

# KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

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Regulation 19 consultation: City Plan 2019 – 2040  
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30 July 2019

Dear Richard

## **Regulation 19 consultation – Representations on the Draft Westminster City Plan 2019 – 2040**

I am writing on behalf of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (the ‘Forum’) to make representations in response to the consultation on the Westminster City Plan 2019 – 2040, Regulation 19 Draft (‘WCP’) (the ‘Consultation’):

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/cityplan2040>

The Forum wishes to make representations on certain matters in WCP which it considers will improve the WCP and help Westminster City Council (the ‘Council’ or ‘WCC’) to better achieve its objectives and to align with other development plan documents, including neighbourhood plans. In this regard, the Forum’s representations have been informed by the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (‘KNP’) which passed referendum on 18 October 2018 and which was ‘made’ (i.e. adopted) by the Council on 11 December 2018. The ‘made’ KNP can be seen here:

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/NP-knightsbridge>

### **Overview**

The Forum generally supports the WCP, although it does have: concerns about a number of specific policies; and some detailed comments which follow. In general:

- the strategic nature of the WCP and its approach to policies is supported as it allows neighbourhood forums to develop neighbourhood policies;
- the WCP seems positive for neighbourhood planning and should add impetus to the KNP; and
- the WCP should encourage other neighbourhood forums to progress their plans.

More specifically, the WCP:

- retains the role of the Central Activities Zone ('CAZ'), which covers the whole of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area ('KNA');
- retains the role of the International Shopping Centre in Knightsbridge;
- confirms the strategic housing allocation for the KNA and the priority to increase housing delivery across Westminster;
- recognises that most of Westminster is not suitable for tall buildings, including Knightsbridge;
- recognises the urgent importance of neighbourly development and sustainability; and
- emphasises the importance of heritage and conservation for buildings across Westminster and the importance for design to respond to the local context and character.

The first two of these seem to avoid or pre-empt the need for the Forum to consider an early review of its plan to take account of similar strategic policies in the draft London Plan that affect the KNA, such as the Central Activities Zone and Town Centres, as the GLA had suggested in its response to the Regulation 16 consultation on the draft KNP dated 14 February 2018.

One issue of significant concern to the Forum is the increase in the indicative number of units proposed for the Hyde Park Barracks strategic housing site from 128 to 250. We address this below in our representations on the Hyde Park Barracks.

You will be aware that neighbourhood plans can be more ambitious than local plans, provided they are in 'general conformity' with the strategic policies of the development plan. An important principle that the Forum wishes to emphasise is that, just because all clauses in a WCP policy are considered by the City Council to be strategic, does not mean that locally specific policies on the same topic in a pre-existing neighbourhood plan would automatically be in conflict with the WCP. Policies in a made neighbourhood plan meet the Basic Conditions because they are locally-specific and therefore should be read alongside the strategic policies of the WCP. We welcome the explanation of Neighbourhood Planning on page 173 of the WCP.

The above themes and the WCP are supported subject to the detailed comments above and below.

### **Saved UDP policies**

The Forum understands that the Council's intention is that the WCP is a complete revision which, upon adoption, would supersede all policies in the previous City Plan and the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) saved policies and that it is for this reason that the WCP makes no mention of any saved policies.

The Forum supports, in general, the above approach. As you know, the Examiner for the KNP decided that saved UDP policies are currently part of the development plan and some will have strategic policy significance for Knightsbridge. The KNP was modified therefore to say (paragraph 0.24 on page 13):

*"The Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Westminster City Plan (i.e. the policies prefixed with an 'S' in the City Plan document and some elements of the UDP saved*

*policies) and the London Plan as a whole. This is so that local policies and approaches relating to Knightsbridge support the delivery of strategic policies at the wider level.”*

It was never clear which of those saved policies might be deemed ‘strategic’ and any confusion had been increased by Westminster stating on its website that ‘General conformity is limited to the ‘S’ policies in the Westminster’s City Plan’.

As you know, the KNP needed to be in ‘general conformity’ with the (current) City Plan and not (all) the saved UDP policies. The Forum does not expect saved UDP policies *per se* to be given more weight than policies in the KNP (pending the saved policies being superseded anyway).

The Forum agrees that the new City Plan should supersede all the UDP saved policies. However, it will be important not to downgrade the significance of some of the evidential documents supporting important aspects of the saved policies such as the Conservation Area Audits, which identified Character Areas, local views, unlisted buildings of merit and single occupancy zone(s).

**The Forum observes that a significant number of policies in the WCP have been amended from non-strategic to strategic when compared with the draft WCP consulted on in late-2018. The 2018 Informal Consultation Draft had 23 of 43 policies that were entirely strategic and five policies that were entirely non-strategic. However, the WCP now considers that 37 of 46 policies are entirely strategic and only one is entirely non-strategic. However, no justification is given as to why so many of the policies in the WCP are considered to be strategic and why this has changed so markedly since the 2018 Informal Draft.** In this regard, paragraph 076 of the national Planning Practice Guidance (Reference ID: 41-076-20190509) addresses how a strategic policy is determined. It provides a list of what are considered to be ‘useful considerations’ in this matter. The Forum considers that the WCP should present the justification for why each policy in the WCP is strategic or non-strategic.

### **Specific comments**

The strategic nature of the WCP and its approach to policies is supported generally since it is supplemented in the KNA by the KNP. The KNP provides a range of detailed policies specific to the character and function of the neighbourhood area.

The Implementation and Monitoring section of the WCP states that additional information, including technical notes and supplementary planning documents (SPDs) will be prepared to implement the policies effectively. It lists the areas that these notes and SPDs will cover and in this regard, we see that the Local Development Scheme (June 2019) timetables their adoption in 2020. The Forum welcomes this timetable and considers it important that these documents are adopted in accordance with this timetable, even if the adoption of the WCP were to be delayed. The SPDs cover a number of matters of considerable relevance to the KNP and their prompt adoption will enable the Forum to come to a view on the potential application of these SPDs in site specific circumstances.

A number of the evidence base documents underpinning the draft WCP were published during the consultation period giving stakeholders a short time to review them in the context of the proposed policies. This includes key documents of relevance to the Knightsbridge area including: the building height study; views background paper; town centre health checks report (including the Knightsbridge International Centre); and others. We also understand that a site allocations Development Plan Document (‘DPD’) will be forthcoming which we would like to have seen published alongside the draft

policies for comment e.g. for the sake of consistency between the two and to allow a more detailed understanding of the Council's intentions for allocated sites including the Hyde Park Barracks land.

As you will be aware, the KNP promotes the production of a planning brief for the Hyde Park Barracks land to provide a framework and insight for the development of the site, should it come forward. A site allocations DPD would perform a similar (albeit perhaps less detailed) role in informing the development of individual sites. As such, the Forum would welcome early engagement with WCC about the content of a DPD in relation to the Hyde Park Barracks to ensure continuity and consistency with the ambitions of the KNP. The Forum is keen that the DPD document should be published as soon as possible and subject to an appropriate consultation period.

Although it is not stated, the Forum understands that the saved Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policies will be superseded on adoption of the new City Plan. This should be made clear in the WCP. It would be helpful if the WCP could make explicit reference to this and how it relates to other parts of the development plan which make reference to these saved policies. In particular, the loss of UDP saved policy DES9 ('Conservation areas') has implications for KNP Policy KBR5 ('Local buildings and structures of merit') which makes reference to that saved policy. The WCP should provide a table showing which WCP policies supersede which saved policies and make clear that other policies in neighbourhood plans which refer to saved policies should instead apply the relevant WCP policy in their interpretation.

Additionally, the Council has not published its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for some time so it is difficult to understand how successfully the current adopted policy framework is being delivered e.g. in the context of housing delivery where the Council is now proposing a significant increase in its annual housing delivery target beyond the draft London Plan.

Objective 4 of the WCP relates to broadening the cultural offer of the city which the Forum supports. However, it is considered that it is more appropriate to put in place measures that anticipate the impacts of clusters of uses rather than to only manage them once they arise, irrespective of what they may be. **The Forum recommends that in Objective 4 of the WCP, the word 'managing' is replaced with 'minimising' (page 24).**

The Forum is also pleased to see that many of the policies of the WCP support the achievement of the 10 objectives in the KNP. Under each of the KNP's individual objectives, the Forum wishes to make the following representations:

***Objective 1: Enhance the special character of Knightsbridge including its architecture, heritage, townscape and trees while recognising its status internationally as a prime residential neighbourhood and centre for retail, culture and education***

The Forum supports WCP Policy 42 ('Building height') given that it very clearly defines what tall buildings are (clause B) and the areas where they may be acceptable (and therefore the areas where they are not generally acceptable). In particular, it makes clear under what limited circumstances development outside of the identified areas would be acceptable (clause F). Please strengthen clause F by requiring any proposals to clearly demonstrate neighbourly development.

Policies 39 ('Design principles') and 41 ('Townscape and architecture') are supported in terms of the parameters they set out for development proposals to have regard to prevailing scale, character, heights, materials, degree of uniformity and other considerations. The Forum welcomes this as an appropriate framework to ensure that the special character of Knightsbridge is maintained and enhanced in line with

the objectives, policies and aspirations of the KNP including the site specific policies for the Hyde Park Barracks land.

It is disappointing however that a few evidence documents are still missing such as the affordable housing and planning obligations SPD and the site allocations DPD.

***Objective 2: Improve the public realm and enhance and restore heritage features***

WCP Policy 40 ('Westminster's heritage') is supported, particularly clause L regarding the recognition of non-designated heritage assets and the fact that they can be identified through neighbourhood plans. The Forum also supports the clarification in paragraph 40.27 that 'non-designated heritage assets' include 'local buildings of merit' as identified in KNP Policy KBR5 ('Local buildings and structures of merit'). The Forum does however consider that WCP Policy 40 and the reasoned justification at paragraph 40.27 and 40.28 fails to reflect a key issue that the evidence base recommended should be addressed in policy. Page 22 of the Heritage Evidence Topic Paper (June 2019) states that, "Policy should recognise non-designated heritage assets can be significant, setting out what is likely to be considered a non-designated heritage asset but also make clear that a proportionate approach to their protection will be taken".

WCP Policies 39 ('Design principles') and 41 ('Townscape and architecture') are supported, particularly the recognition of the importance of having regards to prevailing scale, heights, character, building lines etc. In turn, this will help to preserve the setting of heritage assets. The Forum also considers that the 'high level' approach in WCP Policy 41 to matters such as new shopfronts is appropriate and provides the opportunity for neighbourhood plans to provide appropriate considerations of detail on relevant design matters for particular neighbourhoods, as demonstrated in KNP Policy KBR2 ('Commercial frontages, signage and lighting').

The Forum also supports the explicit recognition in WCP Policy 41 clause H of local views and the clarification in paragraph 41.17 that these include local views in conservation area audits as well as those in neighbourhood plans. The Forum reserves the right, as part of the review of the KNP, to assess whether there are any other local views that would merit protection. In this regard the proposed commitment in the WCC Views Background Paper June 2019 to publish a set of criteria for identifying local views in neighbourhood plans (para. 5.9) is welcomed.

WCP Policy 44 ('Public realm') is generally supported, particularly the recognition of the importance of improving connectivity, legibility and permeability of the public realm. Clause B requires development to improve connectivity. In areas with busy streets such as Knightsbridge, an important function of this is ensuring that footways are sufficiently wide to accommodate the number of pedestrians, taking into account the other items which must be sited in this space, e.g. soft landscaping, street furniture, bicycle parking and bus stops. Clause B could be strengthened by explicit reference to the need to ensure sufficient widths of footway to be provided.

***Objective 3: Protect and enhance Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and enable development of the Hyde Park Barracks land as a strategic housing site***

The WCP Policy 39 ('Design principles') is supported, particularly the focus on responding to local context, putting people at the forefront of design and the promotion of sustainable design. The key consideration for the Forum is how design policies will be applied to the potential future development of the Hyde Park Barracks. The WCP continues to allocate Hyde Park Barracks as a strategic site for the delivery of new housing, with an indicative figure for the number of new homes. The plan correctly

states that the delivery of the site is subject to primary legislation (and the Ministry of Defence finding alternative stables), a point made in the KNP, which includes a detailed policy for the Barracks site. The reference made to the need to consult the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (page 191) is welcomed as are the notes on the scale of development which is to be informed by its surrounding constraints and context.

The Forum is concerned however that the indicative capacity of the Hyde Park Barracks site has been increased substantially from the currently adopted City Plan i.e. effectively doubled from 128 to 250. This could result in the site being over-developed to the detriment of the surrounding area and existing residents. The KNP contains detailed policies for the Hyde Park Barracks site which should be reflected in the emerging City Plan framework and the forthcoming site allocations DPD. For example, the KNP does not consider the site suitable for commercial uses, such as retail units, which should be directed to the Knightsbridge International Shopping Centre in line with current strategic and local policy.

The Forum assumes from the proposed policies WCP Policy 41 ('Townscape and Architecture') and WCP Policy 42 ('Building Height') that, should the Barracks site come forward for development, that proposals (while optimising the density of the site) should be sensitively designed having regard to the prevailing scale, character, external materials, architectural quality and other relevant considerations as set out in the policy framework including the neighbourly development and other policies. This approach is supported. WCP Policy 42 states that developments higher than their surroundings will only be supported when it is demonstrated that building higher is the only way to make the most efficient use of the site (which is assumed to be meeting the housing target for the site set out in the plan). Based on this assessment it is assumed that the Council's position is that the site is not a suitable location for additional tall buildings. The Forum would welcome confirmation of this position in response to this letter and through the forthcoming site allocations DPD.

By way of providing some context, much of the built environment surrounding the Hyde Park Barracks comprises a mix of historic residential terraces (generally three to four stories), mansion block type residences and mix use buildings of various ages (generally six to 10 stories).

The Forum considers that a planning brief or development opportunity framework should be prepared for the Barracks site (as encouraged in paragraph 3.16 of the KNP), to give greater certainty and clarity around the development parameters of the site, should primary legislation come forward to enable this, and to provide detailed interpretation of how planning policy will apply to the site. This is of greater importance given the revisions to the housing capacity envisaged for the site which is nearly doubled in the latest iteration of the draft WCP. Please consult the Forum on the contents of the forthcoming site allocations DPD in relation to the Hyde Park Barracks land at the earliest stage and ensure that the DPD has full regard to the detailed policies for the site as set out in the KNP.

Please note that the Forum considers that any planning brief needs to be prepared by WCC officers not a potential developer in order to ensure 'objectivity'.

#### ***Objective 4: Promote the sense of community***

WCP Policy 7 ('Managing development for Westminster's people' or 'Neighbourly development') is supported as the framework for protecting residential amenity. This is a key concern to residents in Knightsbridge. The Forum is pleased that the relevant matters covered in clauses A to G are key matters raised and addressed through the development of the KNP. **However, the Forum is concerned about the absence from Policy 7 of the requirement to minimise construction impacts as a function of delivering neighbourly development.** Whilst it is recognised that WCP Policy 34 ('Local

environmental impacts’) does seek to ensure that the negative local impact of construction is minimised, this is a major issue of concern to Knightsbridge residents and is a consistent and everyday example of development being unneighbourly. Signposting this in WCP Policy 7 would make clear its importance alongside the other matters currently listed which are then addressed in separate policies elsewhere in the document. The Forum proposes the following additional clause to Policy 7: “**Minimising demolition and construction impact.**”

The Forum notes that the WCP proposes to drop the use of ‘stress areas’, replacing this with the neighbourly development concept in WCP Policy 7. Whilst WCP Policy 7 is identified as a strategic policy, the Forum reserves the right to review the effectiveness of its application within the Neighbourhood Area and to consider the need to include the stress area concept in any review of the KNP.

### *Knightsbridge International Shopping Centre*

The Forum emphatically supports the continuing designation of the Knightsbridge International Centre (KIC) including in WCP Policy 15 (‘Town centres, high streets and the CAZ’) and its precise geographic area. We also strongly support WCC’s ‘light touch’ approach to the KIC i.e. not including a specific ‘Spatial Development Priority’ for Knightsbridge in the WCP that might clash with or otherwise undermine the KNP.

The Forum’s main objectives in this regard are to ensure that the WCP:

- i. uses the most accurate and up-to-date evidence and analysis of the area;
- ii. supports – even ‘supercharges’ – the policies and objectives in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan and does not undermine or detract from them;
- iii. enhances the International Shopping Centre’s reputation and standing through the provision of new retail uses and high quality design (see KNP Policy KBR 17). The area must remain unique;
- iv. requires that ‘The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan must also be consulted’ (as the WCP properly does for the Hyde Park Barracks on page 191); and
- v. unambiguously defines the geographical area and its ‘name’ in a manner that provides continuity and is fully consistent with the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan.

The Forum is also keen to support, in principle, the ‘Business Improvement District’ that is being considered for Brompton Road. Our support for the BID is conditional on: governance of the BID (including one or more legal entities underpinning it); its alignment to the objectives and policies in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan; and the avoidance of duplication of responsibilities.

Equally, the recognition in paragraph 15.15 that the Knightsbridge International Centre’s retail provision should be predominantly for ‘comparison shopping’, with convenience shopping creating servicing issues, is supported. In order to avoid any confusion, it is important that the WCP confirms that the term ‘International Centre’ replaces ‘International Shopping Centre’ as used in the adopted City Plan 2016 and uses it consistently. The Forum considers this important because KNP Policy KBR7 uses the term ‘International Shopping Centre’ (as does the Health Check Report referred to below).

However, the Forum is concerned that the WCP does not fully recognise the threats and opportunities for Knightsbridge’s continuing role as an International Centre. We are concerned, for example, that Appendix 2: Individual Town Centre Health Check Reports for the Knightsbridge ‘International

Shopping Centre’ provides an overly simplistic and broad-brush sketch of the area that fails even to mention (as far as we can see) the Knightsbridge Evidence Base Document:

[https://www.knightsbridgeforum.org/media//documents/kebd\\_december\\_2018\\_141218\\_website.pdf](https://www.knightsbridgeforum.org/media//documents/kebd_december_2018_141218_website.pdf)

For example, the Health Check Report:

- i. shows the sharp drop in the number of comparison and convenience A1 units by year (particularly in the period 1997 to 2002) [Figure 4.5] but does not seem to identify it as serious a problem (as the Forum and the local community do);
- ii. correctly states that ‘the public realm was found to be of low quality and inadequate for the number of people using the centre every day’ [4.431];
- iii. states that ‘Cleanliness was judged to be average along the centre’ [4.432] when the photos it shows demonstrate the opposite i.e. dirty pavements. We are surprised that the ‘little evidence of litter’ was found during the site visit when it is a nearly constant problem because of the numbers of visitors and activity in the area;
- iv. states that ‘The area feels safe and secure’ [4.432] when there are [highly organised gangs of] beggars operating in the area and other pressures typical of busy international centres;
- v. states that the ‘western portion of the centre appears also to cater for workers and residents’ [4.432] when this detracts from the International Shopping Centre and is one of the worst parts of the KNA for problematic cafes and street clutter; and
- vi. needs to be updated because we have seen the loss of the Burberry shop at Scotch House Corner and its replacement by a number of tatty shops more akin to the ‘Trocadero’ in Soho than an international shopping centre.

All in all, we request respectfully that the Health Check Report addressing the Knightsbridge International Shopping Centre is revised to better reflect the tone, facts and assessment in the Knightsbridge Evidence Base Document, Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan and Knightsbridge Management Plan and updated, of course, to 2019. These documents can all be found here: <https://www.knightsbridgeforum.org>. We would be pleased to meet your consultants to discuss our concerns with them.

The Forum is concerned by the broad or permissive approach in WCP Policy 1 (‘Westminster’s spatial strategy’) clause A.6 which could be interpreted mischievously. Please add at the end of Policy 1 A6:

**“...as multifunctional commercial areas to shop, work and socialise provided that this evolution does not undermine their role in the town centre hierarchy or diminish the assets which underpin that role.”**

WCP Policy 15 clause C3, relating to no more than two non-A1 uses consecutively in the International Centre is supported in principle, with the tightening of the restriction (from no more than three consecutive non-A1 uses) helping to address the proliferation of cafés, a significant concern in Knightsbridge. However, this should not be used as justification to welcome in retailers which would detract from Knightsbridge’s status as an International Centre with a world-class shopping offer.

It will also be important that uses are properly monitored as a review undertaken to inform the KNP identified a number of discrepancies between the active use and that for which it had planning permission. The town centre health check reports published as part of the evidence base during the current consultation period includes, for example, a land use map dated 2017 – which is already two years out of date and should be sense checked against neighbourhood plans, planning applications or



appeals that have taken place over the last couple of years. It should also be clarified whether the land use analysis captures what is the ‘lawful use’ of the unit or the ‘observed use’ as assessed through any site visits or data collection.

The inclusion of clause E of Policy 15 introduces the possibility of comprehensive redevelopment in retail centres e.g. of the former Burberry store at the eastern end the Knightsbridge International Centre. Whilst comprehensive proposals may be suitable for other centres, it is considered that this would place its function as a world-class retail centre under threat.

**The Forum is concerned about the encouragement of ‘meanwhile uses’ for all retail centres in Policy 15 clause F and markets in all retail centres in Policy 15 clause G.** Again, whilst this may be appropriate in many centres, the encouragement of unrestricted temporary uses or street markets could significantly undermine the world-class retail reputation of the Knightsbridge International Shopping Centre.

The Forum is concerned about the potential implications of WCP Policy 15 clause H. The whole of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area is within the CAZ, with large parts of this area being residential or fulfilling a particular function which contributes towards the character of the area e.g. the Strategic Cultural Area, university or student accommodation. The potential for any number of town centre uses to be permitted in these areas even if they are likely to create ‘harm’ (the threshold being ‘significant harm’) to local character or residential amenity is of concern.

As mentioned above, the Forum is concerned about the inclusion of commercial uses as an acceptable use on the Hyde Park Barracks allocated site – both in terms of the effect on residential amenity and also by potentially undermining the neighbouring International Shopping Centre (to which new commercial uses should be directed along with other designated shopping areas).

**The Forum is concerned about WCP Policy 15 clause H. The CAZ designation covers a wide area and across this area its activities fulfil a wide range of roles. A blanket approach to certain types of use is not appropriate. Town centre uses should be directed to the defined town centres within the CAZ.**

To address the above concerns, the Forum requests that the following wording is added as policy wording or reasoned justification in the WCP:

**“Key principles for development in the Knightsbridge International Centre are contained in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan. Its specific policies reflect the KIC’s unique characteristics which make it a world-class shopping destination and for which general town centre policies are not appropriate. It is important that, in order to maintain and enhance its status, that Knightsbridge’s world-class retailers are retained and not lost to comprehensive or mixed development which could result in fewer comparison retailers offering commoditised goods and brands.”**

*Other policies*

WCP Policy 44 (‘Public realm’) clause C seeks to prevent kiosks or structures from which goods will be sold being sited in the public realm. This is supported. Also supported is clause D which recognises that tables and chairs on the highway not only have the potential to obstruct pedestrian movement but also to harm local amenity and to impede refuse storage and street cleansing.

WCP Policy 17 ('Food, drink and entertainment uses') clause B protects pubs by requiring an 18-month marketing period before they can be converted to an alternative use. This clause is supported but it would be helpful if the reasoned justification for the policy clarified what constitutes evidence of 'appropriate marketing'. In this regard, the Forum considers this to be as described in KNP Policy KBR18, i.e. 'marketing at a reasonable market value and other terms for drinking establishment floorspace that are comparable to the market values for drinking establishment floorspace in that general locality.'

Clause F of WCP Policy 17 seeks to limit the impacts of shisha smoking on residential amenity, which is a significant issue in Knightsbridge. This is supported.

Clauses D and E of WCP Policy 17 address the impact of hot food deliveries on the balance of uses in an area and on residential amenity. They are both supported.

The Forum supports WCP Policy 18 ('Community infrastructure and facilities') and its protection for existing community uses.

The Forum supports WCP Policy 34 ('Local environmental impacts), particularly in respect of clauses F and G on construction impacts and clause C on noise and vibration.

***Objective 5: Protect and enhance existing residential amenity and mix***

**The Forum is concerned about WCP Policy 8 ('Stepping up housing delivery') because it does not retain explicitly the restriction in Knightsbridge on the conversion of single dwelling houses to more than one unit (UDP Saved Policy H5: 'Providing a range of housing sizes')**. The Forum does not consider that this change in approach from the 2018 City Plan Informal Consultation has been justified. The Forum considers that, in light of the clear statement at paragraph 5.6 of the Westminster Housing Needs Analysis (June 2019) Report about the continuing need for family-sized homes, WCP Policy 8 should be more explicit about the expectation that family housing will not be divided into multiple units. This will ensure a comprehensive policy approach to family housing that encourages new provision and protects the existing stock of these properties. As currently worded, clause C of WCP Policy 8 is ambiguous about this.

The recognition of the importance of providing affordable student accommodation and protecting it from change of use in WCP Policy 11 ('Housing for specific groups') clauses H and I is supported.

Clause H in WCP Policy 15 ('Town centres, high streets and the CAZ') gives explicit recognition to the need to balance new town centre uses with residential amenity and local character. This is supported.

***Objective 6: Foster an environment that enables our world-class cultural and educational institutions to thrive as centres of learning and innovation within a flourishing community***

The continued designation and recognition of the value of the Strategic Cultural Area (SCA) is supported as a key function of the Knightsbridge Area.

The Forum supports:

- the recognition in Policy 1 of the Knightsbridge SCA and the protection of cultural uses to retain the character and function of the area;

- the recognition in Policy 11 clauses H and I of the importance of providing affordable student accommodation and protecting it from change of use;
- the protection in Policy 16 for arts and cultural uses in the Knightsbridge SCA; and
- the inclusion in Policy 19 of the new policy to support the improvement and expansion of Westminster's world class higher educational institutions.

The Forum wishes to emphasise the importance of WCC working in partnership with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to achieve a shared vision for the Knightsbridge SCA that is consistent across the wider arts and science district laid out by the Commissioners of the Great Exhibition and the aims of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan for that unique area.

***Objective 7: Enable active travel and personal mobility and***

***Objective 8: Encourage superb public transport***

The Forum supports the focus in WCP Policy 25 ('Sustainable transport'), Policy 26 ('Walking and cycling') and Policy 27 ('Public transport and infrastructure') on pedestrians, cycling and public transport. **However, the Forum is concerned about the removal of the term 'active travel' as an underlying principle of its movement policies, since the draft WCP was consulted on in 2018.** The Forum is therefore of the view that the overarching role of WCP Policy 25 ('Sustainable transport') must be to explicitly prioritise active travel opportunities.

Clause C3 of Policy 25 lacks clarity in what it is seeking to achieve. The Forum proposes that the wording of Policy 25 clause C3 is replaced with the following wording:

**"...both in terms of traffic and congestion, whilst not worsening the excessive levels of on-street parking whilst tackling poor air quality and not worsening the excessive levels of on-street parking."**

The Forum supports more explicit reference in WCP Policy 26 ('Walking and cycling') to major development enabling and making contributions towards the delivery of specific current and planned cycle routes and to footway widening.

The Forum questions the assertion in paragraph 28.8 of the WCP that, "Cars provide a method of convenient transportation and release from the stress of living in central London. This is particularly relevant for young families where the cost of public transport and the logistical implications of using these forms of travel can be a prohibiting factor for many families moving to and staying in Westminster." The Forum would wish to see the evidence for this statement cited because it is considered unlikely that the cost of purchasing, servicing, refuelling, taxing and parking a vehicle in Central London would be less than the cost of using public transport. The Forum is concerned that, when compared with the WCP objectives, this unsubstantiated statement provides an inconsistent message in respect of the focus on active travel.

The Forum also supports WCP Policy 29 ('Highway access and management') in requiring sufficient provision of space for taxis and coaches, WCP Policy 30 ('Freight and servicing') in minimising impacts of servicing and deliveries and WCP Policy 31 ('Technological innovation in transport') in rolling out electric vehicle charging.

The Forum supports the requirements of WCP Policy 28 ('Parking') and specifically the alignment of the maximum residential parking standards set out in Appendix 2 with the draft new London Plan,

requiring the CAZ to be car-free in Knightsbridge. It also supports the prioritisation of ‘alternative kerbside uses’ over private vehicles.

The Forum considers that the requirement in clause E of WCP Policy 28 for major developments to contribute towards electric vehicle and other low emission vehicle infrastructure should be extended to all new development. The nature of development in Westminster and particularly in Knightsbridge is that there are many small developments which would not be required to contribute. Yet these developments, in combination, will be creating a significant and growing demand on the electric and low emission vehicle infrastructure in the area, but will not have been expected to contribute towards its expansion.

***Objective 9: Encourage superb utilities and communications infrastructure***

The Forum supports WCP Policy 20 (‘Digital infrastructure, information and communications technology’) and the requirement to make on-site provision for telecommunications equipment in major commercial developments. It is considered that this should also apply to major residential developments as well, which also require significant amounts of such provision to be made.

Whilst the Forum recognises that some communications infrastructure will need to be sited in public places such as on streets, it is important that it is contained in well designed units that are sympathetic to the local character of the area. This is particularly important in conservation areas. The Forum requests that such a requirement is included in clause D to WCP Policy 20.

There is a minor typographical error in Policy 34 (‘Local environmental impacts’) clause. The word ‘welling’ should presumably be replaced with ‘well-being’.

Whilst the general intention of WCP Policy 36 (‘Flood risk’) is supported, the Forum is concerned that it restricts the best and most effective flood infrastructure from being provided and has been used by some developers to comply with minimum standards (within the very broad range of measures categorised by Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)). Clause I requires that SuDS to be provided for all development. However, as noted in Policy KBR33 of the Neighbourhood Plan, there may be better solutions which can come forward yet WCP Policy 36 would restrict their adoption. For example, please see Imperial College London’s work on sustainable urban water management:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/environmental-and-water-resource-engineering/research/urban-water/>

**Please therefore amend clause I of WCP Policy 36.** The Forum considers that Policy 36 needs to be more ambitious and therefore should be amended to state that the highest feasible standards of SuDS or better should be adopted by all development. The Forum proposes the following amendment to Policy 36 clause I:

**“New development must incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) or better to alleviate...”**

**The Forum is also concerned about the narrow criteria in WCP Policy 36 clause B for requiring a site-specific flood risk assessment (FRA).** Whilst the criteria include large sites by area, they do not take account of large developments on small sites which are likely where tall buildings are proposed. In this regard, the Forum is aware that only part of the Hyde Park Barracks site – which totals 1.46 hectares – may be developed. If this area totals less than one hectare then it would not require an FRA, despite potentially creating a new development of some 200 dwellings. The Forum also notes that only

a small part of the western end of the site is within a Surface Water Flood Risk hotspot, this being criterion 3 for requiring an FRA. The Forum therefore considers it necessary that an additional criterion for an FRA is included in clause B which defines a minimum number of dwellings or floorspace that would trigger an FRA.

***Objective 10: Be an exemplar in sustainable city living by complying fully with international laws, standards, guidelines and best practice***

The Forum is grateful to WCC for amending WCP Policy 33 ('Air Quality') from the previous draft of the WCP to include 'at least' in Part (C) and make other changes.

Please make a few technical corrections:

- Paragraph 33.1 This paragraph conflates binding legal limits and health guidelines. Please change the last two sentences to read: 'Air pollution levels in large areas of the city exceed current guidelines, limit values, objectives and targets set by the EU and/or World Health Organisation'.
- Paragraph 33.4. please insert the word 'minimum' i.e. 'The Air Quality Neutral **minimum** requirement... ' to avoid ambiguity.
- Paragraph 33.6. Please delete 'appropriately' to avoid creating a 'loophole' that may be abused.

Please ensure that the WCP is updated to reflect the latest version on 'Policy S11 Improving air quality' in the Mayor of London's New London Plan published on 15 July 2019:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/examination-public-draft-new-london-plan/examination-public-news>

For example:

- [all] development proposals **must be at least** air quality neutral (Policy S11 B 2a.);
- Development proposals in Air Quality Focus Areas or that are likely to be used by large numbers of people particularly vulnerable to poor air quality, such as children or older people, which do not demonstrate that design measures have been used to minimise exposure **should be refused** (Policy S11 B2d);
- Where this policy refers to '**existing poor air quality**' this should be taken to include areas where legal limits for any pollutant or World Health Organisation [guidelines] for particulate matter are already exceeded and areas where current pollution levels are within 5% of these limits (paragraph 9.1.2A).

The Forum encourages WCC to allow and encourage developers to go further than the New London Plan. Please insert an additional (new) Policy 33 (B) to say:

**"B. Development plans and proposals should aim to achieve Zero Local Emissions."**

The Forum has proposed a definition of ZLE in its glossary:

[https://www.knightsbridgeforum.org/media//documents/knp\\_made\\_version\\_december\\_2018\\_131218\\_website.pdf](https://www.knightsbridgeforum.org/media//documents/knp_made_version_december_2018_131218_website.pdf)

Existing paragraphs B, C and D would be renumbered.

Please add a new 5<sup>th</sup> point to AIR QUALITY ASSESSMENTS in Policy 33 ('Air quality') that states:

**"5. All areas of poor air quality."**

Please consider the latest evidence on air pollution levels and health impacts including:

[https://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/site/exceedence?site\\_id=KC3](https://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/site/exceedence?site_id=KC3)

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-atmospheric-emissions-inventory--laei--2016>

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/public-health-outcomes-framework/data#page/3/gid/1000043/pat/6/par/E12000007/ati/102/are/E09000002/iid/30101/age/230/sex/4>

Last but not least, the Forum is concerned that the references to 'reduce exposure' in the WCP and new London Plan could be mis-understood to mean solely the 'exposure' of occupants of buildings. This cannot be the correct intention since exposure and air pollution concentrations need to be reduced for everyone inside or outside a development. Please delete 'reduce exposure to' in Policy 33 A or explain the intention more fully in the reasoned justification below.

The Forum is grateful to WCC for amending WCP Policy 37 ('Energy') from the previous draft of the WCP.

Please: allow, not require, connections to existing heat networks or a local Decentralised Heat Network since these need also to achieve or approach zero air emissions over the lifetime of the WCP; and make clear in reference to BREEAM or equivalent performance standards that these should not incentivise small scale combined heat and power or worsen local air quality.

The Forum encourages WCC to be more ambitious than the Major and to have policies that will enable the changes that are needed urgently to mitigate and adapt to climate change and comply fully with World Health Organisation guidelines for air quality inside and out.

Please therefore review and amend WCP Policies 33 and 37 after reading the KNP's policy and justification wording on KBR34 'Healthy air' and KBR35 'Renewable energy'. It is important that the WCP enables a rapid shift to zero air emissions and encourages it over the lifetime of the WCP. Please see the Forum's response to the most recent consultation on the New London Plan (attached) for further evidence in relation to these policies.

WCP Policy 39 ('Design principles') clause E requires applicants to demonstrate how sustainable design principles have been incorporated and requires BREEAM performance standards to be met. The Forum supports the principle of this clause. However, in meeting sustainability standards, consideration of wider environmental impacts should be made. For example, the incorporation of small scale combined heat and power (CHP) can have negative impacts for air quality and should not be incentivised through striving to achieve a high BREEAM score. **The Forum is concerned about the sole requirement of WCP Policy 39 clause E being the achievement of BREEAM "Excellent" or equivalent standard. The policy should require that 'Excellent or better is achieved without worsening air quality'.** The KNP has adopted this approach in Policy KBR40 Db. Please note that the Forum considers BREEAM is not sufficient in itself to achieve true sustainability or circular economy objectives for the built environment.

The Forum supports WCP Policy 38 ('Waste management') but considers it important that clause A makes reference to 'recycling' as well as waste storage. Recycling material is collected and managed by the waste authority and in this regard, it is important that it is identified as a particular stream of waste management. This should be complemented by reference to 'recycling' in clause G of WCP Policy 7 ('Managing development for Westminster's people').

WCP Policy 35 ('Green infrastructure') is generally supported, particularly the specific reference to the greening of buildings e.g. green roofs and walls, which will help to enhance biodiversity and mitigate the urban heat island effect. **However, in light of the NPPF requirement for development to demonstrate a net biodiversity gain, the Forum objects to the words 'wherever possible' in WCP Policy 35 clause A.** Given the importance of enhancing biodiversity as a key building block of addressing climate change, a robust policy approach is needed to ensure that development properly addresses this at the application stage. This could be strengthened by the amendment of WCP Policy 35 clause A to read:

**'The Council will protect and enhance the city's green infrastructure to maximise its environmental, social and economic value. Development will contribute to this by securing net biodiversity gain.'**

The Forum supports the requirement in clause E of WCP Policy 35 that development enhances the quality and range of uses in the Royal Parks. However, this must not have any detrimental impact on their function as very high quality open spaces and the Forum considers that wording to this effect should be included in clause E.

The Forum welcomes the explicit addition to WCP Policy 35 of the need to protect valuable trees. However, the Forum still has serious concerns about a number of related matters including:

- the WCP seems to make no mention of the concept of 'urban forests' which are the primary focus, thread and priority in the latest version of the New London Plan (Policy G7 Trees and woodlands) (15 July 2019);
- the WCP is unduly prescriptive in stating that "open spaces and their quality, heritage and ecological value, tranquillity and amenity will be protected" (Policy 35C). For example, as explained below, a rigid focus on keeping the 'heritage' (in Policy 35C) or 'historic' (e.g. in paragraph 35.13) benefits of existing trees may result in their widespread or total, 'overnight' loss through climate change, disease and/or pests; and
- the WCP is not consistent with the Mayor's emphasis on the importance of the London Tree and Woodland Framework and Supplementary Planning Guidance which in turns emphasises the need in formulating policy aims and objectives to include "A statement of intent that in managing the trees under its control the Council will take account of the predicted impacts of climate change to ensure a continuation of large scale canopy cover with a diverse species and age range".

<https://ltoa.org.uk/documents-1/tree-strategy-guidance/47-jim-smith-london-trees-and-woodland-framework-manager/file>

The predicted impacts of climate change include: disease; drought; flooding and heavy rain; pests; temperature; and weather generally.

In the Forum's opinion, current policy and reasoned justification wording in the WCP fail to acknowledge the vital role that trees will play in mitigating the impact of the changing climate over the

plan period. **For example, the Forum is concerned about weakness of the requirement to ‘encourage’ the planting of trees to optimise canopy cover (WCP Policy 35 clause I).** Moreover, development proposals should explicitly be required to consider this as part of any application and, if it is not possible to increase the tree cover as part of that development, to clearly demonstrate why.

**The Forum objects to the failure of WCP Policy 35 to address and avoid the potentially catastrophic effect of the loss of London plane or other trees due to climate change, diseases or pests.** Currently in London the plane tree predominates, a species that has been devastated by ‘plane wilt’ in other cities such as Lyon, France. The Food and Environment Research Agency, part of Defra, published a Rapid Pest Risk Analysis within the UK Plant Health Risk Register for the plane tree in 2013<sup>1</sup>. It revealed that London plane trees in urban environments are particularly at risk with a tenth of all London trees in Greater London being plane trees. It is not a case of simply replacing these trees with other species but making sure that over time a more diverse tree population is developed that is more able to survive in a changing climate whilst maintaining the attractiveness of the tree cover in Knightsbridge. This could include other species such as chestnut, catalpa, quercus and lienco. WCP Policy 35 must recognise this and embrace a wider set of criteria than just ‘optimis(ing) the city’s canopy cover’ (which could subsequently be decimated by disease).

Please see also the Forum’s ‘Best practice guidance on Tree Management Plans’:

<https://www.knightsbridgeforum.org/best-practice-guidance-tree-management-plans/>

To address the Forum’s concerns, Clause I of WCP Policy 35 should be reworded to say:

**‘In order to minimise the impact of climate change and maximise canopy cover, new developments are required, wherever possible, to plant trees and improve the urban forest. Any trees that are planted must be of a diverse range of species and ages that are expected to survive the threats of climate change, diseases and pests over the longer term.’**

The Forum considers that the WCP’s Green Infrastructure policy does not conform to the latest version of the New London Plan in its approach to trees. Please therefore reword all references to ‘Open space’ and ‘Trees’ in the WCP to conform with the last version of the new London Plan.

The reference in clause B2 of WCP Policy 40 (‘Westminster’s heritage’) to the sensitive adaptation of historic buildings is supported. However, adaptation of such buildings creates the opportunity to address their environmental performance which is important because their age and design means they are often very energy inefficient. The Forum considers that such applications must demonstrate how any adaptation will maximise the improve in the environmental performance of the building.

## **Glossary in the WCP**

In the Glossary to the WCP, the Forum considers that the following amendments should be made:

- ‘Evening economy’ – the hours should be amended to 6.00pm-11.00pm.
- ‘Idling’ should refer to “vehicle’s” not “vehicles”.
- ‘Neighbourhood forum’ – should recognise that ‘cultural institutions’ can also be part of a forum as well as residents and/or businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/phiw/riskRegister/viewPestRisks.cfm?cslref=22882>



- ‘Night-time economy’ – needs to align with Policy KBR15 of the KNP for development in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area in or adjacent to residential areas, i.e. between 11.00pm and 7.00am Monday to Saturday and before 7.30am and after 10.30am on Sunday.

Last but not least, alongside the role of neighbourhood planning please make clear in the WCP its opportunity to go further than strategic policies in the WCP provided that it remains in ‘general conformity’ with them in it.

### Other points

The Forum has the following other points some of what may be typographical errors in the draft WCP:

- WCP includes many references to out-of-date or soon to be out-of-date Westminster strategic or guidance which should be updated or removed e.g. Policy 25A (page 104) and in paragraph 34.6 (page 131);
- Please amend the penultimate paragraph in the first column on page 23 because ozone air pollution, for example, is highly likely to worsen over the next 20 years if NOx emissions reduce;
- Policy 12: The Forum is concerned that, as worded, 12(B) may give a ‘blank cheque’ to developers because it is so broadly drawn and not caveated;
- Paragraph 13.2 (page 67) should refer to the draft new NICE guidance on indoor air quality. Please also see paragraph 10.7 in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan;
- Paragraph 25.6 should be corrected to read “**...have some of the worst air quality in Europe. Seeking to reduce emissions of NOx and particulate matter by discouraging motor vehicle use will contribute to reducing...**”
- Policy 27 and Figure 22 should note and include one entrance to the Knightsbridge underground station within the City of Westminster (i.e. beside the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park);
- Policy 28 A(2) should state 100% not 50% to reflect the latest government guidance;
- Policy 28 E, paragraph 28.11 and Policy 30 B should also refer to “zero tailpipe emissions” not “low emission” which is vague and open to misinterpretation;
- Paragraph 29.6 includes an odd and wrong reference to minicab offices;
- Policy 31C should say ‘**...or better**’ at the end;
- Figure 28, paragraph 35.8 and Figure 29 oddly omit the Local Green Spaces defined in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan;
- Policy 36C and E seems to be directing or excluding the possibility of basements (as Vulnerable uses) in about half of the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area (as an identified Surface Water Flood Risk Hotspot). Is this correct and if so, it might be better to propose additional assessment, mitigation and adaptation measures;
- some policy titles do not seem to tally with the actual policy wording e.g. Policy 45 ‘Security measures in the public realm’;
- the micro-recycling centre in Relton Mews should be included in Figure 33 (page 143);
- Monitoring framework point 33 should be reworded to say “Reduction of NOx and carbon dioxide emissions and particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>) and nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations against national, regional and local air quality guidelines and standards”; and
- Appendix 2 (third paragraph) should refer to 100% electric following new government guidance.

Without pre-judging the content of the Submission Version of the WCP, the Forum is keen to give evidence at the WCP Examination in Public in respect of the following matters:

- i. neighbourhood planning (Policy 1);
- ii. neighbourly development relating to construction management (Policies 7, 34 and 46);
- iii. town centres, high streets and the CAZ (Policy 15);
- iv. visitor economy (Policy 16);
- v. air quality (Policy 33);
- vi. green infrastructure including trees and the urban forest (Policy 35);
- vii. energy (Policy 37);
- viii. Westminster's heritage (Policy 40);
- ix. building height (Policy 42); and
- x. anything relating to the Royal Parks including the Hyde Park Barracks;

The Forum also has an interest generally in most of the Connections Policies and Environment Policies.

My colleagues and I would be pleased to discuss these representations with you.

Yours sincerely

Simon Birkett  
Chair  
Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum