CITY PLAN
2019 – 2040
OUR APPROACH
Westminster is a vibrant city which offers a wealth of opportunities for its residents, its businesses and more than 25 million tourists who visit each year. City Plan 2019–2040, underpinned by our City for All vision, is a plan for all these people. It sets out an ambitious strategy to make Westminster one of the best places to live, work and play.

A city that will inspire the world.

To read the full City Plan 2019–2040 visit westminster.gov.uk/cityplan2040

1 Visit Britain – Local Authorities Combined Analysis (domestic overnight & day visits)
City Plan 2019–2040, first and foremost, 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. Not just in London or the UK, but globally.

Although this plan projects us forward to 2040, the transformation starts now. Being a city where people want to live is at the forefront of our agenda. Whilst a quarter of all homes in Westminster are social rented – a statistic of which we are very proud – we have a pressing need for new, affordable homes. Regeneration of key areas such as Victoria and Paddington, and the north west of the borough, will invigorate both our residential and business capabilities.

It's absolutely vital that development must never be at the expense of our heritage. Our new neighbourly development policy will make sure planning for Westminster is about conservation not preservation, and building tomorrow’s heritage today. Our iconic landmarks and areas of Outstanding Universal Significance form a stunning backdrop where people build lives, forge careers, and make memories. We have identified ‘specialist clusters’ to be protected; places whose character adds significantly to London’s global appeal, such as Soho, Mayfair, Harley Street and Savile Row.

Sustainability must drive everything we do. This strategy defines what we need to achieve and how innovative planning and design will achieve it. Greener living must inform the choices we make – sometimes literally. Soft landscaping and streets lined with trees, bring natural beauty and mitigate against the harmful effects of CO2. A stunning city encourages walking and cycling, bringing further environmental benefits.

As we set out to create our city of the future, there is one question that should be at the forefront of our minds in every development we undertake: Will this be an asset to people’s lives? If we can answer this positively every time, the Westminster of 2040 is one we will all want to be a part of.

Councillor Richard Beddoe
Cabinet Member for Place Shaping and Planning Westminster City Council

The policies in our City Plan have been developed following extensive engagement across many years. The plan was first adopted with just strategic policies in 2013. An extensive programme of non-statutory consultation was undertaken between 2013 and 2016 on draft policies. Since then it has been subject to three formal reviews to fast track the incorporation of some policies; this full revision to the City Plan incorporates all outstanding policies, drawing on feedback from previous consultations.

2 Interdepartmental Business Register, ONS
City for All is our vision for Westminster. Our City Plan sets out how we will achieve this through planning policy. It sets out a blueprint for how Westminster will enter the next few decades in a strong and competitive position. To achieve this, we need to be adaptable to change. To focus on an environment where communities and businesses can thrive, with plenty of open spaces to enjoy. A place where people can thrive.

A vision for homes and communities

An immediate need for affordable housing brings with it opportunity. The opportunity to build not just houses, but communities. Safe communities that bring people together. Healthy communities with green open spaces. Communities that will transform the lives of the people who live here.

A vision for the right kind of growth

Growth is the lifeblood of any city. But growth is only possible when that city is a rewarding place to live, work or visit. The right type of new developments will help us build on our remarkable legacy to create a city where people choose to be. To sustain that growth, we have to create a city where people want to stay.

A vision for a healthier and greener city

Climate change is affecting us now. Everything we plan, everything we design, everything we build should make our city a more carbon-neutral place to live. Energy-efficient transport, less waste, cleaner air. Open spaces that connect people to our natural environment, so people can enjoy more fulfilling leisure time. A healthier city is a better city.
Every city needs growth to flourish. But growth is only possible when that city is a rewarding place to live, work or visit. To achieve this, we need to respond to our changing needs. The need for affordable housing. The need for office space that reflects the way we work today and in the future. The need to maintain Westminster’s global reputation as one of the best visitor destinations in the world.

Our challenges
With a growing population comes an increased need for housing. Housing that’s affordable in a climate where there is enough employment to support a good standard of living. Growth also puts increased demands on our infrastructure and need for more commercial spaces. Space, which is already at a premium in the city. Estimates suggest a need for more than 75,000 office-based jobs alone up to 2041.

Our plan
Regeneration is key to growth. The West End Retail and Leisure Special Policy and Opportunity Areas will bring thousands of new jobs and new homes to the city. An ambitious strategy for Oxford Street will see the West End become the world’s best outdoor street shopping experience. Its unrivalled mix of flagship and branded stores, bars, restaurants, theatre and cinema will make it not just the ultimate retail destination, but the ultimate leisure destination. Westminster will offer an experience that simply can’t be matched.

Our exciting ambition will transform our waterways and north bank of the River Thames to create vibrant new hubs for business and leisure. The Grand Union Canal will be a renewed place for residents, workers and visitors to get together, enjoy nature, relax and be active. Ambitious projects to regenerate Victoria, Paddington and the north west will bring a new vitality throughout the borough.

Building communities will be given the same priority as building homes. Our residents will feel a sense of belonging and enjoy a rewarding quality of life. Our business environment will continue to attract robust, diverse investment across a wide range of sectors and a dynamic workforce eager to work here.

This is a plan that builds futures.
IMPROVED HOUSING IMPROVED LIVES

Westminster is one of London’s most densely populated boroughs, and it is a population that continues rising year on year. The average monthly rent is over £2,000 a month. The issue is further compounded by a shortage of housing stock in all tenures. Although 25% of our housing stock is available for social rent, less than 2% of homes are available to middle income households. This creates a unique problem: people who can’t afford to rent or buy in the open market, but are ineligible for social housing.

Our challenges

How affordable an area is can be easily estimated by dividing the average house price by the average household income. Based on current figures, the average salary for a Westminster resident would have to increase almost twenty five times more to reach the affordable level of buying in the borough. Renting poses a similar challenge.

We also face a changing and challenging demographic. Projections from the GLA estimate that Westminster’s population will increase by 7% by 2030 and to an unprecedented 13% by 2043.

Our plan

With these challenges comes the opportunity to transform the lives of the people who live here. Our City Plan looks at building communities where people of all ages and all abilities will be able to feel safe and have a sense of belonging. Communities that enhance quality of life, with green open spaces within a five minute reach of every household. By 2040 we will have created enough new homes to meet our targets and provide genuine housing choice for our residents.

Westminster has a significantly higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) than any other London borough, contributing £53.6 billion to the economy in Gross Value Added (GVA). That accounts for 3.2% of the UK total and more than 14% of London’s. What is good for our local economy is good for the national economy.

Our challenges

The city has some of the most affluent areas in the UK, but also some of the most deprived, and it is these areas which demand immediate attention in terms of appropriate, affordable housing for the city to flourish.

Our approach

The scale and breadth of Westminster’s economy is like no other. Ours is a business landscape where international business and finance headquarters sit shoulder to shoulder with niche creative and retail clusters. Together, these form more than 55,000 different enterprises providing around 764,000 jobs, making Westminster the largest employment centre in the UK.

With some of the world’s most iconic landmarks and districts, tourism is a main staple of our economy. Tourism in London rose 10% last year, and as we increase our offering as the world’s most vibrant city, so too will we increase our visitor numbers.

A daytime population in excess of more than one million people a day puts enormous pressure on every aspect of our infrastructure.

Our plan

With most office space concentrated in the West End, Paddington, and Victoria, City Plan 2019–2040 will bring investment to take these areas to the next level of economic growth. This is a plan that supports growth that benefits everyone, by creating an environment where people can flourish. More homes, more jobs, more opportunity. Our plan sets out to create a thriving city. With that will come a thriving economy.
As our climate changes, so does our city. Tackling these issues now is the only way we can meet future demands. For the past two decades Westminster has been designated an Air Quality Management Area; reducing our CO2 emissions to create a “Clean Air City” remains a top priority. The City Plan 2019–2040 looks at ways we can minimise negative effects on our environment in everything we do. We will be working with developers and industry partners to achieve our targets of a greener, healthier Westminster, because failing to do so simply isn’t an option.

Our challenges
The impact of climate change is more acute in Westminster. The city’s CO2 challenge goes beyond the negative carbon impact from transport. Typically, in UK cities, buildings generate around 40% of CO2. Here in Westminster, that figure is around 90%. We also face an increased flood risk, not just as a result of climate change but the nature of an intensively built environment and the use of non-porous materials in design.

Our plan
As we approach 2040, public transport will become more attractive in Westminster. New public transport services include the opening of the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail 1), which will better connect three areas of Westminster with Heathrow Airport, the City of London, Canary Wharf, and beyond, an additional 1.5 million people will be able to reach central London within 45 minutes. Crossrail 2, HS2, Heathrow expansion, and extensions and upgrades to the Northern and Bakerloo lines will increase capacity, taking the strain off an already crowded system. Our plan will help to deliver these major infrastructure schemes.

Connections
4 terminal rail stations
4 river bus terminals
32 underground stations
150+ bus routes
170 cycle hire docking stations
350 km of highway
6.4 km of canal frontage

A greener and healthier city
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Our plan
Over the next 20 years our air quality will improve dramatically. As we become less reliant on fossil fuels, it will have an impact on how we build, putting a greater emphasis on renewables.

Improvements to our infrastructure will make electric vehicles a more viable option, as people move away from petrol and diesel cars. There will be a move towards ‘active travel’ as Westminster builds on its reputation as a walking and river city to bring healthier and greener transport choices. An enhanced natural environment, upgraded pedestrian and more cycle routes will be better not just for our environment, but the people who live here.

By 2040 every resident will be within a five minute walk of a public open space and all businesses in the West End will be within a ten minute walk of a tranquil space. Through the plan, the Westminster of 2040 will be a city that’s greener, a city that’s healthier.

A greener and healthier city
5 Royal Parks account for 17% of the city
15,000 council owned trees
9,000 street trees
650 Tree Preservation Orders
8 Air Quality Focus Areas
180,000 tonnes of waste annually
Westminster is a city of contrasts. A place where the historic Palace of Westminster and the world famous Piccadilly Lights share the same iconic skyline. Our built environment is as diverse as the people who live here. We have limited land availability, but almost limitless demands. We have more than 11,000 listed building in 56 Conservation Areas, which cover 78% of our city. Conserving our design, our character, our heritage and natural environment has to be considered every step of the way. Westminster is a city that means different things to different people, but needs to work for everyone.

Our challenges
Development brings with it the opportunity to build new homes and new jobs, but that development can never compromise our heritage. Planning for Westminster must be about responsible conservation not preservation. The Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey are World Heritage sites defined as having ‘Outstanding Universal Values’, which will impact on any development within a significant surrounding area, and any area outside this zone which could also compromise the view.

It is estimated that around 75% of buildings expected to be in use in 2050 have already been built, so we need to do more to retrofit our existing buildings. Three quarters of our housing stock was built before 1915, and half before 187010.

Again we are presented with the challenge of how to adapt older buildings to serve both functional and aesthetic demands.

Our plan
Special Policy Areas like Soho, Harley Street and Mayfair each bring their own unique contribution to our city and our economy. City Plan 2019–2040 puts enhanced measures in place to keep a closer eye on development. Commercially, this will help to safeguard the livelihood of smaller, independent retailers, whilst maintaining the character and spirit of these areas for the enjoyment of generations to come.

Tighter legislation is making buildings more energy efficient. Less waste makes everyday living more affordable and reduces our carbon footprint. By placing the people at the heart of the design process, through neighbourly development, we improve the quality of life for everyone.