

KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Overwhelming majority votes for Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan at referendum
Simon Birkett, Chairman

In the referendum held on 18 October, voters on the local electoral roll were asked:

'Do you want Westminster City Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for the Knightsbridge area to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

93% of the 376 people voting supported the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan (Plan); this represented a 'turnout' of 19.2%, a good result for neighbourhood planning in London (full details are available at www.knightsbridgeforum.org).

As soon as it was approved at referendum, the Plan came into force as part of the statutory development plan and will remain in place until 2037. Westminster City Council must 'make' a neighbourhood plan within eight weeks of a referendum. As part of Westminster's statutory development plan, the Plan will be used alongside the Council's own plan and the Mayor's London Plan to determine planning applications in the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area.

The Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum (the Forum) was the first of 17 neighbourhood forums in the City of Westminster to reach this exciting final stage!

As you may remember, the Forum was established to give people who live, work or study in Knightsbridge the opportunity under the Localism Act 2011 to develop planning policy and influence neighbourhood management locally. The Forum was designated by Westminster on 21 July 2015 with an exclusive mandate for five years to write a neighbourhood plan for the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Area (the 'Area').



Kent House, Knightsbridge

The Area is bounded by Albert Gate, Brompton Road, Exhibition Road, Imperial College Road, Kensington Road, Kensington Gore, Knightsbridge, Queen's Gate and South Carriage Drive. The Area was decided by Westminster on 27 March 2014. The Forum developed the Plan over more than three years after two public exhibitions, two statutory consultations and a formal Examination. Westminster decided on 21 August 2018 to accept all the Examiner's modifications to the draft plan and subsequently confirmed the referendum date.

The strongest message from residents, businesses and cultural institutions was a desire to preserve or improve the character and appearance of Knightsbridge and reinforce its sense of community. People want Knightsbridge to remain a special place to live, work, bring up children and enjoy life.

To support this vision, the new Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan will:

- (i) support retention of the Hyde Park Barracks and frame any redevelopment there;
- (ii) encourage retail shops and manage cafés;
- (iii) improve public spaces and restore heritage features;
- (iv) mitigate the impacts of construction activity;

- (v) encourage major development to address genuine housing needs;
- (vi) reduce air pollution from traffic and buildings;
- (vii) maximise the benefits of trees over the long-term; and
- (viii) ensure that at least 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy is spent locally, e.g. on measures contributing to a clean, safe and quiet neighbourhood.

In preparing the Plan the Forum has also produced some supplementary documents that provide context for the policies in the Plan and set out actions the Forum wishes to pursue over the Plan period. Most significant among these is the Knightsbridge Management Plan which identifies 85 actions, identified by the community during the many stages of consultation, that legislation would not allow the Forum to include in the Plan itself e.g. licensing, street cleansing and a 20 mph speed limit on local streets. Other supporting material includes best practice guidance on community consultation (for developers and others), construction standards and procedures and tree management plans.

Going forward the Forum expects to: apply to Westminster to renew its mandate in 2020; update its Plan from time to time; comment selectively on planning applications and relevant statutory consultations; follow up the actions in its Knightsbridge Management Plan at least once (e.g. by writing letters about them to relevant authorities); and monitor and report annually or biennially on outcomes.

Last but not least, the Forum wishes to thank all those who voted in the referendum and many others who helped it over three years to achieve this very positive result.