



House of Lords

House of Commons

House of Lords Commission
and

House of Commons Commission

Restoration and Renewal Client Board: Strategic Case

Joint Report

*1st Report of the House of Lords Commission, Session 2023–24,
ordered by the House of Lords to be printed on 7 March 2024*

*Report of the House of Commons Commission presented to the
House by the Speaker and ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed on 18 March 2024*

HL Paper 82
HC 621

Published on 19 March 2024

by authority of the House of Lords and House of Commons

House of Lords Commission

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Restoration and Renewal Client Board: Strategic Case

Introduction

1. Members of both Houses and the public are clear that the Palace of Westminster should be restored and protected for future generations.¹ In this report we set out a clear pathway to enable the Houses to take an evidence-based decision in 2025 on a way forward for Restoration and Renewal (R&R) of the Palace. We outline plans for further work on three options: a full decant option, a continued presence option and an option of enhanced maintenance and improvement. The detailed work on each of these options, and the costs, risks and benefits associated with them, will be brought to the Houses next year in advance of decisions being taken.

2. Part of the further work carried out over the next year will also consider whether the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019 needs amending, to facilitate greater parliamentary scrutiny and a more flexible programme and funding model throughout the extensive lifetime of R&R.

3. Restoring and renewing the Palace—an internationally recognised symbol of the UK, democracy, and part of a UNESCO world heritage site—will directly benefit the one million people who visit every year and the thousands who work here every day, by delivering a greatly improved building, with better accessibility, more reliable services and enhanced health and safety. Companies and small businesses in all four nations of the UK will also benefit from the work and long-term investment that restoring the Palace will generate. Jobs and opportunities will be created, while skills and trades can be developed and revitalised, with the potential to secure an enduring legacy from the works. Above all, delivering R&R will fulfil the commitment made by both Houses to preserve and restore the Palace of Westminster, and ensure the continuing function of the UK Parliament in its historic home for generations to come.

4. We recognise that a variety of views exist about the best way to tackle the works required to secure the Palace's future, and the challenging circumstances in which decisions will need to be taken. At this stage, we are not asking the Houses to choose between the options set out in this report. Rather, we have identified a way forward which will enable us to arrive at a detailed, robust and fully costed plan for the works which commands the confidence of both Houses, and the public, as swiftly as possible.

5. We recognise that before taking a decision, Members will want detailed information regarding the costs for restoring the Palace, and the benefits R&R will achieve. Robust costs will accordingly be prepared and presented for all three options outlined in this report in 2025.

6. Estimates have not yet been produced for the option of enhanced maintenance and improvement, as we first need the more detailed work to determine the scope that could be achieved under this option, and the exact approach to its delivery. Waiting until we can provide costs for all three options will enable the Houses to make a meaningful comparison

¹ More than 70% of people surveyed in a recent public poll agreed that the Palace should be restored and protected for future generations.

between them and to take an informed decision about the preferred way forward. All options for R&R, however, represent a significant, multi-billion pound and decades-long investment in the Palace. We are committed to supporting the two Corporate Officers (the Clerk of the House of Commons and the Clerk of the Parliaments) in bearing down on those costs and ensuring value for money.

7. A final decision on how to deliver R&R is expected to be taken in 2025, once the three options outlined in this report have been worked up into fully costed proposals. This report also sets out our conclusions as a Client Board regarding the locations for temporary accommodation for the Houses under the full decant and continued presence options. It is estimated that construction of temporary Chamber accommodation venues for one or both Houses—depending on the option finally chosen—would aim to start in 2026. The exact timetable for subsequent decant, where required, and the beginning of main R&R works, will be presented to the Houses in 2025 as part of the more detailed work to be undertaken during the next year.

Identifying a way forward: the work of the R&R Programme Board

8. The R&R Programme Board was appointed by both Houses in February 2023 to help identify what R&R should look like and how it should be delivered.² It brings together Members and senior officials from the House of Commons and House of Lords, alongside external members with extensive experience of major programmes. The Board has worked diligently since its appointment, meeting at least monthly to assess a wide range of options regarding what could be delivered under R&R, and how best to carry out the works necessary to achieve the desired scope. We would like to place on record our thanks to the Programme Board for their continued input and hard work.

9. Between March and June 2023, the Programme Board examined 36 different combinations for how R&R could be delivered and what the scope of the works might look like. Through a series of meetings and workshops, the Board set out to identify one or a small number of options to take forward for further design work to inform a later decision on fully costed proposals for the works, as required under the 2019 Act.

10. The Programme Board carefully considered the 36 combinations against a range of criteria, including: value for money, health and safety implications, likely disruption to the work of Parliament, and lasting benefits, including accessibility and sustainability improvements. The Programme Board requested additional information at various points throughout their shortlisting, including regarding health and safety and value for money. This resulted in several of the proposals for lower levels of ambition for the scope of the works being ruled out because the Board considered that they would not sufficiently comply with legislation, regulations, and compliance standards.

11. In addition to considering the scope for R&R, the Programme Board looked at how the works could be delivered, with the main differentiator being the extent of the decant required from the Palace while the works are undertaken. The Board ruled out several options, including those which had longer durations of decant and those which they concluded had the highest levels of health, safety and security risks to Palace occupants.

² The current membership of the Programme Board and Client Board can be found as an appendix to this report.

12. To inform the Programme Board’s decisions, Members and staff of both Houses were engaged and consulted on the main trade-offs associated with the options. The views expressed were considered as part of the shortlisting deliberations and helped the Board arrive at a shortlist which, once worked up over the next year, will present the Houses with a genuine choice about how to proceed.

13. Following this extensive shortlisting process, the Programme Board concluded that a reasonably ambitious scope for the works represented the best value for money. This would deliver a range of improvements to the Palace but would stop short of the transformative change proposed under the highest level considered, which it was concluded did not represent better value for money.

14. The Programme Board decided that two options should be taken forward for how to deliver the works:

- both Houses moving out for the majority of the works, with the House of Commons prioritised for an earlier return (a full decant option); and
- the House of Lords moving out for the duration of the works while the Commons Chamber and essential support functions remain in the Palace in varying locations throughout the works (a continued presence option).

Scope and delivery approaches for Restoration and Renewal

Scope of the works for the full decant and continued presence options

15. The Programme Board considered six possible levels of ambition for restoring the Palace. These ranged from a scheme focusing on priority areas only, with a limited scope, which the Board concluded was unlikely to meet various statutory obligations (Level 0), up to a higher level of ambition which would have delivered transformative change, including providing resilience against longer term climate change projections and extending the scope of historic fabric repair by reintroducing lost details (Level 5). It is worth noting that the highest level of scope considered by the Programme Board was not the maximum scope which could have been achieved.

16. The reasonably ambitious scope (Level 4), which would be delivered by either the continued presence or full decant option, will be worked up in further detail prior to fully costed proposals being presented to both Houses in 2025. It is expected to achieve improvements in the following areas:

- health and safety, including fire safety and addressing the risks posed by asbestos;
- renewal and expansion of mechanical, electrical and other services;
- building fabric conservation;
- air ventilation and heating and cooling to rooms and offices;
- security protection measures; and

- accessibility—including to improve audibility and increase step-free access, with the greatest improvements in the most visited and used areas of the Palace and an average enhancement from the current 12% step free access to circa 60% across the Palace.³

17. The Programme Board selected this scope for the works because it would deliver significant improvements to the Palace for all those who work in and visit it, while representing the best value for money for taxpayers. In addition, part of the appeal was the potential to add additional improvements to the scope for R&R after costed proposals have been approved, should circumstances or the Houses’ priorities change. Any such additions and associated funding for them would require subsequent approval from both Houses under the Act.

18. All levels of ambition considered by the Programme Board would reduce the amount of useable floorspace in the Palace. This is due to the space required for the installation of new electrical services, replacing the existing steam heating system and other improvements, including those relating to accessibility. Any shortfall in accommodation would be offset elsewhere on the Parliamentary Estate.

19. As noted above, in addition to the two approaches selected by the Programme Board, we consider that further work should be undertaken on a third option of enhanced maintenance and improvement for restoring the Palace through a rolling programme of works. This further work will consider:

- the level of improvements to the Palace that this option could achieve, including levels of compliance with health and safety legislation, judged against the same criteria that were used to assess the full decant and continued presence delivery options;
- the costs and risks of this approach (including health and safety risks and mitigations); and
- how long it will take to complete such a programme of works, including the extent of any partial, temporary decant from the Palace of Westminster that could be necessary.

20. As a minimum, we consider that the enhanced maintenance and improvement option will need to deliver the improvements to the priority areas identified in the 2022 mandate for R&R, namely: fire safety and protection; building services; asbestos; and building fabric conservation.⁴ When assessing this option, it will also be necessary to consider any loss of useable floor space (see paragraph 18), and the extent of health and safety related improvements it would deliver. We will also want to know whether the scope of the works achievable under this option would constitute restoration of the Palace under the terms of the Act or whether it would require amendment or repeal of the Act.

3 It is not possible to achieve 100% step free access throughout the Palace; the maximum level considered by the Programme Board was circa 70% under the most ambitious scope for the work.

4 House of Lords Commission and House of Commons Commission, [*Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster—a new mandate*](#) (1st Report, Session 2022–23, HL Paper 19, HC 399)

How to deliver the works—the three options

Option 1: Full decant

21. Under the full decant option, both Houses would leave the Palace and relocate nearby on a temporary basis while the majority of the works are completed. For the House of Commons, the Chamber and associated support functions would temporarily relocate to Richmond House, alongside continuing use of the rest of the Northern Estate (from Portcullis House to Norman Shaw North). Our preferred location for temporary decant of the House of Lords would be the nearby QEII Conference Centre building, while continuing to make use of the existing Southern Estate (i.e. Millbank House, Fielden House and Old Palace Yard). Additional information about where each House would go is set out in paras 36–44.

22. The House of Commons Chamber would be prioritised for return to the Palace after approximately eight years, at which point it is expected that the works would be sufficiently complete to enable this. House of Commons support functions would return after approximately nine to ten years. The House of Lords would return after approximately 11 years, once the works are complete.

23. It should be noted that these timelines are indicative only at this stage and will be developed to a greater degree of maturity as part of the detailed work to be undertaken over the next year.

Option 2: Continued presence

24. The second option for delivery of R&R which will be taken forward for further detailed work involves a continued presence of the House of Commons Chamber and essential support functions in the Palace throughout the works.⁵ The House of Lords would temporarily move out of the Palace until the works are complete, with the QEII Conference Centre being the preferred venue for this relocation. Other House of Commons functions currently based in the Palace would be relocated elsewhere on the existing House of Commons Estate.

25. As with the full decant option, timings are indicative at this stage but based on work undertaken to date, it is expected that those House of Commons support areas which do not need to remain in the Palace would be based elsewhere for approximately ten years. As with the full decant option, the expectation under the continued presence option would be for the House of Lords to relocate for the entirety of the main works. However, under this option the Lords would be out for a longer period and expected to return after approximately 17 years, with the longer timeframe necessitated by the works taking longer to complete overall with a continued presence of the Commons Chamber and essential support functions.

26. More detailed work would be required to plan how a continued presence would best be achieved in terms of the alternative locations for House of Commons Chamber business while works are carried out to the Commons Chamber itself. We are clear, however, that

⁵ In addition to the Chamber and division lobbies, essential support services are likely to include space for broadcasting and Hansard officials, a press gallery, a public viewing area and a space for civil servants.

any use of the Lords Chamber by the House of Commons would require the separate approval of the House of Lords.

27. On the basis of the initial work undertaken, we recognise that the health and safety risks to Palace occupants are expected to be significantly higher under the continued presence option than under the full decant option and will therefore require greater mitigation, at an increased cost. Nevertheless, we consider that in order to achieve lasting and properly informed decisions on the way forward for the programme, it is important that we can fully articulate and quantify the risks and related mitigations associated with all of the options. It is for this reason that we have fully supported the Programme Board's recommendation to take continued presence forward for further detailed work.

Option 3: Rolling works to deliver enhanced maintenance and improvement

28. In addition to the options shortlisted by the Programme Board, as a Client Board we have commissioned detailed work on a third option of enhanced maintenance and improvement of the Palace, which would be delivered as part of a rolling, sequenced, programme of works. This option will be worked up in greater detail and assessed against the same criteria as the two shortlisted options described in paras 21–27. Once this work is complete, all three options will be presented alongside one another to enable informed decisions by the Houses and a genuine choice on the preferred way forward.

29. Further work on this option will examine what scope it could achieve compared with the full decant and continued presence options. We also need to understand the timescales and health and safety risks associated with its delivery, as well as the extent and duration of moves that it would require, including any partial decant of parliamentary business from the Palace, if needed. The additional work will also examine the implications of current operating constraints and seek to identify opportunities to support a rolling programme of works that can be delivered while both Houses continue to conduct parliamentary business in the Palace during some or all of the works. This work will also assess whether this option would be consistent with the definition of “restoration” under the 2019 Act or would require its amendment or repeal.

30. A rolling programme of enhanced maintenance and improvement would be likely to take longer than the other two options to restore the Palace, and benefits could take longer to realise. However, balanced against this would be the ability to have greater parliamentary control over the programme, with work likely to be broken down into phases, enabling the programme to be more responsive to evolving needs and requirements throughout the duration of the works.

31. It is worth noting that under the 2019 Act, a rolling programme of enhanced maintenance and improvement, carried out as part of the Restoration and Renewal programme, would still require the Houses to approve a set of fully costed proposals for the works as a whole. Any alternative mechanism for the approval of the costs would require amendment or repeal of the Act (see paragraph 32).

The Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019

32. As we have noted, all options for delivery of R&R represent a significant, multi-billion pound and decades-long investment in the Palace. We therefore consider that it would be prudent to explore whether the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019 should be amended to provide for greater Parliamentary oversight and control as well as a more flexible programme and funding model throughout the extensive lifetime of the programme. This could include, for example, phased funding approvals rather than the current one-off approval of fully costed proposals required by the Act, which could help to ensure more effective ongoing scrutiny of the works, with the flexibility to respond to technical and political developments. As part of the further work being undertaken next year, consideration will therefore also be given to whether and how the 2019 Act could be amended to more effectively underpin the Houses' ability to oversee the ongoing spending on the programme.

R&R Client Board conclusions

33. We agree with the R&R Programme Board's recommendations that further detailed work should be undertaken on the shortlisted scope for R&R, and the continued presence and full decant options identified for achieving this.

34. In addition, we consider that detailed work should be undertaken on a third option of enhanced maintenance and improvement, to be delivered as a rolling, sequenced programme of works.

35. We also conclude that work should be conducted to consider amendment of the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019 to provide for a programme consisting of multiple phases and funding approvals, to facilitate a more flexible programme, with greater parliamentary control and scrutiny throughout the lifetime of R&R.

Temporary accommodation planning

House of Commons

36. Following a reassessment of the temporary accommodation options for each House last year, we consider that under the full decant option, the most appropriate decant location for the House of Commons Chamber to temporarily relocate to is Richmond House. This revised proposal, in contrast to plans drawn up in 2020 which were not progressed, involves significantly less demolition and impact to the façade of the building. It would accommodate the Chamber (providing a similar capacity to the current Commons Chamber) and division lobbies. It is anticipated that it would also be possible to provide some ministerial accommodation alongside flexible workspaces for Members in the building.

37. For both the full decant and continued presence options, dedicated office space would be provided on the Northern Estate for all MPs, with some of their staff. This would include those MPs currently based in the Palace. Some Member services, such as the Vote Office, Library and Members' Tea Room would also be located on the Northern Estate. It will not

be possible, however, to provide a complete replica of existing Palace-based parliamentary services on the Northern Estate during R&R works due to space constraints.

38. Under the full decant option, temporary accommodation would be ready in advance of work starting to create the Chamber and division lobbies in Richmond House, although there is a dependency with planned projects to refurbish other buildings on the Parliamentary Estate. There is a balance to be struck between the time needed to fully refurbish the Northern Estate and the desire to get on with the main R&R works as soon as possible. Further information on the sequencing of these projects and the associated plan of moves will be set out in the costed proposals presented in 2025.

House of Lords

39. We agree with the conclusions of the reassessment of possible decant locations and consider that the QEII Conference Centre should remain the preferred venue for the House of Lords under both the full decant and continued presence options. Recognising that the freehold of the building is currently owned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, this is subject to further work and continuing discussions with the Government.

40. Benefits associated with this location include its proximity to the existing Parliamentary Estate and Whitehall, and its ability to accommodate a Lords Chamber, division lobbies and committee rooms, comparable with current provision in the Palace. It would also provide space for those offices and functions which need to be in close proximity to the Chamber, and some space for Member and staff accommodation, with additional provision on the wider Parliamentary Estate.

41. As noted in paragraph 7, depending on the option chosen and the timing of a decision on the preferred way forward, it is anticipated that preparation of the temporary accommodation venue would aim to commence in 2026, with the exact timing of decant to be determined.

Bicameral provision for enhanced maintenance and improvement

42. Additional accommodation may be required to support delivery of a programme of enhanced maintenance and improvement, not least because it will likely still require partial decants from the Palace, to allow for works to be completed in all areas. Further work on this option will include an assessment of the extent of any temporary decant from the Palace that could be necessary. This assessment will be completed over the next year in order that a comprehensive plan can be presented to support decisions on the preferred way forward in 2025.

Temporary accommodation conclusions

43. **In line with the assessment of the R&R Programme Board, we conclude that:**

- **Richmond House should be developed as the location for any decant of the House of Commons Chamber, with less invasive plans than in previous schemes; and**

- **the QEII Conference Centre should remain the preferred decant location for any decant of the House of Lords.**

44. Furthermore, we consider that the additional work looking at a third option of enhanced maintenance and improvement should prioritise an assessment of whether additional accommodation would be required to facilitate the works and which location(s) are best placed to meet any such need.

Next steps

45. As this report demonstrates, we remain committed to regular communication and engagement with Members, the wider parliamentary community and the public regarding progress and the developing plans for R&R. Members and staff will be a key focus of forthcoming engagement on matters such as the prioritisation of services, helping us to ensure that temporary accommodation plans and designs best support Members and the continued effective delivery of Parliamentary business throughout the works.

46. Regular updates on the additional work outlined in this report will be provided to the Programme Board and Client Board, who will continue to scrutinise all three options carefully as they are developed further. This detailed work, including robust cost estimates and risk assessments, will then be presented to the Houses in 2025, enabling them to make an evidence-based decision about how to restore the Palace and in order to decide whether to further amend the 2019 Act.

47. This work will also consider how R&R works are aligned with other significant programmes happening on and around the Parliamentary Estate in the coming years, such as the proposed Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. Officials from the R&R programme are working with relevant external parties to consider these impacts and ensure there is appropriate alignment. We are keen to understand whether any of the options present greater risks or opportunities in this regard and will provide this information to both Houses before a final decision is taken about the preferred way forward.

48. Under all options to restore the Palace, the priority remains keeping the people who visit and work within it safe now and in the future. Related to this, all those involved have the shared aim of ensuring the Palace can operate safely and effectively for generations to come. The Clerk of the House of Commons and the Clerk of the Parliaments, as the Corporate Officers, have a responsibility to maintain a safe working environment and to raise concerns where an extraordinary level of unmitigated risk presents itself. As well as testing what can be delivered through each of the options, understanding the risks and how they can be mitigated is a critical element of the further work required.

49. We hope that Members will welcome the progress made to date and be supportive of the next steps set out in this report, which we consider are essential to ensure momentum is maintained and that decisions can be taken early in the new Parliament to secure the future of the Palace of Westminster.

Appendix: R&R Client Board and R&R Programme Board Members

R&R Client Board

Current membership

Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP (House of Commons Speaker) (Co-Chair)

Rt Hon the Lord McFall of Alcluith (The Lord Speaker) (Co-Chair)

Nickie Aiken MP

Deidre Brock MP

Sharon Hodgson MP

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP (Leader of the House of Commons)

Lucy Powell MP (Shadow Leader of the House of Commons)

Sir Charles Walker MP

Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Senior Deputy Speaker)

The Earl of Kinnoull

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall

Lord McLoughlin

Lord Morse

Rt Hon the Lord Newby

Baroness Scott of Needham Market

Rt Hon the Baroness Smith of Basildon

Rt Hon the Lord True (Leader of the House of Lords)

Shrinivas Honap (House of Commons external member)

Catherine Ward (House of Commons external member)

Charlotte Moar (House of Lords external member)

Nora Senior (House of Lords external member)

Marianne Cwynarski (Director General, House of Commons)

Tom Goldsmith (Clerk of the House of Commons)

Simon Burton (Clerk of the Parliaments)

Andy Helliwell (Chief Operating Officer, House of Lords)

Former members

Lord German [Member from 17/10/22 until 31/01/24]

Rt Hon the Lord Hill of Oareford [Member from 17/10/22 until 31/01/24]

Lord Vaux of Harrowden [Member from 17/10/22 until 31/01/24]

Sir John Benger (Former Clerk of the House of Commons) [Member from 17/10/22 until 30/09/23]

Thangam Debbonaire MP [Member from 17/10/22 until 04/09/23]

Mathew Duncan (House of Lords external member) [Member from 17/10/22 until 22/05/23]

Rt Hon the Lord Judge [Member from 17/10/22 until 27/04/23]

Rt Hon Nicholas Brown MP [Member from 17/10/22 until 08/03/23]

Rt Hon the Lord Touhig [Member from 17/10/22 until 09/01/23]

Louise Wilson (House of Commons external member) [Member from 17/10/22 until 14/11/22]

R&R Programme Board

Current membership

Rt Hon Nigel Evans MP (Chair)
 Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP (Leader of the House of Commons)
 Lucy Powell MP (Shadow Leader of the House of Commons)
 Wera Hobhouse MP
 Sir Edward Leigh MP (Delegate of the Leader of the House of Commons)
 Mark Tami MP (Delegate of the Shadow Leader of the House of Commons)
 Lord Collins of Highbury
 Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury
 Lord Vaux of Harrowden (Deputy Chair)
 Dr Michèle Dix (External member)
 Paul Duffree (External member)
 Steve Hails (External member)
 Sir Jonathan Stephens (External member)
 Simon Burton (Clerk of the Parliaments)
 Tom Goldsmith (Clerk of the House of Commons)

Former members

Lord Morse (Deputy Chair) [Member from 22/02/23 until 31/01/24]
 Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP (Delegate of the Leader of the House of Commons) [Member from 07/02/23 until 11/01/24]
 Thangam Debbonaire MP (Former Shadow Leader of the House of Commons) [Member from 07/02/23 until 04/09/23]
 Sir John Benger (Former Clerk of the House of Commons) [Member from 07/02/23 until 30/09/23]