

## Appendix 3

### Stakeholder consultations

#### Introduction

Consultation has played an essential part in the development of the plan. As a first step (Round 1), three workshops were held with key stakeholder groups to identify issues and objectives, focusing on: tourism and the economy; community and user groups; and the public realm and conservation. English Heritage on behalf of the Steering Group, invited participants to the meetings. Plans and illustrations were prepared and each meeting was facilitated by a member of the consultant team, who ensure that each participant was asked about their views and aspirations for the area. Participants, including those unable to attend the workshops, were invited to submit further comments on a specially prepared questionnaire. Detailed notes recorded the discussions.

In addition, consultation meetings were held with a number of individuals with regard to specific issues:

#### WORKSHOPS

Set out below are the details of each workshop.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Tourism and economy</b>
<b>Date</b>	17 March 2003
<b>Venue</b>	Cheyneygates, Westminster Abbey, SW1
<b>Attendees :</b>	Peter Heath (facilitator) Atkins (consultant team)
Simon Woodward	PLB Consulting Ltd
Paul Gardner	Transport for London Project Manager
Steven Tomlinson	Transport for London
Juliet West	English Heritage
Victor Launert	Palace of Westminster Central Tourist Officer
Canon David Hutt	Westminster Abbey
David Burden	Westminster Abbey
Phil Evans	GLA Tourism Officer
David Tidley	TfL Street Management
Tim Gould	City of Westminster
Rosemary MacQueen	Westminster City Council

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Community</b>
<b>Date</b>	18 March 2003, 2pm
<b>Venue</b>	Cheyneygates, Westminster Abbey, SW1
<b>Attendees :</b>	Peter Heath (facilitator) Atkins (consultant team)
Simon Woodward	PLB (consultant team)
Graham Tanner	Transport for London
Paul Velluet	English Heritage
Steven Tomlinson	Transport for London
F Platt	Westminster Society
Tim Gould	City of Westminster
Vince Amers	QEI Conference Centre
David Burden	Westminster Abbey
Paul Smith	English Heritage/ Jewel Tower
Ceciel Delaru	Greater London Authority
Helen Bowes	Greater London Authority
Rosemary MacQueen	Westminster City Council
John Burton	Westminster Abbey
Janet Miller	Atkins Heritage (Consultant Team)

**Topic Public Realm and Conservation**

<b>Date</b>	19 March 2003, 6.30pm
<b>Venue</b>	
<b>Attendees :</b>	Peter Heath (facilitator) Atkins (consultant team)
Simon Woodward	PLB Consulting Ltd
Paul Velluet	English Heritage
Rosemary McQueen	Westminster City Council
Juliet West English	Heritage Head of Property
Timothy Jones	English Heritage
Graham King	Westminster City Council
Glyn Richards	Westminster City Council
Peter MacBride	Transport for London
Tim Gould	City of Westminster
Gerard Phillips	Greater London Authority
Tim Tatton-Brown	Archaeologist
Steve Brindle	English Heritage
Robert Whytehead	English Heritage
Steven Tomlinson	Transport for London

## Summary of Workshop Discussion

The complexity of the site led to a great deal of overlap in the topics discussed at each workshop. The main areas of interest and concern are summarised below under the broad topic headings.

### Tourism and economy

#### *The benefits and disbenefits of tourism to the WHS*

The principal roles of the Abbey and Westminster Palace are not as tourist attractions. However, all agreed that it is important to welcome visitors and there is a need to balance their interests with the purposes of the institutions of the Westminster WHS. Visitors provide a great deal of income towards upkeep and increased tourism may boost the local economy, although currently most tourist spend is confined to within the WHS itself, particularly within the Abbey, Palace and Jewel Tower souvenir outlets and the specialist Parliamentary bookshop. It was recognised that large numbers of tourists and visitors may also lead to pollution, disturbance, and congestion and particularly to a loss of tranquillity to the Abbey.

Rosemary MacQueen of Westminster City Council explained that WCC has recently begun to address tourism more actively with a view to achieving sustainable tourism, optimising rather than increasing the number of visitors and focussing on four questions:

1. Where does the spend actually occur?
2. What services and facilities such as lunch/ toilets/ signage etc. are there for tourists?
3. What is the relationship between the major strategic traffic network and tourist safety? Fatalities have already occurred within the WHS as a result of traffic
4. What is the impact of tourism on the residential population?  
Residents are already feeling the pressure and are concerned about a possible pedestrianisation of Parliament Square leading to the rerouting of traffic through residential zones.

#### *Intellectual access and orientation*

The tourism experts and a number of respondents observed that despite the importance and magnificence of the buildings, there is little in the way of orientation and interpretation for visitors, in order help them understand the history and nature of the site and to plan their visit. In particular, there is nothing to indicate the status of the site as a WHS and the significance of

this. Some attendees believed that there was a lack of 'unity of experience' for visitors which meant that tourists and others could not appreciate the ways in which the histories of the Palace and Abbey were completely intertwined. Although the proposal for a visitor centre in Westminster Palace was welcomed, there was some concern that this might further the current discontinuity in the approach to interpretation throughout the whole of the WHS. The idea of a passport or dual-ticketing approach to admissions to the Palace and Abbey was raised, similar to the system at Ironbridge and Stratford. The problem is that while Ironbridge is all run by the same organisation, the Westminster WHS houses a number of institutions, each with its own needs and priorities.

Some participants recommended that there should be increased provision of signage and interpretation boards and this might reduce some of the costs currently expended on wardens who provide assistance and guidance around the site. Others feared this would introduce clutter and they valued the vergers, wardens and other guides who comprise the 'people-centred' nature of visitor assistance. The Abbey is particularly proud that everyone working there belongs to the Abbey community and the public seem to appreciate this.

An escorted time tour is the only way to tour the Palace but this has already sold 30,000 tickets in pre-booking.

The possibility of a series of local leaflets on topics such as Statues and Monuments was discussed, as was the question of whether the WHS should have a 'brand'. Some agreed that the WHS logo could be used more around the site. There are a number of empty walls and big spaces within Westminster Underground Station which might be used for display and orientation for the WHS. There is an unused retail outlet in Westminster Underground Station which might be good as a location for ticketing and this might avoid heavy queuing at the Houses of Parliament.

All agreed that the Jewel Tower is a hugely understated attraction. It is a remarkable piece of surviving fabric of Old Westminster and the exhibition in Tower is the only feature illustrating the history and meaning of Westminster as a whole, yet it is not well publicised and tends not to feature on trails and maps. There is limited scope for increasing visitor numbers however, because of the nature of the space.

Some attendees would like to see Westminster Hall open to the public in the summer months

### *Other facilities for tourists*

The buildings are all iconic. But once the photographs have been taken there remains the question – what do I do now? Unlike many other London ‘attractions’ there are relatively few facilities, such as restaurants, cafes and shops, in the area. While the office workers and others are well-catered for, from 5pm, or when Parliament is in recess, the area is very quiet. Even the public lavatories are not well sign-posted. Some of the food kiosks around the site are operating without permission and, it might be argued, do not enhance the historic character of the area. A number of suggestions were made for alternative sites for places to eat and drink, such as Victoria Tower Gardens and the benefits and impacts of introducing more of a café culture close to the site. Both the Palace and Abbey are limited in their scope for expanding their catering facilities. The Abbey provides chairs in Poets’ Corner and coffee in the North cloister but there is an important need to remember that the Abbey is principally for prayer.

The Palace would like to expand the *range* of people who visit the Houses of Parliament but neither the Lords nor Commons like people queuing outside on the pavement. An area is needed to accommodate this. It was also suggested that the WHS should be seen as part of a tourist trail walking route and visitors thus might be guided towards the Parks area after their visit to the WHS. This would fit in with the Mayor’s aspiration to develop London as one of the world’s great walking cities.

Although the particular challenges of historic buildings were recognised, a number of respondents noted that provision for disabled people could be improved in many parts of the site.

### *The economy of the area*

The WHS needs to be seen in the context of the economy of the area. There are few prominent hotels featured in the area that might keep tourists within the Westminster area. Retail outlets also seem to find it difficult in the area. There are two shops for rent on the northern side of Victoria Street near Barclays Bank but these have never been occupied. This is an indication of the commercial vibrancy of the area.

There was some concern that the WHS Management plans may have a commercial impact on the QEII Centre, such as by restricting physical access to the conference centre. The activities at the Centre require that exhibition and event related equipment needs to be delivered by large vehicles. The conference centre is used every day and hosts events on most days. It has a capacity of 3,500 to 4,000 people with the Central Methodist Hall having a capacity of 2,000. The majority of delegates arrive by public transport. The combined capacity of the QEII Centre and Central Hall and is approximately 6,000. Thus at peak times there have been many pedestrian and traffic conflicts at Victoria Street and this has resulted in the occasional accident.

## Community

### *Residents*

It is important to remember that parts of the WHS are lived in. South of the Abbey, adjacent to the WHS boundary, the area is residential and quiet and is not knitted into WHS. That is part of its charm, it is an enclave and would wish to remain so. There are other residential areas very close by such as Marsham Street and parts of Whitehall buildings, which are becoming residential as the office spaces become redundant. The residential college is also very unusual in this context and the residential nature of parts of site and immediate surroundings is important and should be valued.

It is important therefore to consider how the heritage of the WHS benefits people and how residents' concerns and needs will be reflected in the WHS plan. There was discussion as to whether interpretation and other facilities have a particular relevance for residents, as well as visitors and ideally local schools should have opportunities to benefit from the WHS. The residents also have other requirements. It is important to maintain and improve bus transportation. Residents could support retail/economic activity but they are nervous about restaurant and cafes as the smells and late night activity can be unpleasant.

While many would like to ensure that residents are not inconvenienced by tourists, much conflict often arises, not between residents and tourists but rather than between workers and tourist. But in fact the biggest conflict is between tourists and traffic and some residents feel that no significant improvements can be made until that is seriously addressed. However it was recognised that this may lead to problems with displaced congestion from the closing of major routes through the WHS.

On the other hand, the difficulties of living within the WHS should not be over estimated. At evenings and weekends it is a very quiet place. But it is at these times that there is 'nothing open' for residents in the immediate area. Most of the principal buildings have in-house facilities for staff e.g food etc. There is no shortage for office workers but it is a desert for residents. The Westminster Society is not a residents' society but an amenity society for the built heritage for the whole of the old town of Westminster. It is statutory consultee on planning applications but is also an umbrella society which has contacts with other parties.

## Public Realm and Conservation

### *Parliament Square*

There was general discussion of this issue. The square is often used as a focus for protest groups and demonstrations reflecting the nature of Westminster Palace which has an international role as the seat of democracy and dissent. There was some debate as to whether public demonstrations here had a long history. The demonstrations do not cause too much difficulty for the Abbey. But it was generally felt that there is conflict between the need to provide a spacious area for tourists and visitors, while ensuring that demonstrations and protestor activity here is not encouraged. The Mayor wishes to see Trafalgar Square as the place for mass gatherings instead of Parliament Square and the police are uneasy with large gatherings in front of the Palace. It was suggested that any improvement or development here could include a fountain to discourage mass gatherings. The GLA would like to see the Square as a dignified area, as the key information point and viewing area, from which monuments in the WHS could be seen, and to co-ordinate it with other tourist sites. The Mayor developed a vision for Parliament Square which includes the setting of policies and a management plan which will focus on maintaining a dignified setting for the WHS. The Square also has relevance for the Mayor's plans for tourism and World Squares. Filming and promotional events are to be allowed in the policy but public demonstrations will not, despite the pressure to allow them. The character of the area now relies heavily on 'green areas'. This is relatively new in some areas. Parliament Square, although modern, is designated as an important open space. The surface of Parliament Square was not always soft and consideration might be given to laying a hard surface, particularly if the Mayor's plans for the square increase the pedestrian traffic. However any changes may impact on its current character, the maintenance requirements

and noise levels need to be considered. Currently the surface and therefore character contrasts well with the hard surface of Trafalgar Square and grass improvement should be considered

The GLA is responsible for Parliament Square Garden although Westminster City Council also has some jurisdiction. Therefore the GLA are keen to know the impact of the WHS Management Plan on Parliament Square and the GLA's desire to propose it as an open space, promoting the ecology and as a tourist information site.

#### *Spaces and setting*

There was some desire to resolve the discontinuity of the areas within the WHS and the current character of the site as a disparate series of elements. There was some feeling that the spaces in the area had not been managed as thoughtfully as the buildings and that spaces which make up the WHS need to be linked together again, so that the site should be seen as a whole. This would recapture the qualities of the area which existed until the interventions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Access to Abbey should be enhanced, to make it more architecturally satisfying and to re-establish the links between buildings. It was felt that with modest measures it was possible to create and recover places and spaces which are desirable to visitor, which are dignified and calming, but which somehow integrate with the livelier activity outside. The setting and environment of Notre Dame or Montmartre were suggested as benchmarks for Westminster – a place to linger. The lighting of key buildings was discussed. Westminster CC has produced booklet called 'Lighting up the City' and there is an EH policy document currently being prepared on the issues of illumination of buildings in London.

A number of particular issues regarding the public realm were highlighted:

- The Sanctuary at the west end of the Abbey does not provide a suitable setting for the church and the approach to the north entrance also requires enhancement.
- The link between St Stephens Entrance to Houses of Parliament and the Abbey also needs to be re-established. As Westminster Hall is a venue for great state occasions, there needs to be clearer links between that building and the Abbey.
- Improvements to Mason's Yard are being considered by the Abbey. Any changes to items which are listed eg railings and layout would

need to incorporate a balance between conservation and justification for change and re-establishing links between buildings

- There is conflict between coaches, cars and car parking in the Sanctuary and this detracts from setting and view of the Abbey for all visitors. The practical issues of users eg taxis and coaches and the need for efficiency should be addressed. There was a feeling that unless this is resolved, visitor numbers may fall
- Monuments and public art outside of the Abbey has been erected without much thought. There was discussion as to whether the City of Westminster's Public Art Strategy sets guidelines for promoting or rejecting work of art. The Strategy looked at grouping memorials strategy, but didn't take on board the political lobbying it would generate. There has been pressure to have more public art since the strategy was commissioned. There are proposals for 2 new statues – Lloyd George and one representative of the suffragette movement. The Burghers of Calais are also going to an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery for a year.
- The area often suffers from demonstration or even energetic violence and is subject to helicopter disruption. A disagreeable level of background noise interrupts the calm of the abbey and evening song.
- Ownership issues make the management of the World Heritage Site quite complicated
- The London Planes trees are all very close in age and their health will eventually decline at the same time.

*Boundaries and Buffer Zone to the WHS*

Many felt that the division of the WHS into two separate areas was unsatisfactory. A revision of the boundary might also include new buildings and encompass underground archaeology. The question of whether Buffer Zone for the WHS should be established was discussed and all agreed that this should be addressed in the Management Plan. The importance of the River Thames to the setting of the buildings was highlighted and it was agreed that it should be addressed along with the consideration of the buffer zone.

*Traffic and transport*

There is a particular clash between pedestrians and traffic. The visitor experience to the site would benefit, in particular, from better crossing points from Westminster underground station and access on and off the grassed area of Parliament Square, from which photographs of 'Big Ben' and Westminster Abbey are often taken.

Many attendees were keen to see the Management Plan adopt a sustainable transport policy, promoting public transport wherever possible, although some noted that the increase in buses running close to Old Palace Yard had not been welcomed. But Westminster Palace would welcome a decision to confine traffic here to public transport only, because of concerns regarding security. The need for better coach-parking provision was highlighted. Currently, coach parties only stay in the site for a short time, in order to accommodate the poor coach facilities. Other participants however would like to encourage coach parties to expect a short walk from a drop-off point to the WHS and that the drop-off and pick-up points may need to differ. Some felt that a reduction of traffic on Bridge Street and St Margarets' Street would improve the area but it was pointed out that TfL would be unlikely to consider the closure of the roads in Parliament Square completely.

*Security*

The nature of the Houses of Parliament mean that security issues and the need for emergency planning have a force behind them which can be difficult to manage and reconcile with the historic environment. The long-standing arrangement of temporary barriers to contain protests and the large concrete blocks which now appear to be at least semi-permanent do not enhance the buildings and setting. It was hoped that the Management Plan could help in reconciling the needs of security, conservation and the visitor experience

*Conservation*

It was generally agreed that a Conservation-based future for the site is necessary. Restoration work at the Abbey and Palace has been exemplarily. Condition surveys are undertaken regularly and it was hoped that the preparation of Conservation plans could form part of the management approach, not least to ensure that informal interventions, such as utilities installation and maintenance, do not have a negative effect. It was agreed that all interventions should consider the impact on buried archaeological remains as well as the upstanding historic fabric.

Westminster School plans to review its historic buildings and their management.

Paul Smith pointed out that summer ticketing facilities for the Palace of Westminster has an impact on the setting of the Jewel Tower and this needs to be addressed although the ticketing booth does attract visitors to the Jewel Tower. (The ticketing tent at Buckingham Palace could be used a benchmark in terms of the quality of its design). It would be desirable for the Jewel Tower to be illuminated at night. The Plan will need to ensure that access for delivery vehicles for the Jewel Tower and other buildings is maintained, if traffic is to be limited.

### *The intangible heritage*

The importance of the history of the site and the institutions which have development in it was highlighted.

## **Other consultations:**

### **Metropolitan Police Representative**

The following points were made

- The only significant crime is pickpocket and opportunist theft with crowds.
- There is relatively little antisocial behaviour, begging or vagrancy in the area, owing to the lack of evening visitors and cash machines.
- There is a need for powers to deal with oversized protests and associated clutter.
- Security concerns are significant around the Palace and for state and VIP uses of the Abbey and St. Margaret's Church.
- There is general support for World Squares for All Masterplan proposals to improve links to the island of Parliament Square as a means of improving pedestrian safety and routing (away from frontage of Palace).
- There is general support for further traffic restriction on St. Margaret's Street as means of reducing vehicle terrorist risks.

## Royal Parks Representative

A study of Victoria Tower Gardens has been undertaken on behalf of the Royal Parks Agency. The general scope of the study is as follows :

- Improvement of soft and hard landscape layout and materials.
- Consideration of uses and possible improvements by provision of refreshment facilities.
- Consideration of statues and implications of relocation proposals for the Burghers of Calais.
- Consideration of existing entrances
- Consideration of the retention and improvement of lawned areas.
- Consideration of day and night time character.
- Consideration of information provision.
- Consideration of integration with English Heritage and the GLA's Architecture and urbanism Unit's study of Embankment Gardens in Westminster.

## Thorney Island Society Representatives

The following points were made:

- There is a desire to see traffic intrusion reduced generally.
- There is general support for proposals of the World Squares for All Masterplan (linking island to Abbey etc.).
- There is a desire to see further interpretation information and enhanced appreciation of historical connections (recent involvement in a new blue plaque for Sassoon).
- There is a desire to see the dignity of the spaces generally maintained rather than over-intensified with public gatherings etc.
- There is a desire to retain and enhance the the soft landscape.
- A test to see a significantly enlarged WHS designation area.



