

Building height: Getting the right kind of growth for Westminster

Heart of London response

May 2017

About us

Heart of London Business Alliance serves as a voice for 500 businesses and 100 property owners in the Piccadilly & St James's and Leicester Square areas. Our purpose is to support the commercial well being of the businesses and organisations we represent, and ensure our areas remain integral to London's West End offer as a place for people to visit, live, trade and work.

As one of the largest drivers for economic growth in the UK, we welcome the direction of travel set in the consultation document, and acknowledgement that if we are to retain our economic competitiveness it is necessary to build to additional height and density at appropriate locations to deliver additional floorspace and jobs.

We very much look forward to considering the more detailed proposals from Westminster City Council later in the year.

Heart of London submission

I. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our suggested principles for growth?

| Principle | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|---|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Ensure forthcoming development in Westminster is of exemplary design quality, is sustainable and will meet the needs of future communities | x | | | | | |
| Secure further commercial development to ensure the continued economic success of Westminster and secure its global reputation | x | | | | | |
| Ensure that the heritage value and character of Westminster's historic environment are conserved and enhanced, and that new development contributes to a strong identity of place | x | | | | | |
| Ensure that the value of Westminster, investment | x | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| drivers, business opportunities and the existing building stock, are maintained and enhanced by new development of an appropriate height, scale and massing, enriching the existing character and attractiveness of Westminster | | | | | | |
| Encourage diversity of land use, functions, types and tenure of development; including housing affordability, optimisation and occupation, and the types of buildings they occupy | | x | | | | |
| Encourage the development of new buildings which make the best use of space available while balancing the needs of residents and workers in new and innovative ways | x | | | | | |
| Include consideration of the public realm experience, including accessibility, security and community value | x | | | | | |
| Ensure that the future growth of Westminster is guided by sustainability principles through design, construction and management | x | | | | | |
| Ensure a broad perspective on growth, by encouraging well designed buildings which make the best use space available, and use fewer resources when they are being constructed | x | | | | | |

2. If you would like to suggest some changes to any of our growth principles, what changes would you suggest?

No further suggestions at this stage.

3. What do you think makes a tall building? Please tick one box only.

| Response | |
|--|---|
| If it is higher than surrounding buildings | |
| More than 10 storeys (31-39m)* | |
| More than 15 storeys (47-59m)* | |
| More than 20 storeys (62-78m)* | x |
| More than 25 storeys (79-98m)* | |
| More than 30 storeys (93-117m)* | |
| More than 35 storeys (109-137m)* | |
| More than 40 storeys (124-156m)* | |

4. What is it about tall buildings that you like?

Well-designed tall buildings, accommodating an appropriate mix of uses and accompanied by good quality infrastructure and public realm can add to the setting, diversity and economic vitality of a district.

5. What is it about higher buildings (defined as an extra one, two or three storeys) that you like?

Higher buildings help to deliver growth, particularly as a sensitive approach to development in areas which are constrained by heritage considerations and view corridors. Once again, the design needs to respect the setting to maximise their potential.

6. What is it about tall buildings that you dislike?

Inappropriately located tall buildings, where little consideration has been given to supporting infrastructure can detract from an area. Also issues of wind-tunnelling, over-shadowing, daylight / sunlight and where they undermine heritage assets are of concern.

7. What is it about higher buildings that you dislike?

No further suggestions at this stage as we believe appropriately located and designed higher buildings which respect their context, can actively contribute to the vitality and success of an area.

8. What tall buildings in London do you like and why?

The Heart of London's area does not include any significantly tall buildings so we would not wish to take a position at this stage.

9. What higher buildings do you like in London and why?

Old Park Lane's redevelopment on the west side of Leicester Square demonstrates would can be achieved, sensitively adding floors whilst respecting and retaining the original design and features of the building.

10. What tall buildings in London do you dislike and why?

The Heart of London's area does not include any significantly tall buildings so we would not wish to take a position at this stage.

11. What higher buildings in London do you dislike and why?

No further suggestions at this stage as we believe appropriately located and designed higher buildings which respect their context, can actively contribute to the vitality and success of an area.

12. What do you think is the best use for tall buildings? Should they be used for...

| Response | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Residential use | |
| Office use | |
| Both | x |
| Something else (please specify) | |

13. What do you think is the best use for higher buildings? Should they be used for...

| Response | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Residential use | |
| Office use | |
| Both | x |
| Something else (please specify) | |

14. Would you support an increase in the number of higher buildings if that was a way to help Westminster solve its housing crisis?

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | x | | | | |

15. Would you support an increase in the number of tall buildings if that was a way to solve its housing crisis?

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | | x | | | |

16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about three opportunity areas, Paddington, Victoria and Tottenham Court Road?

| Statement | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|---|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| They should continue to accommodate tall buildings | | x | | | | |
| The could accommodate taller buildings than currently permitted | | x | | | | |

17. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the potential growth areas, those places around Church Street regeneration area and the Harrow Road area are appropriate locations for tall buildings (height to be determined)?

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | x | | | | |

18. Do you agree that high buildings should not impact on the World Heritage Site (WHS) of Parliament?

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | x | | | | |

19. Do you agree that there is scope to increase existing buildings, as appropriate, by a few extra storeys to accommodate growth?

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| x | | | | | |

20. Do you agree that higher buildings - with the exception of listed buildings or amenity constraints - could be added to Westminster as a whole?

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| x | | | | | |

21. To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is scope for moderately higher buildings (an additional one, two, or three storeys) along commercial streets such as Oxford Street and Edgware Road (south of the Marylebone Flyover)?

| Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| x | | | | | |

22. Are there any other areas where extra floors (an additional one or two storeys) could be accommodated in Westminster?

We believe extra floors could be sensitively added across much of the West End, particularly the Core Central Activities Zone to facilitate its economic growth, given its unique contribution to London and the UK's economy. This is particularly important for commercial occupants for whom space is at a premium and to meet ever-growing demand.

23. Which if any, of these factors are most important to you when considering development across the borough? You can choose up to five factors.

| Factor | |
|---|---|
| The look and feel of the building (e.g. that the building is of excellent design, made from high quality materials, how it looks in relation to its surroundings, its relationship to historic buildings/areas) | |
| Whether it is affecting any important views | |
| Whether it improves and/or adds public spaces at ground level | x |
| Whether it is environmentally friendly/energy efficient/sustainable | x |
| The impact of the building on the immediate feel of an area (including shadowing, windier environment, indoor heat effects in hot weather, external glare) | |
| How close it is to public transport, including major transport hub | x |
| The impact on traffic and parking | |
| It is well connected for walking and cycling | |
| Whether it provides new job opportunities | x |
| Whether it provides new homes | |
| Whether it provides new affordable homes | |
| Whether it provides new shops, leisure opportunities and other retail-type uses | x |
| The impact it has on the skyline | |
| Other - Write in | |

Intensification

This means using existing building plots in a more intense way, for example by creating more flats or a more efficient office space in the same or similar amount of space, or to extend or alter buildings to create additional floor space sideways, downwards in basements or by rear extensions.

24. What are your views on this approach?

Heart of London support intensification as a principle and means to deliver additional space in areas which are constrained by heritage assets. The continued use of basements for ancillary services should also continue to be explored, particularly in commercial areas where there is less of an impact upon residents during the construction period and thereafter.

25. Are there any further options for delivering the growth needed in Westminster which you feel have not been covered by this questionnaire?

To facilitate the debate, WCC could commission an audit to identify buildings and areas where there is a planning rationale for additional height, particularly 1 – 3 storeys, could reasonably be accommodated. Such a designation would be subject to planning but could allow property owners to bring forward applications in greater confidence and align with the City Council’s growth objectives.

26. Do you have any additional comments you would like to make?

We would welcome a further consultation placing additional emphasise on the importance of investment in the public realm as a further driver for growth. Sensitively designed and well managed public realm can also act as a drive for growth, encouraging further investment and complementing additional building height.