



City of Westminster Cabinet Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	21 October 2019
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Petition not to extend the Victoria Opportunity Area boundary
Wards Affected:	St James's, Vincent Square, Warwick
City for All:	The decision contributes to the following City for All commitment: 'City that celebrates its communities' – particularly the commitment to ensure local people are at the heart of every decision made by the Council.
Key Decision:	Yes
Financial Summary:	There are no financial implications associated with this report
Report of:	Executive Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The draft City Plan 2019-2040 published for Regulation 19 consultation on 19 June 2019 proposed a series of minor changes to the Victoria Opportunity Area (VOA) boundary. On 29 July, a '**Petition to: not extend the Victoria Opportunity Area beyond the boundary adopted in the London Plan**' was set up to oppose such changes and ran until 5 September 2019 reaching a total of 534 signatures. As required by the Council's petition scheme constitution, a Cabinet Report is required in response to any petition that achieves 500 or more signatures.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet agrees to revert to the VOA boundary as defined by the current Westminster City Plan (November 2016).

3. Reasons for Decision

The changes to the Victoria Opportunity Boundary proposed in the City Plan have been reviewed in light of the concerns raised by the petition as well as by comments received as part of the City Plan consultation. Officers have agreed that there is not a compelling case for such changes in light of the reasons for the opposition and recommend reverting to the boundary set by the current Westminster City Plan (November 2016).

4. Background, including Policy Context

The petition

- 4.1 The 'Petition to: not extend the Victoria Opportunity Area beyond the boundary adopted in the London Plan' was created on 29 July 2019 by Peter Roberts, who is the chair of the Cathedral Area Residents Group (CARG). The petition ran until 5 September 2019 and had 534 signatures.
- 4.2 The petition raised objections against *"any extensions of the Victoria Opportunity Area (VOA) adjacent to or encroaching on existing residential or conservation areas"* that *"will encourage further intensive developments which would have unacceptable impact on those areas"*.
- 4.3 The text of the petition particularly stressed that *"extensions of the VOA in the WCC Plan encroach on Belgravia, Westminster Cathedral and the Christchurch Gardens and Broadway areas. They extend on both sides of Victoria Street from Palace Street to Great Smith Street where they threaten the setting of Westminster Abbey and the Palace of Westminster"*.
- 4.4 The request of the petitioners is that the VOA boundary should not change from what is adopted in the London Plan.

The Victoria Opportunity Area

- 4.5 The London Plan defines Opportunity Areas as London's major source of brownfield land which have significant capacity for development and existing or potentially improved public transport access.
- 4.6 While the London Plan defines the VOA by saying that *"The station, the airspace above its tracks and approaches, and nearby sites have significant potential for mixed-use intensification, capitalising on enhancement to the public transport interchange and improvements to accessibility and capacity"*, this description does not set out the spatially detailed boundaries i.e. there is no 'line on a map'. It is the council's responsibility to define the boundary line through the City Plan and to ensure this designation remains up to date and effective in delivering the objective of the policies. For this reason, the draft City Plan 2019-2040 includes some minor proposed changes to the VOA boundary.

- 4.7 The VOA boundary has been subject to little change since 2011, when the council adopted Westminster's Core Strategy (the precursor to the City Plan). It already comprised not only the Victoria Transport Interchange, but other areas surrounding the station to the west and east, and a number of sites north and south of Victoria Street as far east as to meet the boundary of the World Heritage Site. A map from Westminster's Core Strategy showing the extent of VOA is provided in Appendix C of this report. The map shows how some overlapping between VOA and Conservation Area already occurs.
- 4.8 The proposed boundary changes proposed by the draft City Plan 2019-2040 are shown in Appendix D and are as follows:
1. Relocating the boundary from the west side of Vauxhall Bridge Road (between Victoria Street and Gillingham Street) to the east side, to run along the northern portion of Carlisle Place and King's Scholar Passage.
 2. Incorporating an additional site on Greencoat Place and the site to the north of the block bounded by Greencoat Place, Artillery Row and Rochester Row.
 3. Incorporating the sites bounded by Victoria Street to the north, and Strutton Ground, Old Pye Street, Abbey Orchard Street and Great Smith Street to the south.
- 4.9 The proposed boundary changes intended to recognise development opportunities that are either buildings which are considerably smaller than their context and could benefit from upwards extensions or are outdated and for which redevelopment could contribute to the VOA's growth objectives, but also the other objectives of the policy such as improved public realm and local environmental quality, legibility and enhanced social and community facilities. Inclusion in the VOA also sought to ensure these sites were developed coherently along with other sites in the area to contribute collectively to the objectives of the Opportunity Area policy.

Final considerations

- 4.10 In line with the ambitions of 'City for All 2018/19', the Council is committed to ensuring local people are listened to and put at the heart of decision-making. The concerns raised by the petition signatories have been considered as have all responses received as part of the City Plan consultation. This has led to a review of the proposed boundary changes.
- 4.11 Officers are of the opinion that there is not a compelling case to justify the proposed changes to the VOA boundary in light of the comments received on the proposal. The sites that were recommended for inclusion have not been identified as key development sites which could make a major contribution to the objectives of the policy and therefore it is not essential to the success of the policy that they are included in the VOA designation.

4.12 It is therefore advised to revert to the boundary that was set by the current Westminster City Plan (November 2016).

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no current financial implications for the City Council to consider.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 In accordance with Chapter 2 of the City Council's Constitution (Council Procedures (Standing Orders)), and the relevant provisions in the Council's Petition Scheme as set out in Chapter 9, Section 42, petitions which receive more than 500 signatures will be debated at the next available meeting of the Cabinet.

6.2 The Cabinet will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

6.3 The City Council when making its final decision on the Extension of the Victoria Opportunities Area is obliged to consider the arguments set out in the Petition in a fair, reasonable and proportionate way as part of the decision-making process. This measured approach needs to be balanced against the City Council's general power of Competence under Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to improve the well-being of its area (the former power being under section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000).

6.4 The Cabinet, during the decision-making process, is required to take into account fully the arguments for and against extending the VOA as amplified within the body of this report and by attaching the necessary weight to those considerations.

6.5 The Director of Law has considered this report and is satisfied that its contents and proposed recommendations are consistent with 6.1 – 6.4 above

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

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APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Other Implications

Appendix B: Screenshot of online petition

Appendix C: Victoria Opportunity Area boundary as defined by Westminster's Core Strategy (2011)

Appendix D: Proposed changes to the Victoria Opportunity Area boundary in the draft City Plan 2019-2040 (Regulation 19 consultation stage)

Other Implications

1. **Resources Implications** – no implication
2. **Business Plan Implications** – no implication
3. **Risk Management Implications** – no implication
4. **Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment including Health and Safety Implications**
– no implication
5. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – no implication
6. **Impact on the Environment** – no implication
7. **Equalities Implications** – no implication
8. **Staffing Implications** – no implication
9. **Human Rights Implications** – no implication
10. **Energy Measure Implications** – no implication
11. **Communications Implications** – no implication

Screenshot of online petition



Petition to: not extend the Victoria Opportunity Area beyond the boundary adopted in the London Plan.

This petition is now closed, as its deadline has passed.

We the undersigned petition Westminster City Council to not extend the Victoria Opportunity Area beyond the boundary adopted in the London Plan. [More details](#)

Submitted by Peter Roberts – **Deadline to sign up by:** 05 September 2019 – **Signatures:** 534

Current signatories

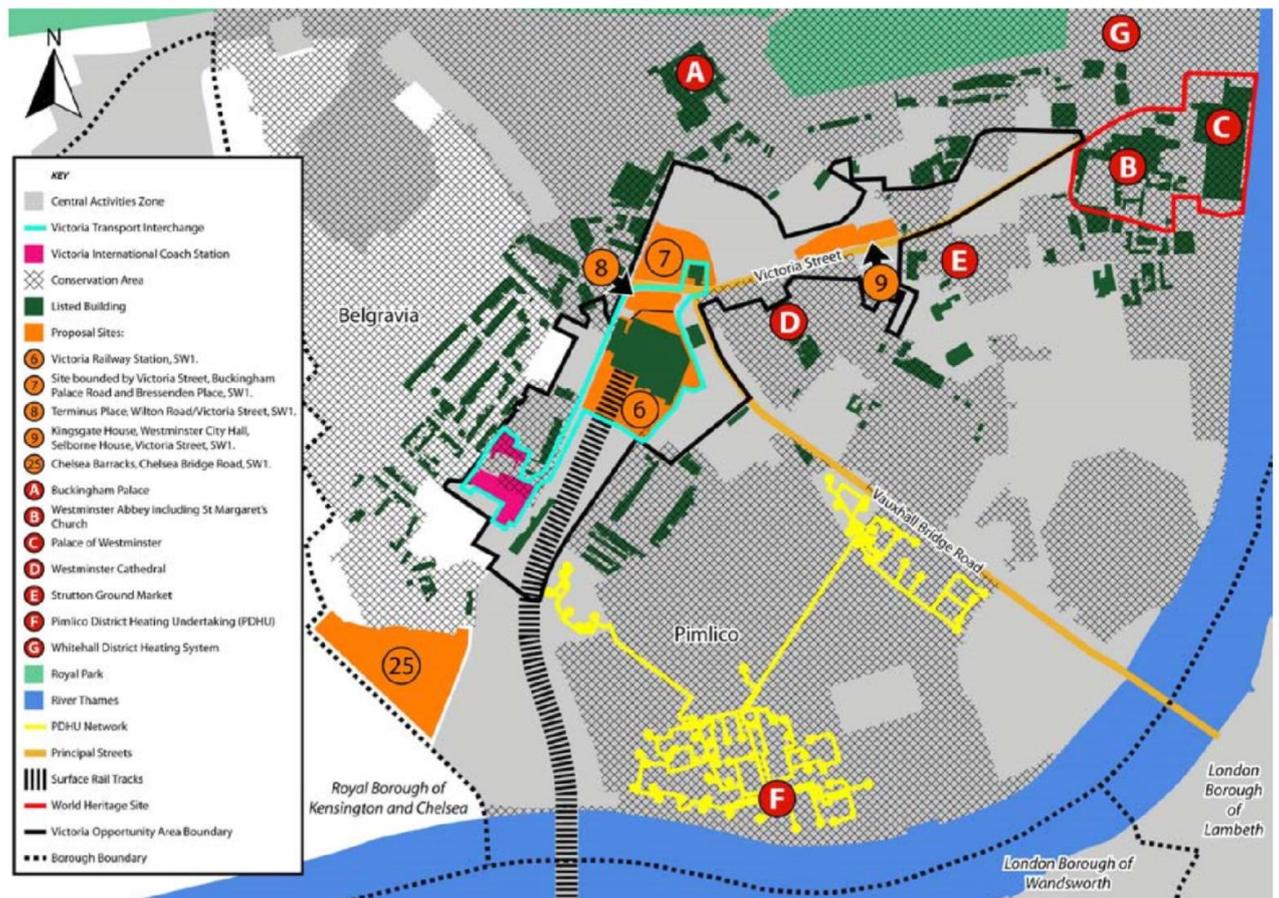
Peter Roberts, the petition creator, joined by:

- Lisa Seidel
- Michael Woodside
- S K Lee
- F Lee
- D Lee
- Brian Wadsworth
- David Jacob
- Alison Yeo
- Andrew Brown
- James Eyers
- brian miller
- Fiona Geddes
- Robin Schlee
- Rob Pinchbeck
- Lynette Braithwaite
- Luanne Thornber
- Caroline Griffith
- Graeme Cottam
- Fiona Wray

More details from petition creator

Any extension of the Victoria Opportunity Area (VOA) adjacent to or encroaching on existing residential or conservation areas will encourage further intensive developments which would have unacceptable impacts on those areas. Therefore the signatories to this petition strongly request that, in the City Plan 2040 currently being prepared, no part of the VOA should be extended beyond the boundary adopted in the London Plan (and proposed to be retained in the updated Plan). The VOA is described as follows for the London Plan: "The station, the airspace above its tracks and approaches, and nearby sites have significant potential for mixed-use intensification, capitalising on enhancement to the public transport interchange and improvements to accessibility and capacity." Extensions of the VOA in the WCC Plan encroach on Belgravia, Westminster Cathedral and the Christchurch Gardens and Broadway areas. They extend on both sides of Victoria Street from Palace Street to Great Smith Street where they threaten the setting of Westminster Abbey and the Palace of Westminster. Email peter@harley1.net for a map of the proposed VOA changes.

Victoria Opportunity Area boundary as defined by Westminster's Core Strategy (2011)



Proposed changes to the Victoria Opportunity Area boundary in the draft City Plan 2019-2040 (Regulation 19 consultation stage)

