

## Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	18 October 2022
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Climate Action, Regeneration & Renters
<b>The Report of:</b>	Councillor Matt Noble
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### 1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 18 July:

- 12/08/2022 – Ebury Estate Renewal, Revised Phasing Programme
- 30/08/2022 - Ebury Demolition Contract Variation and Additional Spend
- 05/09/2022 – Lisson Grove Programme: Multi-Discipline Consultant Team Appointment
- 07/09/2022 – Infills Programme: Appointment of the Main Contract for Package B Sites

### 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration.

#### Climate Action

##### Climate Action Programme Highlights

In line with the new Administration's priorities, the Climate Action team are engaging with external delivery partners to determine indicative costs and timeline for delivery of a 'Climate Assembly', with hopes to effectively engage and consult the public with this work. To provide dedicated support on climate outreach, influencing, and engagement we have recruited two engagement officers.

In July, in partnership with our contractor *Morgan Sindall* the Council retrofitted a 1-bed show home in Queen's Park to demonstrate several retrofit measures to promote energy savings such as solar panel powering, an electric hob, and thermally efficient windows and doors. Prior to returning the flat to WCC Housing for letting, Over 100 residents have received a tour of the property. In addition to this our planning team are developing a series of 'How to' guides for householders to advise on how they can upgrade/retrofit their homes. The first guide on Windows launched in early August and can be found online at [Planning householder retrofit how-to guides | Westminster City Council](#). Please see Appendix A for the PDF of the guide. Subsequent guides on solar and heat pumps are to follow.

We have recently completed our first Climate Action Classrooms workshop programme in 23 primary schools. A total of 1243 young people (Year 5 and 6 students) attended the climate education workshops in the 2021/22 school year.

A GLA-funded review of our capability to meet social housing retrofit targets has begun. This will result in a Westminster Specific roadmap to retrofit success and inform future GLA support. We will also be launching a Historic Building Retrofit Taskforce. The first workshop with local stakeholders is to be held on 10 October to launch the taskforce and prioritise where it can add value to addressing barriers to retrofit in Westminster.

### **Update on Green Bonds**

Westminster City Council signed the Green Finance Institute's Local Climate Bond Pledge in July. Officers continue to work on logistics with our external legal provider for the official bond launch currently scheduled for late 2022. To note bond-holders must be 18 years of age or older. This summer we have been working with our contractor *Vital Energi* to assess retrofit opportunities and costs on Council owned community buildings across the City to help inform a list of local projects that could be funded through the bond. This is a developing space, and a more substantial update will be brought to this Committee when available.

### **Biodiversity in Westminster**

Glyphosate (a herbicide) has now been banned across all Council estates. In early September, an engagement exercise will be undertaken with residents, landowners, estate managers and educational institutions to join us in banning glyphosates. Officers have been developing an Environmental Justice Measure to track progress on climate action and environmental justice. In line with our priorities around achieving greater biodiversity in Westminster, we are re-establishing our relationship with *Wild West End*, and *Westminster Tree Trust*, with a view to increase canopy cover over the City and participate in more tree pit planting. Guidance regarding use of tree pits for residents and interested parties is currently in development under the purview of the Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality.

### **Sustainable City Charter**

We are pleased to say our Sustainable City Charter will be launched in November 2022. The Charter is open to all organisations involved in the development, operation and occupation of non-domestic buildings in Westminster. It is designed to be flexible enough to be used by organisations of all sizes, regardless of why they are on their own climate action journey. Together as building owners, developers, occupiers and users, we can make real progress towards a Net Zero Carbon Westminster by 2040 and achieving an improved, greener and healthier built environment for all.

Signatories commit to identifying any buildings in Westminster where they have a high level of long-term control over most of the building and commit to baselining Emissions to assess their current carbon emissions, The results of the audits must be used to identify a pathway and actions to achieve net zero operational energy emissions for these buildings by 2040 or earlier.

### **Environmental Justice Measure**

Officers are currently producing an Environmental Justice Measure (EJM) to track progress on Climate Action and environmental justice in Westminster as illustrated as an interactive GIS map, focused on the pillars of Efficient Buildings, Clean & Affordable Energy, Reduced Consumption & Waste, Sustainable Travel & Transport, and Green and Resilient City. Our aim is encourage residents and stakeholders to track our progress as a Council to reach our Climate goals. We anticipate the EJM to go live during November 2022.

## **Regeneration**

### **Greening in the Regeneration Programme**

In regard to our continuing greening programme across the City, the Church Street Green Spine Phase 1 Public Realm improvement project is now complete. This includes improvements to the park at Broadley Street and the creation of a pedestrian friendly route through the Church Street area, new trees, plants, play areas and new areas to facilitate community planting. The Triangle Public Realm works have been completed. The new space offers additional seating, lighting, and bicycle racks. Designed with pedestrian and cyclists in mind. The space encourages healthy living through opportunities for walking, cycling, play and exercise, while biodiverse green spaces are wonderful places to relax and will attract birds and wildlife.

Working with the Lisson Green Tenants & Residents Association, two new community planters have been installed for residents to plant and grow their own vegetables. On Ebury, a temporary landscape and play space solution is being delivered that will offer more amenity space for local residents and remaining families during construction. Both the temporary and permanent landscaping is utilising materials and trees from the Marble Arch Mound.

### **Truly Affordable Housing in Westminster**

In line with the Truly Affordable Housing Strategy, works continues to increase the number of truly affordable homes in the borough by reviewing the existing pipeline and mechanisms to increase supply. The Development Team, in collaboration with Housing and Finance officers, presented a range of options to Cabinet Members who supported options to switch market homes at 300 Harrow and Westmead to affordable homes as well as switching intermediate rent homes of 2 or more bedrooms to social rent. On October 17 this decision will be taken to Cabinet in line with the principles outlined in our Fairer Westminster Vision.

### **Church Street Programme Update**

A refreshed consultation and engagement strategy for Church Street is being developed with the community. It aims to strengthen relationships and links between the council, residents, key stakeholders, businesses, and interest groups to increase involvement and co-creation opportunities. A ballot strategy for Sites A,B and C is being taken through the GLA formal approval process, with an outcome to be presented in my next report to this Committee.

Church Street Site A is progressing with design changes to alter tenure mix of affordable to 70/30 social rent/intermediate and an increase to the size of the library. Officers will soon begin the demolition workstream and JV partner procurement. As above, any changes to the scheme will be taken through formal Council decision making processes as required.

Ashbridge site external works are being finalized which include of completion of sewer connections, an attenuation tank, and external balconies. We expect practical completion in January 2023 which reflects the lengthy lead in time for the air source heat pumps order.

### **Church Street Ballot Sites A,B, C**

The ballot at Church Street Sites A,B,C will enable the Council to bid for funding to further increase the numbers of affordable homes in a landmark scheme for the Church Street Regeneration

Programme. By holding a vote, the council will give the residents of Church Street the final say on the proposals for regeneration.

Officers have been in regular contact with residents, businesses, and stakeholders throughout this process. In the lead up to the ballot the council will be carrying out extensive engagement with local residents to ensure they are supported during the ballot process. The first of these communications has gone out in the Church Street Newsletter on 27 September, along with a press release on 28 September. Registration for the ballot will take place from 30 September to 14 October 2022.

### **Ebury Bridge Programme Update**

The Ebury Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Inquiry commenced on 9 August and concluded on 16 August. A CPO is a fail-safe position for the Council to ensure that all outstanding land interests can be acquired in order to bring the entire scheme and maximum level of new affordable homes forward. The Council continues to pro-actively engage and acquire the 20 outstanding interests voluntarily without the need to enact the order. These outstanding interests are in 5 out of the 6 remaining blocks so the CPO process has been necessary. On 5 October we learned the CPO was successful. A further update will be released to this Committee at the November meeting date.

Through the progress of the Inquiry, the 2 remaining statutory objectors have now started to engage with the Council. Of the other 18 outstanding interests, 11 are 'under offer' with agreed terms in place and 7 are actively negotiating. We are optimistic at securing the remaining interests through voluntary arrangements. The Ebury CPO outcome is due by 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Once the decision has been received a 6-week Judicial Review Period then kicks in before implementation.

### **Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Sites Update**

Our MMC sites will deliver a total of 15 social rent homes (6 at Melrose & Keith House, 6 at Helmsdale House and 3 at Ordnance Mews). All three of our sites are progressing well, however, in common with the wider sector, our contractor has reported problems with a shortage of both labour and materials over the past six months which has pushed out completion dates on Helmsdale House and Melrose and Keith into early 2023. Ordnance Mews is still due to complete by December of this year.

Ordnance Mews (Regent's Park): Scaffolding has now been removed from the site. Roofing works (including the green roof and photovoltaics) is complete, along with the external brickwork. External hoarding is due to be removed at the end of August to allow landscaping and highways works to be completed. Internally we currently have fitout works ongoing for kitchens and bathrooms along with all the electrical and plumbing second fix works.

Helmsdale House (Maida Vale): Externally the scaffolding will be removed by the end of August. Incoming services are due to be installed from the road over the next two months. The party wall agreement with the adjoining build has been signed this week which will allow the boundary wall works to complete over the next few weeks.

Melrose and Keith (Maida Vale): External corium brick cladding works is ongoing and due to complete early September when the scaffolding will be removed. Incoming service works is ongoing with the main connections in the road due in September. Internal fitout works is the same as Ordnance Mews with fitout works ongoing of kitchens and bathrooms.

## **Infills Programme**

The Infills Programme remains challenging with the current price movement and inflation increases within the construction market. Adpar, Torridon and Queens Park Court schemes (Package B) are progressing. Contracts are being executed with our partner *Osbourne* and delivery on site is due to re-commence shortly.

## **Development Updates**

Practical completion of Luton Street was achieved on 12 August, which includes the development of 171 modern new homes, of which 109 are for sale and 62 designated affordable. Together with our partners have delivered a triple-height, three-court new sports hall and community space for the wider neighbourhood to benefit from. The development also includes the first section of a new Green Spine. Enabling works on Darwin and Balmoral House have started with garage demolition nearing completion. Procurement of the main contractor is underway with completed tenders being reviewed.

## **Renters**

On Monday 5 September 2022 I gave evidence on behalf of Westminster City Council at Parliament for the Private Rented Sector Select Committee Inquiry. The inquiry is scrutinising the Government's plans to introduce a decent homes standard for the PRS; reform the system of tenancies and abolish no-fault evictions; reform the grounds on which landlords can take possession of their properties; and better protect tenants from unfair rent increases. In line with our commitments for a Fairer Westminster, we believe that more can be done at the national level to support individuals and families during these unprecedented difficult economic times. Particularly low-income households having to move away from their communities as landlords continue to raise rents.

## **Policy Update**

Our Private Rented Sector (PRS) Strategy Group met in July to discuss the White Paper proposal and in October to discuss government proposals for the introduction of a decent homes standard in the PRS. The overall view from members is that the White Paper proposals will help to create a fairer PRS but concerns about affordability remain. The White Paper is likely to assist with enforcement as it will clarify ownership and responsibilities for this sector. Success of any potential reforms will rest, in part, around local authorities being adequately resourced for enforcement.

Westminster is seeing price increases in the PRS. The median 2 bed rent per week rose to £594 in June 2022 from £549 in June 2021, an 8% increase. This is coupled with the rising cost of living. Private tenants (with their landlords' consent) can apply for GLA Warmer Homes Grant. This is to support those impacted by focussing on the immediate actions of making homes greener and warmer, reducing energy use. Officers are currently working with the GLA to identify PRS tenants that may be eligible.

## **Enforcement Update**

An Emergency Prohibition Order was served on a flat in Vale House, Kilburn High Road due to multiple hazards including fire risks and sewage flooding. The flat had previously been under control of one of our landlords who is non-compliant. The tenants have relocated and the property has been secured by the owner who is starting major renovation.

Recently an agreement has been signed between the Council and *Justice for Tenants (JFT)* to enable JFT to assist private sector Housing with Multiple Occupancy (HMO) tenants with rent repayment orders. These are available to tenants where the landlord has failed to apply for a licence. Tenants can receive up to 12 months' rent on application to the First Tier Tribunal (Property Chamber).