

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Planning & Transportation – For Decision	Dated: 05/11/2024
Subject: Puddle Dock – Planning Brief	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Planning Duties • Diverse Engaged Communities • Dynamic Economic Growth • Leading Sustainable Environment • Vibrant Thriving Destination • Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Yes
If so, how much?	A total allocation of £125,000
What is the source of Funding?	Project Reserve Contingency
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Yes
Report of:	Katie Stewart – Executive Director Environment
Report author:	Peter Wilson – Assistant Director (Development Management)

Summary

This report recommends that approval is granted to commencement the drafting of a Planning Brief for the area known as Puddle Dock. On 11th July 2024 Policy and Resources Committee approved a non-public report of the City Surveyor that included a recommendation for the City as Local Planning Authority to work up a Planning Brief for Puddle Dock to provide guidelines and requirements for development - together with a budget allowance from the Project Reserve

Contingency for its delivery - regarding the area known as Puddle Dock. This report presents the intention for a Planning Brief which will set out guidelines and requirements for any development of, in whole or in part, the area known as Puddle Dock. It is considered necessary given the scale, overarching public realm and sensitive nature of this site. The Planning Brief will, upon adoption, constitute a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in line with the Local Plan 2015 and the forthcoming City Plan 2040.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

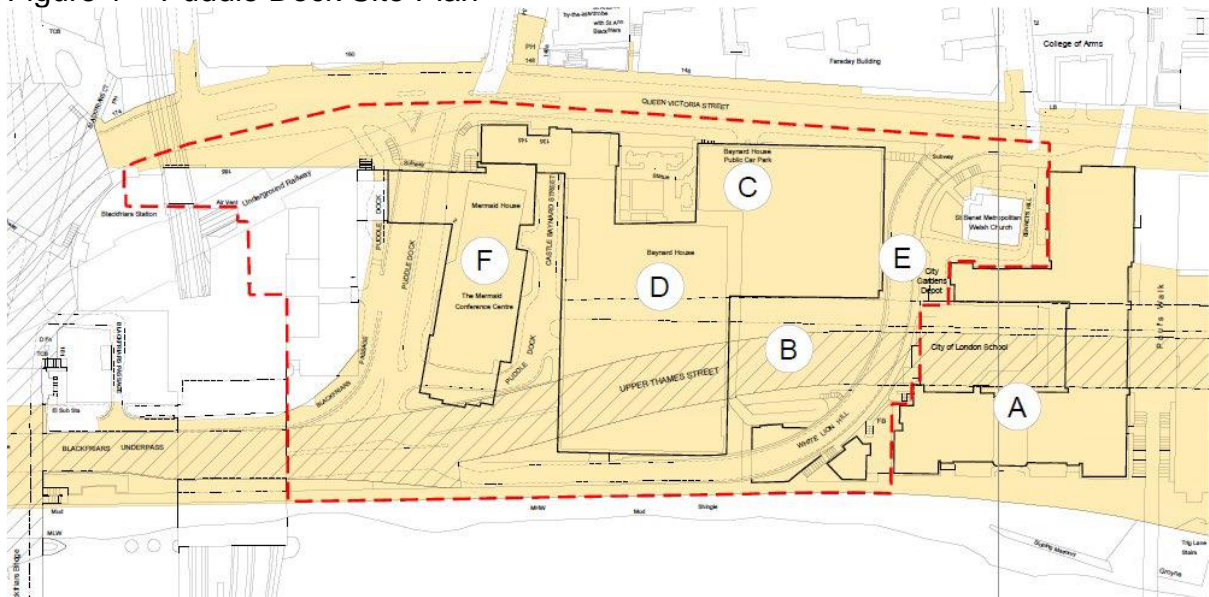
- Approve the commencement of a draft Puddle Dock Planning Brief

Main Report

Background

1. The area known as Puddle Dock (bounded by Queen Victoria Street to the north, the river Thames to the south, Blackfriars Station to the west, and Millenium Bridge/ Peter's Hill to the east) has significant development potential. See location plan and building summary below:

Figure 1 – Puddle Dock Site Plan



- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| A – City of London Boys School | B – CoLBS pitches |
| C – Baynard House Public Car Park | D – Baynard House |
| E – City Garden Depot | F – Mermaid Theatre |

2. The Puddle Dock area was redeveloped during the 1960s - 1980s, including the creation of the Upper Thames Street tunnel. The site is dominated by significant buildings and the highway network creating visual and physical barriers for

pedestrians. These result in a lack of permeability within the site. The public realm provision and the area is generally considered uninviting.

3. Within the draft City Plan 2040 the site falls within the Blackfriars 'Key Area of Change' which includes the promotion of comprehensive redevelopment or refurbishment of existing post-war buildings to provide new high-quality office and commercial accommodation, creation of new public realm, enhancing pedestrian permeability including widening and creating a vibrant Riverside Walk.

Current Position

4. To realise optimal outcomes for the Puddle Dock area, proposals that come forward would benefit from a shared vision, clear masterplan and alignment on specific aspects of the design, uses and infrastructure for the site. These can best be captured in a 'Design Guide', or Planning Brief, for Puddle Dock.
5. The development of the Puddle Dock Planning Brief would be led by the City's Planning division, working in partnership with key stakeholders, with governance processes agreed at an early stage. Given the resources requirements, consultancy support is required to assist the preparation of a Design Guide.
6. Planning Briefs can be developed to different levels of detail, depending on their purpose. Careful scoping would be undertaken at the start of the project to set out the appropriate level of detail for different aspects of the design guide, helping to give the right balance between certainty and flexibility, and ensuring the process of developing a design guide can happen at pace. It is currently envisaged that the Planning Brief could set parameters for:
 - i) Movement, street layout, public spaces
 - ii) Built form, heights, scale, massing, and an overall masterplan
 - iii) Character, heritage, identity, wayfinding, legibility
 - iv) Uses and activation (at different times/days)
 - v) Safety, security, lighting, resilience, flooding
 - vi) Green spaces, sustainability, energy
 - vii) Transport and servicing
 - viii) Policy compliance
7. The Planning Brief would give the City, through its planning function, additional influence through all stages of the process to delivery, and provide developers greater certainty about what may be acceptable when seeking planning permission, and can help lead to faster decisions based on whether a proposal complies with a guide. This can help to speed up the delivery of development. For larger potentially phased schemes such as Puddle Dock, design guides can help to maintain consistency in the delivery of development over a longer period of time.

8. This Planning Brief would prevail even if the scheme cannot be evolved with the other landowners. The City's ambitions for the uses within a scheme at Puddle Dock, will need to be evolved in the context of its evolving strategies for operational use, placemaking, governance, corporate objectives, City Plan, Destination City and Corporate Plan. A development at Puddle Dock provides opportunity for the City to take a leading role in shaping through this SPD a 'once in a generation' development site capable of meeting the requirements of various occupier uses, with exemplar sustainability standards and significant public, social and placemaking benefits.

Options

9. The options for the City are:

- A. Do Nothing – to reactively respond to and anticipate and assess proposals for the area in whole or part as and when they come forward.

- B. Proactively consider the potential for development of the site. To fully assess and determine the latent potential in the site a Planning Brief should be evolved working with stakeholders to address the primary impediments to a full comprehensive development of the whole. During this time further consideration can be given to the potential uses for the end development.

10. In order to establish a proactive vision for what this vital river opportunity and Key Area of Change can deliver it is recommended to proceed with Option B, drawing down on the funding approved by Policy and Resources Committee from the Project Reserve Contingency.

11. In the event that stakeholder(s) do not engage positively to working collaboratively, and/or there is no alignment of vision for the site, the City could revert to options A or B.

Proposals

12. To have weight in decision-making and influence development proposals through the planning process, a Planning Brief will need to go through a number of stages of development including public consultation and formal adoption by the Planning and Transportation Committee as a Supplementary Planning Document.

13. Evolving a Planning Brief will require an external appointment of a consultant through a public procurement process. A consultant is required to secure optimum capability in this area and to build capacity.

14. The process would likely include:

- The procurement and appointment of a consultant Autumn 2024.

- A Draft Planning Brief to Planning & Transportation Committee to approve public consultation in the Spring/Summer 2025.
- A return to Planning & Transportation Committee for approval to adopt the Planning Brief as a SPD Autumn/Winter 2025 following consideration of consultation responses and finalisation of the document.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

15. **Strategic implications** – The delivery of this Planning Brief will strengthen the influence of and strengthen existing and draft City Plan policy for this Key Area of Change and delivery of the following outcomes of the Corporate Plan:
- Diverse Engaged Communities
 - Dynamic Economic Growth
 - Leading Sustainable Environment
 - Vibrant Thriving Destination
 - Flourishing Public Spaces
16. **Financial implications** - There are no financial implications arising from this report with funding already approved through Policy & Resources Committee 11th July 2024; Finance Committee 23rd July 2024; and Investment Committee 25th July 2024.
17. **Resource implications** - Delivery of the Planning Brief will be through an appointed consultant with oversight by existing Environment Department staff resources.
18. **Legal implications** - There are no legal implications arising from this report. The SPD is being developed in line with the requirements of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 received Royal Assent on the 26th of October 2023. This Act introduces changes to the plan making system but the dates for the initial commencement of the relevant sections is yet to be appointed, meaning these sections don't yet apply. If the relevant sections are commenced, local planning authorities will no longer be able to produce supplementary planning documents. However, In the event that a date is appointed before the SPD is adopted, it is likely that the SPD could still be treated as a material planning consideration and officers consider it will still provide useful guidance to inform the planning process.
19. **Risk implications** - There are no additional new risks arising from this report.
20. **Equalities implications** – Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that the City Corporation, as a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
21. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are age, disability, gender, reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or beliefs, sex and sexual orientation.
22. Communications and events will be designed to be accessible. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening of the draft SPD will be undertaken to evaluate the implications for people with protected characteristics.
23. **Climate implications** - Delivery of the SPD will seek to contribute towards meeting the objectives of the Climate Action Strategy.
24. **Security implications** - There are no security implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

25. The potential for Development at Puddle Dock is a generational opportunity for the City and a Planning Brief for the site in addition to the vision and policies of the City Plan 2040 including that for the Blackfriars Key Area of Change allows for a proactive position to be taken as a material consideration in any development proposals and therefore would act as a proponent of the development of this gateway to the City, enlivening this north bank of the river. To achieve optimal improvement of the site, a development needs master planning and engagement with the key stakeholders including landowners and infrastructure.
26. This is a complex site with multiple constraints and landowners. The Planning Brief is considered to allow for the City to positively shape future development proposals in support of the City Plan and wider City Corporate Plan objectives. The Planning Brief will form a complementary material planning consideration to the Development Plan.

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