



City of Westminster

Cabinet Report

Date:	19 April 2021
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Oxford Street District – Project update
Wards Affected:	West End, Bryanston and Dorset Square, Marylebone High Street and Hyde Park
City for All Summary	The Oxford Street District Scheme supports the key pillars of City for All, particularly the new Thriving Economy pillar by leveraging the Council's significant investment in the Scheme to transform the heart of the West End and Westminster's retail, cultural and hospitality economy and to test low carbon economic growth and development.
Key Decision:	For information only
Financial Summary:	For information only
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Following a public consultation exercise, Cabinet approved the Oxford Street District (OSD) Place Strategy and Delivery Plan on 25th February 2019. A business case was developed and approved by Cabinet in April 2019 setting out the justification for the Council's investment.
- 1.2 The case for change is now even more compelling. A rapidly changing retail environment, the arrival of the Elizabeth Line and, most recently, the Covid-19 pandemic, pose new challenges as well as opportunities.
- 1.3 Westminster City Council recognises the need for a coordinated district-wide approach during these critical times. Action is urgently needed to ensure the programme adequately addresses immediate community and economic needs, lays the foundations for a sustainable recovery and adaptation to the emerging context, as well as ensure that the district remains globally competitive in the years ahead.
- 1.4 From the start of the pandemic, the council has engaged with local residents, businesses and partners to understand the impacts of Covid-19, both in the local area as well as on the economy of central London more broadly. We have also looked internationally to understand better how other cities are responding to the immediate challenges of the pandemic while identifying new opportunities for long term improvement and resilience. This has informed the Council's development of appropriate plans and initiatives, responding proactively to the new opportunities and challenges of today, as well as preparing for the future.
- 1.5 In February 2021, the Council has launched the new Oxford Street District (OSD) Framework, delivering an ambitious and meaningful vision for the area that captures the values and needs of communities, residents and visitors and setting a roadmap for delivery.
- 1.6 The framework has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders. Effective collaboration between public and private sectors will create opportunities to leverage major investments in the area, maximising public benefits.
- 1.7 The ambitious new plans reaffirm the council's commitment to the Oxford Street District, with 2021 being 'the year of delivery'.
- 1.8 The February 2021 OSD launch included the following statements:
 - A bold vision to deliver a successful future for the nation's high street, as the greenest, smartest, most sustainable district of its kind, anywhere in the world.
 - See spades in the ground in early 2021 to kick start the year of delivery in an overarching 10-year plan.

- Restore the area as the must-visit destination of choice for domestic and international visitors when restrictions ease, through a range of intensive, interim improvements on Oxford Street.
- A strong boost for the visitor economy with immediate improvements, including a bold, new 'March Arch Hill' visitor attraction to be a catalyst for the district to climb back to global acclaim and success.

- 1.9 In March 2021, following a 4-week engagement process, the council began delivering the first phase of the Oxford Street temporary public realm improvement scheme.
- 1.10 Interventions as part of the temporary scheme will be deliver a greener Oxford Street with significantly extended footways, pocket parks, new bespoke street furniture, banners and feature lighting. When completed, the designs will bring to the district 40% more trees, over 1500 new plants from 65 species and double the amount of seating. The works will be delivered in phases, between April and late Spring, with Phase 1 ready for hospitality reopening by 12 April.
- 1.11 All interventions as part of the temporary public realm scheme are delivered via a Temporary Traffic Order (TTO) for 18 months.
- 1.12 Another key intervention for 2021 is Marble Arch Hill. This new temporary visitor attraction is proposed as part of the council's response to reactivating the Oxford Street District. The 24m high climbable hill will create a new visitor experience in the West End and deliver sweeping views of Oxford Street, Hyde Park and surrounding areas.
- 1.13 The project got planning approval on 30 March 2021 and is now progressing towards delivery in the summer. It is expected to open to public in the summer, for a period of 6 months. Subject to social distancing and the appropriate guidance, the project is expected to attract approximately 200,000 visitors, generating significant cumulative spend in the area.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Cabinet to endorse Oxford Street District (OSD) framework and delivery plans for 2021, acknowledging the significant progress made over the past 6 months.

3. Reason for Decision

- 3.1 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Oxford Street District has been significant. The area has seen a dramatic drop in footfall and a growing number of business closures, some permanent.
- 3.2 In these unprecedented times, doing nothing is not an option.
- 3.3 The council remains committed to deliver its plans for the district. The pandemic presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address the big challenges ahead and at the same time support the aspirations of local

communities, reinforcing the district's status as a global exemplar and cultural, leisure and economic powerhouse.

4. Progress to Date

- 4.1 Since the approval of the Oxford Street District business case in April 2019, design had been progressed on key work packages across the district and been informed by the subsequent development of the OSD Framework this year.

COVID Impact

- 4.2 With a large proportion of the area's workforce continuing to work from home and with international tourism on hold, it seems likely the challenges of the pandemic will continue to impact the area and throughout 2021 and beyond.
- 4.3 Alongside the huge costs of the pandemic, there is an urgent need to support businesses and communities and there are opportunities to innovate, trial and test solutions quickly, which would otherwise take a long time to develop. Additionally, there is now the opportunity to take a long-term view on the big questions highlighted by the pandemic. These include issues of health and wellbeing, mobility, density, living and working in central London and how to maximise the value of investment in infrastructure in the area.

Framework Document

- 4.4 Developed in full partnership with key stakeholders, the framework for the Oxford Street District sets out a comprehensive programme of improvements, which will enhance the district in its entirety: as a global destination alongside thriving residential neighbourhoods, with successful businesses and an unrivalled visitor experience. The framework responds to long-standing opportunities and challenges as well as the significant new ones presented by the pandemic, capitalising on this moment to strengthen the district's world-renowned status as a great place to live, work and visit.
- 4.5 Delivery of the Oxford Street District is already underway, with major public realm interventions in progress. The framework ensures that this ambitious programme continues, and is accelerated where most needed, with strategic focus in key areas and workstreams, to enable the urgent recovery of the West End and begin the longer-term transformation of the area.
- 4.6 The Framework is not a stand-alone document. It builds on previous work by the council and should be read in conjunction with the OSD Place Strategy, approved in February 2019, and the Westminster City Plan which sets out the conditions around which this Framework operates.

Engagement

4.7 A comprehensive engagement process with members, key partners, resident groups and other stakeholders has taken place prior to the launch of the framework. This included:

- Ward members
- OSD Strategic partnership
- Core resident groups and neighbourhood forums, including:

Marylebone Association
Mayfair Residents Group
Residents Association of Mayfair and St James
Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association
WECN
Soho Neighbourhood Forum
Mayfair neighbourhood Forum
Marylebone Neighbourhood forum
FitzWest

- GLA family (TfL, GLA)
- BIDs (NVEC, HOLBA, BSQ, Marble Arch, North Bank)
- NVEC Board / Oxford Street Group
- Key retailers (Selfridges, M&S, John Lewis)

5. Delivery Plan for 2021

5.1 Whilst progress has been made on the delivery of the OSD programme, the Framework ensures that this level of ambition continues, and is accelerated where most needed, to enable the urgent recovery of the West End and kick-start the longer-term transformation of the area.

The Framework includes a comprehensive delivery plan for 2021. It is underpinned by 8 workstreams as illustrated below:

5.1.1 Zero Carbon Demonstrator

Accelerate the delivery of zero-carbon projects commencing with a pilot project within the district to demonstrate the council's commitment to cleaner air, more efficient freight and servicing, and sustainable movement. This will see the council deliver:

- Public realm improvements that support active mobility and community uses
- Smart freight and servicing networks and services
- Upscale EV charging infrastructure
- Prioritise cleaner modes and vehicles

Progress made since framework launch:

The council is currently making good progress on these proposals, with phase 1 expected to be delivered before the end of 2021.

5.1.2 Marble Arch Centre

Work with stakeholders and landowners, as part of the three centres approach (e.g. Marble Arch, Oxford Circus and East Oxford Street), to progress delivery of a fully integrated and attractive centre at Marble Arch. Key outcomes:

- Short-term catalyst projects to showcase the level of ambition and reopen the city post-pandemic
- Connect the western end of Oxford Street with Hyde Park
- Coherent public realm worthy of a global destination
- Significant developments to provide more homes, jobs and diversity of uses

Progress made since framework launch:

Marble Arch Hill received planning approval on 30 March 2021 and is expected to open to public in summer 2021.

The delivery of the Marble Arch Hill will comprise two main packages, including but not limited to:

- a) Design and construction, fit-out, maintenance of the structure as well as any necessary coordination with stakeholders to facilitate any traffic diversions or other temporary infrastructure to support the project. It will also include decommission and removal of the temporary structures at the end of the Project.
- b) Operations and event management including but not limited to event security, ticketing, booking and payment systems, meet and greet staffing, communications and public relations, possibly operation of a light refreshments facility, cleaning and staff welfare facilities.

Full details on the projects' design, commission, construction and operation are provided as part of a separate CMR dated 22 March 2021.

The Marble Arch Hill project includes a significant legacy element. This includes a permanent power supply provided to the site in support of future events as well as trees and planting which will be reused across the district. Works on defining the longer term transformation of the area are in design stages and will capitalise on the improvements to the area made throughout 2021.

5.1.3 Laneways Programme

Public realm catalyst projects that can be delivered without major district-wide enabling works - providing maximum value in the short to medium term. Key outcomes:

- Two key laneway schemes constructed in 2021
- Four remaining laneways to be delivered throughout 2022/23
- Maximise the value of local character and ambitions for the identified spaces in collaboration with stakeholders

Progress made since framework launch:

A detailed delivery programme for laneways is underway. The first OSD permanent scheme, Soho Photography Quarter, started on site on 22 March, with Phase 1 expected to complete by the summer. Additional laneways are in design stages and are on track for delivery in 2022.

5.1.4 Greenways Programme

A network of green routes connecting neighbourhoods, garden squares and parks, by providing safe, comfortable, sustainable, and attractive streets for walking and cycling. Key outcomes:

- An east-west route to the north of Oxford Street from Edgware Road to Foley Street delivered by 2022
- An east-west route to the south of Oxford Street connecting Hyde Park to Soho, constructed by the end of 2023
- A north-south route connecting Fitzrovia and Soho delivered in 2022

Progress made since framework launch:

Designs and delivery of greenways progressing to plan with works to start on site in 2022.

5.1.5 Oxford Street Showcase

Deliver immediate improvements to Oxford Street and adjacent streets as a springboard for wider recovery and acceleration of major schemes along the district's main spine. Temporary improvements to provide a trial ahead of permanent scheme delivery. Key outcomes:

- Increased footway space by mid-2021 to enable safe, distanced access to the district and its businesses
- Work with partners to further advance Oxford Circus plans and enabling works in 2021
- Provide additional greenery, cycle parking and seating
- Introduce pocket parks on adjacent streets

Progress made since framework launch:

Work has started on the first phase of the temporary public realm improvement scheme on Oxford Street. The scheme will deliver significant improvements to Oxford Street which include wider pavements, new street furniture, more trees and planting, lighting features and pocket parks.

The scheme is delivered via a Temporary Traffic Order (TTO) for a period of 18 months and will provide much needed improvement to the appearance and operational aspects of the district, supporting businesses, residents and visitors returning to the area.

First phase of the highways works is expected to complete by 11th April, in time for the reopening of leisure and hospitality on 12th April.

5.1.6 World's first 'District as a service' offering - implement a district-wide business scale- Business Scale-up programme to support local start-ups and attract new businesses to the district. Trial and test innovative uses of enterprise spaces to contribute to a more resilient, inclusive and thriving local economy. Key outcomes:

- Attractive packages for local businesses, start-ups and international firms, attracting and retaining them in the district
- District-wide curation of vacant spaces with full scale-up capacity
- Flexible accommodation options for a range of business uses

Progress made since framework launch:

The council is working closely partners on the development of a business scale up and activation programmes across the West End. This is a council-wide effort which involving various directorates across WCC.

5.1.7 Diverse uses accelerator

Refresh the West End's world-class experience by using spaces in new ways that meet the changing needs of local communities, occupiers, property owners and consumers, and are flexible in the face of challenges such as Covid-19. Key outcomes:

- Support innovative application of flexible new planning rules to provide a greater mix of uses and activities
- Explore options for a new major attraction on Oxford Street to stimulate footfall and growth
- Develop pioneering day and evening activities and opportunities

Progress made since framework launch:

The council has undertaken a high-level economics study for the district to inform future scenarios. The study indicated that the nature of uses within the West End will change significantly over the next 5-10 and identified the need to create the appropriate conditions to support a more varied mix of uses (such as leisure and culture), a growing

residential demand and attract new types of businesses to the area. Sustainability is also playing a key part in defining the attractiveness of the district.

The council is working on strategies, initiatives and projects that support changing needs of the district across areas including; new mix of uses, active travel, public realm with more focus on play, arts and culture, digital and smart infrastructure as well as sustainability and tackling climate emergency.

5.1.8 Smart District

Deliver a world-leading activation programme that provides unique experiences, transforms the look and feel of the area and kick-starts wider economic recovery. Seamlessly integrate smart-city solutions to enhance the overall experience of the district. Key outcomes:

- Broker new partnerships to develop an exciting cultural programme
- Trial and test longer term technology solutions for freight, waste and mobility
- Deliver an evening and night-time lighting scheme

Progress made since framework launch:

The smart district programme for OSD is making good progress with feasibility work underway for various waste, mobility, freight and other smart solutions for the district. Part of these will be delivered via the Zero Carbon Demonstrator as part of a pilot and others in the longer term.

As part of the programme, works are also progressing on an integrated activation plan for 2021 which includes arts and culture, pop ups and events. This is a cross council effort which will be delivered in partnership with other stakeholders as well.

- 5.2 The detailed OSD delivery plan for 2021 is included in the Framework document. This can be downloaded from the OSD website on:

<https://osd.london/framework/>

6. **Governance**

- 6.1 Central to the delivery of the programme is a robust governance plan that maximises collaboration within and beyond the Council. Set out below is the governance programme for 2021.

Group / Board	Role and level of engagement
Delivery Board / Officer Steering group	<p>Monthly project board meetings which are chaired by the Programme Director for Oxford Street District and attended by senior responsible officers from various departments. The project board's role is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully integrate delivery across the council and other external interfaces • Monitor and approve any changes to the project programme and reports; • Exercise financial authority to support the project; • Review risks, issues and exceptions and determine appropriate course of action based on recommendations from the Project Working Group; • Manage and co-ordinate private sector funding mechanisms; • Review, comment and approve the project business case and economic case for investment; • Regular monitoring of the project budget; • Maintain overview of the communication strategy.
Leader's OSD board	<p>Monthly steering group meetings which are chaired by the Leader and attended by Cllr Caplan, Green and Swaddle, along with senior responsible officers. The Steering Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide strategic direction for the project including the agreed aspirations and outcomes; • Agree the programme for the project and any significant changes to key milestones; • Make decisions on proposals and agree the strategy for their implementation; • Approve the projects delivered within the district; • Agree the funding model for the delivery of the project; • Resolve issues raised by the Project Board • Approve communications strategy and key messaging relating to the project; • Provide direction on possible impact this project may have on other major projects; • Align the strategic plans and processes of their respective departments for the achievement of agreed project outcomes; • Provide authorisation to spend against budget (formalised via a Cabinet Member report).
Partnership board	<p>Monthly meetings which are chaired by the Leader, and attended by Cllr Caplan senior responsible officers well as key representatives of Primary Landowners. The Partnership board:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees strategic partnership actions to deliver the project and various sub-programme initiatives • Aligns key interfaces, timeframes and budgets to maximise outcomes from key aspects of the projects • Create partnership to enable the delivery of key aspects of the project
Ward Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-monthly updates to the ward members of the affected wards; • Engagement with ward members will continue during the design process.
Residents, Neighbourhood Forums and Amenity Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular engagement with stakeholders. Further engagement will be undertaken with stakeholders during the design process to ensure their views are taken on board. There will also be consultation on individual schemes as they are progressed. Regular newsletters will be issued to keep all stakeholders updated on progress.
Stakeholders including BIDs, business representatives and landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular engagement with stakeholders. Further engagement will be undertaken with stakeholders during the design process to ensure their views are taken on board.

6.2 The Council is also engaging widely through its own digital platforms. These include:

- Westminster City Council Website: www.westminster.gov.uk/oxford-street-district
This platform is being updated regularly as new project information becomes available for engagement.
- Oxford Street District Website: www.osd.london
This platform is regularly being updated to communicate new launches, activities and events across the district. It also has the OSD framework available for viewing and download.

7. Staffing Implication

- 7.1 A Programme Director for the Oxford Street District has been appointed in October 2020. The team includes 5 additional team members with two new staff joining in April 2021.
- 7.2 The OSD programme is delivered as a council-wide effort with full collaboration across all council's directorates.
- 7.3 Clear governance structure sets out the interfaces required to deliver the programme across all strands of work which require full integration across planning, economics, highways, maintenance and management, etc.

8. Financial Implications

Capital Funding

- 8.1 Capital costs to deliver the plans as illustrated in this report for 21/22 including the Oxford Street Temporary Public Realm Improvement scheme are estimated at £35m.
- 8.2 All delivery plan expenditure for 21/22 will be funded from the £150m investment by the Council in the district. This was approved by Cabinet in April 2019.
- 8.3 In April 2019, Cabinet also approved £21m of expenditure from the £150m for design, surveys and other feasibility related work required for the delivery of the programme.
- 8.4 The capital costs for the Oxford Street Temporary Public Realm Improvement Scheme detailed in paragraph 5.1.5 are estimated at £3.3m. This includes design, construction costs and professional fees as well as risk and contingency.
- 8.5 The Cabinet Member responsible for Oxford Street District will approve spend in accordance with Council financial regulations.
- 8.6 Any other Cabinet Members with an interest in the decision being taken will be informed and consulted with as part of the approval process.

Revenue implications

- 8.7 A detailed management plan for the District going forward is currently being developed. The Council is committed to maximising the use of existing resources as well as contributions from partners to support the future vision of the district.

9 Legal implications

- 9.1 The Director of Law has considered the contents of this report and doesn't have any other comments to add.

10 Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

- 10.1 Stakeholder engagement for the OSD framework is illustrated in section 4.8 of this report.
- 10.2 With regards to respective work packages, a master OSD stakeholder engagement and communications plan has been prepared by MCJV and approved by the Westminster Communications team. This document provides an umbrella for all other projects delivered through the programme and will be supplemented by locally specific plans, which refer to the particular

circumstances of the spaces in question, including land- use and ownership, stakeholders, etc.

11. Equalities Implications

- 11.1 Diversity and Inclusion, in all respects, have been critical to the success of the Oxford Street District and will continue to be in the future. The Oxford Street Framework ensures there is a wide offering for all audiences.
- 11.2 All projects delivered within the OSD programme embed Diversity and Inclusion principles from early stages of the design and up to delivery.
- 11.3 All OSD procurement related activities seek to maximise opportunities for social value and promoting D&I through the procurement activity. Social value criteria is included within the tender process for any consultant appointed to work on the project.
- 11.4 Social value monitoring is undertaken for all schemes being implemented as part of the programme.
- 11.5 Appointed OSD contractor MCJV are finalising their social value implementation plan which will be reflected throughout the design and construction of the project.
- 11.6 Each work package will develop an equality impact assessment to cover both strategic and operational activities.
- 11.7 The OSD team is working with a wide range of groups (access groups, youth groups, residents, etc) to develop designs that will not disadvantage any protected group from enjoying Oxford Street District proposals.

Background Papers

Oxford Street District – Project Approach, Cabinet Report and Decision, 9th July 2018.

Cabinet Member Report – Oxford Street Phase 1, 5th October 2018.

Cabinet Report – Capital Programme 2019/20 to 2023/24, 15th October 2018.

Cabinet Member Report – Oxford Street District, Procurement Strategy, 16th October 2018.

Cabinet Report – Oxford Street District, Public Consultation on the Draft Place Strategy and Delivery Plan, 25th October 2018.

Capital Programme – March 2019

Cabinet Report - Oxford Street District – Place Strategy and Delivery Plan Consultation Results and Updated Strategy – 25th February 2019

Cabinet Report - Oxford Street District – Business Case and Investment Approval, 9th April 2019

Oxford Street District Framework – February 2021

Cabinet Member Report - Marble Arch Mound - Design, commission, construction and operation of the showcase event – 22 March 2021

For further information regarding this report please contact the Oxford Street District
