

2040 City Plan

James Irving [REDACTED]

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To: Planning Policy Consultations <PlanningPolicyConsultations@cityoflondon.gov.uk>

Cc: Archdeacon London [REDACTED]

📎 1 attachments (189 KB)

Response to City Plan 2040 Shaping the Future City.pdf;

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THIS IS AN EXTERNAL EMAIL

Please find attached our response to the *2040 City Plan – Shaping the Future City* consultation.

With best wishes,
James

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ST BRIDE'S CHURCH

To:
Development Plans Team

From:
Revd Canon Dr Alison Joyce, Rector
Robin Turner, Facilities Manager
James Irving, Head of Finance

We are writing in response to the *2040 City Plan – Shaping the Future City*, on behalf of St Bride's Church, Fleet Street.

We note that reference to St Bride's and its churchyard is made within the City Plan, and that the historical significance of our building and our green space is recognised.

Nevertheless, we do wish to express a range of concerns about the City Plan in its current iteration, including the following:

- In general, the City Plan does not seem to grasp the true extent and significance of the contribution made by the churches across this area (including our own) to the cultural, historical, pastoral and commercial life of the City of London.
- The role of the city churches as custodians of crucial and irreplaceable elements of London's heritage does not seem to be fully and appropriately recognised.
- Our churches contribute actively to the mental and social well-being of everyone in the area: residents, city workers, visitors and tourists, as well as the most vulnerable members of society. This must not be overlooked.
- We have significant concerns about the impact of the proposed development upon the historic skyline of the City of London: once lost this can never be replaced.

The following factual information about life of St Bride's will serve to illustrate the true extent of the contribution made by the city churches to every aspect of the life of the city. We have set out our comments with reference to the Policies as set out in the City Plan.

S1 Healthy and inclusive city

The contribution made by the city churches to the health and welfare of the people who live and work in this area of London and the many tourists who visit us here, is incalculable. It would therefore seem important to make reference to the quiet spaces in city churches and churchyards, such as St Bride's, in 6d as well as the existing community facilities already offered in a number of these churches.

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SA1 Publicly Accessible Locations

Our own churchyard is open and available to all, free of charge, and is widely used throughout the year by city workers, residents, and visitors. We are currently working with the City Gardens team to enhance it as a green space and cultural asset. It also serves as a place of safety for vulnerable people.

HL5 Location and Protection of Social and Community Facilities

Our church building is also open every day, free of charge, and provides an oasis of peace and calm within a busy and noisy area of the city. Every weekday evening we offer an hour's 'Space for Silence' by candlelight, which provides a welcome place of refuge and retreat for stressed city workers. We also offer pastoral support to any who request it. The volume of written prayer requests that we receive each day testifies to the levels of anxiety and distress that we deal with routinely.

S6 Culture and Visitors

St Bride's is recognised internationally as being one of the most famous and significant historic and cultural assets in London, alongside its unique ministry to journalists and all who work in the media. **St Bride's is open to all, free of charge, every day of the year** (barring Bank Holidays), to people of all faiths and none: we routinely welcome more than 3,000 visitors per week (often considerably more).

As a Grade I listed Wren Church, with a history that dates back to the sixth century, we are the custodians of one of the most significant heritage sites in the country. **St Bride's crypt museum (open every day, free of charge)** tells the story of London from Roman times to the present day.

We have on display a Roman pavement dating from AD180 alongside a range of Roman artefacts, together with church stonework, window glass, and bell metal damaged by the Great Fire of London (amongst other items). Uniquely, our crypt also houses a mediaeval charnel house full of skeletal remains and an ossuary which is managed in partnership with the Museum of London.

We are currently in the process of digitising our museum professionally, to enhance our visitor experience and bring to life the human story we tell, which embraces the whole history of London. This includes the story of three martyred St Bride's parishioners, who were burnt at the stake during the reign of Mary Tudor; the story of the Great Plague and the Vicar of St Bride's who remained at his post when so many clergy fled the city; the entire history of the printing industry in England since 1500; and extends to the story of the first known victim of Jack the Ripper (who lived in our parish and was married here in 1864).

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Throughout the year (excepting December and August) we offer **two lunchtime music recitals every week, that are open to all free of charge**. These concerts provide a venue for established professionals wishing to try out a new programme, or music students who value the opportunity to perform in public. These recital slots are so popular with musicians that they are booked up many months ahead. In addition, we have an annual programme of evening lectures and concerts (ranging from folk music to contemporary classical). Our world-class professional choir sings at two services each Sunday.

We receive regular requests from the media, especially film and documentary makers, to make use of our site as a venue, thus supporting the engagement of the city with these industries. For instance, the BBC are filming some scenes for an upcoming documentary in St Bride's in early July.

S11 Historic Environment

Heritage - Religion

St Bride's welcomes people of all faiths and none, and its special services are frequently heavily over-subscribed. It is not uncommon for us to host as many as 26 carol services during December, many of them full to capacity (320+ people per service).

S12 & S13 Tall Buildings & Protected Views

Despite there being nearly 40 Grade 1 listed churches in the city, very few have had their views protected by post-war developments. For the first time since the 1940s it is currently possible to see the steeple of St Bride's from Fleet Street at ground level, but this is solely due to adjacent buildings having been demolished to make way for the new courts and police buildings. It would be a shame if the remaining viewpoints to city churches were obstructed or restricted by further developments.

Conclusion - engagement with the wider life of the city

St Bride's values its close association with the life of the city of London, not least through its work with four of the city's Livery Companies. In addition, we collaborate closely with the City of London Police: on several occasions we have provided a venue for firearms training for specialist officers, who conduct training exercises in and around our site.

We contribute significantly to the social welfare of people of every kind and background in London. Our pastoral care and support for journalists and those working in the media is recognised internationally; alongside that, we provide a safe, warm space during the day for vulnerable people, and those who are street homeless. We also provide a collection point for foodbank donations, and pastoral

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and spiritual support for any who require it, many of them city workers. Our ministry is to people of all faiths and none: there are no barriers or boundaries to the people we serve.

St Bride's is far from unique in what it offers the wider life of the city – we would request that the true significance of the contribution made by the city churches is given a far higher profile in the future plans for the city.

13th June 2024

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