



MARYLEBONEFORUM

Planning Policy Team
Westminster City Council
Westminster City Hall
64 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6QP

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A New City Plan for Westminster - Direction of Travel

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an input on issues for the New City Plan.

The Marylebone Forum's Committee considered a wide range of issues and have focused on a few matters that attracted across the Board consensus. The major points for the Forum are focused on community/family and high streets.

Community Assets, Family Resources and Play

While it is accepted that Marylebone is fortunate to be sandwiched between two wonderful Royal Parks, there is a groundswell of opinion among Marylebone families that there is a lack of incidental, publicly accessible open space available for families and young people, particularly children over the age of 6. One of the first priorities identified when the Marylebone Forum considered its Neighbourhood Plan headings was 'Whole Life Marylebone'. Can families grow in Marylebone? Can children grow up in Marylebone? Can people grow old and stay in Marylebone? Does Marylebone meet the needs of someone for their whole life?

- **Play Streets and Play:** Parents are strongly in favour of creating play streets, temporary street closures that allow children to play safely (ball games, cycling, scooters). The Royal Parks do not offer a quick and safe alternative for, say, 9 – 13-year-olds after school. Play suited to a wider range of children and teenagers was something also raised by Marylebone parents – where is the space for play? Where do children attend after school activities like music or dance or Brownies/Guides/Scouts?
- **Space for ball games:** Paddington Street Gardens currently has a no-ball policy, which many feel is unfair given the lack of alternatives. The existing playground only caters to younger children (roughly up to age 5–6). Families surveyed by our committee as part of this exercise would like to see an acceleration of discussions about Paddington Street Gardens which we understand is already underway. Also raised were issues around dog waste and frequency of cleaning and while we appreciate that these are not planning issues, the committee wanted to record the feedback.
- **Family Centres and Community Hubs:** there is widespread support for the Marylebone Hall proposals and Seymour Leisure Centre is a much -missed asset at the moment. These comments therefore come at a point in time when community facilities or places where families/residents can come together are few and far between. The Forum would like to see greater use of S106 agreements to secure open, free community and family facilities or provision, where people can come together with their families, including older children and older residents. There are high hopes that the Marylebone Hall and refurbished Seymour Leisure Centre will be able to accommodate families and teenagers and provide much needed facilities for Marylebone families.

Protection of Pubs

This existing policy in the City Plan was considered and there were some views that perhaps some parts of Marylebone have an over concentration of pubs, and that these do not necessarily serve neighbourhoods but a much wider catchment of people who are visiting or working in the area.

Change of use to housing from pubs was suggested where the right conditions could be met, and key worker or intermediate housing was suggested in some locations.

Our High Streets

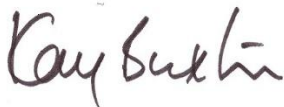
Within the Marylebone Forum area there are multiple retail centres, from Edgware Road in the west to Great Portland Street in the east – and also including Oxford Street, Baker Street and of course Marylebone High Street.

We are fortunate to have great estates, whose curation of the offer does make a significant contribution to the quality of retailing and the townscape. Our high streets include those that provide essential everyday services to local residents as well as destination retailing. Both are key ingredients in the city's attractiveness for investment and living, and for Marylebone.

Edgware Road and Marylebone High Street could not be further apart in character and some of the issues we raise here lie outside the oversight of great estates.

- Better regulation of the delivery sector: consumer behaviour and retailing trends have meant that planning is playing catch-up with this issue. Whereas new applicants may be required to seek approval for delivery arrangements, the bulk of existing operators on our high streets face no regulation of bike and e-bike deliveries. Whether planning or licensing have the right policy lever for this is a moot point, but it is an important one on Edgware Road and Baker Street as it has a significant impact on perceptions of safety.
- Streetscape: poor quality shopfronts, forecourts, A-boards, clutter, tables and chairs all contribute towards a poor streetscape on some (but not all) of our high streets, outside Conservation Areas in particular. It would be good to see a stronger policy or design framework, either co-designed with Forums, or an updated shopfronts SPD that better reflects modern retailing and consumer demand outside Conservation Areas.
- Sustainability: safer high streets should include green infrastructure, space for shade, places to pause and sit, sustainable urban drainage and measures that support sustainable, active travel.
- Space for families: some families feel pushed out of their high streets, partly due to the offer and partly due to the limitations on space for buggies and children on cluttered pavements and in busy cafes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to have an input to this early engagement stage of the new City Plan. We hope you find these comments helpful.



Kay Buxton
On behalf of The Marylebone Forum Committee