

Pimlico Neighbourhood Forum 2023-2024 Annual Report

1. This report sets out activities of the Forum since the 2023 AGM.
2. Our main function has been to comment on Westminster City Council proposed changes in Planning Policy and on planning applications, to ensure that Officers and Committees are aware of the policies and supporting analysis in the Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan that passed a referendum in 2022 and taking account of them in their decisions.
3. We have concentrated on those areas where the Plan introduced substantively new policies for our area, or to test the water for applications raising issues that challenge the Plan. We have also aimed to give support and advice on the Plan to local residents and to residents' associations seeking help, but have been limited by our capacity to take on this work.

Consultation on Westminster's Planning Policy for Grosvenor Sidings

4. WCC's partial review of the Westminster City Plan covered Affordable Housing and "Retrofit First", but also proposed policies for development on a number of specific sites, including Grosvenor Sidings (two railway sites either side of the tracks going over Grosvenor Railway Bridge). The Grosvenor Sidings are within the Forum area. We were concerned that the proposed policy did not take sufficient account of detailed design and heritage policies (specifically protected views and heights policy) in the Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan and commented accordingly. We also alerted Forum members. We await the revised draft plan and will then consider how to respond further. Development should need re-provisioning of the sidings further along the railway, so this is likely to take some time to come to an application.

Planning Applications/enforcement

5. We have also commented on some planning applications for upward extensions to buildings of mansard form. Our comments reflected policy and supporting analysis in the Neighbourhood Plan. This is a detailed subject on which past decisions by WCC have not always reflected their stated policies – hence why we sought to clarify and simplify the position in the Neighbourhood Plan.

6. We commented on an application for a fast food takeaway in Wilton Road and subsequently raised issues about enforcement of planning conditions.
7. We also liaised with a FREDA representative on retrospective planning applications and enforcement issues at Neate House in Lupus Street.
8. Both of the above cases have had long running enforcement issues and raise the question of whether planning consents with material conditions on operation of facilities should be given, if enforcement could take many years.
9. We will continue to monitor planning applications and assist where we can.
10. At the last AGM, a member expressed concerns about 74 Lupus Street which had become an eyesore with hoardings, diverted pedestrian routes and no apparent progress. Following a request from the Forum, Councillor Jason Williams has repeatedly raised this case with Officers. We understand that Planning Enforcement has requested the (new) agents to undertake a full structural survey of the building and to implement any required actions immediately. The Highways Department is progressing an “improvement notice” for work on the vaults.

Redesignation of Pimlico Neighbourhood Forum

11. It will be necessary to apply in the next year or so for the redesignation of the Forum. Our constitution was written well before work started on the Neighbourhood Plan and without the benefit of practical experience of the process. With the Plan having been “made” and a better understanding of what is needed to monitor it and potentially revise it, it seems appropriate before applying to consider whether the constitution needs improvement.
12. Finally, we are awaiting updates on a number of further issues from WCC and will report back at the AGM.

18 July 2024