

City Plan Examination Hearings Opening Statement

Councillor Matthew Green

September 28th 2020

It is my immense pleasure to introduce to you today to our City Plan at the start of its formal examination in public.

It is a living document that is much less prescriptive than the current, outdated framework we are seeking to replace. We already operate in the heart of a fast-moving global city, but everyone with a long-term stake in Westminster's future success will need to be highly responsive to seize the opportunities and respond to the challenges that recent events will undoubtedly generate.

This City Plan will allow us to achieve this, by enabling us to deliver planning decisions based on a plan that is right for the city and that we will be able to adapt to the emerging context. That is its strength.

But at its heart, the draft City Plan 2019-2040 is a plan for people. It sets out to deliver an ambitious strategy to make Westminster one of the best places to live, work and play.

Being a city where people want to live is at the forefront of our agenda and we have a pressing need for new affordable homes. Regeneration will invigorate both our residential and business capabilities.

We have modernised our adopted policy to capture affordable housing contributions from commercial development to address the unique affordability challenges that the heart of our city faces.

Whilst we are gearing to ensure the long-term economic success of the city, it's absolutely vital that development must never be at the expense of our heritage. Planning for Westminster must be about conservation not preservation and building tomorrow's heritage today.

We have also identified 'specialist clusters' to be protected as their character adds significantly to London's global appeal.

To build the Westminster of 2040 and beyond, sustainability must drive everything we do. This draft City Plan also defines what we need to

achieve and how innovative planning and design will achieve it. Greener living must inform the choices we make.

A stunning city encourages active travel, bringing further environmental benefits. With changing patterns of how people shop, bold action will ensure London's West End remains the jewel in our commercial crown and that the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) delivers a world-class leisure experience.

We have listened to many different groups and individuals over many months and years when forming this new look and highly effective plan. We would like to thank everyone who has given their time to share their, often quite challenging but always constructive, views with us to shape our thinking.

Finally, our over-arching City for All programme sets out how we will build vibrant communities that are greener and cleaner, supported by leading edge Smart City technologies. Our City Plan will be a key policy tool to deliver this vision and I therefore commend it to the Inspector for formal examination.

Thank you.