

APPLICATION to Designate FITZROVIA as a Neighbourhood Area

AREA NAME: FITZROVIA

APPLICANT: FITZROVIA FORUM STEERING COMMITTEE

Pursuant to Sections 61I and 61G of the TPCA 1990, the Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee submits to the City of Westminster and the London Borough of Camden this application for a Neighbourhood Area designation:

RELEVANT NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA:

1. Fitzrovia is a central London neighbourhood, near London's West End. Fitzrovia lies partly in the City of Westminster and partly in the London Borough of Camden situated between Marylebone and Bloomsbury and north of Soho.
2. Within the City of Westminster, the proposed Fitzrovia neighbourhood area includes that area of the Marylebone High Street Ward east of Great Portland Street, and that area of the West End Ward north of Oxford Street and east of Great Portland Street, Riding House Street, Langham Place and Regent Street.
3. Within the London Borough of Camden, the proposed Fitzrovia neighbourhood area includes that area of the Bloomsbury Ward north of New Oxford Street and west of Gower Street, Store Street and South Crescent (including the buildings on the South side of Store Street and South Crescent), Morwell Street, Bedford Avenue, Adeline Place, Great Russell Street and Bainbridge Street.
4. We attach a boundary map showing the proposed Fitzrovia neighbourhood area ("Fitzrovia").

REASON THAT FITZROVIA IS APPROPRIATE FOR DESIGNATION AS A NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA:

5. The Localism Act (2011) created new rights and powers for local communities. In its publication *A plain English guide to the Localism Act*, the Department for Communities and Local Government describes these new rights and powers as follows:

Greater freedom and flexibilities for local government are vital for achieving the shift in power the government wants to see. But, on their own, these measures will not be enough. Government alone does not make great places to live, people do. People who look out for their neighbours, who take pride in their street and get involved - from the retired teacher who volunteers in the village shop once a month, to the social entrepreneur who runs the nursery full time.

Until now, however, many people have found that their good ideas have been overlooked and they have little opportunity to get on and tackle problems in the way they want. Voluntary and community groups often find that their potential contribution is neglected, when, in fact, they carry out some of the most innovative and effective work in public services and we should be encouraging them to get more involved.

This Act passes significant new rights direct to communities and individuals, making it easier for them to get things done and achieve their ambitions for the place where they live.

A plain English Guide to the Localism Act, Communities and Local Government (ISBN: 978 1 4098 3226-5), November 2011, page 8.

6. Because Fitzrovia crosses the government boundary between two different local authorities, the City of Westminster and the London Borough of Camden, Fitzrovia is and has, for many years, been regulated by different policies that reflect different strategies and preferences for addressing the needs of our central London community. While different strategies and preferences among local government entities may be beneficial in the broader context, Fitzrovia, to greater and lesser degrees, has suffered as a result of its location straddling the local government boundary between the City of Westminster and London Borough of Camden. The Communities and Local Government publication quoted above describes some of these challenges.

- Many people have found that their good ideas have been overlooked.
- There is a perception that Fitzrovia residents have had insufficient opportunity to get on and tackle problems in the way they want.
- Voluntary and community groups have found their potential contribution is neglected.

A Fitzrovia Forum may provide scope for economies or improvements through the joint provision of services across the Westminster – Camden boundary. One important example of such collaboration is the new Fitzrovia Community Centre. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee welcomes the opportunity to exercise the devolved powers of the Localism Law.

7. Fitzrovia currently has a variety of land uses, including residential, office and commercial, retail, and institutional, with no single dominate activity. Importantly, Fitzrovia also has a diverse social and economic profile that is a positive example of a comprehensive, human scale urban community. This historically bohemian area is referred to as London's Latin Quarter. Indeed, Fitzrovia has long nurtured and supported people from a wide range of creative communities and businesses: writers, actors, artists, architects, furniture makers, fashion and garment designers, musicians and professionals working in advertising, radio, television, and, more recently, internet media. Reflecting Fitzrovia's connections with the avant-garde the area also has a significant concentration of commercial art galleries and dealers.
8. The Improvement & Development Agency for Local Government has issued a Planning Advice Service note regarding designated neighbourhood areas under the Localism Act (2011). See *Designated neighbourhood areas*, published by Improvement & Development Agency for Local Government, <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagelId=2497068>. This advice note emphasizes, “[t]o assess the appropriate area a [local planning authority] must ensure neighbourhood areas are coherent, consistent and appropriate in planning terms. The neighbourhood area should not be dictated by Electoral Services or the potential logistics of undertaking the referendum. “ The note also observes that in addition to taking on board comments received from consultations other factors to consider might include man-made features (such as roads), and the catchment area for current and planned infrastructure and services (e.g., community centres and schools).
9. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee submits that its proposed boundaries for the Fitzrovia neighbourhood area are appropriate because they reflect the area widely regarded as “Fitzrovia” by those who live and work in the area. The proposed Fitzrovia neighbourhood area is also generally consistent with the area of benefit for the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, the amenity society that has represented the area for many years. The City of Westminster and the London Borough of Camden have accepted these boundaries for at least the past thirty years. Finally, the proposed Fitzrovia neighbourhood area boundaries are consistent with the catchment areas of important community infrastructure, including the recently established Fitzrovia Community and our local primary school, All Souls C of E Primary School both on Foley Street, Westminster.
10. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee has validated these understandings after a broad consultation with active community groups in Fitzrovia. The list of local community groups consulted in connection with the application is attached below as Attachment 2.

11. To further validate these understandings and to determine community support for this application, the Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee held a meeting in January 2012 with representatives of community groups active in Fitzrovia. Community leaders attending the January meeting identified themselves as members of the following community groups: Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, Fitzrovia Community Centre, Fitzrovia Trust, Cleveland Street Neighbourhood Watch, Fitzroy Square Neighbourhood Association, Fitzroy Square Frontagers Committee, Holcroft Court Residents Association, Charlotte Street Association, 25 Gresse Street Tenants and Residents Association and Gordon Mansions Residents Association. Since January 2013, the Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee has had further consultation with the Bloomsbury Forum Steering Committee, the Marylebone Forum Steering Committee, and, more recently, the Fitzrovia (West) Forum Steering Committee.
12. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee has attempted to agree neighbourhood area boundaries with groups active in adjacent areas. While we believe that there is general agreement regarding our proposed northern (Euston Road) and southern (New Oxford Street and Oxford Street) neighbourhood area boundaries, there are a broader range of views in respect to our proposed western (Great Portland Street, Riding House Street, Langham Place and Regent Street) and eastern (Gower Street, Store Street, South Crescent, Morwell Street, Bedford Avenue, Adeline Place, Great Russell Street and Bainbridge Street) neighbourhood area boundaries.
13. The Marylebone Forum has proposed a neighbourhood area designation for the Marylebone neighbourhood area that includes the area between Euston Road (to the north) and Oxford Street (to the south) and an eastern boundary at the City of Westminster local government boundary with London Borough of Camden. In its neighbourhood area designation application, the Marylebone Forum omits any mention of Fitzrovia or its character as a distinct neighbourhood, and provides no explanation regarding why Fitzrovia should be divided in half for purposes of neighbourhood planning. Rather, the Marylebone Forum simply asserts that its proposed neighbourhood area “forms a broadly coherent whole” and that the area is “popularly known as Marylebone.” We beg to disagree.
14. Our proposed neighbourhood boundary with the Marylebone Forum is at Great Portland Street, Riding House Street, Langham Place and Regent Street because historically it has been seen as the western boundary of Fitzrovia and it marks a change in social condition and built form. The Marylebone neighbourhood area proposed by the Marylebone Forum includes the western half of Fitzrovia and would embrace community infrastructure important to Fitzrovia, including the Fitzrovia Community Centre and All Souls C of E Primary School both on Foley Street, Westminster. The proposed eastern boundary of the Marylebone neighbourhood area is neither coherent, consistent nor appropriate in planning terms and should be refused.

15. Representatives of the Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee met with representatives of the Marylebone Forum Steering Committee in February 2013 to discuss an appropriate neighbourhood area boundary. The Marylebone Forum Steering Committee was unwilling to engage in any meaningful discussion about the boundary between Marylebone and Fitzrovia. Rather, the Marylebone Forum Steering Committee suggested that the Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee discuss the boundary issue with the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, which currently supports the Marylebone Forum.
16. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee wrote to the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association (“FNA”) in January 2013 requesting a meeting with the FNA Trustees to discuss neighbourhood planning in Fitzrovia and support for the Fitzrovia Forum. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee has been unable to secure a meeting with the FNA. The Fitzrovia Forum has recently written to the FNA to request a general meeting of its members to discuss neighbourhood planning for the Westminster-side of Fitzrovia.
17. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee has consulted with the other community groups active along our proposed western neighbourhood area boundary. As a result of these consultations, we have proposed an amendment to the western boundary proposed in our January 2013 neighbourhood area designation application. In particular, we are now proposing that the area between Portland Place and Great Portland Street, and south of Riding House Street be included in the Fitzrovia neighbourhood area. This adjustment to the proposed western boundary of the Fitzrovia neighbourhood area would be the entire area of benefit of the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association. This revised western neighbourhood area boundary would also have the benefit of including the whole of the East Marylebone Conservation Area and the East Marylebone Special Policy Area, which are longstanding Westminster special plans governing development in Fitzrovia.
18. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee has met with the Chairman of the Bloomsbury Forum Steering Committee to discuss the appropriate eastern neighbourhood area boundary for the Fitzrovia neighbourhood area. The Bloomsbury Forum Steering Committee has expressed the view that the historic western boundary of Bloomsbury is Tottenham Court Road.
19. The Bloomsbury Forum Steering Committee has also asserted that property owners in the Bedford Square area and the residents of Bedford Court Mansions prefer to be included in a Bloomsbury neighbourhood area.
20. Local residents who live in the area between Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street and north of Store Street, including the Gordon Mansions Residents Association and the Chenies Street Chambers Leaseholders Association, have expressed a preference to be included in the Fitzrovia neighbourhood area.

21. We are proposing an adjustment to the eastern boundary of the Fitzrovia neighbourhood area included in our January 2013 neighbourhood area designation application to exclude Bedford Square and the area south of Bedford Square, including Bedford Court Mansions.
22. We are proposing that the eastern boundary of the Fitzrovia neighbourhood area is Gower Street, Store Street and South Crescent (including the buildings on the south side of Store Street and South Crescent), Morwell Street, Bedford Street, Adeline Place, Great Russell Street and Bainbridge Street. This proposed eastern boundary will have the benefit of including both sides of Store Street and the South Crescent, and both sides of Tottenham Court Road within a single neighbourhood area. This will allow for more a more coherent and rational plan for these areas than if they were divided between two different neighbourhood areas.
23. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee intends to work closely with neighbouring forums and with communities that do not have a forum, in developing our Neighbourhood Forum and any Neighbourhood Plan, and we will cooperate fully to benefit mutual interests.
24. The Fitzrovia Area does not include the whole or any part of the area of a parish council and no part of the Fitzrovia Area has previously been designated as a Neighbourhood Area.

RELEVANT BODY STATEMENT:

25. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee is a “relevant body” to make this application under the terms of the Section 61G of the TCPA 1990 being an organization or body which is capable of being designated as a Neighbourhood Forum.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS IN SECTION 61F(5) of the TCPA 1990:

26. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee was organized to investigate and advance community interest in a neighbourhood area designation for Fitzrovia and the formation of a neighbourhood forum under the TCPA 1990. The Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee will see that the Fitzrovia Forum complies with the following conditions:
 - It will be established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well being of Fitzrovia.
 - Its membership will be open to (a) individuals who live in Fitzrovia, (b) individuals who work in Fitzrovia (whether for business carried on in Fitzrovia or otherwise), and (c) individuals who are elected to represent Fitzrovia namely the Ward Councillors who respective wards fall within Fitzrovia.

- Its membership will include a minimum of 21 individuals each of whom (a) lives in Fitzrovia or (b) works in Fitzrovia (whether for a business carried on there or otherwise).
- Its membership will be drawn from different locations in Fitzrovia and from different sections so the community in Fitzrovia.
- Its purposes will reflect in general terms the character of Fitzrovia.

For the purposes intended of this application we represent an intention to form a Fitzrovia Forum and adopt a written constitution with the objectives, purposes and membership discussed above.

ATTACHMENTS:

Boundary Map
Consultation List

J. Wesley Skow
for Fitzrovia Forum Steering Committee
7 October 2013