

# City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b> Planning & Transportation Committee – For Decision	<b>Dated:</b> 06/05/2025
<b>Subject:</b> Smithfield Market – Planning Brief	<b>Public report:</b> For Decision
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</b></li><li>• <b>provides statutory duties</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statutory Planning Duties</li><li>• Diverse Engaged Communities</li><li>• Dynamic Economic Growth</li><li>• Leading Sustainable Environment</li><li>• Vibrant Thriving Destination</li><li>• Flourishing Public Spaces</li></ul>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	No
<b>Report of:</b>	Katie Stewart – Executive Director Environment
<b>Report author:</b>	Gemma Delves – Principal Planning Officer (Development Management)

## Summary

This report recommends that approval is granted to commence the drafting of a Planning Brief for the part of Smithfield Market that includes the East and West Market buildings and the Rotunda. At the outset, it must be emphasised that all future development proposals are subject to the City of London (Markets) Bill being approved by Parliament and are therefore undertaken on a prospective basis.

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, of the respective market buildings. It is considered necessary given the potential relocation of the markets and subsequent opportunities for the re-use of the buildings that would therefore arise. It needs to be ensured that future development preserves and enhances the legacy of these buildings through exemplary design and conservation and innovation which supports the growing evening and weekend economy, complements the City Corporation's emerging aspirations for Smithfield for the significant social and economic value can be derived from the growth of creative enterprises, cultural and leisure uses and it should be fully inclusive whilst protecting local amenity. 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 Smithfield Market Planning Brief.

## Main Report

### Background

1. This paper relates to the grade II\* listed East and West Market buildings and the grade II listed Rotunda, which form part of the Smithfield Market complex as shown edged in red on figure one below. These buildings were constructed for the Corporation in the 1860s to the design of the City Surveyor Sir Horace Jones. They are historically and architecturally significant and together with the Poultry Market, General Market and Annexe Market to the west of the site, they formed one of the finest market complexes in Europe. They are located within the Smithfield Conservation Area.

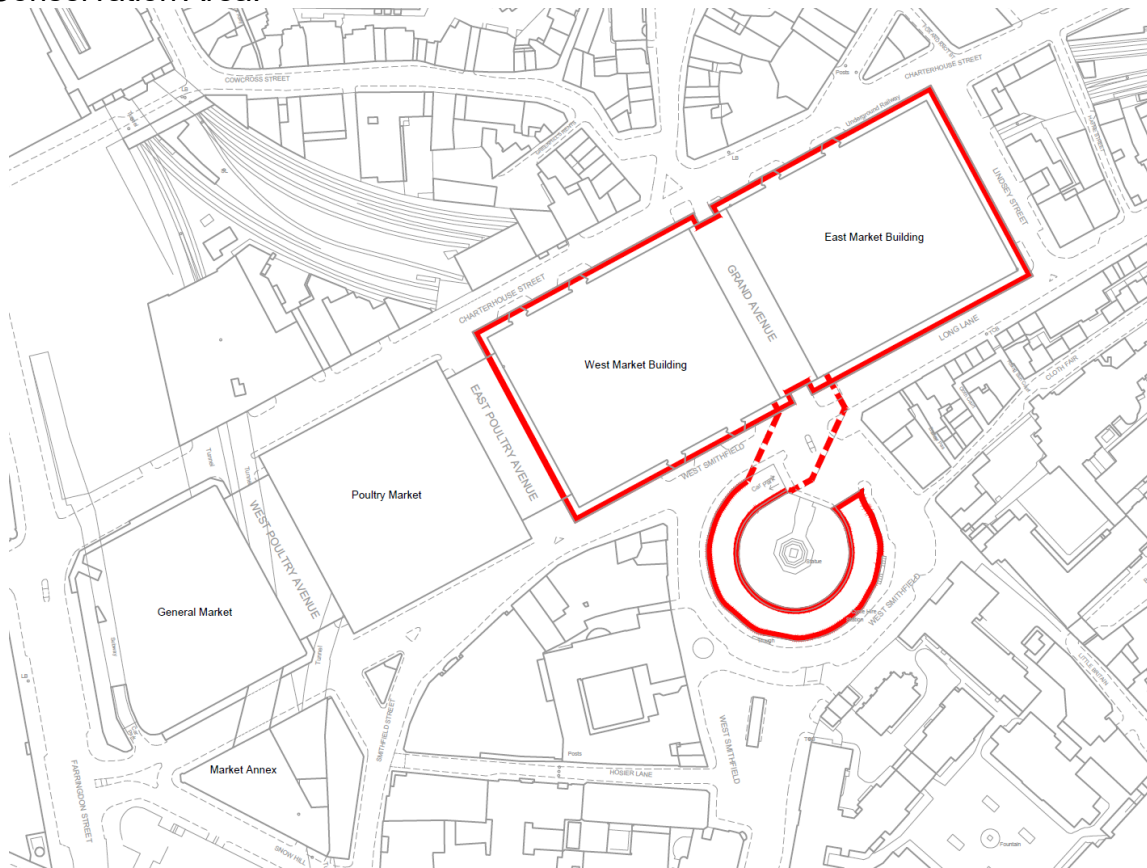


Figure 1

2. While parts of the identified site are still operational as a wholesale meat market, a Bill was deposited in Parliament on 27 November 2024 that provides for the ending of the City Corporation's responsibilities to operate the Smithfield and Billingsgate Markets.
3. With the potential relocation of the meat market, the Smithfield area would undergo substantial change over the coming years. Works are already underway in the

General Market and Poultry Market to the west of the site to accommodate the relocation of the London Museum. The draft City Plan 2040 identifies the site as being within the Smithfield and Smithfield and Barbican Key Areas of Change which seek to support the continued presence of Smithfield Market in the short to medium term, while encouraging the future sensitive re-use of the Smithfield Market buildings should the market re-locate, requiring a world class design solution that delivers a mix of uses that celebrate and are appropriate to the site's sensitive heritage character, and that provide inclusive public access to the buildings.

## **Current Position**

4. It is estimated that the Bill is likely to take around 2.5 years to complete its Parliamentary passage and subject to the successful passage of the Bill, it is therefore expected that the markets would continue to operate in Smithfield until at least 2028. Notwithstanding, in anticipation of the site becoming vacant, to set expectations and to realise optimal outcomes for the area, proposals that could 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 this part of the market site.
5. The development of the Smithfield Market Planning Brief would be carried out in-house and led by the City's Planning and Development Division. 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:
  - a) Conservation and adaptation of the historic buildings
  - b) Scoping the potential, if any, for extensions
  - c) Uses and activation (at different times/days), securing public access
  - d) Movement, public spaces, public realm enhancements
  - e) Character, identity, wayfinding, legibility
  - f) Safety, security, lighting, resilience
  - g) Exploring opportunity for greening
  - h) Sustainability, energy
  - i) Transport and servicing
  - j) Policy compliance
6. It is anticipated that key statutory consultees such as Historic England could provide input on the developing draft at an early stage, together with other key statutory and non-statutory consultees as required, to be scoped following committee endorsement of this paper.
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 listed building consent, 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

schemes such as Smithfield Market, design guides can help to maintain consistency in the delivery of development over a longer period of time.

8. The City's ambitions for the Smithfield Market site, will need to be evolved in the context of placemaking, governance, corporate objectives, the City Plan, Destination City and the Corporate Plan along with evolving strategies for operational use of the site and strategies for the wider area including the conversion of the western end of the market buildings to the London Museum, the Bunhill, Barbican and Golden Lane Area Healthy Neighbourhoods Plan, the Culture Mile BID Public Realm Vision and Strategy and the City's Smithfield Public Realm Strategy. A development brief for Smithfield Market provides opportunity for the City to take a leading role in shaping through this SPD, a 'once in a generation' development capable of meeting the requirements of various occupier uses, with exemplar heritage benefits, sustainability standards and significant public, social and placemaking benefits.
9. The brief would build upon emerging Strategic Policies S23 and S24 of the City Plan 2040 by seeking to ensure that the re-use of the market buildings embodies exemplary design, supports the growing evening and weekend economy, complements aspirations for cultural and leisure activity and this area and is fully inclusive whilst protecting amenity.

## **Options**

10. 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. During this time further consideration can be given to the potential uses for the end development.

In order to establish a proactive vision for what is one of the most historically significant sites in the City it is recommended to proceed with Option B and utilise in house expertise to develop a brief for the site.

## **Proposals**

11. 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.
12. The process would likely include (timescales are indicative and would need to be mindful of the status and progress of the Bill):
  - An in-house team within the City's Planning Division being formed to take the project forward in June 2025, which would seek input on the developing draft from key statutory and non-statutory consultees as required.
  - A Draft Planning Brief to Planning & Transportation Committee to approve public consultation in December 2025.

- A return to Planning & Transportation Committee for approval to adopt the Planning Brief as an SPD April 2026 following consideration of consultation responses and finalisation of the document.

## Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. **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
14. **Financial** implications - There are no financial implications arising from this report.
15. **Resource** implications - Delivery of the Planning Brief will be through an in house team and would require officer time.
16. **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 before the SPD is adopted, local planning authorities will no longer be able to produce supplementary planning documents. Instead, Supplementary Plans can be produced which are intended to relate to the use of land and therefore could cover the Smithfield area. These would form part of the Development Plan and undergo 'light touch' examination. A brief will still provide useful guidance to inform the planning process.
17. **Risk** implications - There is some risk that proceeding with developing the Planning Brief, and in particular publicly consulting on it, might be misunderstood or misinterpreted as assuming that Parliament will decide to pass the Bill. This matters because the Corporation does not want to in any way impact negatively its relationship with Parliamentarians, whether in relation to the City of London (Markets) Bill or more broadly. On the other hand, delaying the development of the Planning Brief until the Bill has completed its passage would result in the real risk of significant delay in the development and regeneration of Smithfield if none of the pre work is undertaken on the Planning Brief until the legislation has been passed: the Corporation would also have to deal with ad hoc approaches and proposals made to it in any event during this period of time. These competing risks can be mitigated by ensuring that in all communications, committee papers and consultations, it is emphasised that all such work is being undertaken on a prospective basis, and development proposals are subject to Parliament passing the legislation.

18. 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;
19. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are age, disability, gender, reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or beliefs, sex and sexual orientation.
20. 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.
21. Climate implications - Delivery of the SPD will seek to contribute towards meeting the objectives of the Climate Action Strategy.
22. Security implications - There are no security implications arising from this report.

## **Conclusion**

23. The future of Smithfield Market is a generational opportunity for the City. A Planning Brief for the site in addition to the vision and policies of the City Plan 2040 including that for the Smithfield and Smithfield and Barbican Key Areas 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 historically and culturally significant area of the City. To achieve optimal improvement of the site, a development needs master planning and engagement with the key stakeholders.
24. This is a complex site with multiple constraints. The Planning Brief would allow 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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