



**WPA**

**Westminster Property Association**

**Annual Report**

**2021**

# Foreword

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My first year as Chair in 2021 was marked by partnership, collaboration and supporting recovery, and whilst these continue to be at the heart of WPA's ethos, we can look back on the year with some pride.

2022 faces its own challenges especially the tragic events in Ukraine but with further opportunities.

Post the prime minister's announcement in January about the removal of remaining restrictions, it is heartening to see so many people back in the West End which has found its buzz.

Our collaboration with policy makers, our members and industry leaders will continue to support and contribute to Westminster's economic and social recovery.

With our members, we have continued to tackle some of the built environment's biggest challenges. Not least, the climate crisis and how we, as an industry, can support Westminster Council's Net Zero Carbon city target of 2040.

A highlight of the year was the publishing of research and guidance on the challenges of retrofitting Westminster's magnificent historic buildings, together with the shared insights and collaboration with our membership and stakeholders such as Historic England and Westminster Council.

It is in this vein and in the spirit of partnership and shared goals that we partnered further with Westminster Council to lay the groundwork to a Sustainable City Charter that will help to steer us all towards a greener, cleaner future. And as I said in my Annual Lunch speech last November, we also need to remember that redevelopment will sometimes be the more sustainable option.

Our NextGen group has played an increasingly important role in our work, particularly around diversity. Our communities, businesses and the places we build and care for will be strengthened by greater diversity, and we remain committed to improving this across our sector.

People are integral to the success of the West End. How we work, interact and spend our leisure time is evolving, and we need to ensure our iconic districts across the city are adapted to ensure the area retains its pre-eminence as a world class business and visitor destination.

I would like to thank the board members' support over the past year, and crucially the support of all our members who put their trust in us to represent the industry.




**Paul Williams**  
WPA Chair  
Derwent London

# Westminster Property Association

The Westminster Property Association (WPA) is a not-for-profit advocacy group representing the leading owners, investors, professional advisors, and developers of real estate across Westminster.

The Association, under the leadership of **Paul Williams** (WPA Chair; Derwent London) and **Marcus Geddes** (WPA Vice Chair; Landsec), agreed to prioritise the following in 2021:

- **Priority 1:** Rebuilding Westminster's economy
- **Priority 2:** Promoting ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) outcomes
- **Priority 3:** Public & private sector collaboration
- **Priority 4:** Diversity, Equality & Inclusion

This report summarises how the Association met these priorities in 2021, and details the Association's research, engagement and events programme and impacts.

## 2021 at a glance



# 1. Our 2021 Priorities

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## Rebuilding Westminster's economy

To support the City of Westminster's economic recovery from the extraordinary and devastating impacts of Covid-19. This will include championing initiatives and policies which provide greater certainty for the private sector to invest in the West End's future success; support for sectors disproportionately impacted by lockdown – including retail and hospitality – which are vital to the City's vibrancy and attractiveness; and advocating for London's role as a global and open city.

The WPA will work with its members, policymakers and stakeholders to help re-open Central London for business and visitors; encourage the activation and animation of Westminster's streets and spaces - with unique experiences for all to enjoy; and build back the City's business ecosystems to be more sustainable, resilient and responsive to changing consumer needs.



## Promoting ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) outcomes

To promote the tangible local benefits from socially responsible and sustainable real estate development – including job creation, a green and healthy environment, improved and activated public realm and the delivery of affordable homes.

Speeding up decision-making within a flexible and well-resourced planning and licensing system will be key to ensuring the private sector can deliver on the economic, environmental and social opportunities from Westminster's recovery.



## Public & private sector collaboration

To work closely with policymakers at local, London and national government on shared challenges – most notably the economic and social recovery from Covid-19 and achieving a Net Zero Carbon Westminster by 2040.

Rebuilding Westminster's economy and creating a more open, attractive and equitable City requires private and public sector collaboration with a new sense of urgency and trust.

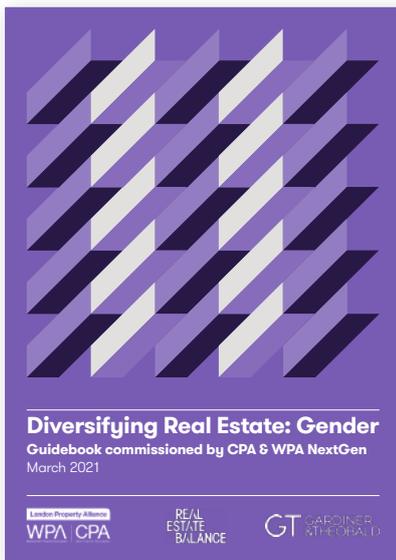


## Diversity, Equality & Inclusion

To champion a more inclusive real estate industry amongst the WPA's membership, and support greater engagement with Westminster's diverse communities of residents, workers and visitors.

## 2. Research

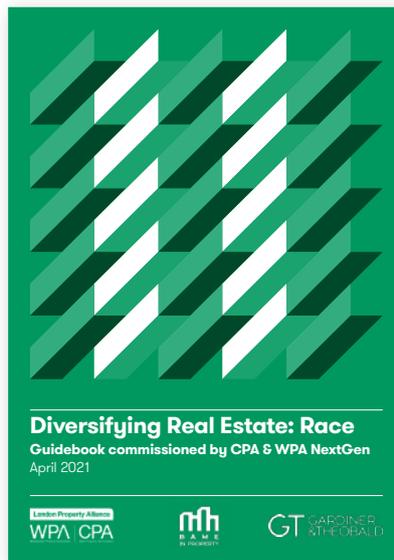
In 2021, the CPA commissioned or co-sponsored the following reports:



### Diversifying Real Estate: Gender

Launched 8 March

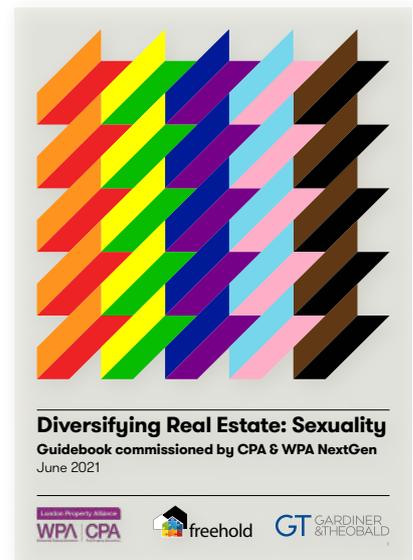
Commissioned by CPA NextGen and WPA NextGen groups, this guidebook provides best practice examples, signposts to resources, and reflections on personal experiences to help individuals and organisations make central London's real estate sector more accessible and inclusive for women.



### Diversifying Real Estate: Race

Launched 28 April

Commissioned by CPA NextGen and WPA NextGen groups, this guidebook provides best practice examples, signposts to resources, and reflections on personal experiences to help individuals and organisations more accessible and inclusive for black and minority ethnic people.

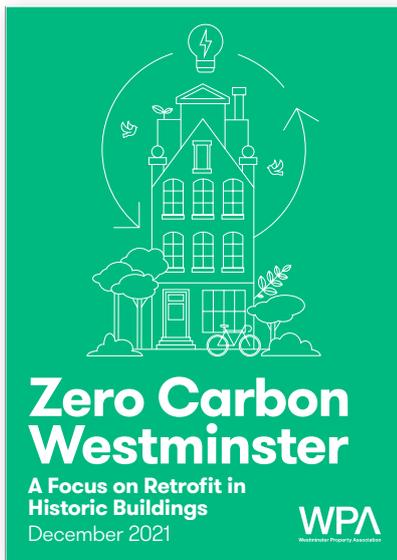


### Diversifying Real Estate: Sexuality

Launched 24 June

Commissioned by CPA NextGen and WPA NextGen groups, this guidebook provides best practice examples, signposts to resources, and reflections on personal experiences to help individuals and organisations be more accessible and inclusive for people that identify as LGBTQ+.

## 2. Research



### Zero Carbon Westminster: A focus on Retrofit in Historic Buildings

Launched 15 December

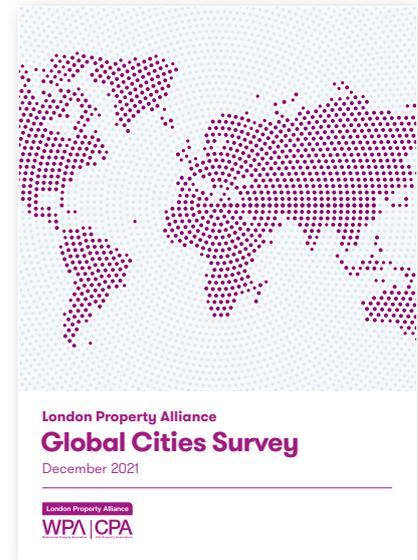
WPA's Zero Carbon Westminster: A Focus on Retrofit in Historic Buildings, sets out a range of case studies, recommendations and retrofit measures, from low-cost and 'light touch' interventions through to comprehensive or 'deep' retrofits, and has been produced in collaboration with Gerald Eve, JLL and Savills, alongside input from both Westminster City Council and Historic England.



### Statement of Intent: Delivering a Sustainable City Charter

Launched 15 December

WPA and Westminster City Council have jointly pledged to work together to develop a Sustainable City Charter to help lead our built environment towards a greener future. The Charter will be launched in 2022 following further research and consultation on its contents and implementation.



### Global Cities Survey

Launched 10 December

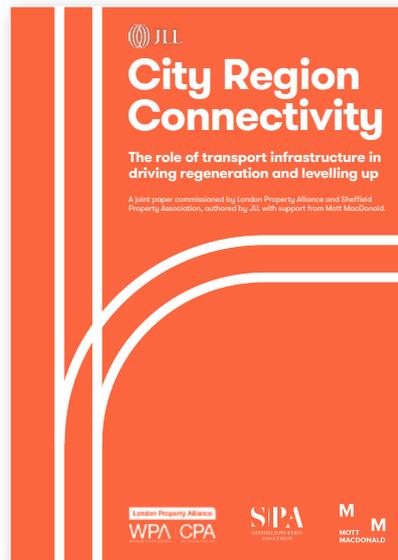
In partnership with WPA and CPA, the Global Cities Survey was launched by London Property Alliance (LPA) with research undertaken by Centre for London. The Survey provides an analysis of the latest data available across a range of 19 economic and societal indices for London, New York, Paris, Berlin and Hong Kong. These include amongst others, employment rates, public transport usage, office vacancies and rents, station and retail visits, the cost of living, air passenger demand and new home completions.



## Al Fresco Survey

Launched 16 November

WPA commissioned a survey that revealed significant support for the continuation of al fresco dining measures in the West End. Respondents were questioned on their experience and views of al fresco, with specific questions on their habits when dining al fresco in the West End.



## City Region Connectivity

Launched 3 August

London Property Alliance (WPA + CPA) launched a major new research report City Region Connectivity which called on the Government to deliver a clear plan on transport infrastructure to address inequality within and between the UK's city regions. The report featured 10 key recommendations to policymakers at local, regional, and national government to support regeneration and 'levelling up' by funding and delivering urban transport connectivity. The research was commissioned by the Alliance and Sheffield Property Association and authored by JLL with support from Mott MacDonald.



## Westminster's Neighbourhood Forums Guide

Launched 25 June

Produced in partnership with New West End Company and Kanda Consulting, WPA produced a guide providing contact details and a summary of the ambitions for each of Westminster's Neighbourhood Forums.

# 3. Policy engagement and campaigns

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Throughout the year WPA engaged with policymakers at local, London and national Government to represent our members' interests on a range of issues aligned with our priorities, including support for central London's return to the office. This engagement included regular meetings with politicians and senior officers from Westminster City Council and the GLA, letters to Government and responses to major consultations.

## Consultation responses

- 18 January: WPA responded to Main Modifications to the City Plan
- 28 January: London Property Alliance responded to MHCLG's Supporting Housing Delivery & Public Service Infrastructure consultation
- 30 April: The Alliance (WPA + CPA) responded to Permitted Development Rights Inquiry
- 28 June: WPA responded to Westminster City Council's Environment SPD Consultation
- 09 September: WPA responded in support of Westminster City Council's Article 4 Direction for Westminster's Central Activities Zone
- 18 September: WPA wrote in response to the validation consultation commenting on technical details of the proposed requirements Westminster City Council's updated 'local lists' of planning application validation requirements
- 12 October: WPA responded to HMO licensing in Westminster
- 27 October: WPA responded to the Chancellor's Autumn Budget and Spending Review
- 16 November: WPA launched the results of an AI fresco dining in Westminster survey

## Campaigns

- 14 February: London Property Alliance wrote to the Chancellor calling for a 'budget for recovery' which provides much-needed support for Central London, as well as commercial centres and high streets across the UK
- 24 December: London Property Alliance signed a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak with London First

## 4. Membership engagement & events

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The WPA's programme of events was hosted both virtually and in-person in 2021, and attracted over 2,500 attendees combined.

### In-person events



#### **Back to the West End Reception: Westminster as a destination for Culture**

28 September

WPA hosted a 'Back to the West End Reception: Westminster as a destination for Culture' in partnership with Heart of London Business Alliance. The event celebrated the return of workers and visitors back to the West End. Speakers included Cllr Paul Swaddle, Westminster City Council's Cabinet member for Finance & Smart City (his portfolio duties covers the arts and culture); Kevin Price, Chief Operating Officer and MD - BAFTA; and Ros Morgan, Chief Executive of Heart of London Business Alliance.



#### **WPA Annual Dinner 2021**

7 October

WPA held an Annual Dinner at The Londoner Hotel on the 7 October. WPA guests were addressed by WPA Chair Paul Williams and Hannah Fry (Professor in the Mathematics of Cities, UCL). The event was attended by over 600 people.

# 4. Membership engagement & events

## In-person events



### WPA NextGen: Autumn Reception

13 October

WPA NextGen held a reception at 20 Balderton Street, providing an opportunity for NextGen members to reconnect with young talent from across Westminster's built environment. Keynote speakers included Amanda Sheppard (WPA NextGen Chair; Senior Innovation Manager –Grosvenor Britain & Ireland) and Charlotte Toon (Co-Founder & Director –TX), Charlotte Ashton (Associate Director –Colliers) and Ellen Lockhart (Development Manager –Grosvenor).



### Morning Briefing: Crossrail update

26 October

The London Property Alliance (CPA + WPA) held a breakfast event at HB Reavis UK Bloom building on top of Crossrail's recently completed Farringdon Station. Mark Wild, CEO of Crossrail talked through the transformational impact that the project will have.



### WPA Annual Lunch 2021

18 November

WPA members and stakeholders were welcomed to the WPA Annual Lunch at the Grosvenor House Hotel. WPA guests were welcomed by WPA Chair Paul Williams and a keynote speech was given by Sir Charlie Mayfield (Founder and Chair of 'Be The Business'). The annual lunch was attended by more than 1000 people.

## 4. Membership engagement & events

### Virtual events



#### **Oxford Street District: West End Recovery**

27 January

The WPA and New West End Company webinar explored how Westminster City Council's (WCC) emerging vision for the Oxford Street District will support the West End's recovery post-Covid. The panel discussion included Cllr Rachael Robathan (WCC –Leader, Elad Eisenstein (WCC – Programme Director, Oxford Street District), James Cooksey (WPA and NWEC Board member; The Crown Estate –Director of Central London), Debbie Jackson (WCC –Executive Director, Growth, Planning & Housing), Tim Reade (Selfridges Group –Director of Asset Management) and Paul Williams (WPA Vice Chair; Derwent London – Chief Executive).



#### **WPA Leadership AGM webinar**

16 March

WPA NextGen Chair Amanda Sheppard (Grosvenor Britain & Ireland –Senior Innovation Manager) interviewed Paul Williams (incoming WPA Chair; Derwent London –Chief Executive), Marcus Geddes (incoming WPA Vice Chair; Landsec –MD Central London), Brian Bickell (WPA Deputy Vice Chair; Shaftesbury –Chief Executive) and Olivia Harris (immediate past Chair; Dolphin Living –Chief Executive) about their achievements in 2020 and priorities for the year ahead.



#### **NextGen webinar: Are you the future of real estate? Meet a property professional**

24 March

WPA NextGen hosted a live webinar with 80 students from the University of Westminster to explore careers within the built environment sector. Following the session, attendees had the opportunity to connect with members of the NextGen committee as part of a wider mentoring scheme.

## 4. Membership engagement & events

### Virtual events



#### **Technical webinar: Infrastructure Coordination Development Service**

20 May

This CPA webinar provided members with the opportunity to meet the City of London Corporation's leading planners and learn about the mechanisms and support that the City Property Advisory Team (CPAT) offers for businesses and developers. This event included a keynote speech by Gwyn Richards (Planning and Development Director – City of London Corporation).



#### **Post-Election Briefing**

9 June

In partnership with LCA (London Communications Agency), London Property Alliance hosted a live webinar about the results of the 2021 Mayoral and GLA election results. The briefing also looked at the London Assembly results, and what they tell us about the potential direction of borough-wide elections in May 2022.



#### **Webinar: Westminster's Neighbourhood Forums**

28 June

In partnership with New West End Company, WPA hosted a webinar exploring the significance of Forums and Neighbourhood Plans in shaping policy, development and growth in Westminster. Speakers included Cllr Elizabeth Hitchcock (Deputy Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning, Westminster City Council); Matt Bell (Director of Corporate Affairs, Grosvenor Britain & Ireland); Matthew Bennett (Chair, Soho Neighbourhood Forum); Simon Birkett (Chair, Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum) and Michael Clarkson (City Planning Policy Team Leader, Westminster City Council).

# 4. Membership engagement & events

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## Virtual events



### **Webinar: Global Cities**

15 July

WPA, in partnership with New West End Company, hosted a webinar 'Global Cities' which compared the recovery initiatives being led by Westminster City Council in Central London with New York City. Speakers included Debbie Jackson (Executive Director, Growth, Planning and Housing, Built Environment at Westminster City Council) and Rosemary Scanlon (Emeritus Chair, TransitCenter / Former Divisional Dean of the Schack Institute of Real Estate, New York University), moderated by the WPA's Chief Economic Adviser Alexander Jan.



### **Webinar: Business Rates Briefing**

11 November

WPA hosted a Business Rates Briefing webinar in partnership with New West End Company. The webinar explored what the Chancellor's Autumn Budget means for business rates and implications for the West End. Panellists included Cllr Matthew Green (Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning-Westminster City Council), Vivienne King (Chair-Shopkeepers' Campaign), Dan Thomas (Chief UK Business Correspondent-FT) and Professor Tony Travers (Director-LSE London).

## 4. Membership engagement & events

Recognising the importance of collaboration and the celebration of London's built environment, the Association also supported industry events.

### Industry events



#### Property Careers Workshop

18 August

WPA hosted an online Property Careers workshop in partnership with 2-3 Degrees and Young Westminster Foundation as part of its 'Mastering My Future' programme. WPA volunteers at the workshop included WPA NextGen representatives and other members including Rupert Calvert (Darling Associates), Andy Hing (Shaftesbury), Alice Murphy (NWECC), Vanisha Solanki (Cratus), Russell Townsend (Capco), Gupreet Tank (Capco) and Oluwatofunmi Ayodeji (Marketing Built ID).



#### London Open House Festival

4 September

On 4 September, the London Property Alliance (WPA + CPA) sponsored Open House Festival: an annual event that opens up London's built environment through free public access to buildings, walks, talks and tours, showcasing the work of the property sector. This event attracted 3.2 million website hits, and included tours of tours of 38 Grosvenor Square (Grosvenor) and Marylebone (Howard de Walden).



#### Bisnow's Women Leading Real Estate

9 September

London Property Alliance (WPA + CPA) partnered with the Bisnow's Women Leading Real Estate event celebrating the industry's top female influencers and innovators. The Alliance had a pop-up stand promoting our 'Diversifying Real Estate' guide on Gender and had an interactive talking point discussing how to get more women into property careers.



#### London Real Estate Forum 2021

29 - 30 September

London Property Alliance (WPA and CPA) was proud to sponsor the 2021 London Real Estate Forum (29 & 30 September). Hosted at The Barbican, the theme of the conference was 'resilient cities': enabling future environmental, social and economic sustainability post-pandemic.

# 5. Supporting WPA NextGen

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The role of WPA NextGen has proven to be critically important during the past year especially in welcoming young workers back to the office. WPA NextGen has provided face-to-face social events and has continued to support professional networking from home using online platforms and a programme of digital content.

The wider WPA NextGen network is made up of 378 young property professionals from over 240 organisations involved with real estate in the City of Westminster. The funding provided by Gardiner & Theobald has enabled WPA NextGen to support, educate and connect with its network, led by an engaged steering group of NextGen members and delivered by WPA's Executive team.

On 16 July, WPA NextGen launched their new podcast mini-series with 'Zero Carbon Westminster WPA Podcast: Welcome to the Series'. This three-part programme is exploring the role of development and design in creating a sustainable, net zero carbon Westminster. Building on the findings of last year's WPA Zero Carbon Westminster report, the series has unpicked some of the key challenges and innovations the property sector must contend with if it is to achieve Westminster City Council's ambitions to become a carbon neutral council by 2030 and a net zero carbon City by 2040. The episodes have included:

- 'Designing a zero carbon Westminster' which explored the definitions of 'net zero', 'embodied' and 'operational' carbon, and challenges associated with off-setting, material re-use and historic buildings [20 July]
- 'Zero Carbon Westminster: The role of developers' about the challenges and opportunities for working with existing buildings, and the importance of investment and resourcing in achieving the UK's carbon reduction commitments [17 August]
- 'Zero Carbon Westminster: Flexible Working' which explored the change in working environments following the pandemic and how this will impact the industry going forward [4 November]

# 5. Supporting WPA NextGen



## Highlights of the 2021 WPA NextGen programme included:

- A strong engagement programme to a total of 378 NextGen members
- 1 in-person event which was the first in person event since 2019. The event was attended by more than 150 guests from the NextGen network
- 3 virtual workshops with where WPA NextGen members spoke with young people from the University of Westminster and the 2-3 Degrees network to explore career options within the built environment and encourage diversity.
- 4 podcasts as part of a Net Zero Carbon Westminster mini-series, with another to be launched by year-end
- 3 expert roundtables exploring issues around diversity, equality and inclusion for the Diversifying Real Estate guidebook series
- 1 blog post authored by a NextGen committee members and promoted to WPA's wider network of 1,900 real estate professionals
- 10 features on NextGen news and activities in the WPA and LPA newsletters



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