# Westminster approves £1.2m consultancy uplift for Lisson Grove as safety and retrofit rules force redesigns



Westminster City Council has agreed to pay an additional £1.2 million in consultancy fees for the Lisson Grove regeneration programme, bringing projected professional fees to about £8.6 million at this stage of the project — up from an earlier estimate of £7.4 million. Westminster Extra reported that the council attributes the rise to a two‑year delay in approving the scope for the Lilestone Centre, the need to redesign elements of the scheme to comply with the Building Safety Act 2022 and the authority’s own Retrofit First planning policy. The council says those changes, together with wider industry responses to new safety requirements, have driven extra professional costs while keeping the overall programme within the approved budget.

The largest single uplift will go to the architect Levitt Bernstein, which is to receive an extra £939,000, taking its fees for driving the project through RIBA stages two to seven to roughly £3.8 million. Cost consultant Ward Williams Associates is to receive an additional £99,500, bringing its total to about £1 million. Planning advisers Savills will be paid an extra £79,000 and structural engineers Cre8 Structures an extra £88,000; the council recorded a modest £38,000 saving on the project manager Arcadis contract after that firm changed consultants under its appointment. Those appointments and the scale of professional spend were foreshadowed in earlier council delegated‑decision records, which authorised multi‑discipline teams and set out a professional‑services envelope for the feasibility and outline business case phases.

Opposition councillors seized on the rises. Alan Mendoza, the Conservative group’s value‑for‑money lead, told Westminster Extra that the increases illustrated a wider problem with the council’s reliance on external consultants. “As we’ve seen with the Lisson Grove Programme, and with the PDHU (Pimlico district heating undertaking) Westminster Council appears incapable of delivering projects without costly consultants,” he said, adding that residents “are paying the price” and warning the sums disclosed so far could be “just the tip of the iceberg.” The additional spend was approved by the then cabinet member for climate action, regeneration and renters, Cllr Matt Noble, in April, when councillors were advised that reprocuring major contracts at this stage would risk delay, higher costs and loss of critical project knowledge.

Those procedural and regulatory pressures reflect wider change across the construction sector. The Building Safety Act 2022 introduced a new regulator, a gateway regime for higher‑risk buildings and a requirement for a digital “golden thread” of information throughout design, construction and occupation — rules that have demanded additional design and compliance work on many large residential schemes. Separately, Westminster’s Retrofit First policy, published in March 2024, requires developers to fully explore retention and refurbishment options before demolition, to assess whole‑life carbon and to favour the reuse of foundations and cores where feasible; the policy forms part of a wider City Plan partial review and the council’s net‑zero ambitions. The council has pointed to both sets of obligations as drivers of redesign and additional consultancy input on Lisson Grove.

Lisson Grove forms part of the Church Street regeneration area and covers two principal sites at Lilestone Street and Orchardson Street, encompassing blocks such as Gayhurst House and Penn House as well as the Greenside Community Centre. Project materials set out plans for between 250 and 300 new homes across the two sites, alongside commercial space and a health and wellbeing hub, and say the feasibility stage concluded in 2024. Church Street regeneration in total is presented as a much larger programme, aiming to deliver some 1,750 new homes, pedestrianised spaces, a new library and upgraded market and community services. Public‑facing material on the redevelopment emphasises resident engagement, design workshops and an expected completion date for the community hub around 2033.

The council’s own delegated‑decision records show a long‑running, staged procurement and approval process. A 2022 delegated decision set out the appointment of the design and delivery team and authorised professional services expenditure through early programme phases, while an April 2025 decision recorded approval to move from feasibility to Outline Business Case Part 2 and authorised further design development for a preferred option. Those papers stress that, because of contractual complexity and commercial sensitivity, reprocuring the professional teams at this point would threaten continuity and increase the risk of cost escalation and delays.

The dispute highlights a familiar trade‑off in major public‑sector redevelopment: additional upfront spending on specialist design, safety and compliance advice can reduce downstream risk, but it also exposes projects to political scrutiny if budgets rise or schedules slip. The council argues the recent uplifts remain contained within the budget approved in March 2025 and that investing in professional expertise now will protect taxpayers from greater expense later. Opponents counter that rising consultancy bills demonstrate an over‑reliance on external advisers and press for tighter cost control and greater transparency as the project progresses.

Next steps for the programme include completing the Outline Business Case and continuing local engagement work as detailed designs are developed; the authority’s public project pages and committee records indicate community events and newsletters are ongoing. With regulatory obligations continuing to evolve and retrofit considerations built into local planning policy, officials say the technical workload on the scheme is likely to remain substantial as it moves towards detailed planning and delivery phases.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[2]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[4]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/news/new-policy-make-westminster-retrofit-first-city), [[5]](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/30/notes/division/3/index.htm)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[2]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[3]](https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?DM=0&DR=09%2F03%2F2022-05%2F09%2F2022&DS=2&HD=0&K=0&META=mgdelegateddecisions&Next=true&RP=0&V=1)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[2]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[7]](https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?DM=0&DR=24%2F07%2F2024-20%2F01%2F2025&DS=0&HD=0&K=0&META=mgdelegateddecisions&Next=true&RP=0&V=1)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/30/notes/division/3/index.htm), [[4]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/news/new-policy-make-westminster-retrofit-first-city), [[1]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.churchstreet.org/lisson_grove), [[1]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[2]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?DM=0&DR=09%2F03%2F2022-05%2F09%2F2022&DS=2&HD=0&K=0&META=mgdelegateddecisions&Next=true&RP=0&V=1), [[7]](https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?DM=0&DR=24%2F07%2F2024-20%2F01%2F2025&DS=0&HD=0&K=0&META=mgdelegateddecisions&Next=true&RP=0&V=1), [[1]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants), [[3]](https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?DM=0&DR=09%2F03%2F2022-05%2F09%2F2022&DS=2&HD=0&K=0&META=mgdelegateddecisions&Next=true&RP=0&V=1), [[4]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/news/new-policy-make-westminster-retrofit-first-city), [[5]](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/30/notes/division/3/index.htm), [[2]](https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants)
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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.westminsterextra.co.uk/article/opposition-question-citys-spending-on-consultants> - Westminster Extra reports that Westminster City Council will pay an additional £1.2 million in consultancy fees for the Lisson Grove Programme, taking professional fees to £8.6 million from an earlier estimate of £7.4 million. The rise is attributed to a two-year delay over the Lilestone Centre scope, redesign work to comply with the Building Safety Act 2022, and the council’s Retrofit First policy. The article names specific fee increases for Levitt Bernstein, Ward Williams Associates, Savills and Cre8 Structures, notes a modest saving with Arcadis, quotes opposition councillor Alan Mendoza criticising consultant dependence, and records council responses about budget controls.
3. <https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?DM=0&DR=09%2F03%2F2022-05%2F09%2F2022&DS=2&HD=0&K=0&META=mgdelegateddecisions&Next=true&RP=0&V=1> - The Westminster City Council delegated decisions record from September 2022 documents the appointment of a multi-discipline consultant team for the Lisson Grove Programme and authorises professional services expenditure up to £9.581 million. It lists core appointments including Levitt Bernstein as architect, Arcadis as project manager and Ward Williams Associates as cost consultant, and explains the Feasibility Stage budget and phases. The decision sets out reasons for appointing the design team, anticipated further expenditure to complete the Outline Business Case, and notes parts of the appendices are exempt due to commercially sensitive financial information and details projected fee allocations for partners.
4. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/news/new-policy-make-westminster-retrofit-first-city> - Westminster City Council’s 'Retrofit First' policy announcement explains proposed planning changes to prioritise refurbishing existing buildings rather than wholesale demolition. Published 4 March 2024, the policy requires developers to fully explore retrofit options before considering demolition, assesses whole-life carbon and encourages retention of foundations and core structures, and links to the City Plan partial review. The announcement describes consultation arrangements, anticipated carbon savings and aims to support sustainable growth while balancing heritage and development needs. It frames retrofit-first as contributing to Westminster’s net zero by 2040 target and sets out proposed embodied carbon benchmarks and implementation steps for local developers.
5. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/30/notes/division/3/index.htm> - Legislation.gov.uk provides the authoritative text and explanatory notes for the Building Safety Act 2022, detailing key changes to building regulation introduced after the Grenfell Tower tragedy. The Act establishes the Building Safety Regulator, a new gateway regime for higher-risk buildings, and duties on designers, contractors and accountable persons. It mandates a digital 'golden thread' of building information, expands limitation periods and creates new remediation and liability orders. The Act aims to strengthen oversight, improve accountability throughout design, construction and occupation, and impose mandatory occurrence reporting and wider enforcement powers to ensure fire and structural safety nationwide.
6. <https://www.churchstreet.org/lisson_grove> - The Church Street regeneration website describes the Lisson Grove Regeneration Programme, covering Orchardson Street and Lilestone Street sites including Gayhurst House, Penn House and Greenside Community Centre. It explains plans to replace existing buildings with a mix of homes, public spaces and a Health and Wellbeing Hub, aiming to deliver affordable housing, improved landscaping and community facilities. Project updates mention resident engagement, design workshops and an expected completion date for the Hub around 2033. The site provides newsletters, event details and contact information, emphasising community consultation and the programme’s contribution to wider Church Street regeneration objectives, including new library plans.
7. <https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?DM=0&DR=24%2F07%2F2024-20%2F01%2F2025&DS=0&HD=0&K=0&META=mgdelegateddecisions&Next=true&RP=0&V=1> - The Westminster City Council delegated decision published April 2025 records approval of the Lisson Grove Programme Feasibility Stage outcome and authorises expenditure to progress to Outline Business Case Part 2. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Renters approved design development for a preferred option, including a Meanwhile Community Hub, contract variations and delegated authorities. The decision explains the rationale for progressing design work following feasibility findings, highlights the need to preserve critical project knowledge, and recognises contractual complexity and commercial sensitivity. It formalises next steps for the programme to develop detailed proposals for new high-quality affordable homes and community facilities.