



## City of Westminster

# Planning & City Development Committee

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Classification:** General Release

**Title:** Update on Neighbourhood Planning in Westminster

**Report of:** Director of Policy and Projects

**Financial Summary:** The implications will be managed within existing resources.

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### **1. Executive Summary**

1.1 This report provides an overview of recent neighbourhood planning activity in Westminster, including the adoption of two new neighbourhood plans in Fitzrovia West and Soho.

### **2. Recommendation**

2.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

### **3. Neighbourhood Planning in Westminster**

3.1 Westminster has the most designated neighbourhood areas of any London Borough (21), the highest number of designated neighbourhood forums (15) and London's only Community Council (Queen's Park), which has neighbourhood planning powers.

3.2 Neighbourhood planning was established via the 2011 Localism Act and allows local communities to devise local planning policies that then form part of the statutory development plan for that area. These are subject to public consultation and scrutiny via an independent examination process to determine whether the plan meets the 'Basic Conditions' (which include conformity with City Plan and London Plan policies) and other legislative requirements. Neighbourhood plans are then subject to local referendum as a final step ensuring support from their local community to adopt the plan. The council has a duty to support neighbourhood planning and officers offer advice and guidance to neighbourhood forums as well as undertaking the statutory processes involved in plan-making.

3.3 Westminster has previously had two neighbourhood plans adopted – in Knightsbridge (2018) and Mayfair (2019) – and there has recently been an increase in neighbourhood planning activity in the city as the Westminster City Plan and London Plan went through

their respective examination processes and have now been adopted. Three neighbourhood plans underwent independent examination in 2020 and 2021 – Fitzrovia West, Soho and Queen’s Park. Referendums were held in September for Soho and Fitzrovia West, and the Queen’s Park referendum took place on 21 October.

- 3.4 Following the successful referendums for the Soho and Fitzrovia West neighbourhood plans, both now have full weight in decision-making on individual planning applications within these areas (alongside City Plan and London Plan policies), and the council undertook the final step of formally adopting them both on 8 October 2021.

#### **4. Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Plan**

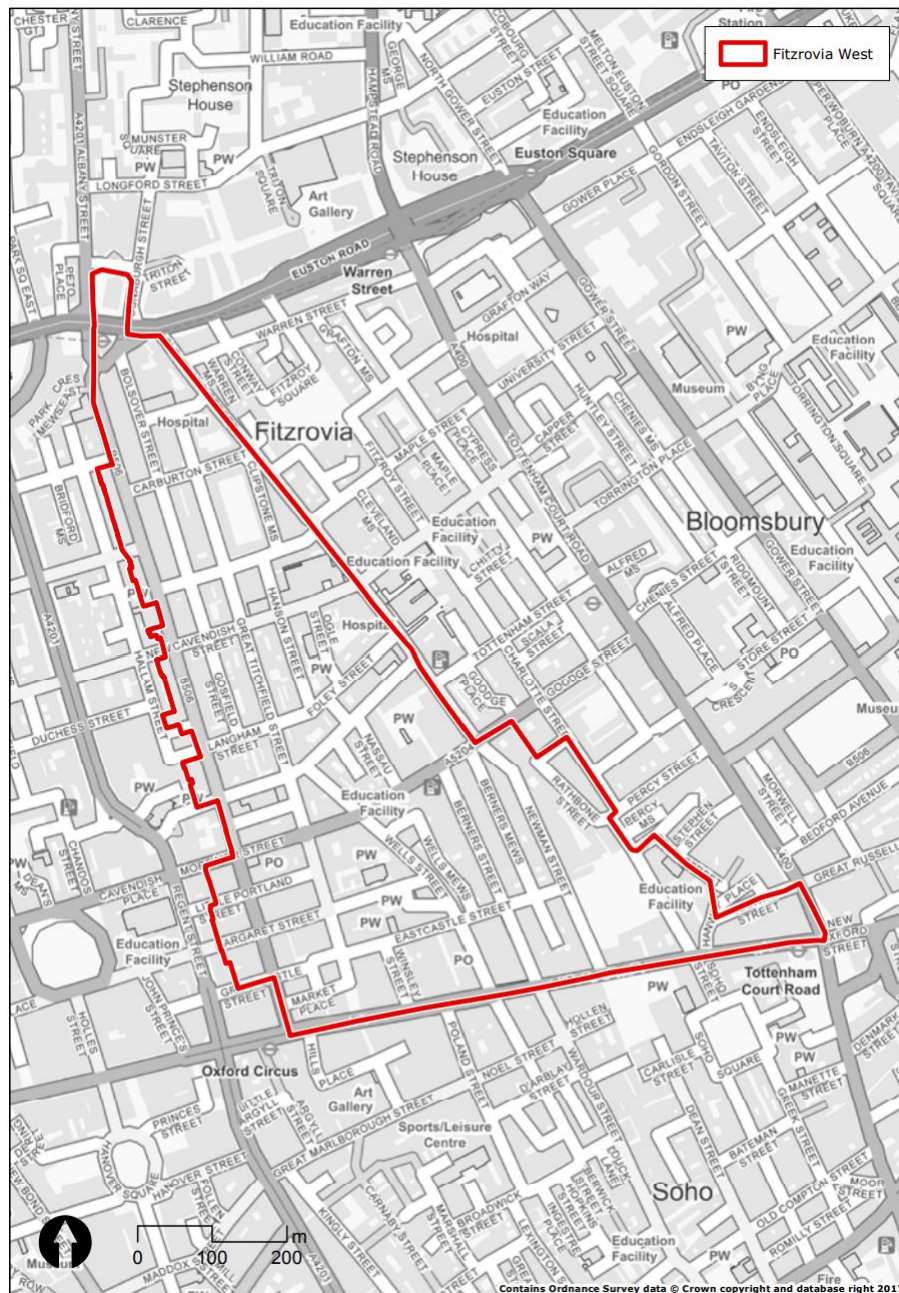
- 4.1 The Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Plan contains a range of policies covering various aspects of the built environment, under the following themes: promoting regeneration; supporting businesses; green and open spaces; environmental quality, and mobility and transport.

- 4.2 Some of the key policies in the neighbourhood plan are:

- demonstrating sustainable re-use or refurbishment has been considered when considering proposals for demolition or replacement of buildings;
- ensuring housing provision meets the needs of all age groups;
- explicitly supporting the creation or re-provision of small business units;
- identification of green and open spaces of special significance for preservation and enhancement;
- support for the conversion of existing streets to create new public amenity space;
- encouraging all major developments to achieve net zero emissions and maximising on-site renewable energy generation; and
- supporting developments incorporating sustainable distribution and servicing arrangements.

- 4.3 As they now form part of the council’s statutory development plan, these policies must be considered when assessing proposals in the Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Area and should be referred to in planning decisions made in that area. The area covers a triangular parcel of land between the eastern Westminster boundary with the London Borough of Camden, Great Portland Street to the west, and Oxford Street to the south. This is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Area



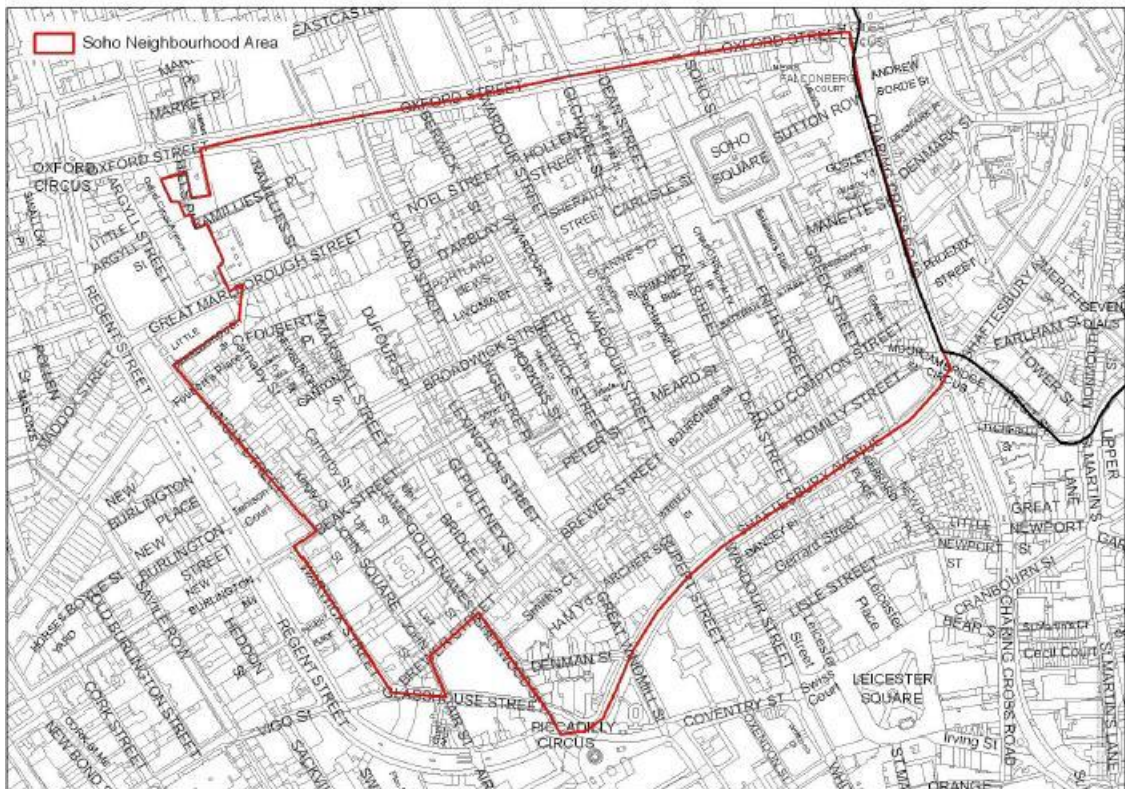
## 5. Soho Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.1 The Soho Neighbourhood Plan also contains a wide range of policies covering various aspects of the built environment, grouped under the following themes: culture and heritage; commercial activity; entertainment and the night-time economy; housing, and sustainable development and the environment.
- 5.2 Some of the key policies in the neighbourhood plan are:
- encouraging provision of space suitable for the creative industries in commercial and mixed-use developments;
  - protecting existing private members' clubs and encouraging new ones where these demonstrably add to Soho's vitality;

- ensuring any off-site delivery of affordable housing is delivered primarily within the neighbourhood area;
- demonstrating refurbishment and retrofitting options have been evaluated prior to demolition being considered by developers; and
- encouraging developers to consider redevelopment of existing off-street car parking for freight consolidation.

5.3 As they now form part of the council’s statutory development plan, these policies must be considered when assessing proposals in the Soho Neighbourhood Area and should be referred to in planning decisions made in that area. The area covers land bounded by Oxford Street to the north, Charing Cross Road to the east and Shaftesbury Avenue and Piccadilly Circus to the south. The western boundary abuts the boundary of the Mayfair Neighbourhood Area and runs along Warwick Street and Kingly Street, as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Soho Neighbourhood Area



## 6. Forthcoming Neighbourhood Plans

6.1 At the time of writing, the referendum on the Queen’s Park Neighbourhood Plan had not yet taken place. The Queen’s Park Neighbourhood Plan has been through independent examination and the council has formally decided that it can proceed to referendum stage, affording it some weight in decision-making in the Queen’s Park Neighbourhood Area. If a positive referendum result is returned, the council will proceed to formally adopt the plan.

6.2 The Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan was formally submitted to the council and consultation was held between June and August 2021. The plan will shortly begin its independent examination to determine whether it meets the ‘Basic Conditions’ set out in legislation, including whether it is in conformity with the policies in the City Plan and

London Plan. Once this process is concluded, the Examiner will issue a report to determine whether the plan should proceed to referendum. If successful, a referendum date will be arranged between the council and the Neighbourhood Forum.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The financial implications of the council's neighbourhood planning function will continue to be managed within existing resources. Government funding remains available for the council to apply for once the decision has been made to take a neighbourhood plan to referendum stage. This means that the council can recoup the costs of both the independent examination and referendum aspects of neighbourhood planning work.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The designation of Neighbourhood Forums, Areas, and the making of Neighbourhood Plans, are governed by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011, the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 8.2 Section 38A (4) and (5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act allows the council to make Neighbourhood Plans if more than half of those voting in one of the referendums have voted in favour of the plan.

## **9. Conclusion**

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report and the implications that newly adopted and forthcoming neighbourhood plans will have for planning decision-making in Westminster.

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| <p><b>If you have any questions about this report, or wish to inspect one of the background papers, please contact: Michael Clarkson (<a href="mailto:mclarkson@westminster.gov.uk">mclarkson@westminster.gov.uk</a>; 07811677027).</b></p> |
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### **Background Papers:**

[Cabinet Member Report, September 2021 – Adoption of the Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Cabinet Member Report, September 2021 – Adoption of the Soho Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Cabinet Member Report, July 2021 – Queen's Park Neighbourhood Plan Decision Statement](#)