

City Plan 2040

Closing statement

12/06/2025

If I may, I would like to say a few closing remarks to round up the City Corporation's input into these hearings.

It is something of a symbolic moment. These sessions began under the chairmanship of my predecessor, and they end today with me occupying the role — a reminder, perhaps, that institutional continuity and civic evolution go hand in hand. That same dynamic is at the heart of this Plan and of the City itself.

While I am new to the role of chair of the Corporation's Planning and Transportation Committee, I have been watching the production of the City Plan for many years and more recently have become directly involved as the Plan makes its way through this examination.

Work on this Plan began several years ago, with a consultation on the issues facing the Square Mile. Then came the pandemic — something no one saw coming — which turned city life upside down and raised tough questions:

What would happen to small businesses?

Would workers return?

How would we adapt?

Alongside that, we faced the long arc of climate change came into sharp focus: and what role development must play in a response.

The Plan we submitted last year is our answer to these questions: shaped by strong evidence, real engagement, and a clear ambition for the future of the City.

We **now know many of the answers** to those questions, and the City Plan we submitted to the Secretary of State last year - informed by robust evidence and extensive engagement - sets out a vision for the future of the Square Mile that charts a course for the years to come.

It is surely right that the City - of all places - has **a mandate to grow**. This is arguably the most productive and sustainable place in the country to do business, with a pressing need to find space for the companies that want to expand and locate here. The Plan is right to enable and make the most of that pent up demand for best in class office, not simply to respond to the evidence but also to reflect the London Plan's aims and the growth mission of the Government — which we share.

The City has always shaped its skyline in relation to its heritage. From the St Paul's Heights policies of a century ago to today's digital contour modelling, we are proud to be evolving that tradition with a nuanced tall buildings strategy — one that respects strategic views while enabling design excellence and architectural confidence.

And while tall buildings capture attention, they do not define this Plan.

There are **many aspects of the Plan** – some innovative and some building on long-standing approaches – that are vital for the Plan to meet the aims of the London Plan’s spatial strategy, respond to local context, and satisfy the requirements of national policy.

The Plan takes a **retrofit first approach** that seeks to prioritise retention while enabling new, highly sustainable development in the right places.

It puts in place a framework to enhance the **cultural life of the City**.

It places great emphasis on **inclusive design** and the creation of a more humane and welcoming City.

The Plan puts in place the highest standards of **design**; protects our **open spaces**; and puts in place safeguards for the City’s **residents and other sensitive uses**.

And of course the City Plan seeks **not only to protect our heritage assets but to actively celebrate them**. We know that our historic buildings, spaces and archaeological remains are priceless assets that not only tell the history of our city but that will continue to play a vital role in the life of the Square Mile for centuries to come.

It only remains then for me to say some words of thanks.

Firstly, to **Inspector Bridgewater and Inspector Phillips**, your stewardship of this examination has been assured, fair, and insightful. We are grateful for your guidance. Thank you.

Secondly, to **Charlotte Glancy** our programme officer. Your calm approach and organisational prowess have ensured that this examination has progressed without a hitch.

Thirdly, to the **many participants** who have engaged, submitted responses, turned up to consultation events, written matters statements, proposed changes or appeared at these hearings. Your input into the Plan has been of immense value.

Fourthly, to all of the **Members** of the local plans sub-committee and the planning and transportation committee, and all other members who have input into and helped to shape the Plan.

And finally, to all the **officers of the City Corporation** who have dedicated themselves to City Plan examination and the preparation of the Plan. Your professionalism, expertise, commitment and resilience has been apparent to everyone who has witnessed you at work, and the City Corporation is incredibly fortunate to have such a talented and able team to guide the City Plan towards adoption. And I must note that last night at the National Planning Awards the team won awards for both Enabling Economic Growth, AND Best use of Heritage in placemaking.

We can, and will always, do both.

My colleagues at the City Corporation are acutely aware of our responsibility as custodians of the Square Mile. Throughout its long history the City has been defined by change, evolution, and endurance.

Walk its streets today — between our hundreds of heritage assets and listed buildings — and you’ll see renewal: younger workers than the national average, a dynamic economy, and the evidence of growth in motion.

When I think of this Plan — and the shape of the City it seeks to permit for us, for them, and for future inheritors of the Square Mile — I am convinced that it is the clearest expression of that

custodianship. It is rooted in evidence, shaped by ambition, and gives form to the future that a new generation is already helping to shape.

Thank you for your time and we await your response and modifications in due course.

Councillor Tom Sleight

Chairman of Planning and Transportation