



**Partial Review of the Core Strategy  
for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
with a focus on North Kensington**



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

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Extracts 1-5 refers to a planning policy for use and character

## Extract 1:

### Chapter 2 Issues and Patterns: Our Spatial Portrait

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

**2.1.1** For many people, the Royal Borough is seen as the best place to live in London. There are many factors that contribute to its success, but two are of particular importance, both of which derive from its location close to, but not in, central London.

**2.1.2** First, the legacy of fine Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian streets and buildings, built as fashionable suburbs of central London. This built form is, by the standards of much of the twentieth century, both high density, and very high quality.

**2.1.3** Second, the fine grained mix of uses gives the Borough its character and vitality, which also means, because of the high density of population, that the vast majority of residents have local shops and services within a 5 minute walk of home, often interspersed within the residential neighbourhoods. But the Borough also supports world class town centres, museums and hospitals that give the Borough its international and national reputation. These attract large numbers of visitors from well beyond the Borough boundary, reflecting the location close to, but not in, central London. The Borough is anything but a 'residential suburb'. This mixture of uses adds so much to the quality of residents' lives.

**2.1.4** This chapter sets out an analysis of different issues in the Borough, to establish spatial patterns and common themes, to inform the shaping of the Vision and Strategic Objectives (See Chapter 3). It draws heavily on The Picture of Our Community (2005 and 2008), a companion guide to the Community Strategy. All details and maps have been drawn from this unless otherwise stated.

## Extract 2:

### Built Environment

**2.2.36** For 300 years, Kensington and Chelsea has been one of the most desirable places to live in London, ever since a private country house was acquired by the Monarchs, William and Mary, and adapted for Royal residence by Sir Christopher Wren in the 1700s. Kensington can claim a pre-eminent position in the hierarchy of the Victorian metropolis, not only as the home to Queen Victoria in her early days, but also because of the lasting legacy of houses, churches, museums and other public buildings which arose during her reign. As a consequence Kensington and Chelsea grew throughout the 19th Century to provide homes for the newly wealthy middle and upper classes.

**2.2.37** This period of growth has left us with a legacy of Georgian and Victorian terraces laid out in a network of streets, often including garden squares, of the highest quality. The Edwardian period saw a shift away from town houses to the mansion block, allowing buildings to be slightly taller and thus, as we see today, higher density. The same principles of street-based architecture with the town house endured with the mansion block. The two principal building types are combined in a rich mix where neither one nor the other predominates over very large areas.

**2.2.38A** Another important characteristic that is also part of this legacy is the interspersal of small scale studios, shops, pubs and other mixed uses within the residential areas. This adds vitality and variety to the street scene – mixed uses are not confined only to town centres or employment zones in the borough.

**2.2.38** ~~Consequently, the~~ This legacy provides a built environment that is one of the finest in the Country with over 4,000 listed buildings in the Borough and over 70% of the Borough being within a conservation area, including some of metropolitan importance such as the Thames, Royal Hospital and South Kensington Museums conservation areas.

**2.2.39** However, away from the Borough's traditional central belt, there are many examples of twentieth century estate developments. These have a varying degree of success. Erno Goldfinger's Trellick Tower for example, is a much loved icon. However, certain estates (such as Lancaster West and Silchester in the Latimer area, and the World's End Estate in the south west) have become isolated from the rest of the Borough with residents often being deficient of local facilities

**2.2.40** The Georgian legacy in the Borough has left us with a tremendous number of garden squares. These are communal spaces enjoyed by the surrounding properties, but their construction has also resulted in a lack of public open and playable space in some parts the Borough. This however, is counter-balanced somewhat by Holland Park and Kensington Gardens which act as the Borough's primary public open spaces.

## Extract 3:

### Strategic Objective One: Keeping Life Local

Social and community uses, local shopping facilities, 'walkable neighbourhoods'

#### Our Local Case

**3.3.9** In spite of the recession which started in 2008/9, residential land values will continue to out-compete those 'local' borough functions which are essential for a successful residential neighbourhood – the local shops and community facilities that are often interspersed within the residential environment, and the Borough or London wide, or in some cases international facilities, such as our hospitals. One of our strategic priorities therefore is to protect and promote functions that otherwise might be lost to residential use.

## CO 1 Strategic Objective for Keeping Life Local

Our strategic objective to keep life local is for strong, effective local centres and for social and community facilities to be widely available and for neighbourhood functions, including neighbourhood shopping facilities, to be easily accessible so that residential communities can flourish.

### Extract 4:

## Strategic Objective Five: Renewing the Legacy

Quality design, conservation and enhancement

### Our Local Case

**3.3.13** We have inherited a remarkable historic townscape and a large number of historic buildings. The exceptional visual quality of our built environment is matched by the finely grained mix of uses, underpinning our success as a highly desirable place in which to live, work and invest. Over 4,000 buildings are listed and there are over 100 garden squares. Conservation Areas cover more than 70% of the Borough. The Royal Borough is known for its legacy of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architecture but there are also a number of twentieth century buildings which continue the legacy of high quality design. Our listed buildings and conservation areas contribute immensely to local distinctiveness both within the Borough and to London as a whole.

## CO 5 Strategic Objective for Renewing the Legacy

Our strategic objective to renew the legacy is not simply to ensure no diminution in the excellence we have inherited, but to pass to the next generation a Borough that is better than today, of the highest quality and inclusive for all, by taking great care to maintain, conserve and enhance the glorious built heritage we have inherited and to ensure that where new development takes place it enhances the Borough

Extract 6 refers to planning policy for public houses and other A Class uses which provide a wider social role

Extract 6:

## Chapter 30 Keeping Life Local

~~30.3.7 Public Houses are also considered a social and community use in the Borough, and recent concern over their loss to residential use has been noted. However, the Borough has only lost 6 public houses to residential units in the last decade. This is not to say that their loss is anything but regrettable. However, the Royal Borough is fortunate to have 173 bars (113 of which are traditional public houses) and the entire Borough (excluding open spaces) is served by one or more of these facilities being within a 10 minute walk. Therefore, the Council considers that there is too little evidence to resist their loss at the present time. This will be kept under review. The Borough has also experience a number of traditional public houses changing into other drinking establishments which do not provide the same community function to residents. However, these changes do not represent a change under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and cannot presently be controlled by the Council.~~

The above paragraph will be replaced by the paragraphs 3.3.14A 3.3.14B and 3.3.14C which appear after paragraph 14.3.4

### Local shopping and other facilities which Keep Life Local

**30.3.9** The evidence on local shopping deficiency shows that a policy is required to retain and enable better access to shopping facilities on foot or by bicycle in order to significantly improve the quality of urban life.

**30.3.10** The Council will use walkable neighbourhood indicators to assess accessibility to local shopping facilities. National indicators recommend an 800 metre (875 yard) walk. However, the use of national indicators is not appropriate due to the relatively large number of shopping centres within the Borough. As such, a 400 metre (440 yard) area is considered to be more appropriate in terms of assessing local shopping deficiency.

**30.3.11** Currently 74.8% of the Borough is located within a 5 minute (400m or 440 yard) walk of a neighbourhood or higher order shopping centre, of this, 1.5% are served by local centres in neighbouring boroughs. Excluding public spaces, the main areas with an established deficiency are Latimer, Kensal (east of Ladbrooke Grove) and parts of Earl's Court. In these areas, many residents will have to walk for more than 10 minutes (or 800m) to local shopping facilities. Lots Road is

currently seen as being deficient. However, once implemented, the planning permission for the Lots Road Power Station site will address the deficiency. Whilst it is noted that there is little residential accommodation currently in the area shown as deficient in Kensal, the Kensal Gasworks Strategic Site is allocated for significant housing growth in this Core Strategy, meaning that local shopping facilities will be required. The deficiency in Earl's Court is expected to be resolved through the redevelopment of the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre Strategic Site.

**30.3.12** By developing these sites and by creating new neighbourhood centres in Latimer and Kensal, it is calculated that 76% of the Borough would be within a 5 minute walk of local shopping facilities.

**30.3.13** Individual shops and parades are also important as they offer convenience retail to those living in areas which are not located near defined shopping centres.

**30.3.14** As well as social and community facilities, the Borough must also cater for local employment needs, this both improves the sense of belonging and can contribute to a more sustainable community. The issue of local employment is covered in more detail in *Fostering Vitality*.

30.3.14A The continued loss of the Borough's stock of public houses over the past 30 years has eroded an easily accessible social focus for the community. From 181 premises in 1980 to 110 in 2012, well over one third have been lost and with escalating residential property prices, this trend is set to continue. The Borough has experienced a number of traditional public houses changing into other drinking establishments which do not provide the same community function to residents. However, these changes do not represent a change under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and cannot be controlled by the Council.

30.3.14B Public houses not only make a valuable contribution to the community and cultural life of the Borough, but at neighbourhood level they offer a source of identity and distinctiveness, provide opportunities for social interaction and provide places to meet which support community cohesion – in short the essential ingredients of a sense of community and place. They are part of that fine grain mix of uses, which provide not only historical continuity, but contribute economically and to the vitality of our residential communities and the character of an area. They are an essential ingredient for promoting healthy communities and maintaining diverse, strong, secure and accessible neighbourhoods.

30.3.14C However, it is not only public houses that display these distinctive characteristics. Other uses such as shops, financial and professional services uses and restaurants/cafes are also valued, for both the service that they provide and their wider social role. This essential mix of uses in the Borough's predominantly residential areas, not only makes these areas highly desirable places in which to live, helping to provide services locally for the community and beyond, but adds to the character and distinctiveness of the Borough as a whole. The approach of maintaining and protecting a broader range of uses also brings greater benefit to the wider community, rather than favouring a particular group within it.

30.3.14D In applying this policy individual shops will be protected, but the swap of other uses within the A Use class<sup>1</sup> (Classes A2 – A4) will be treated on their own merits depending on their role within the locality they serve and their impact on neighbours. The Council recognise no hierarchy of uses in this regard.

## Policy CK 2

### Local Shopping and other Facilities which Keep Life Local

The Council will ensure opportunities exist for convenience shopping and other facilities which make life local throughout the Borough.

To deliver this the Council will

- a) protect individual shops (Class A1) outside of designated town centres.
- b) resist the loss of Public Houses and other Drinking Establishments (Class A4) throughout the Borough
- c) resist the loss of Restaurants and Cafes (Class A3) and Financial and Professional Services (Class A2) outside of Higher Order Town Centres

**NOTE:** Further policy mechanisms for delivering local shopping facilities are included in Policies CF1, CF2 and CF3 in *Fostering Vitality, Chapter 31*

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<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

Extract 5:  
Chapter 34  
Renewing the Legacy  
Conservation, quality and design

### 34.1 INTRODUCTION

**34.1.1** The Borough has inherited a remarkable historic townscape and a large number of historic buildings. The exceptional quality of the built environment and finely grained mix of uses underpins the Borough's success as a highly desirable place in which to live, work and invest. Over 4,000 buildings are 'listed' and there are over 100 garden squares. Conservation areas cover more than 70% of the Borough. The Royal Borough is known for its legacy of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architecture, interspersed with corner shops, pubs, studios and small pockets of mixed uses, but there are also a number of twentieth century buildings which continue the legacy of high quality design. Our listed buildings and conservation areas contribute immensely to local distinctiveness both within the Borough and to London as a whole.

**34.1.2** Renewing the Legacy is an integral part of the Core Strategy's central vision of Building on Success. The exceptional quality of the built environment underpins the reputation of both Kensington and Chelsea, and our residents' quality of life.

**CO 5 Strategic Objective for Renewing the Legacy** Our strategic objective to renew the legacy is not simply to ensure no diminution in the excellence we have inherited, but to pass to the next generation a Borough that is better than today, of the highest quality and inclusive for all. This will be achieved by taking great care to maintain, conserve and enhance the glorious built heritage we have inherited and to ensure that where new development takes place it enhances the Borough.

### 34.2 WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE BOROUGH

**34.2.1** Careful incremental improvement is needed to ensure our conservation areas remain of the highest quality. However, there are a number of small areas in the south and two large areas in the north of the Borough which are not within conservation areas. It is important that these areas are not regarded as 'second class' in terms of the future quality and contribution for which we should be striving. We should aspire for these areas to be our future conservation areas and a high design quality is needed to create a new design legacy for the Borough.

**34.2.2** There is inevitable pressure for change, as the existing, often historic, building stock is updated, renewed or replaced to meet today's needs and changing lifestyles. These changes are not only physical. The mixed uses in the borough – as set out in Keeping Life Local and Fostering Vitality – are an integral part of the Borough's character. Even small changes of use, that reduce the finely grained mix of uses that are interspersed in our residential areas can be damaging to the quality of the Borough.

**34.2.2A** Maintaining and improving the mixed-use and architectural character, quality, inclusivity and setting of the Royal Borough's exceptional built environment is vital. Past approaches, where no worsening was good enough, are no longer acceptable. The prevailing philosophy will be to drive up the quality of design to improve the quality of the Borough's built environment. The local context is of primary importance in achieving this.

**34.2.3** To ensure continued design excellence in the Royal Borough, the Council and the Royal Institute of British Architects (London) have appointed an Architectural Appraisal Panel. The purpose of the panel is to review key planning proposals and offer support and advice to the Council's officers, planning application committees and its Design Champion, and for planning applicants to deliver high quality architecture within the Royal Borough.

### **34.3 PLANNING POLICIES**

## **Context and Character**

**34.3.1** The Borough's townscape is unique in its high quality, finely grained, historic built environment with a strong context and character. The Council has a reputation of upholding high standards of conservation and design.

**34.3.2** The Council consider that the assessment of planning applications should be based on whether they are 'good enough to approve' rather than 'bad enough to refuse' to ensure the continuation of our existing high quality environment.

**34.3.3** The Council have a hard-won reputation for requiring more for the Borough's historic urban fabric than pure preservation when it comes to assessing planning applications. We have embraced the principle of resisting 'design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area and the way it functions'. We are therefore constantly seeking to improve our environment and new development must improve upon the existing situation.

**34.3.4** The Borough is a highly desirable place to live, shown by the highest average home prices in England<sup>2</sup>. This is against a backdrop of considerable residential densities but surprisingly modest building scales. For example, Victorian terraced housing in the Borough typically consists of 700 habitable rooms per hectare (hrha) in 4 storeys, Edwardian terraced mansion blocks increasing this to 970hrh in 6 storeys. In North Kensington, the typical density and height of the postwar estates are 500hrh and 5-6 storeys, much lower than in the Victorian period.

**34.3.5** Vistas and views as well as gaps between development are often planned aspects of townscape, particularly within the Victorian period.

**34.3.6** The Borough does not shy away from high density designs, it is an exemplar in demonstrating that high density and high quality are compatible - our context encourages us to deliver high density schemes.

**34.3.7** However, the Council considers that densities should not be used as the sole determinant of design, as it would undermine our duties to have regard both to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas, and to good design<sup>3</sup>. The density matrix in the London Plan<sup>4</sup> therefore needs to be read in relation to the context of the development.

**34.3.8** The physical context of the Borough is highly valued, far beyond the Borough itself, and it has become a well-known and cherished part of London. Context is relevant to the size of the development. For example, for a single dwelling house the relevant context may be just the immediate street, whereas a larger development would draw on the wider area for its context.

**34.3.9** The Borough is fortunate to abut the River Thames in the south and the Grand Union Canal in the north. These river and canalside environments are considered important features in maintaining the Borough's distinctiveness. The Thames and areas adjoining have been designated as the Thames Policy Area in conformity with the London Plan. The Council considers that developments within these environments should pay great respect in ensuring their enhancement.

**34.3.10** The quality and character of an area is not only provided by the individual buildings but it is also gained from views into and out of the area. When considering development that impacts on views, vistas and gaps, it is important to respect the local context. The Borough has one designated strategic view which is that of St Paul's as seen from King Henry's mound in Richmond Park.

**34.3.11** It is important that a comprehensive approach is taken to site re-development so that layout and design quality are not compromised, there is efficient use of land and opportunities to improve the surrounding townscape are taken. This can include, on occasions, assessing adjacent sites and their development potential as part of the development appraisal process, so that a piecemeal and uncoordinated approach to site re-development is avoided.

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34.3.41a In addition, a building's use can contribute to the character of a conservation area and to a sense of place. The Borough contains a scattered mix of uses within its residential neighbourhoods, which offer variety, surprise and delight. These punctuate the street scene and add to the vitality and character of a conservation area. Their loss diminishes the character of the townscape, the cherished local scene and the vitality and diversity of the area. The Council will take account of the nature of the current or last use when assessing character.

## Policy CL3

### Heritage Assets - Conservation Areas and Historic Spaces

The Council will require development to preserve and to take opportunities to enhance the cherished and familiar local scene, character or appearance of conservation areas, historic places, spaces and townscapes, and their settings.

To deliver this the Council will:

- a. require development to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and protect the special architectural or historic interest of the area and its setting.
- b. resist the change of use of any building where the current use contributes positively to the character of the surrounding area and to its sense of place.
- c. ~~b.~~ resist substantial demolition in conservation areas unless it can be demonstrated that:
  - i. the building or part of the building or structure makes no positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area;
  - ii. a scheme for redevelopment has been approved;
- d. ~~c.~~ require a replacement replica in the event of a collapse or unauthorised demolition of a structure that made a positive contribution to the character or appearance of in a conservation area; a replacement replica of the structure where the original made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of that conservation area.
- e. ~~a.~~ require full planning applications in conservation areas;

