr Ed Argar's decision to step down from the Cabinet at the end of January, there have been a number of changes to the responsibilities included in each portfolio.
- 9.2 In Built Environment this has meant that responsibility for public realm capital schemes lies wholly under my purview. This covers all executive functions relating to the Public Realm Capital Works Programme, including street improvements and street furniture which have little or no impact on traffic.

10. Proposals for Introducing a Two-Way Operation to Baker Street

- 10.1 As a result of the changes in Cabinet portfolio responsibilities, I am now the Cabinet Member responsible for the proposals for introducing a two-way operation to Baker Street.

- 10.2 Two weeks ago I sent letters to a number of stakeholders in the area outlining that, in light of information gathered in the period since the publication of the original report, I had narrowed down the options for improving the right-turning capacity for southbound traffic on the Marylebone Road.
- 10.3 I have decided to discount the two options that take traffic routes through Dorset Square to make a right hand turn onto Marylebone Road. The two options that will put forward for the public consultation will be for a right hand turn at Allsop Place and the alternative right hand turn at Rossmore Road.
- 10.4 The City Council will be engaging in further informal discussions with stakeholders in the run up to the start of the public consultation.

11. Development Planning

- 11.1 Officers continue to liaise with Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) over vacant building credit incentive.

Attention is now being paid to working on a more stringent and demarcated definition of the term 'vacant', in order to ensure the unintended negative effects of the credit in Westminster can be rectified.

- 11.2 At the previous meeting of the Committee my then Deputy, Councillor Richard Beddoe, was asked about any perceived impacts of the new guidelines around schemes delivering 10 units or less not having to make Section 106 contributions.

Whilst this is of concern, the threshold in terms of dimensions set at 1,000m² will negate many of the impacts here in Westminster given the trends in development size here.