



## **PLAN FOR SOHO ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

We had a good AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> July last year and the new FSG has continued to meet and progress the draft Plan. We were sorry to lose Rob Kirk as our treasurer on his leaving Shaftesbury but he was ably replaced by Farida Dungawalla and Andrew Price came on as Shaftesbury's representative. Gareth Evans replaced Sandra Schembri at House of St Barnabas and Peter Parker came on as a resident in place of Michael Case who helped so much in earlier years with our surveys.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> July to 11<sup>th</sup> September we held the last round of public consultation organised by the Forum. In the legislation this is called the Regulation 14 stage. We received 1,057 written responses of which 970 were positive or neutral and 87 were negative. During the autumn we revised the plan in the light of the comments we received with the help of a grant funded consultant who is himself a plan inspector and also Troy Planning a specialist consultancy working for the Forum. We were also helped by the very supportive team at Comm Comm UK to produce a report on all our consultations in formulating the Plan and in particular the Regulation 14 consultation.

We formally submitted our Plan and the necessary accompanying documents to Westminster City Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Members of the Forum Steering Group (FSG) have remained incredibly supportive and constructive throughout the year in guiding the process and reconciling differences.

Then Covid 19 hit us all. Eventually WCC was able to respond and agreed to start their own consultation on the Plan, carried out largely through their own website and other channels. This was the Regulation 16 consultation, the last consultation stage.

It ran from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 10<sup>th</sup> July and WCC received 35 representations about the plan. These representations are sent to an independent examiner for the plan to consider. This person is appointed by Westminster and I am pleased to report that Ms Jill Kingaby BSc (Econ), MRTPI who examined both the Knightsbridge and Mayfair plans has been appointed. We have had an initial exchange of letters on the most material points and the examination process has started. Although not finalised our Plan is now a material document which applicants and the City Council must take into account in deciding planning applications so we have passed an important mile stone.

### **Looking forward**

The examination will inevitably mean a number of modifications to the plan in the light of the examiner's recommendations and consultation and discussions with Westminster Planning Policy officers. Troy Planning is advising us during the process.

Ms Kingaby will in due course issue her report on the Plan to Westminster and assuming Westminster accept her report and agree that it conforms to the basic

conditions to become a 'made' plan then they will start the process to hold the two referendums required. One of residents and one of businesses. These are likely to be held in May or June 2021.

This timetable is still dependent on Westminster's own Local Plan being adopted. A new WCC plan was originally promised in the autumn of 2017. There was a draft in November 2018 and it was finalised and formally published 20 months later, on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019. It has now been submitted for independent examination which has recently concluded. Once the inspector's report has been issued and considered hopefully the Westminster Local Plan will be adopted. This is important because our Plan has to be 'in general conformity' with all the higher plans. These are the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the London Plan and Westminster's local plan. Our Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with Westminster's draft plan but until that is finalised, we do not know if there are changes as a result of the inspector's decisions which will necessitate changes to our plan before it goes to referendum.

We hope you will all want to vote yes and get others locally to vote yes so that finally we will have 'made' the first neighbourhood plan for Soho!

Matthew Bennett MBE

## **Finance**

A financial report will be available before the meeting from our Treasurer, Farida Dungawalla. The bank balance stood at £6,808.17 on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.