

Matter 3 – The Spatial Strategy and Spatial Development Priorities

**Westminster City Plan 2019-2040 – Examination in Public
Response to Inspector’s Matters, Issues and Questions**

Policy 2 – Spatial Development Priorities: West End Retail and Leisure Special Policy Area

*Question 19 - Does Policy 2 adequately and effectively deal with the full range of relevant issues?
How will these priorities be delivered?*

1. The Crown Estate refers to its representations of 31 July 2019, supporting the expanded area of the West End Retail and Leisure Special Policy Area (WERLSPA) to include St James’s and the change in nature of the area to include leisure uses. However there remains no non-strategic policy which establishes exactly how non-retail uses will be supported and delivered within the boundary of the WERLSPA.
2. The commendable intentions of Policy 2 are to intensify the area, deliver an improved retail and leisure experience (part C) and diverse evening economy (part D) however the policy contains no detail as to how this is to be supported or achieved. Other later policies on retail and related uses, Policies 15 and 17, do not provide a distinction between how proposals for leisure or evening uses should be considered differently within the WERLSPA to outside it. The plan’s policies are therefore unlikely to be effective in delivering the mix of uses WCC seeks to achieve.
3. The structural shift in retail and the importance of retail within the high street has been seen over the past few years, with the interdependence of retail and other uses in the high street growing. The full effect of the lockdown and required health & safety measures of Covid-19 has yet to be fully established in these early stages but it is well recognised that the period of lockdown and changing nature of the experience of shopping has accelerated a move towards further online, rather than face to face, purchasing. Other uses therefore need to be not only referenced but strongly supported in policy terms in order for the priorities of WERLSPA to be accomplished.
4. If WCC’s priority is to intensify and deliver more leisure and evening uses then Policy 2 (or Policies 15 and 17) need to be clarified to provide strong, specific support for these types of uses within the WERLSPA in order to be effective.