The study is divided into 7 parts, all available to download from the City of London Tall buildings and St Paul’s Heights Study page:

Part 1: Policy context and history and form of St Paul’s Heights

Part 2: The History of the St Paul’s Heights Study, Infringing Buildings of the St Paul’s Heights policy and Existing Views - Introduction

Part 3: The Existing Views – analysis of the views (part 1)

Part 4: The Existing Views – analysis of the views (part 2)

Part 5: The Existing Views – analysis of the views (part 3)

Part 6: The Existing Views – analysis of the views (part 4)

Part 7: The Existing Views – analysis of the views (part 5), Comparison Summary, Conclusion and Appendices

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Policy Context

St Paul’s Cathedral is an internationally recognised landmark in the London skyline. Since 1937, the City of London Corporation has operated a unique policy known as the “St Paul’s Heights” to protect and enhance important local views of the Cathedral from the South Bank, Thames bridges and certain points to the north, west and east. The long-term consistent implementation of the Heights policy has enabled the views to be protected and enhanced for more than seventy years for the enjoyment of Londoners and those who visit London.

St Paul’s Heights is implemented through Core Strategic Policy CS13 of the City of London Local Plan. The area directly affected by the Heights policy is shown on the Local Plan Policies Map A and on Map 1 of this study. Local view protection provided by the Heights complements and conforms to the Mayor’s strategic view protection provided by London Plan Policy 7.11 and set out in detail in the London View Management Framework (LVMF).

The St Paul’s Heights Subject Study, published 1978, was a technical document which not only looked at the formation and intentions of the Heights, but also the effect the controls had on views of the cathedral. Since the publication of the Subject Study there have been significant changes to building architecture and the built form within the St Paul’s Heights Policy Area. Many sites have been redeveloped, notably Paternoster Square as well as a number of riverside buildings. The Thames Path on the south bank of the Thames has also become fully accessible and now provides a significant public amenity.

The St Paul’s Heights Subject Study was published in 2013 with the objective of updating the technical details and spatial analysis of the 1978 Study and evaluating the changes to the views as well as new views relevant to the evaluation of the St Paul’s Heights Policy, i.e. LVMF River Prospect viewpoints and Monument View 5, which form part of Core Strategic Policy CS13. This was set in the context of the history of the Heights, an analysis of the form of the Heights, evaluation of infringing buildings, evaluation of existing views, and a summary of issues that arise. This document is a minor revision and update of the Study, with details and photographs accurate to January 2015.

Note: Further details of the St Paul’s Height Policy and its context within Protected Views policy can be found in the Protected Views Supplementary Planning Document (2012).
History of the Heights

The Heights were devised in the 1930s by W. Godfrey Allen, Surveyor to the Fabric of St Paul’s, in response to growing concern that important views of the Cathedral would be obscured by the “lofty structures” being erected in its vicinity. The 1930 Buildings Act allowed significantly taller development than had previously been permitted. New tall buildings erected in accordance with the Act, such as the Faraday Building (Photo 1) and Unilever House (Photo 2) caused new obstructions to well-known views of the Cathedral to which there was public outcry. Godfrey Allen surveyed the existing views and proposed an area of control where building heights would be limited to protect and restore important views of the Cathedral. Godfrey Allen’s proposals, supported by the Dean and Chapter of St Paul’s, were submitted to the City of London Corporation in 1937.

The City Corporation accepted the St Paul’s Heights proposals and the Heights were implemented from 1938 by a gentleman’s agreement between the City Corporation and developers. This voluntary approach proved to be remarkably successful in protecting important views during the post-war reconstruction of the City. The Heights were later given policy status in successive statutory development plans prepared since the 1980s. They are currently implemented through the City’s Local Plan 2015 and supported in the Protected Views SPD.

The Heights limitations used to implement the policy are still closely based on the original 1937 maps and the height values have remained unchanged throughout their operation. However, the maps themselves have been updated periodically to take account of base map changes, metrical and the adoption of Newlyn as the Ordnance Datum. The Heights were also extended in 1981 to protect certain northern views of the Cathedral identified in liaison with the London Borough of Islington.

The majority of views of St Paul’s Cathedral are from surrounding boroughs and are operated in co-operation with the relevant neighbouring local authorities. Specific policy context is set out in Islington’s Local Plan Policy CS7 for Bunhill and Clerkenwell which includes protection of local views, some of which accord with the City of London St Paul’s Heights policy.
Photo 1: The Faraday Building

Photo 2: Unilever House
Map 1: St Paul’s Heights Policy Area and indicative viewing points / areas
Form of the Heights

Although the Surveyor did not leave a written account of how he constructed the Heights, this can be inferred from the form of the planes and the resultant grid of height limits defined by them. Understanding the method of construction can assist when making decisions on the interpretation of the Heights for individual development sites. Figure 1 sets out a section through the Cathedral at roof level, showing its key features.
Figure 2 sets out the oblique view from above. The viewpoints protected by the St Paul’s Heights are from the Thames bridges and south bank between Hungerford Bridge and London Bridge, together with a number of views from streets to the west, north and east (as shown on Map 1). The viewpoints are indicative only and should not be seen as assessment points. They represent general viewing areas and the direction of the view towards the Cathedral.

Tables 1A and 1B set out the dimensions and the heights for the principal architectural features of St Paul’s Cathedral. Figure 3 shows a simplified plan of the Cathedral showing the main components.
### Dimensions

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<th>Feet</th>
<th>Metres</th>
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<td>Greatest Breadth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Height</td>
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<td>111.6</td>
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Table 1A: Dimensions of St Paul’s Cathedral

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<th>Detailed Heights</th>
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<th>Metres</th>
<th>Feet AOD</th>
<th>Metres AOD</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>111.6</td>
<td>419.15</td>
<td>127.7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>170.9</td>
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<td>36.0</td>
<td>170.9</td>
<td>52.1</td>
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<td>50.0</td>
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<td>45.3</td>
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Table 1B: Heights for the principal architectural features of St Paul’s Cathedral

*Source: Survey of St Paul’s by A.F.E. Poley (1919)*

Figure 3: Simplified plan showing the main components

In the views from the Thames bridges, south bank and points to the west and east, the Heights protect views of the dome, western towers and, in order to retain a sense of the entire length of the Cathedral, the main entablature. The area of the Heights also extends laterally beyond the Cathedral to ensure that buildings do not crowd its setting on the skyline.
Visibility of the Cathedral from the north is more restricted and so the Heights in these views relate to higher and narrower view planes. Figures 4 and 5 set out viewlines created by the Heights from the south and the north.

Figure 4: Viewline created by the Heights to the south of the Cathedral

Figure 5: Viewline created by the Heights to the north of the Cathedral
The Heights were built up by constructing view planes from a series of discrete viewpoints. The plane for each viewpoint forms an inclined triangle with the length of the Cathedral as its base and the viewpoint at its apex. All the planes slope upwards to the Cathedral, but the gradient of the view plane is different for each viewpoint: gradients are steeper where the viewpoint is closer to the Cathedral or at a low elevation, such as the south bank; gradients are shallower from more distant viewpoints or higher vantage points, such as the Thames bridges. The planes form a ceiling on development through which no building can be allowed to rise if the views are to be preserved.

Every view triangle overlaps with one or more others. Where this occurs, the lower/lowest plane takes precedence. To simplify their implementation, the Heights are expressed as a grid of squares with a height value at the centre of each square. The Heights limits are expressed in metres above Ordnance Datum Newlyn (m AOD).

Within each grid square is a building height limitation applicable to the centre of the square only. The official grid square limitations can be supplemented if necessary by the calculation of intermediate values using linear interpolation. Therefore, the value applicable half way between two grid square centre points will be the average of the two grid square limitations.

Within each view triangle the heights in the resultant grid squares define an evenly sloping plane; however, where triangles undercut there is a marked step or ‘cliff’ in the heights. This can easily be seen on Map 2 for the views from the north, because the viewpoints are relatively widely spaced. Elsewhere the viewpoints are much closer together, so the pattern appears more complex.

Most of the southern views are from the south bank and Thames bridges. In this area the ‘cliffs’ vary from major steps, where adjacent grid squares are at widely differing heights, to more minor changes in level. These variations result from both the differences in the topography of the viewpoints and the method of construction of the Heights.

Where a viewpoint on a bridge is close to a viewpoint on the river bank, there is a large difference in their topographical levels and a major cliff results. Elsewhere, the Heights protect views from a series of points along a given stretch of a bridge or the south bank. The effect of this is to protect a “kinetic” view from the whole stretch. However, because the view is constructed of several view planes, each calculated from a discrete viewpoint, there are minor cliffs between them. These minor cliffs result from the method of construction of the Heights, rather than from topography.
The grid of height limits defined by the St Paul’s Heights views is shown on Map 2. The ‘cliffs’ are also shown - major cliffs representing a height difference from 2.5m to as much as 10m and minor cliffs over 1.5m.

The views from Fleet Street/Ludgate Hill, Watling Street and Cannon Street are further protected by “set-backs”. These are the stepping back of the upper floors of the street frontage of buildings. This avoids a canyon-like effect being created in the views along these streets. In some places streets have been widened since the formulation of the Heights and the set-backs are no longer relevant. Where this has not occurred, the set-backs continue to be applied.
Map 2: St Paul’s Heights grid of height limits

Note: Height limits have been extrapolated for further areas of the northern views. However, these areas are within the London Borough of Islington and are outside the planning control of the City of London.