

Kensal

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The northernmost wards of North Kensington, which include the Kensal area, are officially amongst the most deprived places in the whole of England. Health there is poor. The residents of those parts have an average life expectancy more than ten years lower than those in the south and centre of the Royal Borough.

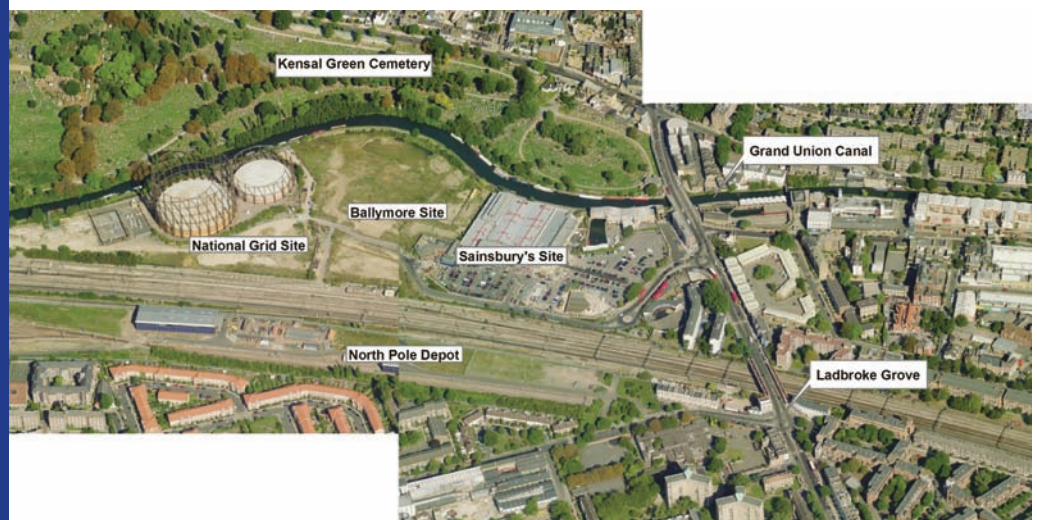
Unemployment is high. The number of economically active people is significantly lower than the borough and national averages; the number of unemployed is significantly higher.

Public transport is patchy. Parts of the area score just one out of six for public transport accessibility, the kind of score more usually associated with suburban fringes than city centres.

At the centre of this disadvantaged area sits a major brownfield site as big as the King's Cross regeneration zone.

The site

The Kensal site consists of the old Kensal Gasworks, a site owned by developers Ballymore, a Sainsbury's supermarket and a former Eurostar depot. All together these make some 67 acres capable of accommodating more than 2,500 new homes, plus a range of new businesses and community facilities.



Our policy and vision

The focus of Council policy has long been to narrow the opportunity gap between the north of the borough and the rest of Kensington and Chelsea. That's why we are building a new academy and replacing our leisure centre. It's why we are rebuilding primary schools and improving parks and it's also why we have championed the wholesale redevelopment of the Wornington Green estate which is adjacent to the Crossrail site. But even more profound change is needed and we think a Crossrail station at Kensal could be that change.

A Crossrail station would mean that the City would be just 15 minutes away, Canary Wharf 20.

We think that kind of accessibility will turbocharge the development potential of the Kensal site, helping to create economic activity in the hundreds of millions. The development would bring thousands of new homes and hundreds of new jobs. It will mean new enterprise and new community facilities and it will also mean new people.

We are also excited by how a Crossrail station might interact with Highspeed 2, just one stop up the line at Old Oak Common.

For all of these reasons we believe we have a one time only opportunity to really make a difference, and not just for the Royal Borough, because the regenerative impact will be felt in equally disadvantaged south Brent and north Westminster as well.

The three tests

In 2009 the Mayor of London accepted the Royal Borough's invitation to visit the Kensal site. Having heard our case for himself, Mayor Boris set the Council three tests. The station must not:

- delay construction
- compromise rail performance
- add costs

We now meet those tests

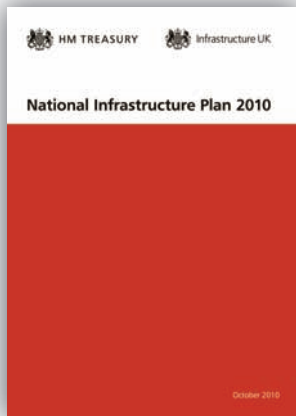
We have looked carefully at the issue of delay and taken expert advice. That advice suggests that a station could indeed be built without affecting the overall construction timetable providing the Crossrail authorities give us the green light early enough in the construction process.

At a cost of £100,000 we have also commissioned experts to carry out modelling work into the impact of a station on rail performance. We have handed over our report to Network Rail, much encouraged that the study has not found that a station would cause delays. In fact it showed that a station could well give Crossrail valuable flexibility in responding to incidents.

Finally the Council has taken the cost issue out of the equation altogether by underwriting the cost of the station. That cost is likely to be in the region of £33 million, a huge sum for a local authority. But we believe that the development potential of Kensal is strong enough for that money to be recovered via planning agreements with the developers.



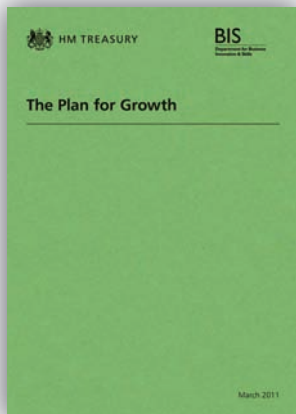
National importance



Speaking to the CBI in 2010, the Prime Minister addressed the economic challenges facing Britain and asked the question:

Where is the growth going to come from – where are the jobs going to come from?

It was clear from that speech, and from the National Infrastructure Plan and the Plan for Growth that have emerged since then, that the Government believes the answer lies in investment, infrastructure, development and enterprise.



That is why Greg Clark, Minister of State for Planning Policy, has announced that:

Benefits to the economy should, where relevant, be an important consideration when other development-related consents are being determined, including... transport consents.

We think Kensal Crossrail provides those 'benefits to the economy' in fact we think it would be difficult to find a project that chimes more perfectly with national policy. And we are not alone.