



Stuart Love  
Chief Executive  
Westminster City Council  
64 Victoria Street  
London, SW1E 6QP

19 May 2026

### **Letter from Councillor Swaddle regarding Planning & Building Control**

Dear Mr Love,

As Leader of the recently elected administration, I would like to set out our approach to planning and to introduce our Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Growth and Planning Councillor Tim Barnes

Our focus is on designing a more vibrant and sustainable '*City for All*' scheme, with planning policy and goals at its heart, creating a city which is modern, sustainable and supports not only the economy but also our communities as well as better support for key workers and their families.

To achieve this, we need to improve viability and deliverability of residential schemes, with greater flexibility on tenure, mix and unit size to unlock affordable housing for key workers and this can also be done by transitioning locations where conversion supports housing delivery.

The delivery of intermediate housing will support and enhance Westminster's role as the engine of the UK economy and boost the global standing of the West End.

#### Further goals and policy directions

We are also clear in stating that the current WCC retrofit-first approach should not become retrofit-only.

Councillor Glen set this out in the January Full Council meeting scrutinizing the City Plan earlier this year ahead of the election, and you and your teams can watch his contribution [here](#), 1 hour 28 minutes 30 seconds in here on the link below,

Retrofits should be applied holistically and proportionately if site constraints, heritage, viability or functional obsolescence point to another outcome.

We should also adopt a more flexible approach to sensitive heritage retrofit enabling listed buildings to remain viable, occupied and economically productive.

We support well-designed mansard roof developments where mansards are an established feature of the townscape.

We should take a more flexible approach to employment and skills contributions through Section 106.

We intend to move from embodied carbon to whole-life assessment.



We need to enable evidence-based flexibility on London Plan cycle parking standards in office-led developments.

As part of our next steps, we would like to:

- Commission an independent review of the planning policy documents to streamline processes and delivering better value for money for everyone (i.e. Council, applicants and stakeholders).
- Commence the constitutional steps necessary to reinstate the Planning and City Development Committee, restoring proper member scrutiny.
- Review the effectiveness of the Community Planning Advice Service and other help offered to residents faced with a major planning application in their area.
- Restate the presumption in favour of sustainable commercial development in the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), recognising its national and international importance and protecting Westminster's prime workspace offer. This will deliver economic growth within the CAZ ensuring delivery of best-in-class office space, with a presumption in favour of development.
- Introduce a programme of training for all members on planning to ensure there is a proper structured process where members can learn and obtain the most up to date information on policies, regulatory frameworks, and procedures especially in the areas of sustainability and viability.

On our part we will ensure senior politicians (members) are available and willing to meet developers, working collaboratively with officers to produce a pipeline of timely planning decisions and feedback as well as Section 106 agreements.

To that end, we would like to launch an early engagement programme (via partners) with the development industry.

Our senior members will be visibly available to rebuild confidence and progress a pipeline of timely decisions and Section 106 agreements and we expect officers to join and work with us accordingly.

It is then subsequently vitally important that planning benefits are then communicated more clearly to the public and businesses, including widely publicising how Section 106, carbon offset funding and how Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) and Community Infrastructure Levy are spent.

We would be grateful for your full cooperation in this review process and policy reset.



City of Westminster

This is an opportunity to ensure that Westminster's planning process is not only well-designed in theory, but effective in practice.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Swaddle'.

**Councillor Paul Swaddle**  
**Leader-elect of the Council**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Barnes'.

**Councillor Tim Barnes**  
**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member-elect for Growth and Planning**