

WESTMINSTER HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY

MARCH 2010



Affordable housing at Wilton Plaza and Woods House



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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Westminster's first citywide housing renewal strategy. This builds on the work we have been doing since the council set up its Housing Commission of experts to advise on how best to meet housing needs within the city. The Commission recognised the very significant challenges we face if we are to offer a range of affordable housing and create vibrant, mixed neighbourhoods which provide good places to live and opportunities for work, in the heart of London.

We acknowledge that our housing stock requires significant investment if we are to keep up with ever advancing housing standards but are faced with a major shortfall in funding to deliver this. As well as requiring structural investment, the areas identified within this strategy are also characterised by issues including disproportionate levels of overcrowded living conditions, health problems which include lower life expectancy rates, higher than average levels of unemployment and increased perceptions of anti social behaviour as a local problem.

Past experience from Westminster and elsewhere demonstrates that housing improvements cannot be delivered in isolation if we are to address these wider issues and maximise opportunities for local people. We are therefore committed to providing better housing, better community facilities, more job opportunities and improvements to the physical environment across the city through the housing renewal project.

Since launching the strategy for consultation in Church Street last November, we undertook more than 25 face to face meetings and received over 100 responses from a range of residents, local neighbourhood and stakeholders groups as well as regional and national organisations. This was merely the first stage though and we are keen to hear the views of all of our residents and partners as we move forward and develop options for the renewal areas. There will be many opportunities to get involved and we propose to host a major housing renewal conference a year from now. This is all part of our



Councillor Philippa Roe



commitment to involve as many people as we can at every stage of the regeneration and renewal of Westminster's neighbourhoods.

Following the consultation, we have also developed ten commitments to reassure our residents. These include a commitment that we will not proceed with plans if, following extensive consultation, the overwhelming majority of residents in the area do not feel they are able to support the final proposals and a guaranteed right of return to the estate for tenants who wish to do so.

This strategy is far more than a short-term fix. It is a long-term commitment to improve the lives of people here in Westminster. Change will not always be easy but I believe that now is absolutely the right time for this strategy. With the major economic difficulties we are facing, it is more important than ever to deliver what our residents and communities really need.

Councillor Philippa Roe
Cabinet Member For Housing

1 Overview

Westminster's Housing Renewal Strategy will involve local people in designing better quality homes in prosperous neighbourhoods to create thriving mixed communities. We will achieve this by bringing together national experts and local residents to identify where we can change existing buildings, street patterns and local facilities to do better for the people who live here.

Our strategy is based around five priorities:

- To increase the supply and quality of affordable homes to meet a variety of local needs, including housing for families
- To improve the quality of the local environment with outstanding green and open spaces and housing that promotes low energy consumption and environmental sustainability
- To promote a high quality of life for people of all ages and backgrounds, in safe, cohesive and healthy neighbourhoods, supported by a range of high quality housing and excellent community facilities
- To enable people to maximise economic opportunity in Westminster with support for training, employment and enterprise, and housing tenures which help those in work to remain in the City
- To create a more distinct sense of neighbourhood, ending the physical divide between Westminster's estates and surrounding local streets.

Involving residents and partners will be crucial if we are to develop and deliver high quality renewal programmes which meet local needs. This is why the council embarked on an extensive consultation exercise following the launch of the draft Westminster Renewal strategy in November last year. We received well over 100 responses and attended 25 meetings during the consultation phase.



Local people will be involved throughout



The ideas and contributions we received were of exceptional quality and will significantly enhance our ability to develop and consult on more detailed renewal proposals. While the responses were broadly supportive of our approach, they enabled us to make seven key changes to our strategy:

- We have revised our renewal objectives to ensure there is sufficient focus on health, wellbeing and environmental sustainability
- We will expand on the four initial renewal neighbourhoods (Church Street, Tollgate Gardens, Brunel and Ebury Bridge) with the addition of the Westbourne Green area
- We will evaluate the potential of other renewal areas proposed during consultation and assess renewal potential across the council's housing land
- We have incorporated wider investment and regeneration plans across housing tenures
- We will develop clear policy statements on the right of return to renewal estates, local preference arrangements for new homes, tenancy conditions and options for leaseholders
- We have made a clear statement about what we will do if there is no overall support from residents and local stakeholders for specific renewal plans
- We will hold a renewal conference in winter 2010/11 to discuss the emerging findings from renewal master plans.

We are keen to hear the views of all of our residents and partners as we go forward in 2010 to develop options to form the basis of renewal plans. We have developed a ten point commitment to local people, endorsed through our consultation on the strategy, to govern ongoing discussions (see page 35). This is all part of our commitment to involve as many people as we can at every stage of the regeneration and renewal of Westminster's neighbourhoods.



We want to bring investment and opportunities to our neighbourhoods



2 The need for housing renewal in Westminster

Westminster contains some of the most affluent areas in the country, but also some of the most deprived neighbourhoods which have not always benefited from new commercial and residential developments nearby.

As the second most expensive borough in the country, housing opportunities for people on low to moderate incomes are rare. There is typically a waiting list of about 5,500 households in priority need of social rented housing, including many who are overcrowded, and potentially about 3,000 households who do not qualify for social housing but cannot afford private rents, and another 16,000 who can afford to rent privately but not purchase in Westminster.

Much of our affordable housing stock is showing its age and, despite internal improvements through the decent homes programme, will need significant investment to keep up with ever advancing housing standards. However, finance available for council housing refurbishment is limited and is unable to fund our long-term housing needs.

Our neighbourhoods most in need of renewal typically face a number of challenges:

- High concentrations of social housing, some of which doesn't meet modern living requirements, and requires high level of ongoing investment to maintain
- Disproportionate levels of overcrowded living conditions¹
- Health problems and lower life expectancy rates of local residents when compared with the Westminster average²
- Poor levels of numeracy and literacy which contribute to low levels of employment and economic activity³
- Higher than average levels of unemployment with as many as one in six of the working⁴ age population not working, with Church Street and Queens Park having significantly higher unemployment rates (8.8% and 7.4% respectively) against the Westminster average of 3.1%⁵

1. Housing Register Applicants – Summary Report by Rehousing List and Bedsize 30 June 2009, Housing Needs Team database

2. City of Westminster and NHS Westminster, Strategy for Tackling Health Inequalities in Westminster 2009–2016

3. Westminster City Partnership, Westminster Ward Profiles 2009: westminstercitypartnership.org.uk

4. London Poverty Profile 2009, City Parochial Foundation and New Policy Institute: www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk/indicators/topics/work-and-worklessness/adults-lacking-work-by-borough

5. City of Westminster Transport & Streets: Local Implementation Plan: www.westminster.gov.uk/services/transportandstreets/lip/

6. Westminster City Partnership, Westminster Ward Profiles 2009: westminstercitypartnership.org.uk

- Much higher than average numbers of people in institutional care rather than living independently
- Higher perceptions of anti-social behaviour as a local problem⁶.

The need to invest in our housing stock

We estimate that the council housing stock requires significant levels of investment over the next 30 years, but our major works programme over this period faces a funding shortfall of £250m.

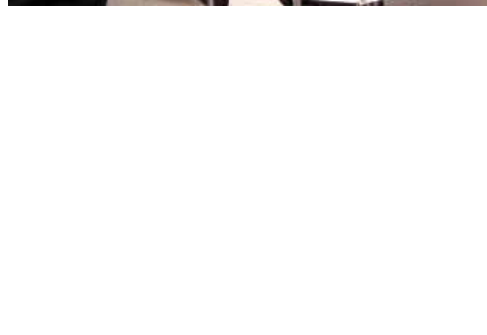
This means that we have to look hard at our asset needs and our planned investment programmes. In 2010 CityWest Homes will undertake a new survey of the condition of our housing stock to reassess investment needs and to develop a new asset strategy. Even if we are able to find ways to reduce costs and prioritise our programme, it is likely that we will still face a funding shortfall.

Possible reform to the national council housing finance system may help, but this change is still at a relatively early stage of development and will need to be delivered against a backdrop of significant pressure on public finances. Our Housing Renewal Programme offers us the opportunity to take greater control of our investment and financing needs, with the potential to renew some of the more costly elements of our stock and to attract external public and private finance to support housing investment in the City.

Increasing affordable housing options

Westminster suffers from a severe shortage of affordable homes with demand for affordable homes far exceeding supply. Two thirds of housing need is for social rented homes, while the remainder could benefit from a wider range of affordable housing options in the intermediate sector (ie sub market homeownership or rental units at more than social rents but less than private sector prices). Due to a lack of land suitable for large scale housing development and high land values, Westminster will never be able to build the number of affordable homes needed to keep step with growing demand. Nevertheless all possible opportunities to deliver affordable housing will continue to be explored.

The independent Westminster Housing Commission recommended that the council carry out a more extensive exercise to determine sites where development could be worthwhile and higher housing density achieved without negatively impacting on local people or their environment⁷.



The council committed to undertake this work in its five year Housing Strategy to 2012.

Supporting successful mixed tenure communities

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation study Mixed Communities: success and sustainability (2006) looks at the benefits of developing neighbourhoods with a broader social mix of households in terms of age, income level, household size and tenure type (ie homes for social rent, intermediate rent, low cost home ownership and private sale).

There is a danger of Westminster's neighbourhoods becoming places where only the very wealthy and the very poor are able to live. Planning policies seek to address this by ensuring that housing developments provide an appropriate mix of homes in terms of tenure, size and type in order to meet Westminster's housing needs⁸. However, our drive for mixed communities recognises that while we have an ongoing duty to house those in most need (homeless households, overcrowded households, people with medical priority and the vulnerable), it is families on low to middle incomes, who play a critical role in the economic life of the city, who currently have almost no new housing opportunities.

The Westminster Housing Commission noted the lack of options for those on low or middle incomes, many of whom work in Westminster. Similarly, the Hills Report (2007)⁹ identified a lack of geographical and social mobility within the social housing system.

To date there have been few opportunities in Westminster for those priced out of their local housing markets to take their first step onto the property ladder. Opportunities for social tenants who aspire to become homeowners have significantly reduced in recent years and the right to buy is no longer a realistic option for council tenants on average or low incomes.

The average income of households on the Westminster Intermediate Housing Register is around £25,000, with 40% of registrants having savings of less than £3,500. Shared Ownership schemes in Westminster – which are currently the only realistic low cost home ownership option in the City – tend to require a sizable deposit and household income of around £35,000 in order to sustain monthly housing costs.

Households who are on incomes between £20,000–£35,000 and work locally have little opportunity to move into home

7. Westminster Housing Commission: Report of the Westminster Housing Commission: Finding future opportunity for housing in Westminster (2006)

8. City of Westminster UDP adopted January 2007 and Publication Draft Core Strategy November 2009

9. Hills, John (2007) Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England

ownership without moving outside of the City, and commuting long distances to work. These households cannot take advantage of buying through shared ownership in Westminster and, if paying private rents, are unable to save for the deposit and set up costs associated with purchasing. Many workers who contribute to the Westminster economy, carrying out essential jobs, but with a relatively low income, struggle to afford a home with a private sector landlord, without the majority of their take home pay being used for their housing costs.

Shared Ownership in Westminster

The average household income for people on the Homeownership Westminster Register is approximately £25,000. However to purchase 50% of a one bedroom shared ownership unit on the 2009 completed Grosvenor Waterside development requires a deposit of approximately £24,000 and a mortgage of about £135,000, more than five times the average income of tenants on the intermediate list. Additionally rent of between £250–£300 per month would be charged on the rented share. A household would need an income of at least £35,000 in order to comfortably afford this scheme without spending over 40–45% of their income in housing costs, the maximum level recommended by the London Development Agency.

Private renting in Westminster

The current Local Housing Allowance private sector weekly rent rate for a one bedroom self contained property in Westminster is £355 (January 2010). Over 12 months this would represent £18,460 in rent payments, which for households with a sole or joint income of £25,000 (the average on the Intermediate Housing Register) would make such opportunities to rent in Westminster outside of their reach of affordability.

Affordable housing is crucial to delivering sustainable mixed tenure neighbourhoods. Building high quality homes available for social rent, sub-market rent, low cost home ownership and outright sale at affordable London prices will support tenure mobility by providing attainable affordable housing options for working social renters who aspire to home ownership. It will also help working households and key-workers already in the private sector with opportunities to move into owning. We are looking to develop a wider range of housing options that will help people with different household sizes and incomes.



Economic renewal – tackling worklessness

Local economies in neighbourhoods at the heart of the proposed renewal programme are struggling as a result of having too few employers, a predominance of social housing, and limited disposable income among residents. These factors, combined with low levels of numeracy and literacy and the inability of local businesses to attract passing trade lead to high unemployment.

The council's Core Strategy has identified the North Westminster Economic Development Area (NWEDA) to address the need for economic renewal of Church Street, Westbourne, Harrow Road and Queen's Park. NWEDA also includes the Paddington Opportunity Area which is the largest scale regeneration area in Westminster, set to deliver about 15,000 new jobs and over 1,200 new homes. This approach helps to ensure that regeneration in Paddington both benefits and is integrated with the communities in these four wards.

The aim of the NWEDA is to encourage a partnership approach between the council, local community, private sector and other local service providers to support economic regeneration and help tackle deprivation and inequalities, including health inequalities. Developments in the area should contribute to increasing economic activity, providing local services, or improving the quality and tenure mix of housing. An important strand of the Housing Renewal Strategy is supporting the community and other infrastructure necessary to deliver this.

In the south of Westminster, the Victoria Opportunity Area is designated in the Core Strategy to achieve area renewal in Victoria, an improved transport interchange and up to 8,000 new jobs.

Church Street has one of the highest worklessness rates in Westminster. Around one in four people are on benefits and a substantial number are not looking for employment in order to look after family or for other reasons. Residents living here are also poorly qualified with over 30% of working age people lacking formal qualifications¹⁰.

The Hills Report, Ends and Means (2007), highlighted that people of working age who are unemployed are disproportionately represented in social housing, and that the proportion of tenants in social housing and paid employment has fallen some 15% between 1981 and 2006¹¹. While the government and local authorities have developed projects with partners to address this trend there is still more we can do.

10. Westminster City Partnership, Westminster Ward Profiles 2009: westminstercitypartnership.org.uk

11. Hills, John (2007) Ends and Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England.

Housing providers have responded by setting up projects which help tenants not working to gain access to training and skills programmes which might help them to access and sustain longer term work. The council and its partners have implemented the Westminster Works programme which seeks to support local business, create jobs, and help people back into work. In Westminster, Notting Hill Housing Group has developed a Local Labour in Construction Programme which supports participating tenants on a path from training to skilled status, and helps to secure apprenticeships and employment on construction and development sites locally.

Creating economically active and inclusive communities

The Westminster Economic Development Strategy (EDS) provides a framework for the council and its partners to deliver a range of initiatives to support businesses and unemployed residents. The Strategy has a spatial focus to ensure the key areas of the West End/ Central Activities Zone, South Westminster and North West Westminster are targeted with specific activities relating to their needs.

The EDS will take forward the Civic Enterprise programme and a range of Local Area Agreement projects. Key priorities are:

- delivering the Westminster Works programme to help people with employment and training.
- developing projects to provide enterprise opportunities for young people
- delivering the shop front improvement programme
- establishing neighbourhood enterprise schemes in North and South Westminster

Over 1,200 participants have registered to find employment through Westminster Works during the first nine months since launch: 67 people have been placed in work and 13 have found volunteering placements.

The Housing Renewal Strategy will work in support of the City Economic Development Strategy aims to help residents to gain confidence through volunteer placements, training and further education courses to increase local skill bases so that people will fulfil their aspirations to work.

Helping people find employment is key to the strategy



Overcrowding

Overcrowding is one of the most severe housing challenges we face in Westminster and can cause a number of physical and mental health issues, particularly respiratory problems and depression. Half of Westminster's housing stock is studio or one bedroom accommodation, whereas two thirds of demand is for homes with two or more bedrooms. According to the Survey of English Housing 2005, levels of overcrowding in Westminster affected 12 households in every 100 in wards such as Church Street, Queen's Park and Westbourne¹². Church Street also has the highest number of households on the council's transfer register to move to a bigger home, as well as the highest proportion of the households identified as most severely overcrowded¹³.

There are currently almost 900 households on the council's housing register who are overcrowded, with 46% requiring two bed properties and a further 42% needing three bedrooms. Recent data collected from the other major social landlords operating in Westminster indicates that there are approximately 500 households living within the housing association sector who are overcrowded. Over a third of this demand is for a move from two bedrooms into three, and a fifth from one-bedroom into two-bedroom accommodation.

A target to rehouse the 44 most severely overcrowded households in 2009/10 has been achieved, and a new target relating to rehousing overcrowded households is in development for 2010/11, alongside a range of initiatives to alleviate the effects of overcrowding. The Housing Renewal Programme is one initiative which can go some way towards addressing the supply of family size accommodation and meeting local housing needs.

Improving health

Whilst general health indicators show that most Westminster residents are living longer, more healthy lives, there are variations in health between neighbourhoods. Patterns of health inequalities and wide variations in life expectancy and mortality rates mirror the patterns of social and economic deprivation in the City.

Poor housing and lack of access to a high-quality outdoor environment can have a considerable impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing. This in turn can affect educational attainment, ability to take up employment and lead to social exclusion.

12. Communities and Local Government, Survey of English Housing Results 2005/06

13. Housing Register Applicants – Summary Report by Rehousing List and Bedsize 30 June 2009, Housing Needs Team database.

For example, the proportion of Church Street residents on Incapacity Benefit is the highest in Westminster. People out of work with long-term sickness issues (over five years or more) represent around 6% of the total working age population¹⁴.

Households with support needs

Around 12% of households in the City are estimated to contain members with support needs. The majority of these have a physical disability, are frail elderly and or have mental health problems. These households are most likely to require either specialist forms of housing, or adaptations and support services to help them to remain living independently in their current home.

The approach and outcome for households with support needs are detailed in the Westminster Housing Strategy 2007/08 to 2011/12 and partnership strategies, the Westminster Learning Disability Partnership Housing and Support Strategy, the Supporting People Strategy, the Mental Health Strategy for Housing and Related Support Services, and Older People Housing and Care Strategy.

Neighbourhood based housing renewal plans are an opportunity to ensure the need for accessible housing and neighbourhoods is properly assessed for future developments. This would not just look at the current housing list but at the future needs assessments of partners such as Adults and Children's services and NHS Westminster.

Such an approach is also in keeping with the national strategy Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods (February 2008). This strategy focuses on making general needs or mainstream homes accessible for an ageing population and not limiting the options for older people to care homes or sheltered housing.

Environmental sustainability

In order to reduce carbon emissions, the government has declared that all housing (existing and new build) must be as near to carbon zero as possible by 2050. We need to focus on the standards of new housing and also refurbishment and retrofit work to existing homes if we are to play our part in achieving reductions in energy consumption and emissions.

The council's Design Policy (as set out in Westminster's Core Strategy) states that development must incorporate exemplary



¹⁴. Westminster City Partnership, Westminster Ward Profiles 2009: westminstercitypartnership.org.uk.

standards of sustainable design. Sustainable housing brings many benefits, such as improved thermal comfort, less energy and water wastage, lower utility costs, increased recycling services and a better quality of life.

Work is in progress, supported by the London Development Agency, to prepare heat maps which will enable the potential for extended and new district heating networks to be identified. Larger areas of housing offer opportunities for low carbon heating solutions using district heating with combined a heat and power plant, or decentralised energy generation.

All new homes are already built to various levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes, and by 2016 all new-build properties are expected to be carbon zero. It can be more difficult to bring about changes to existing homes because the buildings have cultural heritage or technological aspects (as well as cost issues and difficulties gaining the consent of owners) which determine patterns of production and consumption. More information about our work to reduce carbon of existing housing is outlined in the investment section.

Westminster's planning policies for a more sustainable environment include:

- Seeking to address current open space deficiencies and future needs by protecting all open spaces, and by securing new improved public open space in developments.
- Encouraging the creation of new wildlife habitat as part of development.
- Encouraging the creation and extension of green infrastructure through the provision of private spaces, roof terraces, balconies, and living roofs and walls.
- Requiring major new development be designed to link to existing heat and energy networks, and where this is not possible, provision of decentralised energy generation will be required.
- Requiring all major developments to maximise onsite renewable energy generation to achieve at least 20% reduction in CO2 emissions.
- Requiring major developments, where feasible, to provide on-site recycling and composting waste management facilities.

Quality of the local environment

Residents identifying themselves as living on a housing estate were less likely to rate the council and the local area as highly as residents living in other housing tenures¹⁵.

Currently residents in Church Street, Churchill and Westbourne wards have a satisfaction rating below the Westminster average in response to whether the council is making their local area a better place to live. The Westminster City Survey shows that residents living in these same wards rate parks and open space within their top five services¹⁶.

Access to good quality open space is very important to quality of life, health and wellbeing. In Church Street, the only significant area of open space is on the western side of the Edgware Road, but this is rarely used by those living to the east of Edgware Road. Parts of Church Street are recognised as being generally deficient in publicly accessible open play space which is considered suitable for informal play.

Church Street feels cut off from its surroundings by nearby major roads. While the neighbourhood is well served by public transport – buses, tube stations, and Marylebone and Paddington stations close by – pedestrian movement in and out of the area is difficult due to the barriers of the Edgware Road and the Westway. There is much potential and community support to look at developing new pedestrian and cycling routes to better link Church Street with nearby neighbourhoods.

Safety and perceptions of safety

Creating a City where people feel safe and are safe is a priority in the Westminster City Plan 2006–16. Crime and the fear of crime can impact on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of residents.

There is a correlation between areas of deprivation and perceptions of crime. Local perceptions in relation to safety are lower than the Westminster average for residents who live on estates in the Church Street, Churchill, Maida Vale and Westbourne wards. Problems with teenagers hanging around and resident safety after dark were far more likely to be perceived as a problem in these areas⁷.

Tackling nuisance, anti social behaviour and crime was one of the most frequently raised issues during public consultation on the draft Housing Renewal Strategy. Improving security of



15. Westminster City Partnership, Westminster Ward Profiles 2009: westminstercitypartnership.org.uk

16. Westminster City Partnership, Westminster Ward Profiles 2009: westminstercitypartnership.org.uk

17. Westminster City Partnership, Westminster Ward Profiles 2009: westminstercitypartnership.org.uk

access to blocks, door entry controls and sensitively designing the layout of open spaces was viewed as beneficial to tackling nuisance behaviour as well as enhancing resident perceptions of safety¹³.

Case study: Mozart Estate, Queens Park, Westminster

Mozart Estate is a 1970s built estate in Queen's Park consisting of around 500 dwellings, a mix of houses and flats. At the time it was built, it was considered a prime example of good social housing design with 'walkways in the sky' inter-linking low rise blocks rather than the tower block architecture of the mid twentieth century.

Unfortunately as time passed, the design and appearance made the estate look impenetrable and uninviting from the outside. The interlinking walkways became escape routes for crime related incidents, like muggings, burglaries, joyriding and drug dealing.

Following extensive resident consultation, a masterplan was agreed which addressed a list of resident priorities, which included:

- improving security and safety by limiting access to blocks, dwellings and shared garden areas, installation of new door entry systems and new homes to infill areas between blocks.
- improving the layout of the estate by demolishing central blocks and walkways to limit access around the estate to street level.
- improving the external appearance of the blocks by installing new, pitched roofs and double glazed windows. This will increase insulation and provide long term energy savings.

Community representatives worked with council officers and other agencies to ensure that residents were active throughout the development of the master plan for improvements to the estate. A 'Block Reps' forum met monthly with the design team to discuss programmes, design issues and resident concerns.

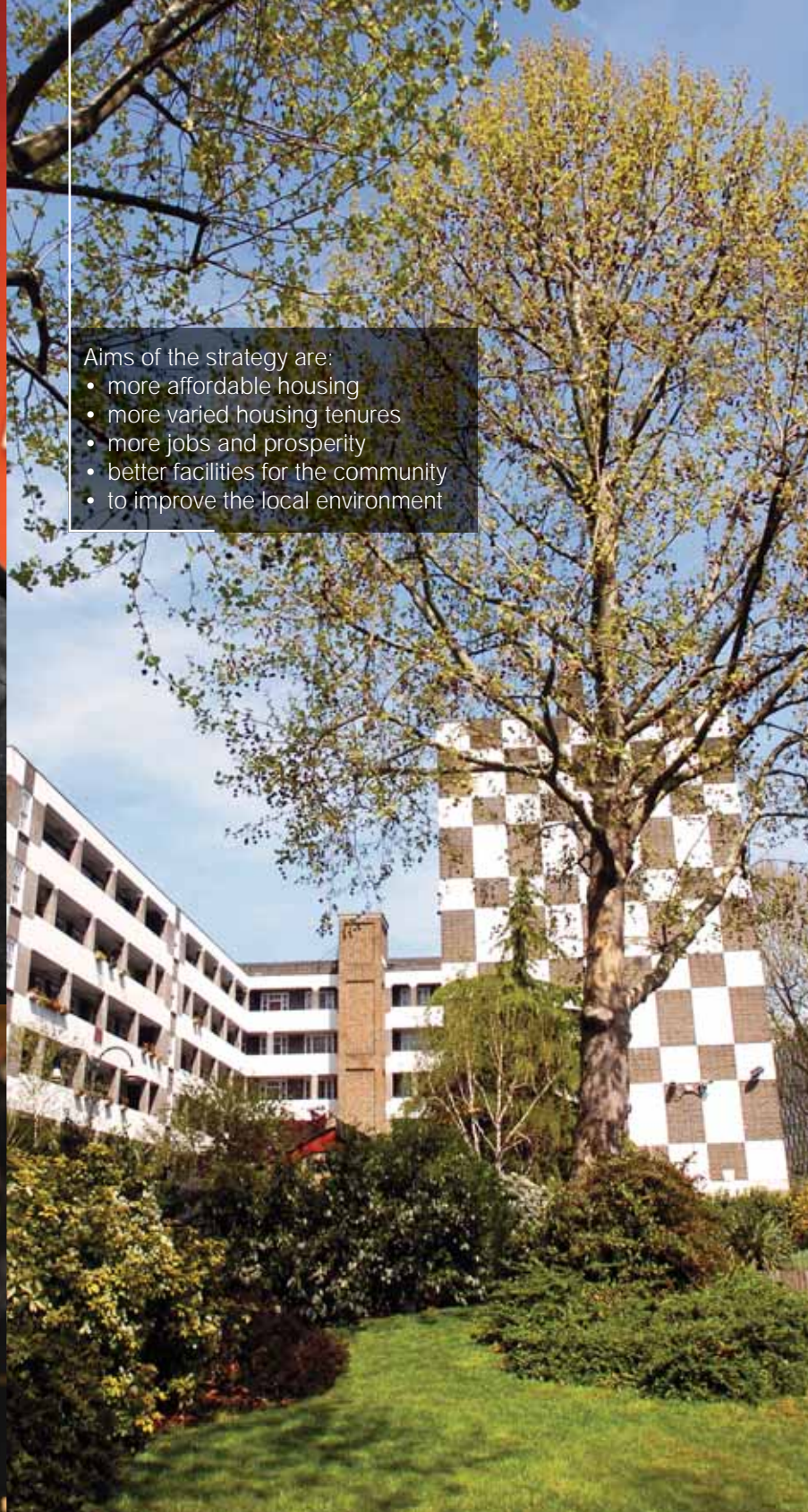
The Queen's Park Neighbourhood Forum has suggested that the people living on Mozart Estate would benefit from further work to address issues relating to worklessness and child poverty, now that physical improvements have been delivered. This is one of several suggestions made for areas which the council needs to consider further for inclusion in future phases of a renewal programme.

For more information visit the Mozart Estate Regeneration Exhibition at: <http://www.cwh.org.uk/main>



Aims of the strategy are:

- more affordable housing
- more varied housing tenures
- more jobs and prosperity
- better facilities for the community
- to improve the local environment



3 Vision and objectives

Westminster's Housing Renewal Strategy aims to involve local people in designing better quality homes in prosperous neighbourhoods with mixed and thriving communities. We will achieve this by bringing together national experts and local residents to identify where we can change existing buildings, street patterns and local facilities to do better for the people who live there.

To deliver this vision we have five objectives:

- To increase the supply and quality of affordable homes to meet a variety of local needs, including housing for families
- To improve the quality of the local environment with outstanding green and open spaces and housing that promotes low energy consumption and environmental sustainability
- To promote a high quality of life for people of all ages and backgrounds, in safe, cohesive and healthy neighbourhoods, supported by a range of high quality housing and excellent community facilities
- To enable people to maximise economic opportunity in Westminster with support for training, employment and enterprise, and housing tenures which help those in work to remain in the city
- To create a more distinct sense of neighbourhood, ending the physical divide between Westminster's estates and surrounding local streets.

To increase the supply and quality of affordable homes to meet a variety of local needs, including housing for families:

we will seek to achieve this by developing plans which:

- Increase the number of affordable homes in the city overall
- Build mixed tenure developments which increase the range of affordable housing options (rent and low cost home ownership) for local people
- Provide homes which meet the size requirements of those in need (including more family-size homes), taking into account

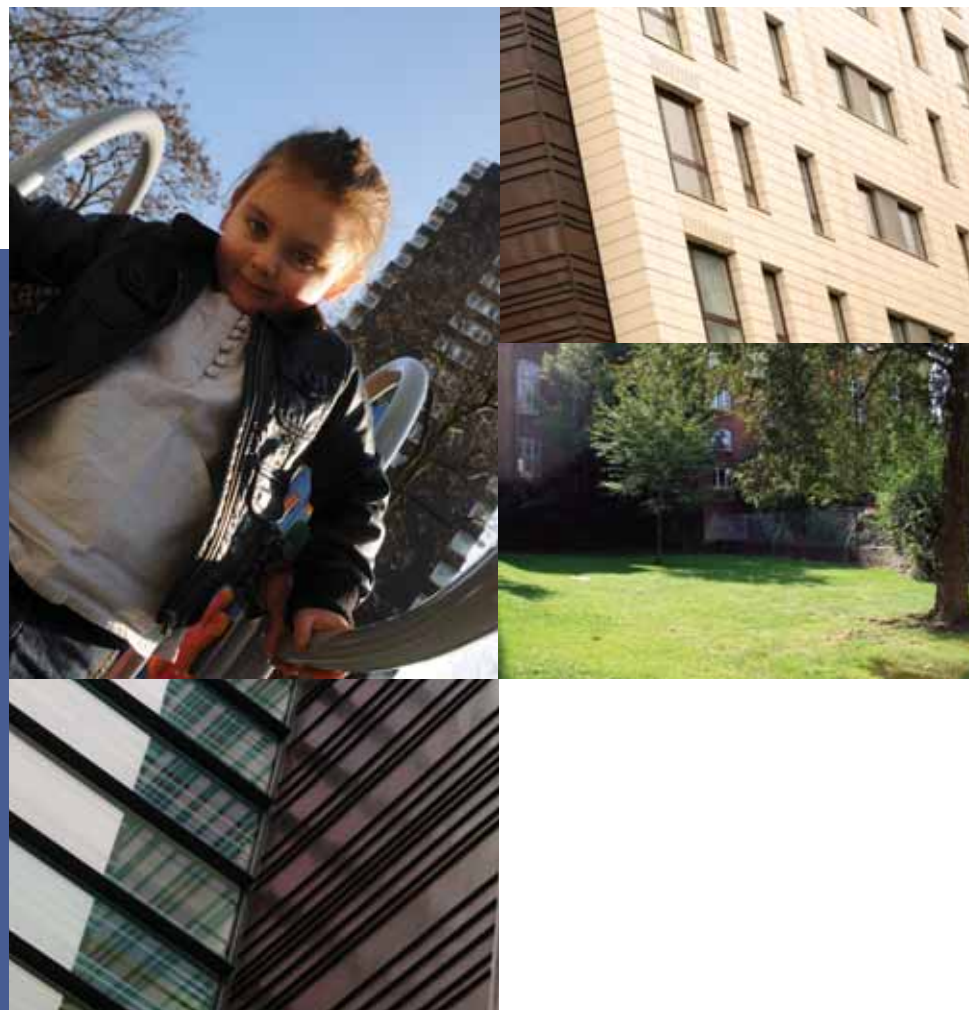
the importance of storage space, floor layouts and space standards

- Fully consider and minimise any negative impact of building to higher densities on quality of life (issues of privacy, natural light, noise and disturbance), as well as demand on car parking, estate facilities and local public services.

Building better homes: new design and quality standards

Proposals to build new homes will take into account the following design standards:

- **The Code for Sustainable Homes** sets out standards for homes with features to minimise energy and resource wastage, encourage domestic recycling, and be built with sustainable materials which have a less harmful impact on the environment. There are six levels of which Level Six is zero carbon.
- **The Lifetime Home Standard** designs homes with greater accessibility (ramp access to blocks, wider door frames in flats, lowering windows, light fittings and other controls). This saves on future costly adaptations, assisting independent living and greater housing choice for households who are ageing or with a mobility disability. (It is a mandatory standard for new homes built from 2011 for affordable homes, and 2013 for private homes).
- **The Mayor of London's draft Design Guidance** specifies floor spaces and layouts of new homes to be suitable for modern living i.e. going 10% above the previous standard applied to homes built in the 1960s and 1970s (called the Parker Morris Standard).
- **Building for Life** is the CABI national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. Recognising that good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and quality of life by reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and increasing property values. Building for Life promotes design excellence and celebrates best practice in the house building industry. New housing developments are scored against 20 Building for Life criteria to assess the quality of their design.
- **Westminster's planning policies** protect green and recreation spaces and require all new developments to provide well designed, high quality living environments, both internally and externally in relation to the site layout.



New developments must minimise noise, light and air pollution to acceptable levels and maintain or improve the amenity for neighbouring residents by addressing issues of privacy, overlooking, natural light, enclosure and disturbance. Building mixed tenure developments which increase the range of affordable housing options for local people may mean flexible application of normal planning policy expectations for affordable tenure split and size mix on individual schemes; with the policy objectives being met by the Renewal Strategy programme overall¹⁸.

To improve the quality of the local environment with outstanding green and open spaces and housing that promotes low energy consumption and environmental sustainability:

We will seek to achieve this through the development of plans which:

- Enhance access to and provision of high quality outside space – whether it be communal gardens or courtyards, communal terraces or roof gardens, individual allotments or balconies, and features to enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitat
- Address a lack of sufficient and stimulating designed play spaces for children
- Deliver spaces accessible for the whole community – the needs of older people, people with disabilities, women and faith groups will be taken into consideration from the outset
- Reduce our carbon footprint – homes and neighbourhoods will be designed to reduce carbon consumption, air and noise pollution levels, prevent energy and water wastage, and facilities which encourage domestic recycling
- Promote sustainable transport and accessibility to the neighbourhood by supporting improvements to local public transport, and the creation of attractive and safe pedestrian and cycling access routes and cycle storage.

To promote a high quality of life for people of all ages and backgrounds, in safe, cohesive and healthy neighbourhoods, supported by a range of high quality housing and excellent community facilities:

we will seek to achieve this through the development of plans which:

- Promote health and wellbeing – we will work in partnership with NHS Westminster and other stakeholders to ascertain how renewal plans can improve people's health
- Address security features for communal areas and entrances, as well as nuisance behaviour or perceptions of safety arising from the layout of open spaces
- Review the delivery of public services within the area – this might involve co-locating services together to make it easier for people to access the advice and help they need in one location
- Create community facilities including open spaces which can be used by the whole neighbourhood – not just people living on an individual estate.



To enable people to maximise economic opportunity in Westminster with support for training, employment and enterprise, and housing tenures which help those in work to remain in the city:

we will seek to achieve this through the development of plans which:

- Increase the overall attractiveness of areas to businesses, such as improving the public realm, retail and commercial space within neighbourhoods to revitalise the local economy
- Encourage local enterprise and the creation of jobs within the area, including arrangements for local labour placements to be provided on renewal schemes
- Increase the range of affordable housing options available to help economically active households who contribute to the Westminster economy to live locally: including sub-market rent schemes to help people save to buy, equity stake options in properties, and low-cost home ownership schemes.



To create a more distinct sense of neighbourhood, ending the physical divide between Westminster's estates and surrounding local streets:

we will seek to achieve this through the development of plans which:

- Eradicate poorly defined elements of the public realm which create a physical barrier between the estate and the wider streetscape of the neighbourhood.
- Promote greater pedestrian accessibility into and out of the area, linking the neighbourhood with nearby areas.
- Use architecture and urban design which is sympathetic to the neighbourhood streetscape, blending the buildings on estate land with those in the wider area.



We seek to end the physical divide between Westminster's estates and surrounding streets



4 Delivering the Renewal Strategy: Our Priority Neighbourhoods

In the areas initially being considered for renewal we will appoint urban design experts to work with local stakeholders and partners to develop neighbourhood renewal masterplans.

The consultation on the draft renewal strategy identified an additional priority renewal area, Westbourne Green, meaning the initial focus will be on the following neighbourhoods:

- Church Street / Edgware Road (Church Street and Little Venice)
- Tollgate Gardens Estate (Maida Vale)
- Brunel Estate (Westbourne)
- Ebury Bridge Estate (Churchill)
- Westbourne Green (Westbourne)

Church Street

Building on work already carried out by the Church Street Neighbourhood Board, the council has commissioned urban designers to develop a Masterplan for how the area around Church Street and Edgware Road can develop in the future. This is a significant project looking at a large and complex urban area with many issues to be addressed like housing, employment, renewal of the market area and other commercial development, transport and access issues, and improved delivery of public and community services.

The overall area masterplan developed for Church Street and Edgware Road will sit alongside and in support of existing council renewal projects for the area such as Civic Streets¹⁹ (which identifies Church Street and Edgware Road as one of seven shopping areas for renewal) and the potential development of 'civic hubs' co-locating council and public services to provide more efficient and customer focussed services.

Given the complexity of this project the plan will not come together until late in 2010. Part of the work of the urban design team will

¹⁹. City of Westminster, Cabinet Member Report: Civic Streets (05 August 2009)



Areas considered for renewal are:

- Church Street
- Tollgate Gardens Estate
- Brunel Estate
- Ebury Bridge Estate
- Westbourne Green

be to talk to as many local people as possible and involve all stakeholders in developing ideas for the Church Street area.

Tollgate Gardens

Tollgate has been identified as an area that needs improvement as it hasn't had significant investment for many years. It is estimated that the estate requires investment of approximately £3.8m over the next 30 years. It has low housing density and poorly laid out public spaces. The residents perceive anti-social behaviour as a problem on the estate. The estate has a high rate of resident turnover, and many tenants are seeking a transfer (particularly to the same size home but on a different estate). The council and CityWest Homes are commissioning architects to work with local residents to develop a plan for improvements, remodelling and/or building new homes on the estate. We expect this study to take place over the next 12 months.

Brunel Estate

Current estimates are that this estate would require investment of around £13.6m over 30 years for decoration and capital works. A key issue to be resolved at Brunel is its current design. Of the 18 blocks on the estate, 15 are linked by raised walkways. However, removing walkways would be difficult as some blocks would be left without lifts. While resident turnover is not high, many households are seeking to transfer from their current homes.

Partly because of its design and layout, Brunel experiences anti-social behaviour and crime, including drug related offences and robbery²⁰, often linked to problems in the wider neighbourhood. The estate masterplan will determine the extent of any redesign needed and whether security improvement works would address these issues.

The council and CityWest Homes will be commissioning architects to work with residents to develop options for the estate in early 2010.

Ebury Bridge Estate

Built in the 1930s, Ebury Bridge is one of Westminster's oldest housing estates and requires approximately £10m of investment over the next 30 years. The estate is becoming more expensive to maintain within limited Housing Revenue Account resources and provides increasingly poor value for money for lessees.



20. Community Protection data
– September 2008 to August 2009)

There are planned upgrade works to the parade of shops on the estate and major development is planned for the adjacent Chelsea Barracks site. There may be opportunities to co-ordinate plans for the neighbourhood in the future.

We are planning to commission architects to work with residents to look at options for Ebury mid-2010.

Westbourne Green²¹

The council and its partners have delivered initial phases of the regeneration of Westbourne Green (see case study). However, new housing led investment presents an opportunity to deliver further major improvements and complete the regeneration of the neighbourhood. Opportunities exist to:

- deliver a range of new affordable homes designed to meet local needs
- develop new and enhanced community facilities
- improve the quality of, and linkages between, open spaces
- enhance the relationship of the area with the adjacent canal
- improve the quality of retail units and the public realm on the Harrow Road
- improve links with neighbouring areas, including a new railway footbridge.

These projects require co-ordination and would benefit from a local masterplan, similar to those being developed in the other renewal neighbourhoods. The scale and significance of proposals at Westbourne Green mean it should be given higher priority as an area for renewal and the council will investigate options to deliver a masterplanning approach to regeneration in this neighbourhood.

Case Study: Westbourne Green Regeneration

The council and its partners have delivered the first phases of the redevelopment of Westbourne Green – a major regeneration scheme for the area which is realising social, economic and physical change. This has improved the range and quality of public facilities and public spaces for the benefit of the local community.

The close working relationship between the council and the Westbourne Local Area Renewal Partnership (LARP) has enabled the programme to respond to local needs and concerns. The Westbourne LARP, managed by Paddington Development Trust, is a community led process



21. Westbourne Green Adopted
Planning Brief February 2004

which enables priorities identified by the community to be fed into service planning. The LARP has been an effective route for meaningful public consultation and communication.

Some of the key initiatives delivered in Westbourne Green include:

- **Westminster Academy**

The Westminster Academy building on Harrow Road opened its doors to 1,175 students in September 2007. The Community Use Agreement developed by the Parks and Leisure Department enables the sports facilities at the academy to be used by local people and community groups outside of school hours.

- **Housing improvements**

The enhancement of six identical 20-storey residential tower blocks and low rise dwellings on the Warwick and Brindley estates was a central part of the Westbourne Green programme. Extensive refurbishment has included new kitchens and bathrooms, communal areas and the installation of new lifts, double glazed windows, improved insulation and door entry systems, external cladding, and improved water supply services. Further improvements to the common parts of the towers and door entry systems are about to commence.

- **Local employment and training**

The programme of maintenance works has delivered employment and training opportunities for local residents through contracts with Wates and other delivery partners.

- **Open Spaces Masterplan**

The Open Spaces Masterplan for Westbourne Green developed a shared vision to help plan improvements to open spaces and public realm. Improvements that have stemmed from the masterplan include landscaping of the canal side open space, the refurbished skatepark and free to use ball courts under the Westway, and the installation of a fitness trail on Westbourne Green.

- **Stowe Centre**

Opened in July 2006 the Stowe Centre is a four storey, hi-tech youth and community facility. The building offers accommodation for voluntary and community organisations as well as an extensive range of youth facilities.

Westbourne Green Delivery Plan Milestone document 2007



Smaller scale renewal schemes

The council's existing Community Build programme to develop new housing on under-utilised pieces of land around existing housing blocks has identified the following smaller development sites:

- Avenue Gardens
- Dudley House²²
- Gloucester Gardens
- Adpar Street*
- Parsons House*
- John Aird Court
- Sheringham House*
- Luxborough Street**
- Warwick and Brindley Estates***

These projects, while primarily small scale housing schemes, are also intended to improve neighbourhood facilities and enhance the overall quality of neighbourhoods as well as meeting local needs for affordable housing.

Identifying other renewal opportunities

Other neighbourhoods may come into the programme as it develops. CityWest Homes will carry out a survey of the condition of the council's housing stock in 2010. This work will identify elements of the stock which are not up to standard, require significant investment, or are nearing the end of their economic life. CityWest will use this opportunity to identify possible new regeneration areas.

Additionally, a number of possible renewal sites were identified by partners during the renewal strategy consultation. The renewal potential of each of the following sites will be assessed during 2010/11:

Queen's Park

- Queen's Park Court Community Hall and Katherine Bruce Nursery
- Garage area in Lancefield Street
- Canal Terrace
- Dart Street
- Further improvements to the Mozart Estate, building on Estate action Works

Harrow Road

- Refurbishment, conversion and extension works to street properties in the Harrow Road and Queen's Park area
- Housing led regeneration of the former RBS bank site, supporting renewal of the Prince of Wales junction.

²² Dudley House, North Wharf Road and 139-147 Harrow Road, W2
Adopted Planning Brief October 2009

*These estates are all located within the wider Church Street masterplan area.

**Development of plans for this site have been deferred until later in 2010 to give the architects and officers longer to consider in more detail some of the issues raised by local residents.

***These estates are located within the Westbourne Green masterplan area.



The Housing Renewal Programme will be shaped and informed by local people



Delivering the Renewal Strategy: 5 Working with residents and local stakeholders

The renewal programme is a unique opportunity for residents to work with the council, its partners and urban design specialists to plan high quality homes and enhanced neighbourhoods. We are committed to a programme which is shaped and informed by people who live locally, local councillors, as well as other stakeholders like business owners and service providers.

While existing forums for engaging residents will continue to be used, like the Area Forums, Neighbourhood Area Action Boards, Local Area Renewal Partnerships and tenant management and housing options user groups, we will introduce a wider range of opportunities for residents to get involved in the renewal process. We also propose to host a major renewal conference a year from now in winter 2010/11, where we can discuss progress, options and emerging ideas with a range of stakeholders.

We recognise that an ambitious plan to renew and improve estates has the potential to cause disruption to residents' lives. That is why the strategy gives a clear commitment that we will only embark on major schemes after full consultation, and rigorous assessment and clarity of the benefits of a scheme.

The Housing Panel raised a number of questions during the consultation process about the impact on both tenants and lessees:

Right of return to renewal estates

Respondents to consultation were very clear that if any plans to build new homes are developed there must be agreed arrangements for how priority to access the homes will work. We agree and intend to carry out further consultation with local

residents and other stakeholder groups to determine the local arrangements to govern first preference for households accessing new homes built under the renewal programme.

We are able to guarantee that tenants who wish to return to their estate after renewal works will be able to do so, with the right to a new property that meets their housing needs. It may however not be possible for this to be the exact same home, as some estates may be radically transformed. Of course some tenants may wish to move to other neighbourhoods, but we very much hope and anticipate that many will wish to stay.

Tenancy conditions

Only local authorities are able to provide secure tenancies, whereas Housing Associations and other affordable housing providers usually offer assured tenancies in their social rented accommodation. However, where new affordable homes on renewal estates are provided by a housing provider other than the council, it is our intention that council tenants who previously lived on these estates are offered tenancies exactly comparable with their secure council conditions.

Options for leaseholders

We recognise that our leaseholders will have a range of needs and housing aspirations. There is no 'one size fits all' solution when it comes to developing an offer for leaseholders whose homes will be affected by renewal. We will develop a draft policy on options for leaseholders and will consult on this later in 2010.

Securing support for renewal plans

The renewal process will enable residents to help us identify problems that need to be addressed on their estates and to design solutions for their neighbourhoods. We therefore hope and expect that residents will support renewal proposals developed for their estates.

However, we have been asked what we would do if this was not the case and residents in a particular area were overwhelmingly opposed to specific plans developed for their neighbourhood. In such a scenario it is highly unlikely that we would push through specific renewal proposals that are clearly opposed by the vast majority of residents on an estate. This issue is also addressed in our residents' charter for renewal.



A Residents' Charter for Renewal

Alongside representatives from the Housing Panel and Residents Associations we will develop a Resident's Charter for each estate affected by the renewal programme. These charters will sit alongside the overall Citywide Compact and will give basic guarantees around:

- the right to remain on an estate / in the local area
- how we will ensure residents are involved throughout the life of the scheme (from development of proposals through to delivery)
- how funding will be raised for the scheme works and renewal projects
- how disturbances will be kept to a minimum
- other estate or location specific issues as agreed with residents.

Our overall ten point commitment to local people, as endorsed by stakeholder consultation, is that:

1. The renewal programme is for the **benefit** of local residents – any tenant or leaseholder wanting to remain living in their area will be offered options to do so.
2. We will involve local residents as fully as possible in the development of options for improvements to the area and ensure that **everyone** has the opportunity to participate and contribute their views and ideas.
3. The community will have the opportunity to tell us **preferences** relating to options to refurbish existing homes and community facilities or whether to redesign and redevelop.
4. Proposals will only be included in a Renewal Programme where there has been thorough dialogue and consultation with stakeholders on the proposals – a proposal which does not have the broad **consensus** of residents will not proceed to planning application.
5. Consultation and engagement will be **ongoing** throughout the delivery process and not just an isolated period without further opportunities to give feedback.
6. There will be a named **lead** officer contact for each area where we propose to develop a renewal plan.
7. Consultation will be led by local **steering** groups of residents and ward councillors.
8. We will work with any established **local groups**.
9. We will hold **one to one** surgeries for residents who want them.
10. We will provide regular **updates** on any plans as they progress.

Local people will be engaged throughout





Artist's impression of the proposal for Merchant Square in Paddington – a mixed use development of commercial and residential properties including affordable housing



The council bought all its properties to the Decent Homes Standard in 2006 but now seeks to go further

Delivering the Renewal Strategy: 6 Housing investment and wider renewal

This strategy's primary aim is to regenerate some of the council's own housing estates. However, it needs to be set within the context of the significant level of ongoing investment in housing in Westminster. This investment helps to improve the quality of Westminster's existing housing and each year adds to the stock of 25,000 affordable homes.

The council is currently developing a local investment plan as part of its 'single conversation' with the Homes and Communities Agency. This will set out the range of housing investment that the council and its partners will require to meet Westminster's future housing and regeneration needs.

Council Housing

Westminster completed its programme of works to bring all council properties to the Government Decent Homes Standard in 2006. The Decent Homes Standard requires works to ensure that homes provide reasonable thermal comfort, reasonable state of repair, modernised kitchen and bathrooms. The standard does not cover communal entrances, lifts and other facilities which are a feature of inner city flats – which make up 90% of the council stock.

The council and CityWest Homes have developed, in consultation with residents, a 'beyond Decent Homes Standard' called the CityWest Homes Standard. The new standard enables the stock to be kept in good condition but to go beyond minimum decency standards and improve features which are important to residents. These include:

- **In flat:** central heating systems, electrical wiring, secure front doors, as well as inclusion of hard wired smoke detectors.

- **In block:** decoration of communal areas and external areas; upgrading communal lighting, flooring, lifts, digital TV and door entry systems.
- **Estate:** upgrading bin stores, fencing, boundary walls, and estate roads.
- **Security:** improvements to address reported levels of nuisance, anti-social behaviour and crime.
- **Green initiatives:** upgrade works to communal heating and lighting systems that will lead to a reduction in energy use and improve SAP ratings.

To date CityWest Homes has carried out works to the new Standard for 29% of the homes it manages and, subject to clarity from government regarding future funding, will set targets for the remainder of the stock to meet the standard sometime after 2012.

An updated stock condition survey is to be undertaken in 2010, the results of which will inform the CityWest Asset Management Strategy, investment priorities and five year capital programme. The surveys will assist with identifying further areas of housing that require significant investment, and may become too expensive to maintain long term, and which could form part of the Renewal Programme.

It is our intention that all council homes outside of the proposed renewal programme will be improved within the means of the investment programme. Homes will be improved beyond the minimum government decency standards and go some way towards meeting resident expectations as set through the CityWest Homes Standard.

Housing Association homes

In the Housing Association sector we expect all homes owned by our major landlord partners to meet the Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2010/11. There are over 50 Housing Associations with stock in Westminster; in total they own approximately the same number of tenanted units as the council so are a significant provider of social housing in the city.

Some parts of Westminster feature large volumes of older housing association stock; like street properties built in Georgian and Victorian times and estates which last received significant investment in the 1970s and 1980s. The condition and need for investment in these homes, combined with their



geographic concentration, have an impact on the overall quality of life in neighbourhoods. The Harrow Road area is a notable example where a number of Housing Associations own approximately 1,500 Victorian houses and converted flats. A partnership approach to developing a programme in such areas of mixed stock holdings would significantly enhance housing conditions and the quality of life in this neighbourhood.

While four out of five of the council's proposed masterplan areas are exclusively council estate based regeneration (the exception being Church Street which has mixed land ownership holdings), we are open to an ongoing review of proposals to extend the focus of the renewal programme to other areas.

Through existing partnership forums we have an open dialogue for assessing potential for developing Housing Association landholdings and proposals for neighbourhood renewal in areas containing mixed ownership holdings. As part of consultation discussions with stakeholders we are aware of areas of street front properties in the Harrow Road area which could be assessed for potential conversion, de-conversion and extension works in order improve the standard of the homes and also increase capacity for re-housing families into suitable size accommodation.

Housing Association led regeneration

Two of the council's largest partner Housing Associations – Peabody Housing Trust and Sanctuary Housing Association – have developed their own renewal strategies and plans for homes they own and manage in the south of Westminster.

Peabody has launched its 21st Century Vision. Peabody's vision shares similar elements to Westminster's Housing Renewal Strategy regarding achieving sustainable mixed tenure communities, and going beyond improvements to homes to address social and economic factors like training, skills and employment which affect the wellbeing of households. The Council and its partners will keep an open dialogue to ensure that development plans in these neighbourhoods are being delivered in such a way as to maximise opportunities for wider renewal in South Westminster.

Private sector housing

At around 36% of the housing stock, Westminster has a disproportionately large private rented sector compared to other local authorities in the UK.

The council has an ongoing programme of engagement with landlords and owners in the sector to enhance housing conditions, promote energy efficiency, minimise the number of empty homes and to tackle homelessness and meet other housing needs.

Green initiatives and carbon reduction housing projects

The nature of Westminster's housing stock makes it a particular challenge to improve the energy efficiency of residential premises:

- The large number of leasehold flats makes it difficult to secure funding and improvements to common parts, such as roofs
- Many buildings are constructed of solid brick walls which may benefit from installation of other energy efficient components such as double glazing
- In the large private rented market, there is little incentive for landlords or tenants to make energy efficient capital investment.

Housing projects which seek to improve environmental sustainability include:

- The council and CityWest Homes investment programme to bring homes up to the CityWest Homes Standard which includes works to reduce energy and water wastage, and mitigate the city's carbon footprint
- Decent Homes funding from the Mayor of London is being used to deliver energy efficiency improvements to several hundred homes in the private sector
- Social Housing Energy Saving Programme: £2.8m in external funding has been obtained to help partner landlords to insulate hard to treat cavity walls that would not otherwise be improved under Decent Homes works
- A Technology Strategy Board Retrofit Competition to develop best practice and innovation to produce energy efficient housing, reducing overall CO2 emissions by 80%, for old traditional style Victorian terraced street properties
- Westminster is working in partnership with the Dolphin Square Charitable Foundation to pilot an energy efficiency advice service, aimed at blocks comprised of leasehold flats,

building on the Mayor of London's 'conciierge' advice service for home owners in London

- Department for Energy and Climate Change and the LDA are providing funding (£3.5m) to join together the Pimlico District Heating Undertaking and the Whitehall District Heating Systems. This will enable the two heat loads to complement each other, making the joined system more efficient. The council is also seeking a third district heating system in the Victoria Opportunity Area
- Further work is underway to map borough wide heat demand which should then enable the council to identify possible opportunities for further expansion and development of district heating networks, potentially serving both domestic and non-domestic customers.



Queen's Park low carbon zone

In 2009 the Westminster Carbon Alliance was successful in obtaining £275,000 from the Mayor of London to turn Queen's Park, a predominantly residential area, into a Low Carbon Zone. The funding has been secured based on the council's plans to achieve a 20% reduction in carbon consumption in the area by 2012.

The package of carbon saving measures for the Queen's Park Low Carbon Zone will include:

- Upgrading the community heating system to a combined heat and power plant
- Providing loft and wall insulation and energy efficiency measures to hundreds of properties in the south of the ward
- Resident training and employment opportunities in the low carbon economy
- Community engagement initiatives.



Building new homes

The council has traditionally depended on Housing Association partners to deliver new affordable homes in Westminster. However, the high cost of land has meant that associations have found it difficult to compete with private developers to secure sites in the city.

Instead new affordable housing opportunities in Westminster have, in the main, been delivered as a consequence of private residential developments where a proportion of housing is

required by planning policy (Section 106 agreements) to be affordable. On completion, affordable housing is transferred to a Housing Association.

Over the five year period 2005 to 2010, 934 affordable housing units have been delivered in Westminster, 80% as a result of Section 106 agreements, with the remaining affordable housing being delivered directly by Housing Associations on sites secured by them or within existing estates and property holdings.

Over 65% of the housing supply over this period has been made up of two bedroom or larger sized homes. Smaller sized accommodation has primarily been provided for supported housing or as shared ownership.

Significant Section 106 affordable housing developments completed during the last five years include Grosvenor Waterside, which has created 181 homes for social rent and 86 units of shared ownership, and Hermitage Walk in Paddington, which has delivered 79 affordable housing units.

Housing Associations have been directly involved in regeneration activity both on their own estates and those owned by the council, which has delivered new build affordable housing supply. Octavia Housing's Salisbury Street re-development in the Church Street area created almost 60 new homes, while Genesis delivered 39 new units as part of the most recent phase of Lisson Green Estate regeneration.

In addition to new affordable housing supply delivered by Housing Associations, the council's new charity Westminster Community Homes (WCH) has secured over 100 affordable homes through its settled homes, overcrowding and intermediate housing purchase and repair schemes, with a target of 195 homes under these programmes.

Currently there are over 550 affordable homes under construction in Westminster, 300 of which are expected to be completed during 2010. Key developments include Merchants Square in Paddington, Peel House in Regency Street and Seymour Place in Marylebone.

The council is also working with its housing partners to identify opportunities to deliver additional affordable homes on land and estates owned by them. We will encourage them to bring forward planning applications to deliver new homes on infill sites and to extend existing properties through conversions and extensions.



The planning application process

The final plans agreed with residents will need to go through the normal planning application process, which will provide a further opportunity for residents to lend support or object to aspects of the proposed scheme. Councillors will consider applications in accordance with the published development plan or plans at a committee meeting and either grant or refuse planning permission. Larger schemes may require referral to the Mayor of London who will determine the application.



The council will deliver the programme in partnership with public agencies, the third sector and major private developers.

7 Funding

Delivery of major estate renewal will be costly and will tie up resources for a number of years. This means that the council will have to deliver the housing renewal programme in partnership with other public agencies, the third sector and major private sector developers to combine the right blend of experience with access to sufficient finances.

While it is the brief of the appointed urban design specialists and officers to develop financially viable proposals with local stakeholders (including self-funding elements of schemes via sales of new private and low cost home ownership properties), it is certain that significant levels of external funding would be required to finance major renewal schemes. The council has been awarded £36m from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for the Community Build programme of new build homes on estates. A wider renewal programme will require significantly higher levels of investment. It is likely that new approaches will be required in order to secure necessary private finance, leveraging the value of council owned land and the rental streams.

A new approach

In order to efficiently deliver the Community Build programme, a new approach has been adopted. This involved the council setting up two companies, Westminster Homes Development Ltd (WHD) and Westminster Community Homes Ltd (WCH).

WHD is a wholly owned Westminster City Council company which will take the lease of the development land from the council and enter into loan agreements with lenders and development/sales agreements with developers/contractors. CityWest Homes are undertaking the project management of the developments for WHD.

WCH is a Westminster City Council controlled company with charitable aims. This was set up in 2008 in order to provide a tax efficient vehicle to hold any acquired properties and receive any of the affordable homes developed through the Community

Build programme. WCH has preferred funding status with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and is able to obtain HCA funding towards these schemes.

Through these arrangements the council is able to draw in loan finance, external funding, sell some new units in the open market (which help to cross subsidise the overall programme) and hold the affordable housing units in the charity. This approach or variations upon it could also be applied to the Renewal programme.

From a resident perspective this approach will not have any impact on the current management arrangements, which will continue to be provided through CityWest Homes which has managed the properties on behalf of the council since 2002. Under this approach WCH, the council controlled charity, own the new affordable homes but with CityWest Homes managing them.



8 Next steps

The Housing Renewal Strategy is just the first step towards estate renewal. Detailed proposals and actions will come forward as findings from estate masterplans begin to emerge later in 2010 and in 2011. However, there are a number of actions and commitments already identified in this strategy.

Timetable for developing preferred options and plans:

Church Street/Edgware Road	
Appointed specialist (Urban Initiatives) gathers information and baseline research.	Nov 2009–Jan 2010
Development of options for the neighbourhood and consult.	Feb 2010–Jun 2010
Develop preferred option and masterplan for the area.	July 2010–Sep 2010
Tollgate Gardens Estate	
Selection of masterplanning specialist.	Dec 2009
Information gathering/baseline evidence collection	Jan 2010–Feb 2010
Consultation with residents about options.	Jan 2010–Sep 2010
Preferred option development.	Sep 2010–Oct 2010
Submit Planning Application.	Dec 2010

Brunel Estate	
Issue project brief to appoint specialists to develop a masterplan.	Jan 2010
Appoint specialist to develop a masterplan.	May 2010
Consultation with residents on options.	May 2010– Dec 2010
Preferred option development.	Jan 2011
Submit Planning Application.	July 2011
Ebury Bridge Estate	
Issue project brief to appoint specialists to develop a masterplan.	Apr 2010
Appoint specialist to develop a masterplan.	Aug 2010
Consultation with residents on options.	Aug 2010– Feb 2011
Preferred option development.	Mar 2011
Submit Planning Application.	Oct 2011
Westbourne Green	
Agree masterplanning approach, subject to securing necessary resources.	Jun 2010

Westminster Housing Renewal Conference

A conference for all interested stakeholders will be held in winter 2010/11 to discuss the preferred options which have emerged during the specialists' feasibility studies, and to look at new funding opportunities and ideas for shaping the final plans.



Assessment of new areas proposed for renewal

A process will be set up for assessing other emerging suggestions for future phases of the renewal programme. The following have been identified through consultation:

Queen's Park

Queen's Park Court Community Hall and Katherine Bruce Nursery.

Garage area in Lancefield Street.

Canal Terrace.

Dart Street.

Further improvements to the Mozart Estate, building on Estate action Works.

Harrow Road

Refurbishment, conversion and extension works to street properties in the Harrow Road and Queen's Park area.

Housing-led regeneration of the former RBS bank site, supporting renewal of the Prince of Wales junction.

Other renewal plans

Updated stock condition survey carried out 2010.

Results of stock condition survey inform the revised CityWest Homes Asset Management Strategy 2010.

Identification of estates which require significant investment long-term which could benefit from the renewal approach.

Development of policies & support options which assist delivery of renewal plans

We intend to do further work and consult in more detail with residents and local groups during 2010 on proposals regarding development of:

- Options for re-housing tenants and providing support packages during delivery of physical works
- Options and support packages to offer leaseholders who need to relocate
- Policies governing right of return to the area and the legal transfer of existing tenancy rights

- Local preference policies to govern who would be given first preference to let or purchase new homes in the renewal areas
- Residents' Charter for each estate affected by the renewal programme
- An intermediate Housing Strategy and the development of a wider range of affordable housing schemes to help working households live locally.



Much of what is required to deliver renewal plans will happen over many years. There will be ongoing opportunities for discussion.



9 Conclusion

This is an ambitious and far-reaching strategy. We have gone beyond the traditional remit and looked more broadly about how thriving neighbourhoods can be delivered across the city. Residents, local businesses and stakeholder groups lie at the very heart of this approach. We are committed to engaging, listening and amending our approach to rolling out this strategy through the development of neighbourhood-based renewal plans so that it meets the real needs of those who live and work in Westminster.

By undertaking a neighbourhood-based approach to developing a renewal programme, we will regenerate some of the most deprived areas of Westminster, support the creation of high quality mixed communities with a broad range of housing types and incomes, increase physical and social mobility, create more job opportunities and strengthen local economies. We will also ensure that we are achieving sustainable improved neighbourhoods, reducing our environmental footprint and safeguarding the benefits of living in the City as best we can for future generations.

Agreeing the vision and objectives of this strategy through public consultation has been the first step in establishing the high level outcomes we want to ultimately achieve from the delivery of renewal plans. But there will be ongoing opportunities for discussion and consultation between urban design specialists, officers and all stakeholders throughout the process for developing and agreeing more detailed proposals for neighbourhoods. Support for individual plans will be determined by the detail – hence many of the most important discussions regarding neighbourhood housing renewal are still to be had.

Much of what is required to deliver renewal plans will happen over many years rather than in the immediate future. There will need to be significant investment and also the involvement of all stakeholders in the development of the Renewal Programme so that delivery is successful and our vision and objectives for the neighbourhoods achieved.



10 Appendices

Appendix A

Summary of Consultation: Main Themes of Comments and Concerns

Providing more affordable and better quality homes

Support for:

- A statement governing who gets priority for the new homes before plans are approved: there was a strong theme of local homes for local people
- Build more affordable family size homes to alleviate overcrowding
- Desire to see new homes built to generous floor specifications, with adequate provision for storage
- Build to higher standards in terms of quality of materials, noise insulation, thermal comfort
- Supportive of sustainability and homes designed to reduce the impact on the environment: positive contribution to carbon reduction, energy efficient and less water wastage, facilities designed to increase domestic recycling
- New homes must be more accessible – welcomed homes which would be built to the Lifetime Homes Standard which would save on costly adaptations, enable independent living and greater housing choice for people who are aging or with a disability
- Security of new homes and access to blocks – safety and security were a priority issue for respondents.

Concerns:

- Building to higher densities must not negatively impact on a loss of greenery or open spaces
- New homes will be cheaply constructed with poor materials and service charges for the maintenance of the new homes and upkeep of new communal areas/ gardens will be high
- Make adequate provision for the impact on car parking, street management and traffic, rubbish disposal facilities, local nuisance and crime, and the demand on public services like GPs, children's centres, schools.

- No mention in the strategy of specific targets for affordable homes (which proportion would be social rent, intermediate or private sale) or targets for re-housing overcrowded households.

Provide more homes for local workers and increase the range of tenures available

Support for:

- Adopting mixed tenure approach to estates – generally recognised it promotes community cohesion, reduces social exclusion and creates socially and economically stronger communities
- Alongside working age households there was also support to look at increasing range of affordable options for an aging population to help them remain independent and living locally if their home becomes unsuitable
- Re-providing some social housing units in the renewal neighbourhoods in other areas with low concentrations of social housing.

Concerns:

- The strategy leans more towards attracting new households into alternative tenures other than social housing and this will be at the expense of current social housing tenants
- No clear statement of targets regarding the proportion of homes which would be for social rent, intermediate or private sale.

Provide a better range of community, leisure and retail facilities and foster local enterprise and employment

Support for:

- Addressing lack of play space in the renewal areas – seen as key to health and wellbeing of children, and overcrowded households
- Greenery and open spaces very important to people – don't want to lose it but would welcome it being re-designed to be better utilised and bring local residents together. (Creation of allotments was a popular suggestion at meetings held)
- Re-design of open spaces could help prevent nuisance behaviour and lessen the perception of nuisance behaviour (i.e. giving youths somewhere else to hang out, protect residents from noise and loitering). Crime, nuisance behaviour and safety was a top five issue to residents during consultation
- Stakeholder groups (as opposed to individual residents) see tackling issues which prevent access to training, skills and



employment as being key to successful and sustainable renewal of a neighbourhood.

Concerns:

- Viability of proposals for community facilities – need to be sustainable to fund and manage long-term
- Accessibility of redesigned areas so no one is disadvantaged – the need to involve groups which specialise in design for older people, people with disabilities, women and faith groups to make sure the open spaces and facilities are accessible and welcoming for the whole community

Appendix B

Planning Policy and Housing Renewal

Westminster's planning policies (as set out in the Westminster Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy²³ and emerging City Management Plan) are supportive of housing renewal plans and facilitate many of the things we are seeking to achieve, such as:

Providing a range of housing tenures and mixed communities:

As a strategic housing authority, the council has a duty under planning policy to provide a range of housing opportunities for those in housing need. The adopted London Plan recommends that local authorities should seek to deliver a 70:30 split of new affordable housing between social rented and intermediate homes. The Mayor's current draft housing strategy recommends that this split should change to 60:40. Similarly Westminster City Council's preferred option within the emerging LDF is that Westminster should adopt a citywide affordable housing target of 60:40 between social rented and intermediate homes.

Current Affordable Housing Planning Policy specifies that affordable housing provision should be located onsite, but provides flexibility so that, where the council considers it is not practical or viable to do so, the affordable housing may be provided offsite but as close as is practical. Flexibility can also be granted where there are identified areas of existing high concentrations of social housing; permission could be granted to provide new affordable housing in other nearby neighbourhoods with less social housing. (Offsite provision beyond the nearby

23. Westminster City Council
Department of Planning and City
Development, Westminster Local
Development Framework Core Strategy
(May 2007)

areas will only be acceptable where the council considers that an increase in the requirement of affordable housing provision can be provided and is of a higher quality than would be possible within the vicinity.)

The Housing Renewal Strategy will comply with the overall planning policy. Within some individual schemes, flexibility around the mixture of tenures and sizes of homes may be required to maintain the financial viability of the scheme and to meet local needs. Stakeholders will be consulted on the detail of proposals once developed so that they can give informed feedback on the tenure mixes proposed prior to planning permission being sought.

Increasing the supply of affordable homes:

Planning policy requires that affordable housing and floor space that is or was last used for this purpose is protected for continued use. If local stakeholders decide on extensive refurbishment or remodelling works, residents might need to temporarily move out meaning temporary rehousing plans, compensation and support packages will need to be developed. It will be important that the existing channels that provide additional affordable housing (such as section 106 agreements for private developments) will need to be maintained once the proposed renewal programme is underway in order to support decant and relocation arrangements.

Maximising land use to build new homes:

Current planning policy sets out that land should be used efficiently to maximise the number of units on sites, taking into account other policies and objectives. Housing densities should reflect the densities laid out in the London Plan. The City Management Plan will include draft policies on residential densities by the middle of 2010, which will inform the development of any future proposals to build more homes than any of the renewal areas currently accommodates.

Supporting high quality residential neighbourhoods and infrastructure:

Westminster's social housing is within easy reach of the major employment centres of central London. Similarly, these residential areas are accessible to the Paddington, Victoria and Tottenham Court Road Opportunity Areas which are forecast for development capacity. Therefore the focus of the Housing Renewal Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy need to be on supporting high quality, primarily residential neighbourhoods, with supporting infrastructure focussing on linking residents into employment opportunities in nearby and emerging major labour markets.



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