

WESTMINSTER NOISE STRATEGY 2010-2015



Improving the health and wellbeing of Westminster's residents, workers and visitors by reducing noise pollution and enhancing the city's sound environment.



Westminster Noise Strategy 2010-2015

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Executive summary

Westminster's sound environment is complex and noise is a serious issue, in 2008-2009 the council received 19,026 noise service requests. Compared to outer London and the rest of the UK it is relatively noisy in Westminster and the quieter night time period is shorter. Noise levels at the rear of properties tend to be significantly lower than at the front of properties.

Road traffic is the main source of noise in Westminster, and it is the biggest cause for concern amongst residents. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of residents questioned said that road traffic noise had bothered them in the last 12 months. Other major sources of noise include construction work, roadworks, neighbours, commercial premises, air conditioning units and aircraft.

The aim of the Westminster Noise Strategy is to contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of Westminster's residents, workers and visitors by reducing noise pollution and enhancing the city's sound environment. The strategy has been informed by several research studies on the city's noise environment, a review of relevant policies and legislation and results of consultation on the Noise Issues and Options Report, 2007 and the draft Noise Strategy, 2009. The strategy is shaped by four key objectives:

- **Reducing noise levels**
- **Reducing noise incidents**
- **Minimising the impact of noise on noise sensitive developments**
- **Protecting and creating tranquil areas and sounds with positive associations.**

There are four noise policies designed to help achieve these:

- 1. Noise conscious city management, planning and licensing**
- 2. Reducing transport and servicing noise and impacts**
- 3. Integrated noise management and enforcement**
- 4. Tranquil areas and positive sounds.**

The strategy also includes a series of short, medium and long-term actions that have been developed to bring about improvements in the council's operations and to facilitate lobbying and engagement with external organisations.

1 Introduction

1.1. Westminster is noisy! Noise incidents ring out over the constant hum of traffic in many parts of the city, leading to high levels of noise pollution. The council's 24 Hour Noise Team received 19,026 service requests in 2008-2009 and 29% of residents think noise problems have got worse. Noise pollution (including vibration) has serious implications for the health and wellbeing of the city's residents, students and workers. It also detracts from the experience of the city for shoppers and visitors.

Noise is most commonly defined as 'unwanted sound'. Noise is classified as a pollutant in the European Directive on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control.

1.2. In response to concerns about noise, Westminster City Partnership (WCP) made a commitment to tackle noise pollution.

Westminster City Partnership is comprised of the council, local health services, Metropolitan Police, voluntary and community sectors, and local business and regeneration partnerships.

WCP produced the Westminster City Plan 2006-2016 (Sustainable Community Strategy) which sets out a vision for Westminster's future and highlights this commitment to take action to reduce noise and protect noise sensitive and quieter areas. To enable this, the council decided to produce Westminster's first Noise Strategy, and has:

- carried out research on the city's sound environment
- established a panel of noise experts to provide advice on the strategy
- consulted with the public on the scope and detail of the noise strategy, this included formal consultation on a Noise Issues and Options Report, 2008 and formal consultation on draft of this noise strategy in summer 2009.

- 1.3. This Westminster Noise Strategy is the culmination of this work. Reducing noise and its impacts is a difficult and long term process and publication of this strategy is just the first step towards achieving the council's aim of contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of Westminster's residents, workers and visitors by reducing noise pollution and enhancing the city's sound environment.

Health and Noise

- 1.4. Improving the health and wellbeing of Westminster communities is the main reason for developing a noise strategy. Noise and sleep disturbance can have serious effects on physical and psychological health. While annoyance created by noise does not necessarily lead to more serious health issues, it can have adverse impacts on general wellbeing and reduce quality of life. Some of the specific impacts are discussed in more detail in section 2 of this strategy which presents information about the key characteristics of the city and its sound environment.
- 1.5. Health and wellbeing is therefore embedded in the noise aim set out above and underpins the noise strategy objectives and overall policy framework set out in section 3 of this strategy. This focus on mitigation, and where possible reducing the impacts of noise also underlies the detailed policies and supporting actions set out in sections 4 - 7 of this strategy. Section 8 briefly highlights the next steps and covers implementation of the strategy and provides contact information for where you can find out more or report a specific noise problem to the council.

2 Sound and the City of Westminster

Westminster in context

- 2.1 A useful and necessary starting point is to consider the current levels of noise pollution and the particular characteristics of Westminster and its sound environment. The City of Westminster is located at the heart of London, a 'world city'. Westminster is the centre of many functions of the monarchy and state: Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament and the Royal Courts of Justice are within its boundaries.
- 2.2 Westminster is also an important commercial centre containing more businesses, employees and more office floor space than any other local authority in the UK. Some 550,000 people work in the city and Westminster's businesses play a key role in the economy of London and the UK as a whole. The visitor economy is a significant contributor across the retail, hospitality, catering, and entertainment sectors. Westminster has over 39% of London's hotel accommodation and 95% of all visitors to London come to Westminster for at least part of their visit and spend over £5 billion per annum which supports tens of thousands of jobs. The city has an unrivalled range and combination of visitor attractions. As well as major museums, galleries, theatres and concert halls, Westminster is home to Europe's largest night-time economy with over 3,000 eating, drinking and nightlife establishments.
- 2.3 Westminster has exciting new architecture and a wealth of historic buildings of architectural interest. The city has retained many of its original 18th and 19th century buildings. Despite its intensely urban aspect Westminster has a rich natural environment and some 438 hectares of parkland. The five Royal Parks in the central area of the city comprise the majority of the parkland but there are also 90 hectares of small parks and garden squares including 21 listed historic squares and gardens.
- 2.4 Westminster has four mainline rail termini, 32 Underground stations and 79 bus services pass through Westminster's streets. Car ownership in Westminster has been rising for a number of years. In 1991 42% of households had a car or van available; by 2001 this had increased to 44%. In absolute terms, the number of

households with cars have risen from 43,625 households in 1991 to 49,316 in 2001. However, most drivers in Westminster are not residents and the city also has very high levels of through traffic and traffic congestion which contributes to problems of poor local air quality, noise pollution and carbon emissions.

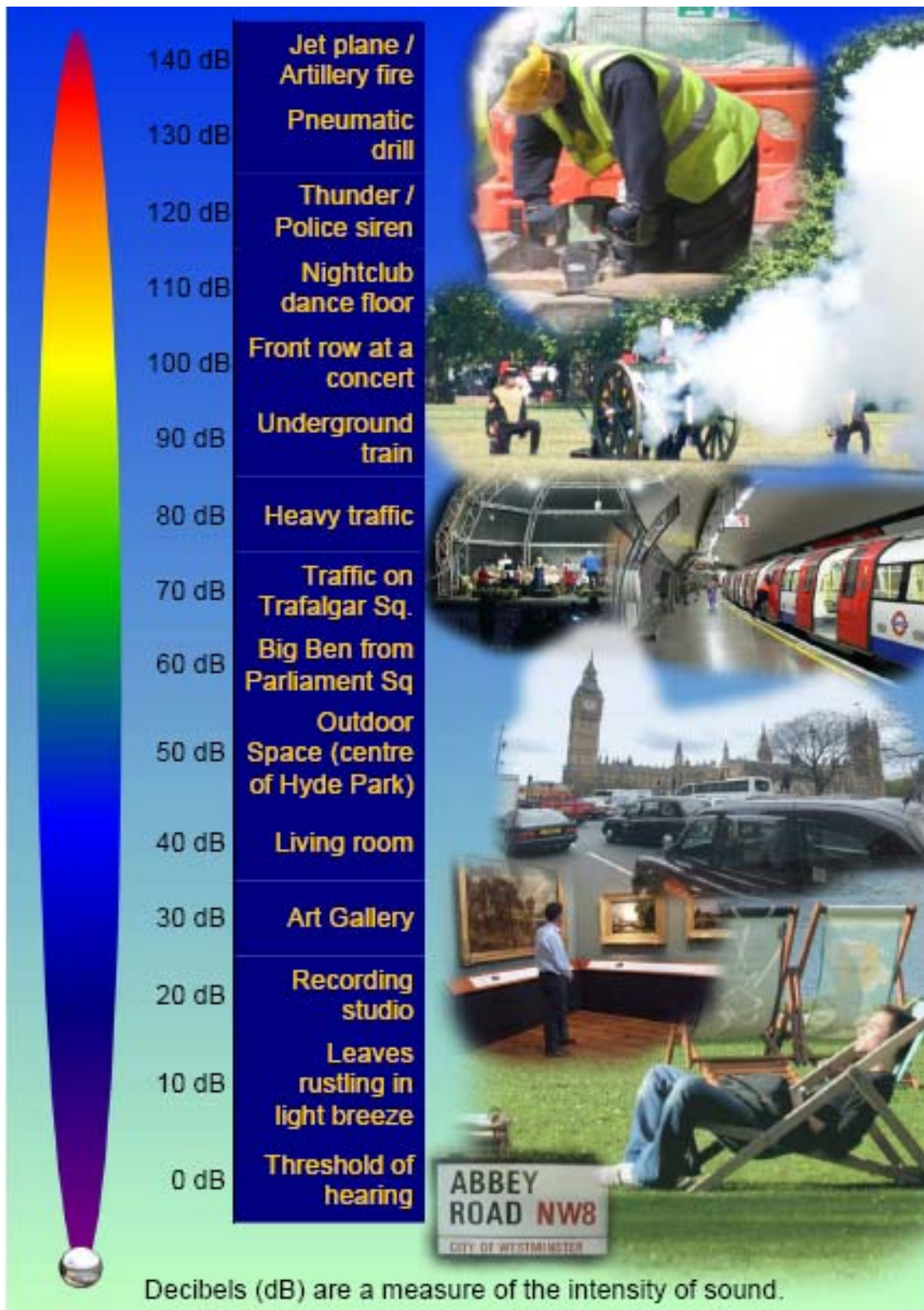
2.5 Westminster is home to a large residential population and the concentration of commercial activities, entertainment and leisure activities and political, cultural and educational institutions brings with it a large number of workers, students and visitors. The mixture of land uses and volume of vehicle and pedestrian movement combine to create a complex urban environment; the sound environment reflects this complexity.

Westminster is home to a residential community of 234,000.

The day-time population of the city rises to over one million expanded by workers, students and visitors to the city.

2.6 Gaining a better understanding of the sound environment was an important first step to developing this strategy. Some key facts about the noise environment in Westminster are set out on the next page. For more information on the studies carried out to inform the strategy see Appendix 1.

Figure 1: Typical sound levels in Westminster



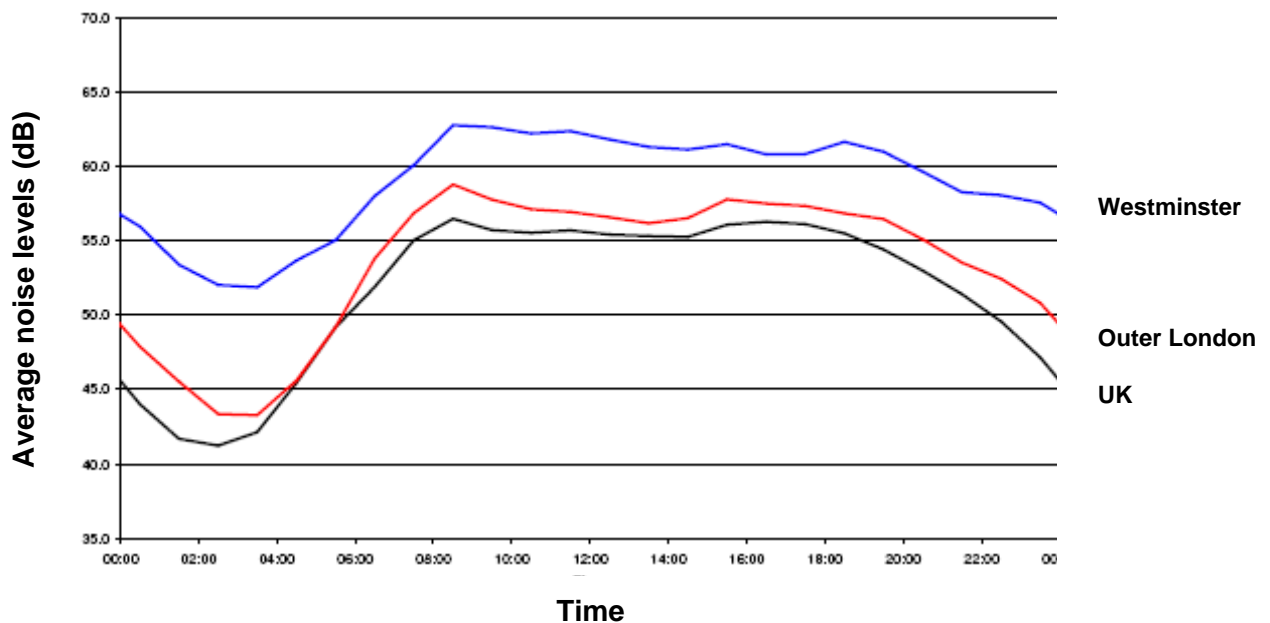
2.7 How noisy is Westminster?

- Average noise levels in Westminster are 62 **decibels (dB) LAeq** in the day (07:00 – 19:00 hrs) and 55.7dB LAeq in the night (23:00 – 07:00 hrs)¹. This is significantly higher than in outer London and in common with most urban areas exceeds the World Health Organisation guideline levels for Community Noise, 1999.

World Health Organisation guidelines say that to protect the majority of people from being seriously annoyed the sound pressure levels on balconies, terraces and outdoor living areas should not exceed 55dB LAeq for steady continuous noise in the day and 45dB LAeq and 60dB LAm_{ax} at night².

- It is relatively noisy at night in Westminster; the difference between noise levels during the day and noise levels at night is less than elsewhere.

Figure 2: Average noise levels over a 24 hour period in Westminster³



- This pattern is most pronounced in the central areas of Westminster where the noise levels tend to reduce more slowly in the early part of the night and the quieter night time period is relatively short.

¹ These figures relate to measurements taken at the front of homes outdoors as part of the Westminster Noise Measurement Survey, 2008.

² LAeq and LAm_{ax} are defined in the Glossary, section 9.

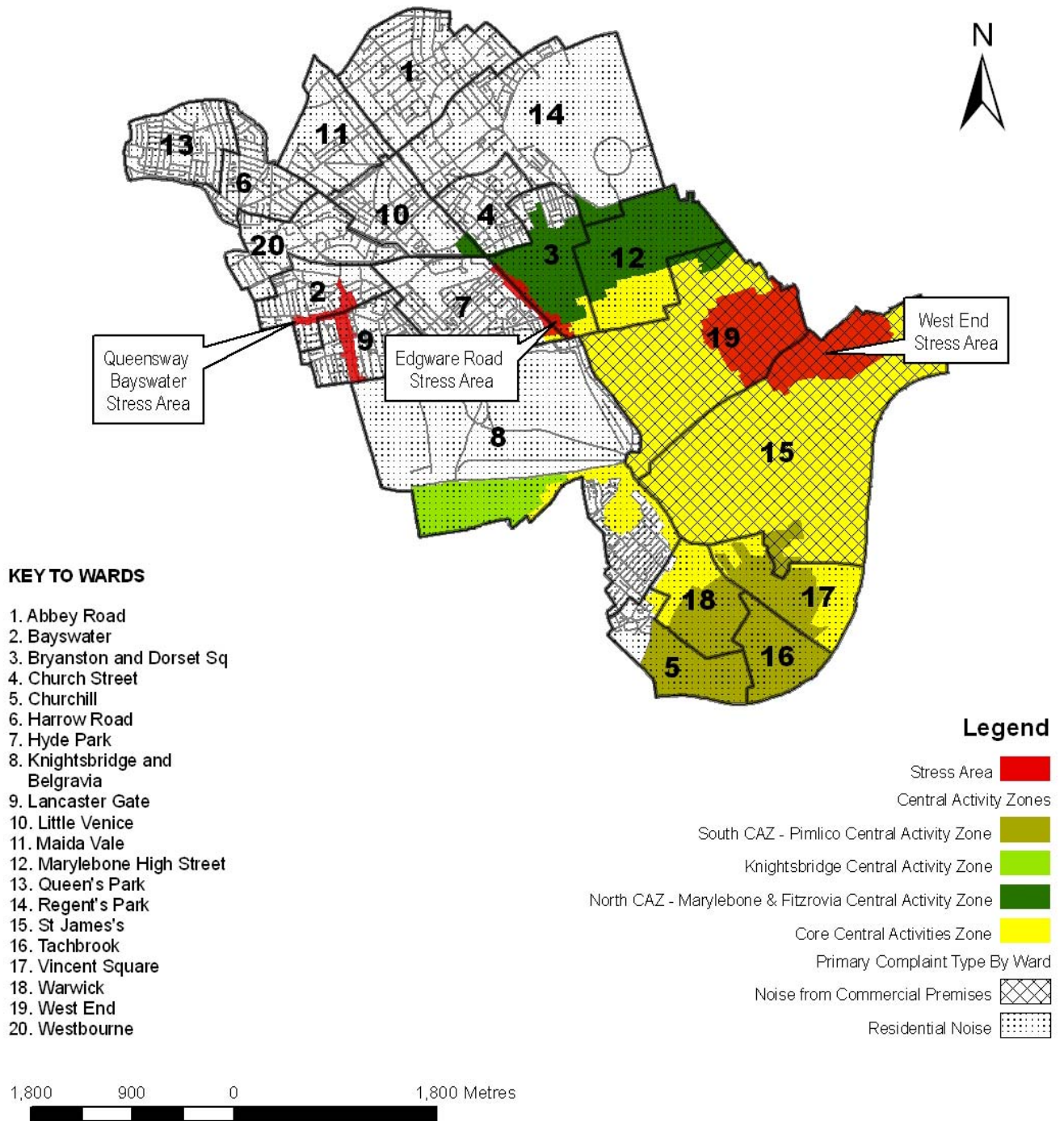
³ The Westminster figures refer to the front of homes and are taken from The Westminster Noise Measurement Survey, 2008.

2.8 What are the main noise problems in the city? ⁴

- Road traffic is the primary source of noise generated in the city and 37% of residents identified road traffic noise as bothering them in the last 12 months.
- Noise from building and construction was cited by 36% of residents as having bothered them. The proportion of residents bothered by building work is much higher than in other parts of the country; 19% considered this to be the *most* annoying type of noise (compared to 3% nationally).
- Road works were mentioned by 30% of residents and 25% said they were bothered by neighbour noise.
- Neighbour noise was highlighted as a problem throughout the city but particularly affected those living in the north-west of the city and south of the city. Residents in Harrow Road and Warwick wards were most likely to have been bothered by neighbour noise (38% and 36% respectively) and these areas have a higher concentration of flats where neighbours live in closer proximity, increasing the chances of hearing neighbours making noise. Noise from neighbours accounts for almost half of all 'service requests' (reports of noise problems) to the council's 24 Hour Noise Team. A recent survey by CityWest Homes found that noisy neighbours were the third highest problem for their tenants and leaseholders.
- Noise from commercial premises, such as pubs, restaurants or offices prompted the second highest number of service requests (18%) and this included a significant number of complaints about air conditioning units.

⁴ Source: The Westminster Noise Attitudes Survey, 2008; Noise Complaints in Westminster, 2008/2009; and Westminster Aircraft Noise Study, 2008

Figure 3: Primary Noise Service Requests by Ward⁵



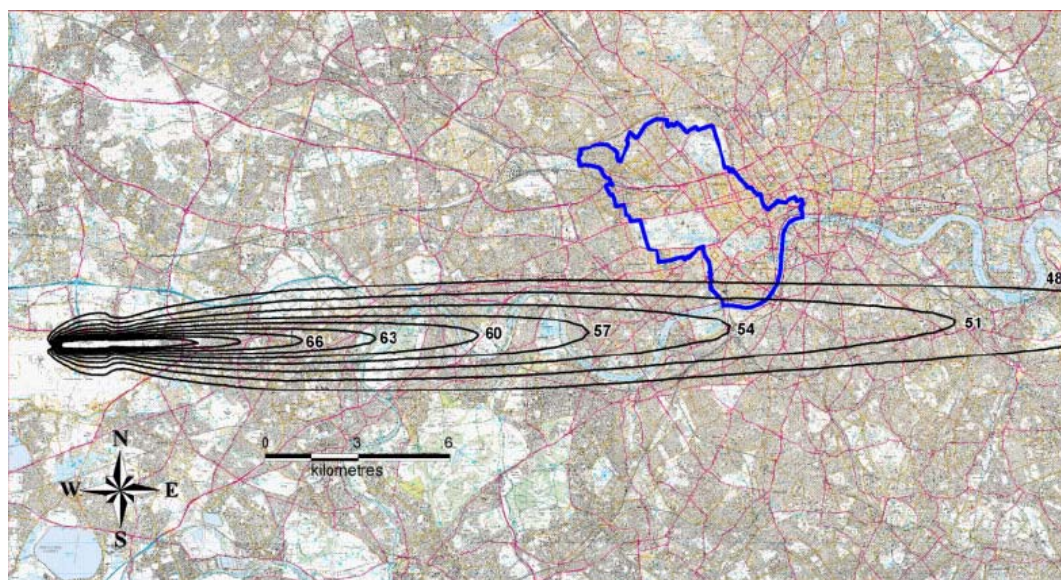
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Note: See Glossary for definitions of Central Activity Zone and Stress Areas

⁵ Source: Noise Complaints in Westminster, 2008/2009.

- While absolute levels are not that high, noise from aircraft can be experienced across the city. Noise from aeroplanes mainly affects the south of the city because of the flight path to Heathrow Airport's northern runway. Helicopters are an issue throughout the city as twin-engined helicopters, including military, police, and civilian helicopters, are able to deviate from the regulated route along the River Thames.

Figure 4: Noise levels (dB) from aeroplanes approaching Heathrow – early morning ⁶



- 21% of residents said they had been bothered by aircraft noise. These residents were mainly in the south of the city and estimates suggest 8-10% of residents in this location may be *highly annoyed* by aircraft noise.

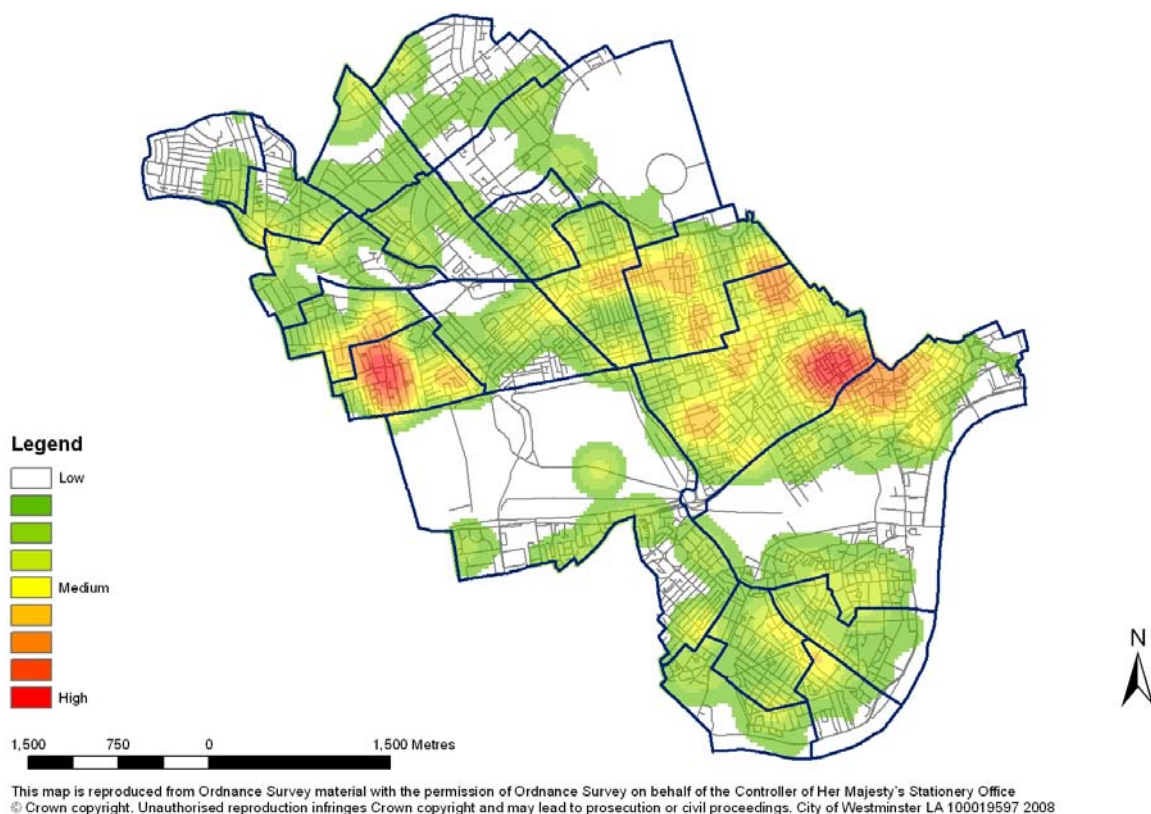
Leicester Square, Bear St and the junction with Charing Cross Road are at their noisiest from 23:00 – 04:00 hrs. This is primarily due to large groups of pedestrians as well as traffic.

- Around half of all residents in West End and St James's wards said they were affected by noise (compared to 16% in Abbey Road ward). As with other parts of the city, noise from road traffic and construction were seen as particular problems, but people living in these locations tended to be most affected by noise associated with entertainment premises. This reflects the particular concentration of commercial venues in these areas.

⁶ Typical morning 'night shoulder period' (06.00-07.00 hrs) LAeq, 1h. Source: Westminster Aircraft Noise Study, 2008.

- Noise from outdoor events (other than in parks) was mentioned by only 8% of residents overall; but 24% of residents in St James’s ward said they had been affected by this type of noise.
- The West End and St James’s wards also had the highest number of service requests to the council’s Noise Team about commercial premises (which includes noise from air conditioning and noise from pubs, clubs and bars). Soho is a particular hotspot for this type of complaint.

Figure 5: Commercial Premises Noise Complaints 2008-09⁷



2.9 When is noise a problem?

- Noise levels in Westminster reduce more slowly into the night than elsewhere in London and do not reduce as much.
- 50% of residents bothered by noise said they had been bothered between 07:00 – 19:00 hrs compared with 37% who had been bothered between 23:00 – 07:00 hrs.

⁷ Source: Noise Complaints in Westminster 2008/2009.

2.10 What impact does the sound environment have on people?

- About 58% of Westminster residents said they have been disturbed by noise when they were sleeping, 56% felt it interfered with resting and 53% with concentrating.⁸
- Noise can lead to sleep disturbance which can have detrimental effects on physical health. There is also a growing body of evidence linking environmental noise to cardiovascular disease⁹.
- The annoyance created by noise does not necessarily lead to more serious mental health issues; however, there is evidence to suggest it can lead to minor psychological problems such as tension, irritability and difficulty concentrating.¹⁰
- Exposure to noisy environments at school can adversely impact on children's learning, affecting performance in reading, attentiveness, concentration, problem solving and memory.
- Noise at very high levels can also affect hearing.

It is not necessarily the loudest sounds that cause most annoyance. Some sounds, because of their tonal quality, or because they are unpredictable can be disturbing. Noise is therefore as much about perception as measurement.

2.11 But it is not all bad noise...

- There are locations in the city that enjoy relatively quiet levels, for example, parts of Regent's Park enjoy noise levels below 55dB during the day (which is the World Health Organisation Guideline level for gardens and recreational areas). In some residential areas in the north east of the city in particular, people are less likely to be bothered by noise.



- Average noise levels at the rear of properties tend to be significantly lower than those at the front with average levels of 54.9 dB LAeq in the day and 48 dB LAeq during the night.
- Westminster is also home to some iconic sounds; the chiming of Big Ben is probably one of the most famous sounds in the world.

⁸ Source: The Westminster Noise Attitudes Survey, 2008.

⁹ Berglund B, Lindvall T, Schwela DH, Guidelines for Community Noise, World Health Organisation, 1999.

Berry B, Effect of noise on physical health risk in London, 2008. <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/strategies/noise/index.jsp>.

¹⁰ London Health Commission, Noise and Health: Making the Link, 2003.

Consultation comments

Consultation on the noise strategy and feedback highlighted a range of noise problems and issues in the city. Along with noise from road traffic, noise from air conditioning, sirens, and noise from people on the street were commonly cited.

“The council should carry out a survey of noise complaints made regarding ventilation issues and contact those who have made complaints to see if these issues have been dealt with.”

Meard Street and Dean Street Resident’s Association

“Road traffic noise: This is by far the biggest complaint from our members and badly infringes on quality of life...”

The Water Gardens Residents Association

“Noise on residential streets is incredibly disruptive at night and need not be associated with an entertainment premises nearby (it is often people shouting on their mobiles).”

Resident, Bryanston and Dorset Square

“The world is full of annoying beeps.”

Worker, Victoria

“We commend WCC for having set clear hours for building work and for late night party noise - backed by enforcement - and urge WCC to make a further step change in its new strategy that will similarly address the greatest concerns of residents.”

The Knightsbridge Association

“I am afraid that the use of sirens by the Emergency Services is hugely disruptive.”

Water Gardens Resident’s Association

3 Noise and soundscape management framework

3.1 Minimising noise impacts is complicated by the large number of different noise sources, where they are and when they cause a problem. Noise sensitive developments are often in close proximity to noise generating developments. These challenges to developing comprehensive noise strategies are further complicated by the number of different organisations with noise management responsibilities and powers.

Government Planning Guidance, PPG 24, 'Planning and Noise' requires protection of noise sensitive developments, the Westminster Unitary Development Plan (UDP) defines these as all residential properties; educational establishments; hotels; theatres; hospitals; concert halls; broadcasting and recording studios.

3.2 Councils have limited powers in relation to many noise sources, but Westminster City Council takes action to reduce noise pollution and its impacts in many ways. This has included:

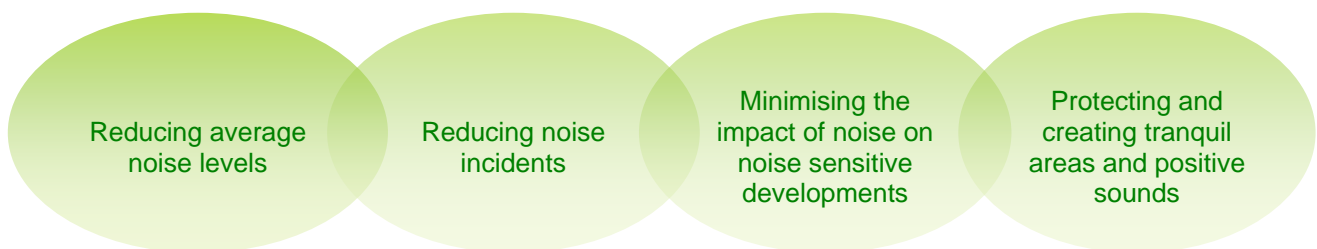
- A 24 hour, year round reactive Noise Team service which deals with noisy neighbours, building sites, plant noise, burglar alarms, noisy licensed premises and a host of other environmental problems
- The introduction in 2008 of a proactive noise service which tackles the most longstanding and difficult to resolve problems
- Developing strong noise policies, in consultation with the community, as part of the council's Unitary Development Plan and Statement of Licensing Policy
- Applying a Code of Construction Practice to minimise environmental impact during construction of major projects
- Investing in infrastructure to support quieter transport modes – such as electric car re-charging points
- Working with entertainment venues to assess their noise impact and ensure preventative solutions are implemented

- Acoustic monitoring, data collection and analysis to gain evidence for use in enforcement related to planning and licensing matters
- Setting noise limits on outdoor concerts and events and monitoring these for compliance
- Taking action to minimise noise from the council's own waste collection services and street cleansing services including:
 - glass recycling bank collections are restricted to 07:00 – 22:00 hrs and in parts of Soho with higher numbers of residents 08:00 – 22:00 hrs
 - using quieter plastic tipped shovels
 - restricting the hours of mechanical sweepers
 - implementing an eco driver training system which also has noise reduction benefits.

3.3 Despite these efforts noise problems persist in the city. There has been no significant reduction in Westminster's noise levels in the last five years. While there

The experience of sound differs from person to person and only becomes noise when it exists in the wrong place at the wrong time such that it causes or contributes to some harmful or otherwise unwanted effect.

has been no significant increase in average noise levels the perception of residents is that noise is getting worse. There are no easy answers to these problems but the council wants to ensure that the strategy responds to the specific challenges in the city and makes a real difference. The council has identified four interlinked objectives (illustrated below and explained in Table 1).



3.4 These objectives respond to the particular characteristics of the sound environment in the city outlined in section 2 and reflect advice from the Westminster Noise Strategy Expert Advisory Panel. They attempt to recognise the spatial and temporal aspects of noise and attempt to capture some sense of the varied ways that noise is experienced by Westminster's communities. Table 2 presents progress to be monitored against each objective.

3.5

Table 1: Westminster Noise Strategy Objectives

<p>What? Reducing average noise levels in the city</p>
<p>Why? Average noise levels in Westminster are significantly higher than the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guideline levels and this has serious implications for the health and wellbeing of residents, those who work in the city and visitors.</p> <p>Where? The council wants to reduce noise levels throughout the city and in doing this will give special priority to those locations where noise pollution is at its worst and affecting a high number of people, particularly occupants of noise sensitive developments.</p> <p>When? The council wants to take action to reduce noise levels throughout the 24 hour period.</p>
<p>What? Reducing noise incidents in the city</p>
<p>Why? Discrete occurrences of noise or 'noise incidents' can be more annoying and disruptive than high ambient noise levels. For example, individual noise incidents can lead to sleep disturbance which can have detrimental effects on physical and mental health.</p> <p>Where? The council wants to reduce incidents throughout the city particularly where this leads to adverse effects on occupants of noise sensitive developments.</p> <p>When? The council wants to take action to reduce noise incidents throughout the 24 hour period.</p>
<p>What? Minimising the impact of noise on <i>noise sensitive developments</i></p>
<p>Why? Reducing noise at source is the most effective way of dealing with a noise problem. However, when this cannot be achieved, other measures that protect residents, workers and visitors from noise impacts are important.</p> <p>Where? The council wants to reduce noise impacts on all of Westminster communities but has a particular focus on residents, workers and other occupants of properties that are sensitive to noise collectively described as 'noise sensitive developments'.</p> <p>When? Reducing night-time noise is important because of the potential effects on sleep and consequent health impacts. However, daytime impacts need to be considered too as residents in Westminster are equally bothered by noise during the day; changes to working patterns can lead to variety of sleeping times; and day-time noise has significant impacts on workers and visitors.</p>
<p>What? Protecting and enhancing tranquil areas and the positive role some sounds can play</p>
<p>Why? Improving the overall quality of the sound environment is more than just about noise levels. Protecting spaces of tranquillity is important because they are vulnerable to noise. Experience of the city is not just visual; it is heard as well as seen. There is considerable scope to enhance the sound environment by considering the role of positive sounds.</p> <p>Where? Specific emphasis will be placed on the city's publicly accessible open spaces and open spaces on housing estates and as part of new developments.</p> <p>When? The council wishes to reduce noise pollution and its impacts at all times, but in terms of specific improvements to tranquil areas there will be a particular focus on day-time and evening when utility of open spaces is at its highest.</p>

Table 2: Monitoring progress against the objectives

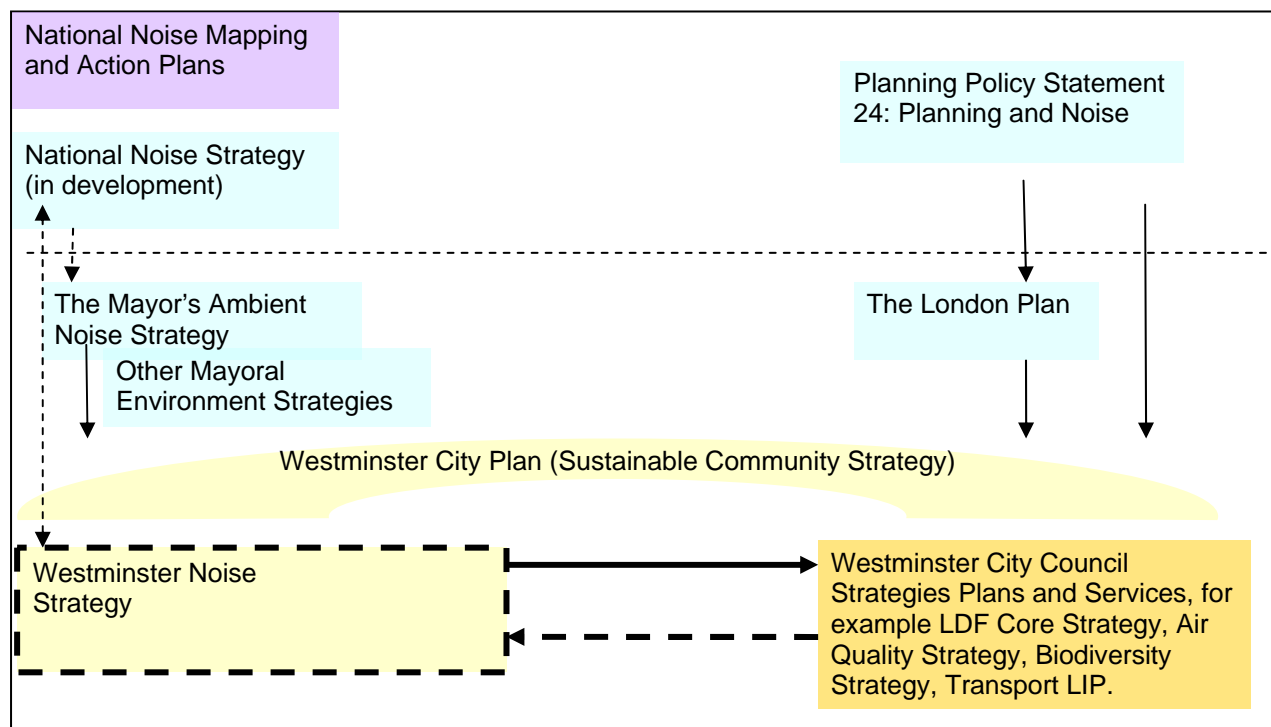
Reducing average noise levels in the city
Monitoring: (i) Gap between current average day-time noise levels at front of buildings (62 dB) and WHO guideline of 55 dB (ii) Average night-time noise levels at rear of buildings.
Reducing noise incidents in the city
Monitoring: This will be linked to reports of noise problems and to questions about noise in the council's annual attitudes survey (the City Survey).
Minimising the impact of noise on <i>noise sensitive developments</i>
Monitoring: Reducing the number of residents bothered by noise, progressively from current levels of 29%.
Protecting and enhancing tranquil areas and positive sounds
Monitoring: Ensuring the tranquillity scores for open spaces improve or do not fall. Ensuring Ambient Noise Levels (LAeq) improve or do not worsen.

3.6 There are four main elements to the council's strategy for reducing noise pollution and enhancing the city's sound environment. These are:

- ***Planning for a better sound environment (section 4)***
- ***Promoting quieter transport and servicing (section 5)***
- ***Proactive and coordinated responses to noise problems (section 6)***
- ***Protecting peaceful spaces and positive sounds (section 7)***

3.7 The policies and related actions set out in the remainder of this strategy address these main themes and all contribute to the four noise strategy objectives. They have been developed with reference to the wider policy context (see figure 6 on the next page). At the national level a noise strategy is in preparation and Noise Action Plans are being developed to fulfil the requirements of the European Directive on Environmental Noise, (2002/49/EC) or END. The END requires Member States to make strategic noise maps for major urban areas, along major roads, major railways and for major airports and to draw up action plans to manage and where necessary reduce this noise and protect quieter areas. Parallel to this, work to implement the Mayor's Ambient Noise Strategy (GLA, 2004) continues. These themes also link to the council's wider policy framework which provides both the context for the noise strategy and which the noise strategy seeks to influence.

Figure 6: The Wider Policy Context



3.8 The Noise Strategy policies and actions reflect relevant aspects of the Mayor's Ambient Noise Strategy and have been developed to take into account broader sustainability objectives in relation to other issues such as air quality and climate change. In particular *Westminster's Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan* has parallels with the Noise Strategy, as sources of air pollution are often sources of noise pollution too. Actions implemented to improve air quality and to reduce carbon emissions, for example the introduction of the new fleet of hybrid diesel/electric buses and the improved emission standards of all new vehicles, will have the secondary effect of reducing noise levels through improved technology. To support proper consideration of these wider environmental sustainability matters the council has also undertaken a *Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)* of the strategy. In addition, in order to consider the likely impact of the strategy on the different communities or groups, the council has carried out an equalities impact assessment (EIA).

3.9 The policies and actions also explicitly address the specific noise problems and issues affecting the city raised in consultation undertaken to inform the preparation of this strategy.

Table 3: Noise Issues

The table below highlights where the specific noise issues raised have been covered in this strategy.

Noise Issues and Problems	Noise Policy 1 Planning for a better sound environment	Noise Policy 2 Promoting quieter transport and servicing	Noise Policy 3 Proactive responses to noise problems	Noise Policy 4 Protecting peaceful spaces and positive sounds	Action Plan reference
Aeroplane noise		✓			T21, T22, T23
Air conditioning / plant / equipment noise	✓		✓		PN7, NM11 NM16
Construction noise	✓		✓		Pn4
Deliveries	✓	✓	✓		T14, T15
DIY noise			✓		NM2, NM13
Emergency Sirens		✓			T25
Events			✓	✓	L4, L5, L6, NM14
Helicopter noise		✓			T21, T22, T23, T24
Laminate flooring			✓		NM2, NM13
Natural Sounds	✓			✓	Pr1, Pr2, Pr3
Neighbour noise (general)	✓		✓		NM2, NM3, NM4, NM5, NM6, NM7, NM13
Noise associated with entertainment premises	✓		✓		L1, L3, NM10, W2, W3
Noise impacts on wildlife				✓	Pr1, Pr2, Pr3, Pr4
Parties			✓		NM2, NM6, NM7
Recycling noise (glass)	✓	✓	✓		W1, W2, W3, NM10
Road traffic noise and vibration	✓	✓	✓	✓	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T14, T15, T28, NM1
Roadworks	✓	✓	✓	✓	T1, T4, T7, T12, T13, T20, T26
Sound Insulation	✓		✓		NM13
Vibration (trains and tubes)		✓			T20
Waste collections	✓	✓	✓		W1, W2, W3, NM10

4 Planning for a better sound environment

- 4.1 Westminster has a rich historic built environment, much of which is given special protection by conservation area or listed building status. Levels of new development, including redevelopment of existing buildings, remain high. There are

There are 55 Conservation Areas in Westminster covering over 75% of the city. Development taking place needs, in these parts of the city to preserve and enhance the character of the area.

Westminster also contains 11,000 listed buildings and structures which are protected from any unauthorised demolition, alteration or extension.

several major transport and utilities proposals affecting the city including Crossrail, development at Victoria and the Thames Tideway Tunnel. In addition, growth is anticipated in Paddington and around Tottenham Court Road. This growth, if unmanaged, has the potential to contribute to increased noise and

wider environmental impacts including increased carbon emissions and air pollution. The quantity of new development also gives rise to significant construction work across the city and even minor renovations can have significant local noise impacts.

- 4.2 Westminster's triple role as a place where people live, a commercial centre and a visitor attraction raises distinct noise management issues. Noise associated with entertainment premises and servicing of premises are particular problems, for example, deliveries, waste and recycling collections (particularly glass). These activities are most safely performed when the streets are clear and so they are often done at times when the ambient noise level is lower, which worsens the noise impact.
- 4.3 Noise Policy 1 and the supporting actions set out how the council will plan and manage the city to reduce noise pollution and enhance the city's sound environment. This policy covers statutory development planning functions, but also relates to planning in a broader sense and therefore includes measures related to: licensing, construction management and building control activities and other environmental projects.

Noise Policy 1: Noise conscious city management, planning and licensing

- a) Noise emissions and noise impacts of new developments (including plant, equipment and machinery) will be minimised by:**
- requiring developers to demonstrate there will be no increase in noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive development, including vigorous protection of the quiet side of properties (frequently the rear) from noise intrusion
 - resisting the installation of air conditioning units in favour of quieter, low energy systems of ventilation and better building design wherever technically possible
 - requiring developers to limit and contain noise from construction activities.
- b) A healthy internal sound environment will be ensured and noise impacts minimised by:**
- encouraging and ensuring, where possible, that development of noise sensitive uses includes highly effective protection against *internal* noise transmission
 - ensuring that new residential developments are designed and constructed to provide sufficient protection from *external* noise
 - incorporating high quality innovative design measures to protect against external noise
 - locating *noise sensitive uses* at the quietest part of a site when part of mixed use developments
 - encouraging the inclusion of tranquil areas in major developments
 - incorporating measures in new development schemes which enable sounds with potentially positive roles, in particular, natural sounds.
- c) The impact of noise-generating activities on noise sensitive developments will be minimised by**
- restricting the introduction of new noise generating uses in areas with a strong residential character
 - limiting large scale development of new entertainment venues and resisting expansion of these uses in stress areas
 - placing appropriate limits on the servicing and hours of operation of new developments
 - continuing to work with the entertainment sector to manage and reduce noise impacts and wider environmental impacts of their operations.

4.4 Complete physical separation of noise sensitive uses from major noise generators is not always going to be practical in a historic and densely developed city like Westminster. It is sometimes not desirable in terms of maintaining the diversity of uses, particularly in central areas of the city. Ensuring that buildings developed in the city achieve adequate protection against noise for their occupants is particularly important for residential buildings, but also schools, hospitals and other noise sensitive developments. In some circumstances, where new residential



Hampton Gurney School

properties are close to commercial developments with high noise levels, it may not be technically possible to achieve desirable standards of quiet living conditions. The advantages and disadvantages of the proposal for residential development in that particular location will, in such cases, need to be carefully considered and balanced.

4.5 Ensuring new development, including construction and servicing of developments, does not lead to a worsening of noise pollution is crucial. Requirements for Construction Management Plans for certain categories of development will continue to have a role in ensuring that measures are taken to minimise noise impacts during construction.

4.6 The council has established a robust set of noise policies as part of the existing Unitary Development Plan (adopted January 2007). Refining these policy approaches to take account of new information on the noise environment and new priorities will take place through the development of the council's Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will include a *Core Strategy* setting out the overall spatial approach to development and a *City Management Plan* containing detailed development management policies. These documents will be supplemented as necessary by additional guidance which takes the form of *Supplementary Planning Documents*.

"London is a competitive global city thus, in order to keep up with the increasing competition offices are required to operate on a 24 hour basis."

Covent Garden Limited

4.7 Noise related planning policies and design guidance will need to be devised in ways that take account of broader sustainable development issues such as reducing carbon emissions and adapting to changing weather conditions resulting from climate change. This will be particularly challenging in the noisiest locations where residents may need to keep windows closed to keep out noise. The increasing likelihood of excessive indoor temperature conditions could lead to requirements for air conditioning or mechanical ventilation which increase a building's energy consumption and contribute to noise. The architectural and historic integrity of buildings must be respected, but this may limit design solutions that would avoid the need to open windows and the necessity of air conditioning. In some cases, the only appropriate design solution will be for air conditioning or mechanical ventilation to be provided and for this to be located in the quieter rear areas of buildings. In these circumstances it will be necessary to require noise emission standards for plant and equipment that will not compromise the noise environment of these quieter rear areas.

4.8 Some general planning and design issues to be considered and developed further include:

- changes to limits on noise emissions
- design layout that provides protection from noise, such as by placing bedrooms and living rooms away from the noisiest aspects of a building
- massing of buildings to create noise screening
- requiring testing of noise levels after installation of plant and equipment and completion of developments
- avoiding use of air conditioning and mechanical ventilation wherever this can be done without leading to excess indoor heat
- innovative ways of locating ventilation and cooling equipment and vents in front of properties, for example, beneath footways where this is appropriate and feasible
- strengthened policies to resist shop-fronts that are fully and partly openable, identifying the particular circumstances where a restrictive approach is appropriate
- protection of tranquil areas from additional noise sources and design reflecting the potentially positive role of sound (see Noise Policy 4 for further explanation).

4.9 The council is concerned to protect the amenity of residents and others sensitive to

Stress Areas have been identified by the council where it believes that restaurants, cafés, takeaways, public houses, bars and other entertainment uses have become concentrated to an extent that harm is being caused to residential amenity, the interests of other commercial uses, the local environment, and to the character and function of the locality.

noise, and also wishes to support local business and recognise their contribution to the economy and culture of the city and London as a whole. Ensuring noise-generating premises, such as entertainment venues, are carefully located and appropriate limits are placed on them, is an important tool in reducing noise and its impacts. This is a matter considered in the council spatial

planning approaches and is intrinsic to the council's Statement of Licensing Policy. The guidance identifies a range of aims including: widening the choice and appeal of licensed premises, the development of culture and the protection of local residents.

4.10 The council will try to plan out noise problems at the earliest stage where it has powers to do so, but it has to be recognised that there are limits to powers under existing planning, building control and licensing regimes. The main legal powers the council uses to control noise are:

- statutory nuisance enforcement
- licensing of pubs, clubs and restaurants
- planning permission conditions for development
- building regulations
- landlord and tenant legislation.

4.11 Seeking changes to regulations and legislation and influencing emerging codes is important, but the council also wants to work in partnership with the entertainment sector to limit noise impacts of their operations and tackle noise problems (see section 3, of this strategy for more on noise associated with entertainment use).

Ref	Actions to facilitate planning a better sound environment	Timescale
Pn1	Develop noise policies for the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and City Management Plan that reflect the policy approaches in the noise strategy.	2010 to 2013/14
Pn2	Develop noise related guidance for inclusion in relevant supplementary planning documents, including site-specific planning briefs.	2010 to 2013/14
Pn3	Update planning conditions and informatives where necessary to reflect emerging new evidence on the sound environment and any emerging LDF policy changes.	2010-11
Pn4	Continue to require adherence to the Westminster Code of Construction Practice for major development schemes, securing this where necessary through planning obligations agreements (section 106).	Ongoing
Pn5	Ensure all new school buildings are compliant with Building Bulletin 93 specifications where technically possible.	2010 to 2011
L1	Propose appropriate noise conditions on new and varied Premises Licence applications.	Ongoing
W1	Evaluate proposals for noise reduction from waste vehicles and operations in the tenders for re-let of the waste and recycling collection and street cleansing contract.	2010
W2	Promote more separation of recyclables (glass and bottles) from general waste, particularly in the hospitality industry.	2010
	Lobbying & Engagement	
Pn6	Lobby the government for the Code for Sustainable Homes and subsequent codes to consider noise emissions and set standards for these.	2010/11 and ongoing
Pn7	Lobby to ensure that appropriate planning control is retained over air conditioning, air-source heat pumps and other plant and equipment in the context of changes to permitted development rights being discussed by the government.	2010
Pn8	Lobby government to develop stricter building regulations in respect to noise emissions and noise insulation standards.	2010/11 and ongoing
L2	Support the London Local Authorities Bill to change the licensing of skips to allow greater conditions to reduce noise (for example, working hours, delivery & collection hours) and enforcement of unlicensed skips.	Ongoing

5 Promoting quieter transport and servicing

- 5.1 Westminster has four mainline rail termini operating up to 20 hours a day. There are also 32 Underground stations and all tube lines run through Westminster with the exception of the Waterloo & City Line and the East London Line. Victoria Station alone deals with 76.4 million passengers a year. Additionally, 79 bus routes pass through Westminster's streets and Transport for London (TfL) have increased the number of buses since 2003 to provide more capacity in relation to the introduction of the congestion charge. Noise from private vehicles on top of noise from public transport means noise from transport is a very significant problem in Westminster.
- 5.2 A related issue is that of noise from streetworks and the maintenance of the public transport infrastructure. This noise can affect residents and local businesses, in particular specialist businesses such as those involved with voiceovers in the film industry. These works tend to be undertaken late at night or at weekends, when there is less traffic on the network. Unfortunately this is often at times when residents would normally experience some respite from noise. This noise might be caused by TfL undertaking maintenance or improvements to traffic signals on Westminster's roads or utility providers who have a statutory right to undertake works on the highway¹¹. The council cannot interfere with this right and can only set times based on the need to keep traffic moving, as part of its network management duty under the Traffic Management Act, 2004. These times cannot be related to prevention of noise disturbance.
- 5.3 Much of the research on the health impacts of noise is based on the effects of transport noise; this is reflected in the priority given by the European Union and the UK government to tackling transport noise. Reducing transport related noise pollution is therefore an essential part of the strategy. However the council is to a large degree limited in its ability to reduce transport noise in the city; this is because the management of transport lies with a number of different organisations such as TfL (who are responsible for most of Westminster's major roads), the Civil Aviation Authority and Network Rail. The following policy and actions outline how the council will adapt its highways management role and influence the priorities of other organisations to reduce noise pollution and protect tranquil areas.

¹¹ This right is under the New Roads and Street Works Act, 1991. Those carrying out the works do have to use best practice measures as far as compatible with any statutory duties.

Noise Policy 2: Reducing transport and servicing noise and impacts

- a) Quieter modes of transport such as walking, cycling and electric vehicles will be promoted and enabled through provision of necessary infrastructure where these also contribute to wider environmental sustainability objectives.
- b) The council will actively seek to reduce noise impacts from air traffic and will resist changes to routes and volumes which lead to increased noise impacts on the city.
- c) The council will work with TfL, Network Rail and other public transport operators to ensure noise from stations and the maintenance and operation of trains, tubes and bus systems does not lead to increased noise and adverse vibration impacts.
- d) The council will identify areas of road where:
 - road transport noise levels are highest
 - road transport noise impacts on the greatest number of occupants of noise sensitive properties.
- e) Where the areas of road identified are located on the council's section of the highway network, the council will develop and implement noise reduction schemes wherever possible. Where these areas are located on TfL's part of Westminster highway network, the council will work with them to adopt the same approach.
- f) Noise minimisation considerations will be integrated in the council's transport planning, highways management and improvement activities across the city, including:
 - identifying changes to the highways network to assess and minimise potential noise impacts on noise sensitive developments
 - giving priority to highway measures that reduce noise in areas where there are high levels of road traffic *and* significant noise sensitive properties
 - using quieter road surfacing material on roads where this is likely to have the greatest noise reduction benefits
 - considering limits on roads affected by noise pollution where it has powers to do so, for example, restrictions on coaches and heavy goods vehicles
 - seeking to minimise and where possible limit the noise impacts of streetworks and consider extended working hours to reduce the duration of the works.
- g) The council will support and promote schemes which lead to quieter deliveries and servicing of commercial and residential properties.

5.4 Walking and cycling are the most sustainable modes of travel and offer a quieter and healthier alternative to motorised vehicles. But technology is advancing and vehicles with reduced noise impacts are emerging. New technology may offer a range of benefits, for example electric and hybrid vehicles are being used because of reduced carbon and air pollution emissions, but also have the potential to be quieter than other vehicles. An expansion in the use of quieter technology has significant potential to reduce noise levels.



5.5 The government is currently implementing the requirements of the European Directive on Environmental Noise, 2002/49/EC which requires Member States to make strategic noise maps for major agglomerations along major roads, major railways and for major airports and to draw up action plans to manage and where necessary reduce this noise and protect quieter areas. This presents an important opportunity for the council and partner agencies to engage with central government to ensure the noise strategy objectives are reflected in these action plans and that



the cumulative impacts of noise and vibration on Westminster, with its dense network of public transport, are properly considered. In relation to road traffic noise in particular, the council will work with the government and TfL as appropriate to refine its mapping data, identify areas to take action and develop schemes to address noise impacts.

5.6 Giving priority to measures that will lead to the biggest noise benefits is essential to ensure that resources are targeted appropriately. But blanket restrictions or approaches will not always be useful because of the specific characteristics of transport use and patterns in the city. For example, two studies carried out by Westminster City Council in the late 1990s provided evidence of 2-3dB decrease in noise levels when reduced-noise surfaces were installed in St. John's Wood.

5.7 Reduced-noise road surfaces are part of the council's overall approach because they can have a significant effect, but the noise from vehicles travelling at lower speeds tends to be less. This means that on some roads in Westminster where average speeds are very low, changing the road surface may not have the same acoustic impact that would be expected if average speeds were greater. Reduced-noise surfaces can also deteriorate faster than conventional surfaces which highlights the need to consider the most locally appropriate response to ensure resources are targeted effectively.

5.8 Changes and maintenance to the existing transport infrastructure can have a positive or a negative impact in Westminster (even when the change is outside of the city). It is essential to consider transport at a strategic level and to find opportunities to influence future developments in ways that benefit the city's sound environment. From a more local perspective, preventing traffic disruption is a key consideration in the council's highway management and maintenance activities. The council's particular duty to keep traffic moving has broader safety and economic implications, but a balance has to be struck to avoid creating a disincentive to quiet travel modes such as walking or cycling. Considering how noise can be minimised in carrying out this duty is essential, and as much of the city's major road network is the responsibility of TfL, working closely with TfL to encourage equivalent approaches is also essential. Seeking influence over activities of utilities operators may also reduce the impacts of noise from streetworks.

5.9 The concentration of commercial premises (office, retail and entertainment venues) raises particular challenges in terms of noise from servicing and deliveries. But this

"In general, we should be doing more than we are to encourage quieter, greener forms of transport. Electric cars, while in a tiny minority, show the way of the future. They are far quieter than their petrol-powered equivalents."

Resident, Little Venice

concentration may also offer opportunities in terms of innovative transport schemes: for example, through freight consolidation schemes or quieter deliveries schemes. Promoting safe and fuel efficient driving techniques for vehicles, including heavy goods vehicles, can also have significant noise minimisation benefits.

Ref	Actions to facilitate quieter transport and servicing	Timescale
T1	'Minimising site noise' to be included as part of the review of how the council's Considerate Builders and Considerate Streetworks schemes relate to mainstream highways and streetworks functions.	2010
T2	Integrate noise management criteria in the council's fleet vehicles policy and ensure this is applied.	2010
T3	Share up-to-date information to improve DEFRA road traffic mapping and work in partnership with TfL to identify priorities for potential noise minimisation.	2010
T4	Work with the council's contractors to identify noise minimisation actions that can be introduced to protect noise sensitive developments and tranquil areas.	2010
T5	Integrate noise minimisation considerations into the review of use of road surface materials taking place during 2009/10 for immediate implementation.	2010
T6	Incorporate noise minimisation considerations in the new Value Management Framework for highways which is being developed during 2009/10, for implementation from 2010/11.	2010
T7	Implement noise minimisation requirements from the specifications for the re-let of the following contracts: - Highways Maintenance Contract (ends Sept 2010) - Engineering and Transportation Projects Contract (ends 2014).	2010/11 2013/14
T8	Expand the Electric Vehicle Recharging Scheme.	2010 to 2014
T9	Incorporate noise mitigation measures into the council's bid for Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding for transport in 2010/11 and in 2011 to 2014.	2010/11 2011 to 2014
T10	Introduce a telematic and diagnostic system in the council's fleet vehicles to help reduce mileage and fuel consumption and promote the use of similar systems by other organisations.	2010
T11	Ensure provision of Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving (SAFED) training to van drivers and subcontractors' drivers.	2010
T12	Continue monitoring the noise impacts from the implementation of Crossrail and other major infrastructure projects.	Ongoing
T13	Identify noise sensitive businesses, such as sound recording studios, and include their details as part of the Additional Street Data (ASD) that is included in the 'Environmental Sensitivity' category in line with Section 5.7 of the 'Code of Practice for the Coordination of Street Works and Works for Road Purposes and Related Matters (Third Edition)'.	2010
T14	Continue to investigate the feasibility of a retail freight consolidation centre.	2010
T15	Investigate the feasibility of a quiet delivery scheme in Westminster in one of the West End areas where noise from deliveries is a particular issue.	2010/11
T16	Increase the number of on street cycle stands from 2,800 to 3,200 and work with TfL to introduce approximately 125 Central London Cycle Hire Scheme docking stations.	2010/11
T17	Deliver free cycle training courses to anyone living, working and studying in the City of Westminster and continue to improve provision of other facilities for cyclists (cycle routes, signage etc).	Ongoing
T18	Deliver further Legible London (pedestrian wayfinding) signs to facilitate journeys by foot.	2010/11
T19	Deliver road safety education and a pedestrian training programme for school children which generates safer walking.	Ongoing
	Lobbying	

Ref	Actions to facilitate quieter transport and servicing	Timescale
T20	Respond to consultation on the Mayor's Transport Strategy, incorporating representations about noise including: protocols in relation to roadworks; mitigating noise from the Westway; freight deliveries; tube vent shafts with fans/plant; Volvo buses etc.	2010
T21	Respond to consultations about airport expansion, make representations to ensure there is no increase in noise and highlight the need to adopt quieter aircraft and operational practices.	As required
T22	Request more detailed monitoring information on flights over Westminster from the Civil Aviation Authority.	2010
T23	Continue to lobby in relation to noise implications of proposed expansion of Heathrow Airport.	Ongoing
T24	Make representations to the Police and Ministry of Defence about impact of noise from helicopters and reinforce the need for pilots to apply guidelines to minimise noise.	2010
T25	Make representations to the Police, the London Fire Brigade and the London Ambulance Service about impact of noise from sirens and explore the potential for improvements e.g. less intrusive broadband sirens and for siren noise levels to adapt to ambient noise levels.	2010
T26	Support the introduction of a utilities permit scheme, develop noise specific conditions in anticipation of this and agree procedures with the Noise Team for considering applications. (Consultation currently underway on London permit scheme).	2010
T27	Respond to complaints about train, bus and coach drivers with idling engines. Approach TfL and/or the relevant company for assistance.	Case by case

Quieter Transport Case Study: *Upper Montagu Street*

There are residential roads in the city where restrictions on traffic movements are not feasible or desirable for safety reasons, or because of other factors such as the need for access for deliveries for businesses. However, in cases where there is a significant problem the council will assess the situation and take action where it can.

That is what happened when residents from Upper Montagu Street contacted the council to raise their concerns about certain heavy goods vehicles that were using the street as a short cut from the strategic Marylebone Road through to Baker Street and the rest of central London.

Noise was a particular problem because there are also speed humps on Upper Montagu Street. Residents advised that empty tipper and skip trucks were using their street and the sound and vibration caused when these heavy goods vehicles drove over the traffic calming measures was disturbing them day and night.

To address such concerns, the council's Transportation Department implemented a 7.5 tonne heavy goods vehicle restriction, except for access, at the junction of Marylebone Road with Upper Montagu Street.

As a result, most lorries and skip trucks now travel along the main Marylebone Road route and are then driven down Baker Street.

6 Proactive and coordinated responses to noise problems

- 6.1 A number of council departments have responsibility for noise-related enforcement issues which can be undertaken through the council's development planning, licensing, environmental health and housing management functions. The council's 24 Hour Noise Team has a central role in the investigation and abatement of statutory noise nuisance. Most of the calls the Noise Team receives relate to commercial premises, neighbour noise or building sites as these are issues for which it has the most effective enforcement powers. There are also a number of other public agencies with noise management powers or responsibilities including:
- CityWest Homes and other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)
 - The Metropolitan Police
 - Transport for London
 - Airport Authorities, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Defence.
 - The Health and Safety Executive.
- 6.2 These agencies all have different responsibilities for different noise sources, including matters where the council has limited powers, such as emergency road works by utilities companies or the operation of private waste and recycling companies (who often want to work before congestion charging begins). These agencies may also have powers to deal with more transient sounds, such as noise from people in the street. Other activities such as smaller scale construction projects not requiring planning consent may fall between or outside the powers of the council or other agencies. Noise Policy 3 and the supporting actions outline how the council will adopt a more coordinated approach to noise enforcement and management issues.

Statutory noise nuisance

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, 'noise emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance' may constitute a statutory nuisance.

Noise Policy 3: Integrated Noise Management and Enforcement

a) Complaints data related to all noise types in Westminster will be collated from sources such as:

- the council's 24 Hour Noise Team and other council departments
- CityWest Homes
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Transport for London
- Metropolitan Police Authority
- Other relevant organisations or agencies with noise management responsibilities.

Complaints data will be assessed and disseminated to the above organisations as relevant and in appropriate instances notification will also be given to the premises or activity that is the source of the noise problem.

b) The council will work in partnership with CityWest Homes, other Registered Social Landlords and private landlords and Local Area Renewal Partnerships to reduce neighbour noise and its impacts by:

- sharing information on noise complaints and taking joint action on cases
- sharing best practice and encouraging landlords to take action
- providing information to those affected by neighbour noise
- disseminating research on the city's noise environment and implications.

c) The council will work in partnership with the entertainment and commercial sector to minimise noise and associated impacts by:

- providing information and advice on best practice to licensed premises as part of 'pro-active visits'
- providing information to those affected by noise related to entertainment premises
- encouraging the development of voluntary joint initiatives by groups of businesses, established business partnerships and Business Improvement Districts to tackle specific noise problems.

d) A timely and coordinated approach to enforcement action will be taken by:

- developing joined up approaches to enforcement action (including evidence gathering to support cases)
- providing a rapid 24 hour response to noise problems that can be dealt with immediately under the council's existing powers.

6.3 When Westminster residents make a formal complaint about noise they are most likely to contact the council¹²; but depending on the problem they may contact the police, their landlord, housing association or another organisation. Comprehensive complaints data and regular analysis of noise complaints will provide a more complete picture and help identify emerging trends and priorities. This can provide the necessary evidence to target particular noise issues through the council's

“Street drinking has become an increasing problem since the smoking ban.”

Resident, Belgravia

existing partnership working groups such as CivicWatch, Anti-Social Behaviour Action Groups, and the Licensing Tasking Group or in conjunction with other agencies such as health services. It may also raise further lobbying issues and highlight areas where up-to-date information about resolving noise problems could be provided.

6.4 Increasing current levels of coordination and cooperation with other noise management agencies and developing partnerships beyond these agencies may also help deliver noise strategy aims. In particular, the council intends to extend this type of approach in response to persistent neighbour noise and noise problems related to entertainment premises. Any such approaches developed will need to be subject to local consultation to ensure effective outcomes.

6.5 Neighbour noise is the biggest source of complaints, but significant under-reporting is likely. CityWest Homes is the council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), responsible for the management of the council's 22,000 properties. There are also a number of other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) managing social housing. Greater coordination between RSLs and the council may help resolve noise issues more quickly. Sharing best practice and the findings of relevant research, such as measures to enhance tranquil spaces and implications of quieter rear facades, with RSLs and private landlords should also contribute to achieving the noise strategy objectives.

¹² Source: Westminster Noise Attitudes Survey, 2008.

- 6.6 Engaging with private landlords and occupants of private rented homes (whether perpetrators of noise or suffering the effects of noise) presents a major challenge. This is because, in common with most of inner London, rented accommodation is the dominant type of housing in Westminster and there are very large numbers of landlords and tenants to deal with.
- 6.7 During 2008/09 a pilot project was undertaken to proactively target repeat neighbour noise complaints to the council's 24 Hour Noise Team. Cases have been resolved by working with the complainant and as a result repeat calls to the Noise Team on these cases have been reduced. Initially this has focused on neighbour complaints. The scope of this work could be extended to consider a broader range of noise problems. The council is particularly keen to work in conjunction with and through voluntary arrangements led by business associations, Business Improvement Districts and Local Area Renewal Partnerships to devise creative solutions to noise problems associated with entertainment premises.
- 6.8 A more coordinated approach across the council to identify potential noise problems may help pre-empt noise problems and, in cases where enforcement action becomes necessary, joint monitoring and intelligence can provide a useful evidence base. In taking enforcement action related to noise problems, liaison across the council and beyond will become much more integral to the council's approach. However, the council's Noise Team will continue to provide a rapid response service on issues where it has effective enforcement powers, such as loud noise from parties, construction sites, malfunctioning alarms and licensed premises.

Ref	Actions to facilitate integrated noise management	Timescale
NM1	Encourage reporting of information on all noise sources (including streetworks and other traffic noise) and set up mechanisms to receive information on noise based complaints from partners.	2010
NM2	Review existing guidance, and where necessary produce Westminster specific guidance on preventing and resolving noise nuisance from neighbours, construction projects (small scale and DIY) and entertainment noise.	Three by March 2010
NM3	Promote the use of the Citizen Advice Bureau Licensing Service.	2010
NM4	Train council officers to make appropriate referrals of noise cases (including referrals to health agencies).	2010
NM15	Pilot scheme to analyse the outputs of acoustic surveys from planning applications in defined areas of the city.	2010/11
<i>Neighbour Noise</i>		
NM5	Develop and maintain an information exchange system on complaints and best practices for neighbour noise nuisance between the Noise Team, CityWest Homes and at least one other RSL.	2010
NM6	Extend information exchange system for neighbour noise nuisance to other RSLs in Westminster. (Linked to Action NM5)	2010/11
NM7	Rolling programme of training/briefing for RSLs and tenants' groups on the implications of research studies and best practice for dealing with noise nuisance.	2010
<i>Construction</i>		
NM8	Brief City Guardians and City Inspectors about the restrictions on hours of working on building sites in the areas of the City with highest level of noise complaints about noise from building sites.	2010
NM9	Develop and implement a strategy for targeting best practice information on minimising noise from construction sites. (Linked to action NM1)	2010/11
<i>Streetworks</i>		
T28	Highways to share information about streetworks with the Noise Team to improve response to noise complaints regarding streetworks.	Started May 2009
<i>Reducing Noise Problems Associated with Entertainment Premises</i>		
L3	Continue programme of proactive weekend visiting to licensed premises in operation and ensure that the licensing conditions are being complied with.	Ongoing
T29	Encourage and support innovative transport initiatives that help to get people home from the city centre quickly, quietly and safely.	Ongoing
NM10	Collect evidence and target problem private waste contractors on an evidence-led basis.	2010
W3	Brief Noise Team on noise minimisation requirements within the new waste and cleansing contract.	2010/11
<i>Air conditioning and Plant</i>		
NM11	Producing a guidance document on the location of air conditioning units, including reference to quieter rear facades.	2010
NM16	Regular meetings between the Noise Team and planning enforcement officers to coordinate action on noisy air conditioning and plant.	TBC
Lobbying & Engagement		
NM12	Encourage social and private landlords to upgrade sound insulation as part of any programmed refurbishments in demonstrably problematic properties.	Ongoing
NM13	Develop best practice guide on sound insulation (including guidance on how to reduce noise problems caused by laminate, ceramic or wooden floor coverings) and promote to residents, RSLs, private landlords and large DIY stores.	2010

Case Study: *Kingly Street, W1*

A resident from Kingly Street had problems with builders outside her flat in Soho; she had to live with the continuous disturbance of banging, drilling and knocking. “It was a living nightmare. I work as a pub manager and my husband has to be up at 3am for work, so after a long shift, all you want to do is relax. The noise would continue day and night, it just never stopped.”

She tried to resolve the issue by talking to the builders, but they were not interested: “At that time I was planning my wedding and found myself adding additional stress, constantly looking at the clock to see how long the noise had been going on for and wondering if I would get a good night sleep.”

“I would call the council Noise Team when the noise was happening and they were fantastic, each time coming out within an hour to get the builders to stop. However, the noise would sometimes continue the next day, so with help and guidance from the council, the matter went to court and the construction company pleaded guilty of working outside permitted working hours. The day I got the call from the council with the good news was one of the happiest days of my life – It was like a massive weight had been lifted.”

If you have a noise related problem, help is at hand 24/7 day or night.

Ring 020 7641 2000 to contact the Noise Team. Call this number when the noise is happening and we will visit as soon as possible to assess the problem.

7 Protecting peaceful spaces and positive sounds

7.1 Few open spaces in the city achieve the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline levels for gardens and recreational areas of 55dB; the Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study, 2008 found that this was limited to the centre of the very largest parks in the city. Despite this, many of the city's open spaces provide a relatively tranquil environment which offers respite from the hustle and bustle of the city.

7.2 Some sounds in Westminster are iconic; the Changing of the Guard is part of the character of Westminster as are the market traders at historic Berwick Street Market in Soho. A less welcome, but prevalent sound feature of the city is sirens.

Other features of the sound environment particularly common in Westminster include the sound of protests and the music (or noise) from events in parks and other public spaces. These sounds and events like the Notting Hill Carnival help to define the character of the city; but they can also lead to annoyance and complaints.

The surface area of buildings in Westminster far exceeds the 438 hectares of parkland in the city. This is mainly accounted for by the five Royal Parks but there are also 90 hectares of small parks and garden squares.

7.3 There is growing research on the role of positive sound. Pleasant sounds can have positive impacts on health and wellbeing. Management of the sound environment in Westminster needs to encompass the potential benefits for health and wellbeing of features that contribute pleasant sounds, as well as taking action to control unwanted sound. This means finding ways to accommodate and manage noise-generating uses in a way that allows protection, maintenance and creation of times and spaces of peace and quiet.

Noise Policy 4: Tranquil areas and positive sounds

a) Open spaces in the city will be protected from increased noise intrusion by:

- ensuring new development (which includes changes of land use or the intensity of an activity) and changes to the highway network do not lead to increased noise intrusion; existing noise levels should be decreased where possible
- working with parks and event organisers to minimise noise caused by sound testing and during events
- minimising noise from maintenance activities in the city's open spaces and encouraging similar practices in the Royal Parks.

(b) Increasing access to tranquil areas by:

- enhancing the tranquillity of existing open spaces
- encouraging major developments to include tranquil areas
- providing information on publicly accessible spaces in the city where relatively tranquil environments can be enjoyed.

(c) Identifying existing tranquil spaces suitable for additional protection and enhancement.

(d) Applying measures to enhance tranquillity where they can have the greatest impact on noise levels and perceptions of tranquillity and prioritising these in areas with poor access to tranquil spaces. Specific measures to improve and enhance tranquillity may include:

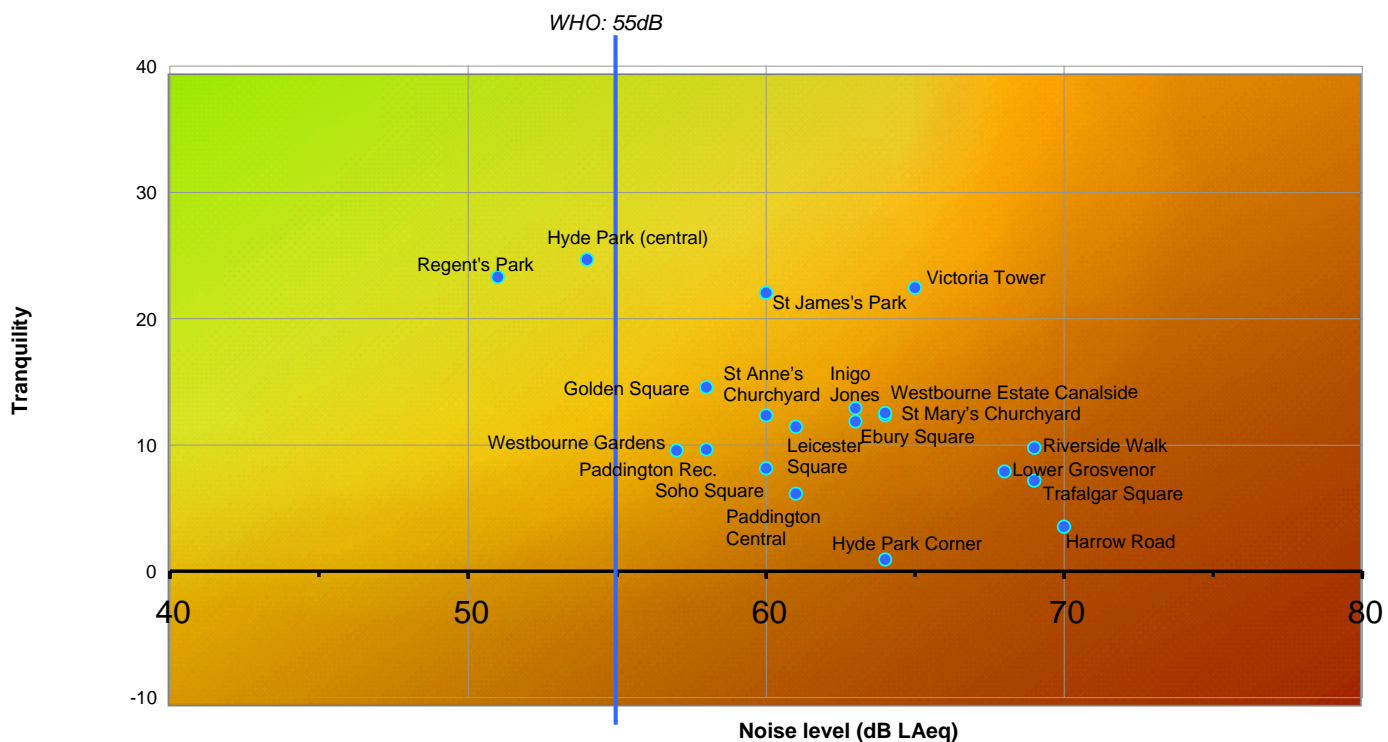
- noise screening and other barriers
- introducing natural sound features
- visual features that add to the tranquillity of the setting.

(e) Promoting positive features of the city's sound environment and encouraging new features by:

- encouraging the introduction of ecologically-rich environments that contribute natural sounds
- promoting and enabling temporary sound installations and promoting the role of permanent sound-based public art where these are sensitive to context and perception
- providing information and disseminating information on the positive and negative aspects of the sound environment of the city.

7.4 The Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study, 2008 found that there was considerable variance in perceptions of tranquillity. Figure 7 (below) shows the noise levels in the 20 open spaces considered in the study, plotted against their tranquillity scores. In open spaces with middling noise levels the relationship between noise levels and perceived tranquillity was weaker; some open spaces with relatively high noise levels were still identified as relatively tranquil.

Figure 7: Noise levels of open spaces in relation to tranquillity



7.5 Avoiding noise pollution is important as it detracts from tranquillity, but tranquillity is about more than just the sound environment. In terms of enhancing open spaces visual factors that lie behind tranquillity can be as important as the acoustic ones.

7.6 Acoustic screening and sound absorption properties can be incorporated in features such as green walls and plant displays, but their visual impact might be even more effective in enhancing tranquillity. Very often open spaces in the city are valued for the respite they offer from human-made noise, not simply the absence of noise. Introducing natural sounds might also enhance tranquillity, for example, conditions that encourage more wildlife, with the associated



A tawny owl¹³

¹³ Image used with permission of Tony Duckett.

birdsong and other wildlife sounds, as well as water and leaves rustling in trees. The council will develop criteria to identify and prioritise tranquil areas for enhancement. The particular enhancement measures in open spaces will depend on function and character, including the historic value.

- 7.7 Protecting the city’s relatively tranquil environments from increased noise intrusion is important. The Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study, 2008 confirmed that spaces considered to be the most tranquil had the lowest noise levels. As a minimum, ensuring the sound environment of open spaces is not worsened by external noise intrusion is essential, particularly as noise pollution is high across the city.
- 7.8 The city’s open spaces are enjoyed by many for relaxation and various leisure and sporting pursuits, for example, children playing. Managing noise generated *within* an open space, such as from maintenance activities and events is very important. Events in parks may not be popular with everyone, for example rock concerts, but they are not incompatible with the enjoyment of these open spaces. Indeed some would argue that they make a positive contribution to Westminster’s soundscape by providing a stimulating and varied acoustic environment. However, they can lead to disturbance and therefore they need careful management to protect the amenity of noise sensitive developments.
- 7.9 There are some noises that detract from the enjoyment of the city but are impossible to control or cannot be avoided entirely. Highlighting these problems with relevant organisations is important. Highlighting sounds which may have positive associations in shaping the experience of the city is also important. As well as the presence of iconic or historic sounds in the city, there is evidence that some sounds, for example natural sounds, can have stress-relieving benefits which could contribute to improving the city’s soundscape.

“I do not think that anyone would argue that Westminster can ever become a quiet place, given the range and intensity of activities that go on in the city.”

The Westminster Society

Ref	Actions to facilitate protecting and enhancing tranquillity and positive sounds	Timescale
Pr1	Identify areas that would benefit from additional protection measures and make specific recommendations.	Ongoing
Pr2	Further develop specific guidance for protecting and enhancing tranquillity in open spaces. This might take the form of a Supplementary Planning Document as part of the council's Local Development Framework.	2010
Pr3	Use techniques from the Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study in Broadley Street Gardens improvements Extend to other programmed improvement projects, including Westbourne Green and Stone Wharf.	2010 Ongoing
Pr4	Continue to specify noise minimisation measures in contracts for the management and maintenance of the council's parks and open spaces in line with the policy approach set out in Noise Policy 4.	Ongoing
Pr5	Develop and implement a three year shrubbery strategy for the council's Parks and Gardens.	Review 2010 Implement 2010 to 2013
Pr6	Consider developing a sound-based public art feature in one of the city's open spaces (including hard surfaced civic spaces).	To be confirmed
Pn9	Encourage positive sound installations as part of public art provisions, including those funded by planning contributions, and any subsequent development related tariff.	2010 to 2013/14
L4	Use traffic control orders to specify noise related conditions for floats and static sound systems.	As required
L5	Work with Royal Parks to establish more effective communication protocols in relation to events in the Parks.	2010
L6	Promote The Royal Parks' excellent communications working practices, for events, to outdoor event organisers.	Ongoing
NM14	Include information on the corporate website about tranquil areas, positive sound features of the city and forthcoming public events that may generate noise.	2010/11

Case Study: *Acoustic Art*

SoundLife London was a unique 3-D sound composition created especially for Leicester Square Gardens by sound artist and musician Martyn Ware. The work was coordinated by Arts Co and supported by Westminster City Council.

This project consisted of an hour long, looped 'soundscape' which inhabited the entire space of the Leicester Square gardens over a 10-day period – at times manifested as a sort of ethereal activity which moved around the space, at others a subtle and ambient musical composition.

The audio clips for SoundLife London were collected through an outreach and education programme called Sounds of the City consisting of workshops with several Westminster community groups. Participating Westminster community groups include The Digital Media Unit, Bayswater; Ebury Bridge Youth Centre, Victoria; Open Age Hub, Victoria; St Marylebone School for Girls; Westminster Special Needs School; and Paddington Green.

The project revealed the three-dimensional sound environment of the city and included snatches of conversation, Westminster Abbey bells, noise from local markets, the Thames, transport as well as sporting and cultural activities.

Leicester Square's central city location and demographics provide a unique opportunity for the creators of SoundLife London to work with local residents, to include sounds that reflect the makeup of the community and improve awareness of Westminster's diverse cultures.

8 Next steps and further information

The council will be implementing the actions set out in the strategy and monitoring their effectiveness in delivering the main objectives of the Westminster Noise Strategy.

The 24 Hour Noise Team: 020 7641 2000

If you are being disturbed by noise happening **now** call 020 7641 2000 (24 hours).

If you would like help and advice about noise or you want to report a noise that is not happening now please report the problem online at:

http://www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/pollution/noisepollution/noise_nuisance.cfm

Noise Strategy Email: noisestrategy@westminster.gov.uk

If you have queries or comments on the Noise Strategy, please email noisestrategy@westminster.gov.uk.



9 Glossary

Ambient noise

Ongoing unwanted sound in the environment such as from transport and industry, as distinct from individual noise incidents, such as a noisy all-night party. Specifically in this strategy, long term, systematically predictable noise emitted by road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic, water transport, and from sites of industrial activity. Unless stated otherwise, noise includes vibration. The term 'ambient noise' can also be used more widely, in terminology deriving from the ISO:1996 standard, to refer to the sound from all sources combined - not just road traffic and industry, but including birdsong, running water, etc.

A-weighted

The human ear is more sensitive to mid frequencies than to very high or low ones. A-weighting is a correction usually applied to environmental noise measurements to reflect this.

Building Regulations

Regulations dealing with design and construction of buildings, and their services, fittings and equipment made by the Secretary of State under the Building Act 1984. The purpose of the regulations is to: secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of the users of buildings; further the conservation of fuel and power; and to prevent waste, undue consumption, misuse or contamination of water.

Central Activities Zone

The Westminster Central Activities Zone is defined in the city's statutory development plan. It is the area of the city where central London activities – including offices, hotels, shops, restaurants, cinemas, bars and other leisure and are protected and encouraged. Residential uses are also located in this part of the city which is characterised by a mix of uses.

Code of Construction Practice

A code of practice that sets out environmental standards and construction procedures for construction sites and projects.

Considerate Builders Scheme

Scheme operated by the council to promote high standards of amenity on all building sites in the city through a code of good practice which seeks to secure building sites are well maintained, quiet, clean, tidy and safe and operated in a responsible and accountable manner.

Crossrail

A new rail link proposed to follow an east-west alignment from Maidenhead and Heathrow in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east via new twin tunnels under central London. It will link Heathrow Airport, the West End, the City of London and Canary Wharf. It will involve the construction of new stations at Paddington, Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road.

Decibel (dB)

Sound is measured in decibels. They are a logarithmic scale normally used for sound pressure measurements.

END The European Environmental Noise Directive (Directive 2002/49/EC). The END requires Member States to create strategic noise maps and to produce noise action plans.

Enforcement notice

A planning Enforcement Notice is a legal notice issued by a local planning authority where it believes that there has been a breach of planning control, for example the carrying out of unauthorised development, requiring the breach to be remedied. There is a right of appeal to the Secretary of State. Failure to comply with the notice after the notice has been confirmed is a criminal offence. Enforcement Notices can also be issued in relation to other local authority services.

Frequency

High frequency noises are often described as having a high pitch and low frequency noises as having a low pitch. Frequency is the number of cycles per second that the sound pressure fluctuates about the ambient static air pressure. Frequency is measured in Hertz (Hz).

L_{Aeq}

Ambient noise is normally measured as L_{Aeq} . $L_{Aeq T}$ is the equivalent **A-weighted sound pressure** level that gives the energy average of a fluctuating sound level measured over a specified time duration.

L_{Amax}

The maximum **A-weighted, sound pressure** for a discrete event or over a specific time period ($L_{Amax T}$).

L_{A90}

A-weighted sound pressure level exceeded for 90% of the measurement period. It is widely used to measure background noise levels.

Mayor's Ambient Noise Strategy

Following public consultation, the Mayor of London published an Ambient Noise Strategy in 2004. The strategy is linked to the Mayor's Transport Strategy and the London Plan, as well as work with borough councils and others. Actions include better management of transport systems, better town planning and better design of buildings.

Noise

'Unwanted sound'. Noise includes vibration, except where the context indicates otherwise. Noise is classified as a pollutant in the European Directive (2008/1/EC) on Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC).

Noise incident(s)

This refers to discrete occurrences of noise, individual noise events.

Noise nuisance

Defined by the World Health Organisation as “a feeling of displeasure evoked by noise”. Statutory nuisance has a more specific meaning and is subject to legal action under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Noise sensitive properties

Term used in Government Planning Guidance, PPG 24, ‘Planning and Noise’; in the councils Unitary Development Plan 2007, these are defined as properties that are to be protected from noise from developments. These include: all residential properties; educational establishments; hotels; theatres; hospitals; concert halls; broadcasting and recording studios.

Sound pressure

The fluctuations in air pressure, from the steady air pressure, caused by sound.

Soundscape

The overall quality of an acoustic environment as a place for human experience. Soundscape design may encompass reduction or elimination of certain sounds (‘noise abatement’), preservation of certain sounds (‘soundmarks’), and the combination and balancing of sounds to create or enhance an attractive and stimulating acoustic environment (analogous to the sound engineering of products). A ‘soundwalk’ is a walk, often guided, designed to enhance awareness of the richness of the sound world.

Statutory nuisance

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, ‘noise emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance’ may constitute a statutory nuisance.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment are set out in the UK Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Carrying out an SEA is a statutory requirement for certain strategies and programmes and provides a way of ensuring important environmental protection objectives are met. An SEA includes the preparation of an Environment Report and statement; a copy of both is available upon request.

Streetworks

Includes roadworks and work in the street carried out by utilities companies such as Thames Water or EDF Energy.

Stress Area

An area identified by the council where it believes that restaurants, cafés, takeaways, public houses, bars and other entertainment uses have become concentrated to an extent that harm is being caused to residential amenity, the interests of other commercial uses, the local environment, and to the character and function of the locality.

Westminster Air Quality Strategy

Westminster was the first council to publish an Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan, in 2001. Work is now underway to update it, to refocus our efforts, and generate new

actions with the overall aim of meeting the pollutant standards set out in the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (2007). The Review and Assessment of air quality is a statutory requirement for local authorities set out in the Environment Act 1995. Working towards air quality objectives will help to force change and improvements in other areas, such as noise.

Appendix 1 Westminster noise research

In order to inform the Noise Strategy, Westminster City Council commissioned a number of surveys and research studies. Brief descriptions are included below and the full reports can be accessed from the council's website.

[The Westminster Noise Attitudes Survey, 2008](#) was a telephone survey of 2000 residents which identified attitudes and responses to noise issues. The data was weighted to ensure the survey was representative of the Westminster population as a whole. The survey helps us to understand which noise issues are the most annoying for residents; that helps us to prioritise actions and it provides evidence which we can use to influence other organisations.

[The Westminster Noise Measurement Survey, 2008](#) included measurements from the front and rear of randomly selected properties in each of the city's 20 wards and at a further 15 locations in central Westminster. The survey found that average ambient noise levels in Westminster are higher than World Health Organisation recommended levels, especially at night and in the **Stress Areas**. The study also confirmed that rear facades of buildings are quieter than fronts. These are both valuable evidence to support Planning and Licensing Policies with respect to **Stress Areas**, and also on preserving quieter spaces, particularly rear facades.

[The Soho Noise Survey Reports, 2008](#) followed noise measurement surveys carried out in 2001 and 2003 and found that, in general, noise levels were slightly reduced since the last survey.

An analysis of [Noise Complaints in Westminster, 2008](#) considered the service requests received by the council's Noise Team. It provided detailed information about the types of noise that disturb people in different parts of Westminster.

[The Westminster Open Spaces Noise Study, 2008](#) considered the factors contributing to the tranquillity of Westminster's open spaces and broad options for enhancing this tranquillity. The study found that, as well as noise levels, visual factors make a significant contribution to people's feeling of calm and tranquillity. This is important for influencing future design of open spaces.

[The Westminster Aircraft Noise Study, 2009](#) examined the impact of aircraft noise (including helicopters) on Westminster's residents, visitors and businesses. It provides evidence that residents in the South of Westminster are affected by Heathrow and that increases in air traffic would have a detrimental affect.