



8 September 2020

2019-20 PNF ANNUAL REPORT

1. **Due to Covid-19 we have not been able to hold our Annual General Meeting in person, as we had hoped, and now want to update you on progress with the Forum since the last AGM. This Annual Report has been sent to all members and is published on our website.**

Progress with Developing our Neighbourhood Plan

2. As members know, the main purpose of our Neighbourhood Forum is to produce a Plan that becomes part of planning policies to sit alongside Westminster's Plan and National Planning Policy when Westminster City Council decides planning applications. It also can influence how the levy on larger developments (Community Infrastructure Levy) is spent in our area.
3. Following the last AGM in May 2019 the Steering Group completed the first full draft of the Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan designed to produce a set of policies that would help deliver the Vision for Pimlico agreed by the Forum in 2017 and which has guided us since then.
4. In late July last year we launched our first draft consultation of the Plan alongside our new website. It seemed the right time to establish our own website and free standing email address. Until then we had been reliant on Ken Sparkes of Warwick Square to host us on his 5 Fields website. We're grateful to Ken for his help and for working with us on a smooth transition.
5. The draft Plan proposed some 24 policies together with the reasoning and evidence to justify them. The Forum does not have a free hand in setting these policies; they have to be in "general conformity" with National and London Planning Policy and with strategic policies of Westminster's City Plan.
6. The Consultation ended in October 2019 and during the consultation period the Steering Group met with members of local residents associations to explain what we are trying to do.
7. **The Draft Plan met with general approval from residents and local Councillors. The Vision, and in particular the emphasis on vibrancy of the**

commercial centre, as well as protecting our heritage, the conservation areas and the preservation of the very limited amount of green and open space was strongly supported.

8. Westminster City Council made a very large number of detailed comments and many of these as well as a wide full range of local views have been reflected in the revision of the Plan, which at the time of writing (September 2020) is almost complete. In particular we are strengthening the justification for limiting tall buildings in our area and have undertaken a detailed analysis of the locations where mansards (“upward extensions”) would be in principle allowed.
9. We took the deliberate step of making the Plan as visually attractive as possible with a large number of photographs that demonstrate what an attractive and varied area we live in. We need businesses to have confidence to invest in and choose to operate in the Warwick Way/Wilton Road area and showing the high quality residential area it serves is a good way to do that.
10. The next stage is a technical consultation with statutory bodies such as Natural England and Historic England to find out whether we need to undertake a Full Strategic Environmental Appraisal or a Habitats Regulation Assessment. This is, we hope, a largely theoretical exercise given that Westminster will have done similar analysis in developing its own City Plans.
- 11. We would then hope to submit the revised Plan to Westminster around the end of the year for a further consultation with the referendum taking place in Summer 2021.**

Westminster City Plan and other planning policy developments

12. **At the time of writing there are a number of developments that could in principle interfere with some of our proposed policies.** The Council’s City Plan is in the middle of its “examination” process and the Council has asked us to defer substantive consultation until that has concluded. We have made comments on the City Plan as it has gone through its own consultation processes, mainly because we consider that the protection of and weight attached to residential amenity is not as good as it needs to be and not as good as it is in the current City Plan.
13. In practice we do not think there should be major objections to the Pimlico Plan from the Council.
14. There are also a number of changes to National Government Planning Policy, including a more liberalised change of uses, permitted development outside conservation areas and the prospect of further permitted development changes in respect of vacant retail premises. Without being complacent we think that the effect on the Plan is limited, but it needs to be watched by the Council in respect of maintaining the vibrancy of the Warwick Way/Wilton Road shopping centre and adjacent commercial streets.
15. Finally, the Government has recently published its Planning White Paper

proposing radical changes to planning policy with clearer presumption of acceptability of development in some areas, but equally with an emphasis on heritage protection and good design.

16. Although the Forum is not able to comment in detail on planning applications, following the consultation on our Draft Plan, we may respond to major applications where there is a clear and relevant view expressed by Forum members and the agreed Vision. Although policies in the Plan will only have force after a successful referendum, we have commented on the major application for the Wilton Road block opposite Sainsbury's in respect of the height of the building and the extent of public realm (which is in short supply and in poor condition in that area).
17. In that vein, when the Council asked Neighbourhood Forums for their suggestions for transport and public realm improvements to help the hospitality and retail sectors recover from lockdown, we put forward an idea for discussion for Warwick Way/Wilton Road produced by one of our members. The issue of resolving competing demands for road and pavement space are accepted by our local Councillors and there is clearly a need for some significant improvement. The temporary scheme that the Council has delivered seems to have facilitated a re-opening of business which was far from certain and to have helped the small independent operators that are key to the character of Pimlico.

Next steps

18. We look unlikely to be able to safely hold a physical meeting this Summer, but we look forward to the time we can do that. The Forum has applied for its designation by the Council to be continued (the initial designation only runs for 5 years) so that we can complete the work needed to have our Neighbourhood Plan adopted.

For the Steering Group
Peter Ruback, Chairman