



# Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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<b>Classification:</b>	General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Oxford Street District Programme Update
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<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	Cllr Matthew Green, Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning
<b>Wards Involved:</b>	West End, Marylebone High Street, Bryanston and Dorset Square
<b>Policy Context:</b>	
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## 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 An update on the Oxford Street District (OSD) programme was last presented to the Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee in May 2021. This highlighted the progress that had been made with temporary Oxford Street public realm works.
- 1.1.2 With the shift of OSD to the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning, the purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee on the review of the OSD programme that has been underway since August 2021 and the proposed way forward for projects. Going forward, each project will be measured against four key tests, explained in further detail on the following sections:
  - A clear case for change
  - Meaningful engagement and partnerships
  - Clarity on impact for residents
  - Robust costing and investment perspective

- 1.1.3 In addition, this report provides a breakdown of the programme's spend to date, governance and forward look on upcoming programme activities.

## **2 Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration**

- 2.1.1 The OSD programme, including project prioritisation, finance, and engagement and consultation has been under review since August 2021. This exercise is necessary to ensure that the proposed programme interventions deliver the key tenants of the OSD Framework and demonstrate that the four key tests have been met for all projects. In doing so it would be beneficial to gain the Committee's input into the following:
- 2.1.2 Have we got the four key tests right (outlined in section 4)?
- 2.1.3 What is the ideal engagement approach moving forward given the complex nature of the District and stakeholders? Are there audiences that we should be involving going forward and how do we meaningfully engage them?
- 2.1.4 The successful delivery of the OSD programme hinges on private sector investment and support. How can we best engage with the private sector on the design, delivery and maintenance of the District given its multiple audiences?

## **3 Background**

- 3.1.1 Oxford Street is one of the world's most celebrated retail streets, it is visited by millions of people each year and is an essential part of the West End and London offer. The street's setting means it sits alongside several distinctive and historic neighbourhoods, including Fitzrovia, Marylebone, Mayfair and Soho, that provides a richness and vibrancy that cannot be matched. Therefore, it is important that Oxford Street is considered as part of a diverse District, integrated into the wider West End, where it can provide world class retail, commercial, culture and leisure opportunities, and is a good neighbour for local residents. Celebrating and amplifying the different elements will reinforce its continuing status as London's primary shopping street and support its development into a vibrant centre for civic life and commerce.
- 3.1.2 Oxford Street's current condition does not match its importance and status. Key challenges need to be addressed for the District to continue to thrive and remain an attractive choice for residents, visitors, businesses, as well as to attract further investment. These challenges include:
- Poor quality public realm, high levels of congestion and limited amenities mean that the current pedestrian environment is no longer fit for purpose. However, it is anticipated that the number of pedestrians in the Oxford Street District will only increase with the opening of the Elizabeth Line stations.
  - The District is also one of the most polluted areas in the UK. The majority of harmful emissions are released from road traffic.

- The change in high street retail moving away from traditional commerce and towards an approach that includes leisure, entertainment and experience has meant that retail trends have continued to evolve at pace. It is vital for Oxford Street to adapt and build upon its unique mix of retail, office, culture and leisure offer.

- 3.1.3 The OSD Framework was launched in February 2021, building on the 2019 Place Strategy and Delivery Plan, to set out the Council's vision on how the challenges faced by the District will be addressed. The Framework sets out the vision for 'Reinventing the Nation's High Street' and delivering a 'Greener, Smarter, Future, Together'.
- 3.1.4 Since the Framework launch, the OSD programme has delivered improvements to Oxford Street and the District. These have included new greening and seating on Oxford Street and selected side streets, along with temporary pavement widening. This was delivered concurrently with the start of construction of the Soho Photography Quarter scheme and Berners/Newman Street traffic switch.

## **4 The Four Key Tests**

- 4.1.1 Westminster remains committed to supporting the future success of the nation's favourite high street and its surrounding neighbourhoods. The case for investing in this area is even stronger following the pandemic and the Council is focused on doing everything it can to deliver on this pledge alongside its partners. However, four key tests must be met to determine the viability of proposed projects - a clearly articulated case for change, meaningful engagement of stakeholders, complete clarity on impacts for residents and robust costing.
- 4.1.2 A Clear Case for Change – The rationale for undertaking a project must be fully articulated and align with the overarching objectives outlined in the existing Oxford Street District business case. Proposed improvements to the public realm, gains and losses in terms of biodiversity and air quality, impacts on accessibility and safety are particularly relevant and must be thoroughly understood before a project can be endorsed.
- 4.1.3 Meaningful Engagement and Partnerships – Meaningfully engaging with stakeholders, residents and the wider community is central to all OSD schemes and a precursor to project development. It is understood that strong partnerships must be forged to deliver and manage public realm improvements. As part of this key test, a project must garner stakeholder support, secure the necessary funding, co-ordinate with other development activity in the vicinity and have the relevant joint agreements between partners in place.
- 4.1.4 Clarity on Impact for Residents – As a public authority, Westminster puts the needs of its residents at the forefront of its decision-making. Core to a project's rationale is the impact of proposed changes on the day-to-day activities of local communities. Therefore, the benefits of any proposed public

realm scheme must be clearly stated and ways of mitigating its negative outcomes outlined.

- 4.1.5 Robust Costing and Investment Perspective – All projects must undergo a detailed cost analysis and investigate additional investment potential to ensure proposals are cost-effective and contribute to delivering the programme's objectives, and that costings are robust. For public realm works this includes a clear understanding of not only construction costs but longer-term maintenance implications as well.

## 5 Delivered Projects

- 5.1.1 Oxford Street Temporary Improvements - The first phase of the Oxford Street District Framework, delivered in April 2021, included a temporary scheme on Oxford Street and selected side streets, with the aim of enhancing greening, improve biodiversity and introducing creative street features.
- 5.1.2 The temporary interventions are an initial step towards reimagining and revitalising the nation's high street for new patterns of use, by providing new bespoke modular seating, planting and playful gobo lighting projections. Pockets of space have been provided for rest on the busy high street along with a refreshed street environment. Increased footway space on Oxford Street has also been achieved that enables safer and more comfortable pedestrian access.
- 5.1.3 The Marble Arch Mound - The Mound is out of scope for this report as it was discussed separately at the Business and Children's Policy Scrutiny Committee which took place on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

## 6 Projects underway: Soho Photography Quarter

- 6.1.1 The new Soho Photography Quarter, comprising Ramillies Street, Hills Place and Ramillies Place, is under construction with completion planned by the end of April 2022. The scheme will deliver a more attractive, accessible, and pedestrian-friendly space. The Quarter will be transformed into a new cultural destination through the installation of cross-street banners, an art frieze and projection, with images curated by The Photographers' Gallery.

### 6.1.2 A Clear Case for Change

The Quarter has been dominated by servicing and waste storage for businesses backing onto its streets, which has a detrimental effect on the attractiveness of the area, linked to anti-social behaviour as a result. The lack of access control has resulted in higher level of vehicular through traffic area and safety concerns for pedestrians.

Improving the public realm quality and overlaying a cultural offer is an attempt to redefine the identity of the area as an attraction and contributes to the delivery of key cornerstones of the OSD programme including culture and

activation and greening in this key through route from Oxford Street and Carnaby and Soho, in collaboration with The Photographers' Gallery.

#### 6.1.3 Meaningful Engagement and Partnership

The scheme was presented and reviewed during the Place Strategy consultation in 2019. This has been supplemented by statutory consultations (Section 6 and Traffic Management Order) and ongoing discussions with key properties in the Quarter.

#### 6.1.4 Clarity on Impact for Residents

The Quarter is dominated by retail and office uses with a small residential presence. The scheme attempts to improve the quality of the public realm through lighting, greening and reduced motorised vehicular through traffic, which is attractive to both daily users of the Quarter and visitors, and in turn seeks to address anti-social behaviour in the area.

#### 6.1.5 Robust Costing and Investment Perspective

The budget for this scheme was approved via a Cabinet Member Report in 2019 is circa £2.84m. This budget has subsequently been revised based on current contract rates and is now calculated at approximately £3.1m but falls within the programme allowance for this scheme as it is supplemented by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding of £600k.

### **7 Projects underway: Berners and Newman Street**

#### 7.1.1 Works on the traffic switch for Berners and Newman Streets were delivered in October 2021. This is the first step towards the wider Berners and Newman Street Greenway programme, highlighted in the OSD Framework document, which seeks to improve the public realm including highways surfaces, street furniture, greening and lighting. The scope of these initial works allowed traffic direction to be changed to northbound on Berners Street and southbound on Newman Street with the aim of creating a more coherent traffic network in the District.

#### 7.1.2 A Clear Case for Change

The initial junction works on Berners and Neman Street, including the traffic direction change, are a move towards realising the benefits of a more effective signal and traffic function on these streets. These works facilitate the creation of a coherent District network with fewer circuitous routes and less conflict between turning vehicles, providing a safer and more comfortable cycling environment, and connection to existing and planned cycle networks.

#### 7.1.3 Meaningful Engagement and Partnership

Neighbourhood forums and amenity societies were engaged together with relevant properties and stakeholders in advance of the traffic switch. Along with statutory consultation, there is commitment to gather local feedback on the proposed scheme for these streets before construction commences.

#### **7.1.4 Clarity on Impact for Residents**

The proposed interventions on these streets will improve their safety, amenity, and attractiveness, as routes through the District and valuable public spaces to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The proposed change to the kerbside has been assessed from a District-wide perspective and will rationalise uses on the streets in question.

#### **7.1.5 Robust Costing and Investment Perspective**

Progression of a project from concept to construction is based on a clear understanding of cost and maintenance implications, and its contribution to the delivery of the overall programme objectives. This is applicable to the Berners/Newman Street traffic switch. The cost of the switch including design, junction works, temporary and permanent traffic signals and overheads is within the existing approvals.

### **8 Projects underway: Manchester Square**

**8.1.1 We are working in partnership with The Portman Estate and the Baker Street Quarter Partnership (BSQP) on engaging with stakeholders on proposals to improve Manchester Square in Marylebone, as part of the Council's ambitions for the wider Oxford Street District. Proposals for the Manchester Square area will create a new culture-focused public space, improve pedestrian safety and introduce a dedicated eastbound cycle lane on the northern side of the square.**

#### **8.1.2 A Clear Case for Change**

Manchester Square is currently subject to several underlying challenges, that the design proposal for the area is aiming to tackle. There is a lack of publicly accessible open space in the area and Manchester Square Gardens itself is not open to the general public. Currently the poor pedestrian environment detracts from the environment surrounding The Wallace Collection, a notable cultural venue in the District. This is further compounded by the traffic arrangement in the area which poses a pedestrian safety risk. Uplifting the area with improved lighting and management will also seek to address levels of anti-social behaviour that is experienced locally.

#### **8.1.3 Meaningful Engagement and Partnership**

A robust communications and engagement strategy has been developed, in partnership with The Portman Estate and BSQP.

As a part of the design development in 2020 and 2021, regular localised consultation has taken place with key stakeholders, including local businesses, schools, residents' groups, landowners and ward councillors to determine access requirements, share information on traffic changes and gather feedback on the proposed public realm vision. Key partners have also been engaged in discussion on the management regime for the area. The type of engagement has included meetings, site visits, drop-in sessions, emails, e-bulletins, as well as social media and website updates, which offers a variety of options to local stakeholders to share their feedback.

#### **8.1.4 Clarity on Impact for Residents**

To facilitate the new public space, it will be necessary to remove a proportion of the existing parking in the square. The impact of removing parking has been considered in detail and analysis has been undertaken of the usage of parking within the square and the availability of parking across the local area and across the District as a whole. While there is no net loss of residential parking bays proposed through the scheme, the location of residential parking bays will be adjusted to continue to meet the demand within the square, whilst also addressing the demand on neighbouring streets. Traffic reassignment analysis has also been finalised and the scheme is expected to have negligible impact on immediate local area.

The proposed interventions on Manchester Square will improve safety and attractiveness of the area and provide a new valuable public space to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

#### **8.1.5 Robust Costing and Investment Perspective**

A private sector contribution has been secured for the design and construction of the scheme from The Portman Estate and BSQP. This will be supplemented by a CIL funding secured in June 2019, as well as S106 contribution and OSD programme funding. The cost of the scheme is being finalised and this will be subject to a separate approval in December.

### **9 Programme-wide Finance**

**9.1.1** The table below highlights the approval to date on the programme sought through Cabinet Member/Cabinet Report, as well as the spend to date against each approval. This does not include the £6m allocation for Marble Arch Mound, which will be funded from the overall £150m OSD allocation.

DATE	APPROVAL METHOD	RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL AMOUNT	SPEND TO DATE
Oct 2018	Cabinet Report	Approve £2.5m of spend to develop Place Strategy & Concept Design	£2.5m	£2.5m
Nov 2018	Cabinet Member Report	Approval to commence procurement process	n/a	n/a
Feb 2019	Cabinet Report	Approve updated Place Strategy and results of consultation	n/a	n/a
April 2019	Cabinet Report	Approve Full Business Case justifying £150m investment. Approve £21m of expenditure on feasibility design and staffing costs	£21m	£16.1m

Sept 2019	Cabinet Member Report	Approve £2.8m for detailed design and construction of Ramillies Street work package	£2.8m	£1.6m
Oct 2019	Cabinet Member Report	Approve the award of the Design and Build contract following the procurement process	n/a	n/a
Nov 2019	Cabinet Member Report	Approval of Resource Contracts (Project and Programme Management and Commercial and Cost Management Services)	n/a	n/a
June 2020	Cabinet Member Report	Approve the award of the Design Guardian following the procurement process (funded from £21m)	n/a	n/a
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£26.3m</b>	<b>£20.2m</b>

#### 9.1.2 Outcomes to date on the programme include:

- OSD Place Strategy and Delivery Plan (2019) and OSD Framework Document (2021)
- Full Business Case drafted and approved (2019)
- Procurement support for successful contract award (MCJV) (2020)
- Design work for priority schemes including Berners Street, Davies Street, James Street, Greenways North, Manchester Square
- Construction of Oxford Street footway widening, planting and seating, Soho Photography Quarter and Berners/Newman Street traffic switch (2021)

## 10 Forward Look

10.1.1 An internal review is underway within which the OSD programme is reaffirming its commitment to meeting the key tests of a clear case for change, meaningful engagement, and complete clarity on impact for residents, costs and investment for all upcoming projects.

10.1.2 Further to the key tests applied to the projects, governance for the programme is also being refined. Key updates are taken to the OSD programme board, which is attended by senior council officers, and subsequently to regular cabinet member briefings, all of which review and monitor programme progress and upcoming project activities and engagement.

10.1.3 As part of the programme review, expanded boundaries and grouping of projects have been proposed, which represent a more strategic approach to delivery. These delivery areas better address operational and other

interdependencies and are a comprehensive approach to achieving change in the District.

10.1.4 The proposed prioritisation of projects within each delivery area is based on:

- progress made on delivery to date and encompassing schemes already in construction that have confirmed the case for change
- projects at a mature design stage that still require the application of the key tests
- projects that require scoping and brief setting, the consolidation of stakeholder ambition and demonstration of the case for change

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

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## **APPENDICES:**

[Appendix A. Oxford Street District Place Strategy and Delivery Plan](#)

[Appendix B. Oxford Street District Business Case](#)

[Appendix C. Oxford Street District Framework Document](#)