



Thames conservation area Management plan

Adopted 17 February 2026



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA



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This management plan should be read in conjunction with the Thames Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) adopted in February 2020. The appraisal explains what a conservation area is and describes the special historic and architectural character and appearance which have led to the creation of a conservation area.

1. Context

The Thames Conservation Area was designated in 1981 when it acquired its current boundaries.

Conservation area designation recognises the unique quality of an area as a whole. It is not just the contribution of individual buildings and monuments and house boats in this case, but also elements such as topography, road layout, pathways, street furniture, open spaces and hard and soft landscaping, which help to define the character and appearance of an area.

Conservation areas identify the familiar and cherished local scene that creates a sense of place, community, distinctiveness and environment.

It is in the public interest to preserve a conservation area through positive intervention and the prevention of inappropriate alterations. Such preservation benefits owners, occupiers and visitors as it ensures that the area is a pleasant environment to live, work and visit.

2. Purpose

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stresses the need for local planning authorities to set out a positive strategy for the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the historic environment. Local planning authorities are required to define and record the special characteristics of heritage assets within their area. This Management Plan fulfils the statutory duty placed on the local planning authority ‘to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas.’

A conservation area may be affected by direct physical change or by changes in its setting or in the uses of buildings or areas within it. A clear definition of those elements which contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of a place enables the development of a robust policy framework for the future management

of that area, against which applications can be considered. This has been done in the CAA.

Following on from that, the conservation area management plan sets out actions to maintain and enhance the special character of the area, as defined in the appraisal. The plan will support the positive and active management of the conservation area through the development management process, including support for planning appeals. It is a vehicle for reinforcing the positive character of an historic area as well as for avoiding, minimising and mitigating negative impacts identified as affecting the area. It will also outline opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance, sometimes through the location or design of new development¹.

1. See conservation area appraisal, designation and management historic England advice note 1 (Second edition, 2019).

3. Methodology

This Management Plan builds on work carried out for the preparation of the Thames CAA when site surveys were carried out photographs were taken, and features of the conservation area noted. Historic research was carried out in local archives and a summary of the special interest of the area was prepared.

Further survey and photographic work has been carried out subsequently, supplemented by online research. An important part of the process has been the involvement and input of representatives of local resident and amenity groups who have contributed to the preparation of this document.

4. Policy framework

This section outlines the legislative and national policy framework for Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

The NPPF (paragraph 203) requires planning policies to establish a positive strategy for heritage assets, focusing on their significance, viable uses, and the benefits of conservation, encouraging new development to contribute positively to local character.

This strategy should take into account:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Local Plan 2024

The RBKC Local Plan (July 2024) contains policies which are relevant to the Borough's conservation areas. Our Conservation and Design policies seek to maintain and enhance the Borough's character and distinctiveness.

Within this context, Local Plan Policies CD1, CD2, CD3, CD4 and CD5 are of particular importance and reflect the requirements of the NPPF and planning law to protect the special historic and architectural interest of conservation areas and listed buildings. Policy TR4 relates to improvements to the quality of the Borough's streets, their design and maintenance to a very high standard, and avoidance and removal of street clutter, whilst Policy GB11 seeks to enable the sustainable and cost-effective upgrade of flood defences along the River Thames in line with the requirements of the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan.

Policy GB15 seeks to protect, enhance and make the most of existing parks, gardens, waterways, canals and open spaces, and to require opportunities to be taken to improve public access to, and along the Thames. All of these policies are available in the Local Plan on the [Council's website](#).

5. General guidance

This section is intended to provide appropriate guidance as to the acceptable form, nature and level of change that is appropriate. It will also be used by the Council to inform the outcome of applications for changes to properties or for new development within the conservation area where planning permission is required.

Planned development within the wider setting of the conservation area has the potential to affect its significance, unless carefully managed. This is true of both small-scale incremental change and development on a much larger scale. Both should be carefully managed in order to avoid the loss or dilution of character. Such management, however, also offers the chance for this development to positively enhance and contribute to the conservation area.

The CAA has identified the key features, including townscape, open spaces, uses and buildings which characterise the conservation area. It should therefore be read in conjunction with the following advice.

Control of physical change

The Royal Borough is under a legal obligation under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that in exercising its powers it needs to consider

whether development proposed within the area would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The approach which follows reflects these duties. Policies for the control of development are found in the adopted Local Plan. This chapter defines more closely how the Council's policies affect physical changes within the Thames Conservation Area.

The Thames Conservation Area is focused on and largely defined by the riverside of the Thames and Chelsea Creek, with piers, moorings and a wharf, and by transport infrastructure including the Embankment and three Thames bridges with a number of associated public gardens and tree avenues. It is unusual for this borough in that it contains no houses and few buildings, and so the potential for improvement in the area lies mainly in the public realm, the Thames Pathway, and the riparian uses it contains. This is reflected in the sections which follow.

Listed buildings

The Thames Conservation Area contains a number of listed buildings², which are partially shown in the Buildings Audit Map within the CAA (figure 6.3). These include part of the most significant historic infrastructure network in

London, the Thames Embankment and sewer, and three of the capital's iconic bridges. There are also a number of smaller items such as the sewer vent close to Battersea Bridge, the lamp standard east of Albert Bridge, and statues and memorials in garden areas.

While most of these structures are in public ownership, the same considerations will apply in managing change to them, and listed building consent will still be required. The CAA map is not at a scale where the listed buildings apart from the bridges and embankment can be seen. Detailed streetscape audit maps are included on pages 7 - 13 where individual features are replicated at a clearer scale and the locations of listed buildings provided.

The Council's policy is to resist the demolition of listed buildings in whole or in part, or the removal or modification of features of interest.

Given the particular and varied characteristics of the listed buildings within the Thames Conservation Area, several of which include engineering as well as architectural elements which contribute to their special interest, it is not possible to offer definitive advice on appropriate alterations. Each building or use must be considered on its own merits. The case of the Thames bridges is also complicated by

2. See conservation area appraisal, designation and management historic England advice note 1 (Second edition, 2019).

the fact that half of each structure lies within the jurisdiction of a different local planning authority, the London Borough of Wandsworth, and additional consultations will be required.

Demolition and new development

Buildings and uses of all kinds, including street furniture and statues, often contribute positively to a conservation area's character. They may also contribute positively to the setting of neighbouring listed buildings. Some are simply of sufficiently good architectural character to justify retention in their own right. Alternatively, alongside other structures they may collectively define a fine group, the character of which relies on the dependence of each building on its neighbour. Within such a context, the demolition of any building can have a considerable effect on the character of the conservation area.

There is therefore a presumption in favour of retention of positive buildings within the area. These are identified in the Buildings Audit Map in the CAA.

Demolition or substantial demolition of an unlisted building within a conservation area will require planning permission from the Council. It is a criminal offence to carry out demolition in a conservation area without planning permission. Such controls are rigorously applied, as works of demolition are by their very nature irreversible and thus the demolition of a substantial part of a building which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area has a profound effect on the area's character.

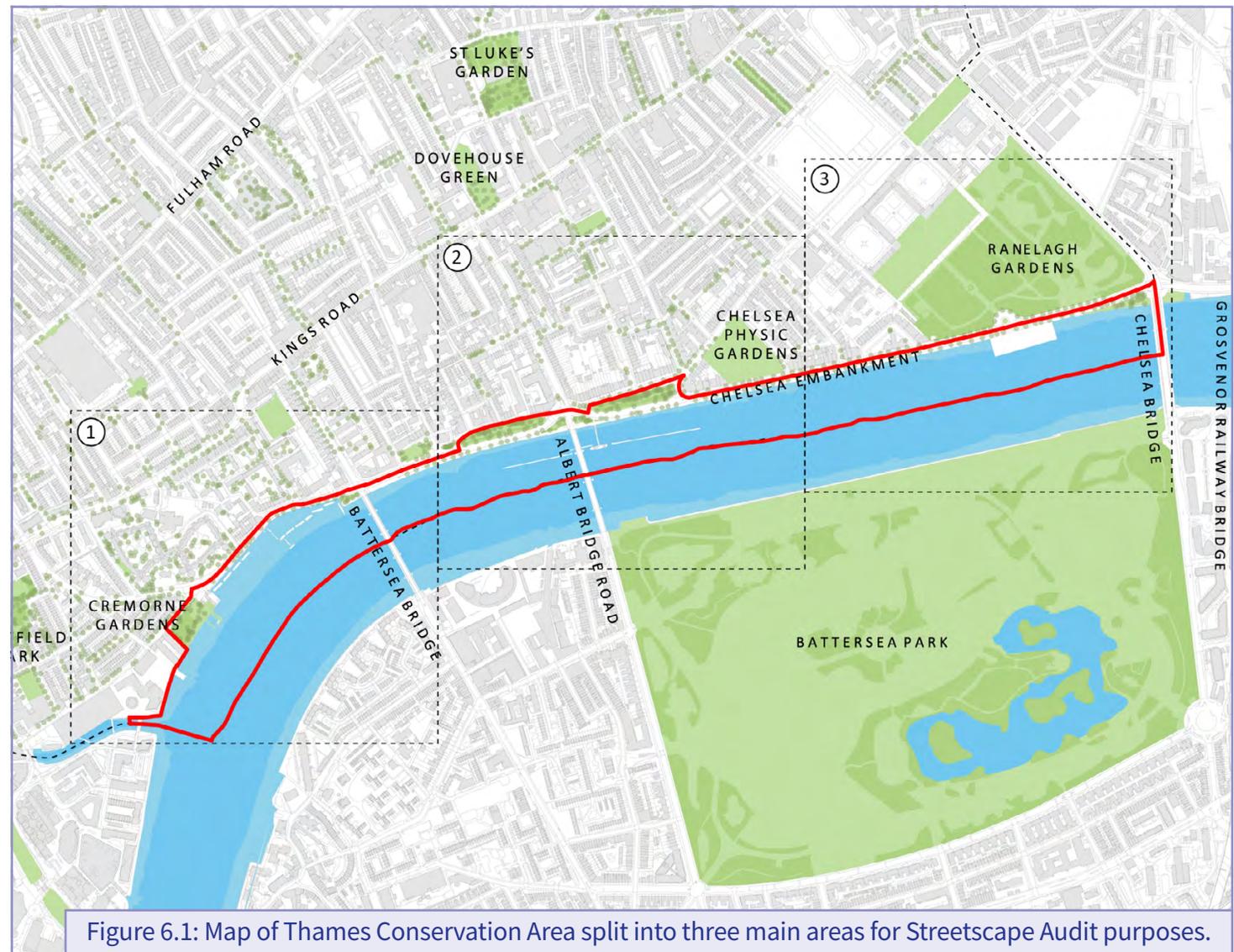
Some buildings' contribution to the area's character is either neutral or, indeed, negative, and their removal or replacement may be accepted, provided the character and appearance of the area is preserved which can be found in the Buildings Audit Map in the CAA.

Audit of buildings and structures

The Buildings Audit Map in the CAA includes only listed buildings, and so more detailed audit maps are provided which also includes unlisted structures which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, details of open spaces, and areas of hard landscaping and street furniture which are positive. It also indicates areas where improvements will be looked for when opportunities arise, and concept designs views are added. Opportunities to enhance the public realm are explored on pages 14-16. Improvements to Cremorne Gardens have not been included as they form part of a separate consultation for Lots Road.

6. Streetscape audit

- 1 **Streetscape audit 1**
Cremorne Gardens
+ Battersea Bridge Gardens
- 2 **Streetscape audit 2**
Embankment Gardens
+ Albert Bridge Gardens
- 3 **Streetscape audit 3**
Chelsea Embankment



Streetscape audit 1

Cremorne Gardens
+ Battersea Bridge Gardens

Listed structures

- 1 Sewer vent

Objects in the public realm

- 2 Table tennis
- 3 Insect hotel
- 4 War memorial
- 5 Restored original gate
- 6 Cremorne Riverside Centre 1
- 7 Cremorne Riverside Centre 2
- 8 Billboard
- 9 James McNeil Whistler

Street furniture

- Street lamps
- Trees
- ▨ Listed buildings



Figure 6.2: Map indicating Area 1 “Cremorne Gardens and Battersea Bridge Gardens” of Streetscape Audit.

Streetscape audit 1

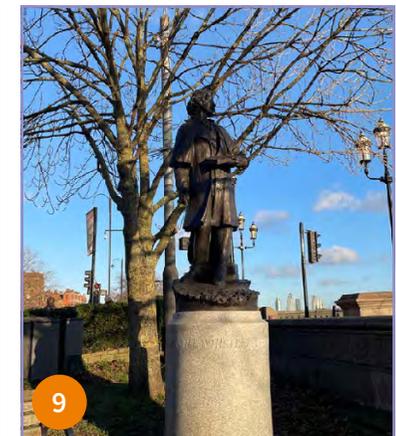
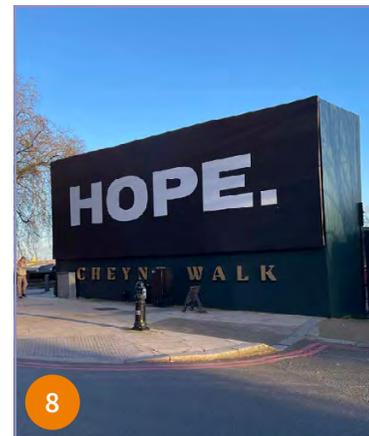
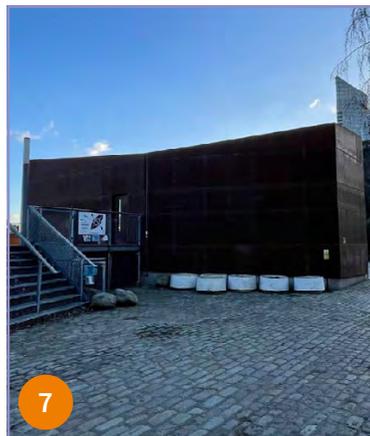
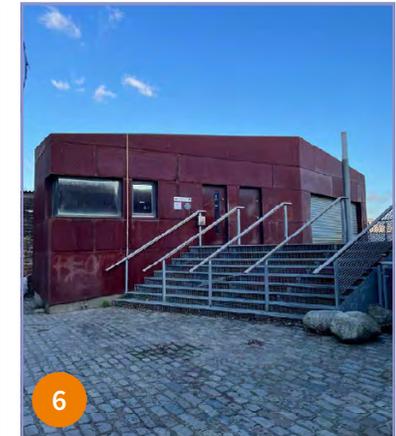
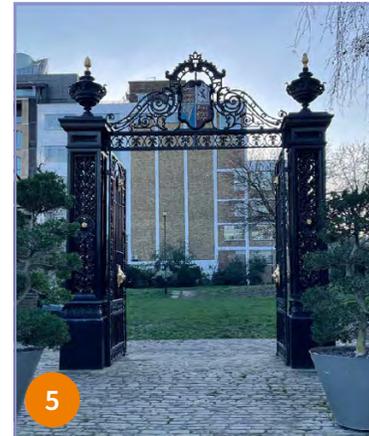
Cremorne Gardens
+ Battersea Bridge Gardens

Listed structures

- 1 Sewer vent

Objects in the public realm

- 2 Table tennis
- 3 Insect hotel
- 4 War memorial
- 5 Restored original gate
- 6 Cremorne Riverside Centre 1
- 7 Cremorne Riverside Centre 2
- 8 Billboard
- 9 James McNeil Whistler



Streetscape audit 2

Embankment Gardens
+ Albert Bridge Gardens

Listed structures

- 1 Atalanta
- 2 K2 telephone box
- 3 The climbing boys
- 4 Albert bridge, toll booth
- 5 Cabmen's Shelter

Objects in the public realm

- 6 The Boy David
- 7 Dante Gabriel Rosseti
- 8 Boy with cat (missing)
- 9 Ralph Vaughan
- 10 Williams insect hotel
- 11 Thomas Carlyle
- 12 Memorial birdbath

Street furniture

- Street lamps
- Trees
- Benches
- Listed buildings

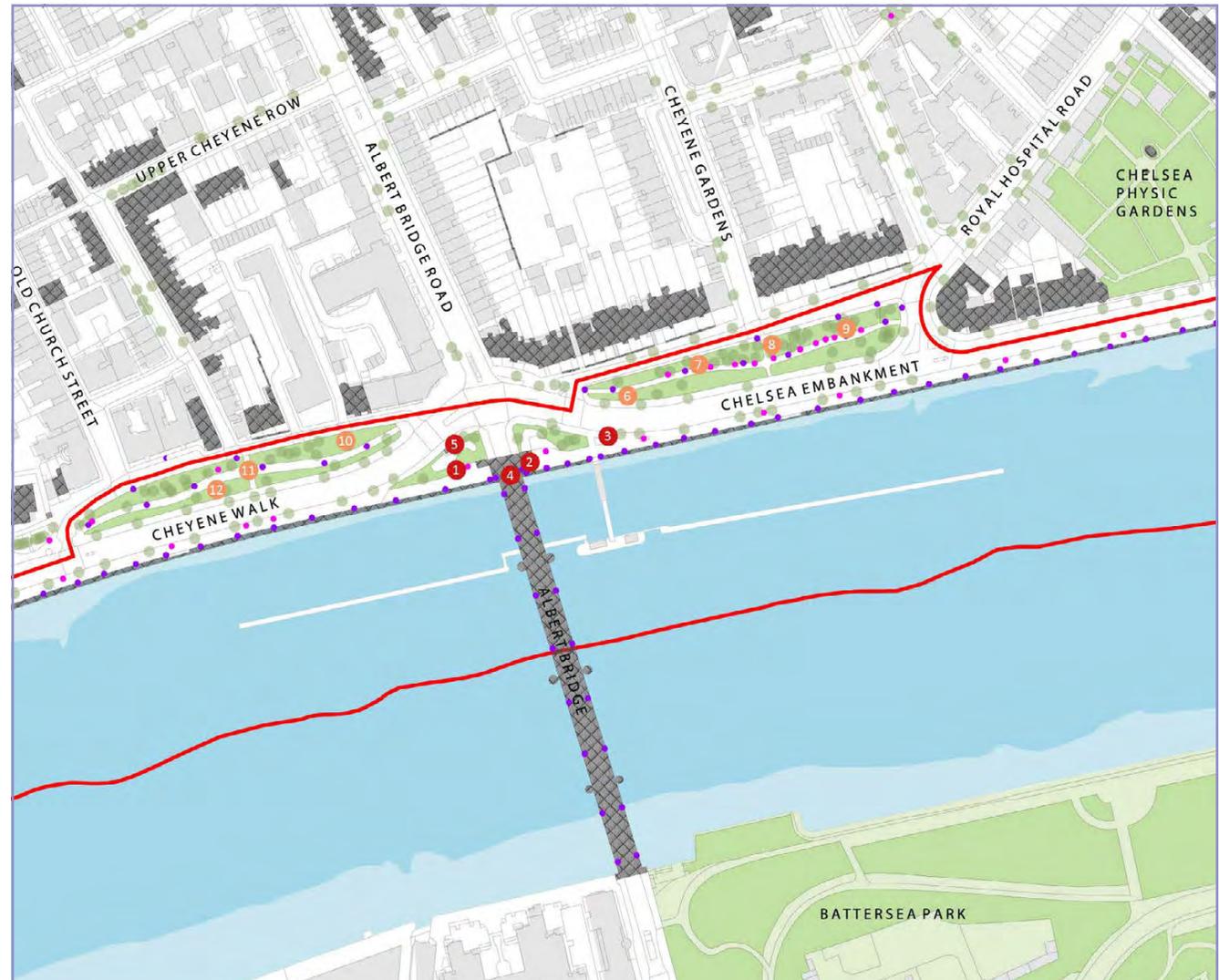


Figure 6.3: Map indicating Area 2 “Embankment Gardens + Albert Bridge Gardens” of Streetscape Audit.

Streetscape audit 2

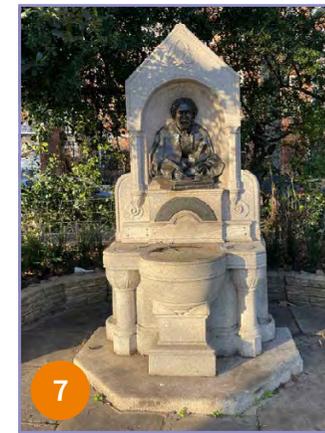
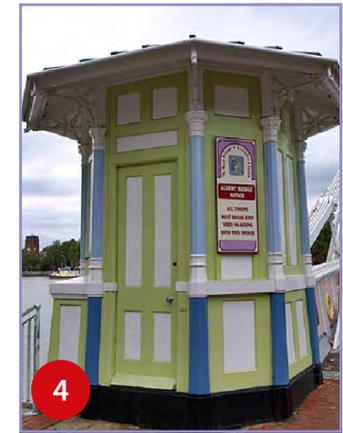
Embankment Gardens
+ Albert Bridge Gardens

Listed structures

- 1 Atalanta
- 2 K2 telephone box
- 3 The climbing boys
- 4 Albert bridge, toll booth
- 5 Cabmen's Shelter

Objects in the public realm

- 6 The Boy David
- 7 Dante Gabriel Rosseti
- 8 Boy with cat (missing)
- 9 Ralph Vaughan
- 10 Williams insect hotel
- 11 Thomas Carlyle
- 12 Memorial birdbath



Streetscape audit 3

Chelsea Embankment

Listed structures

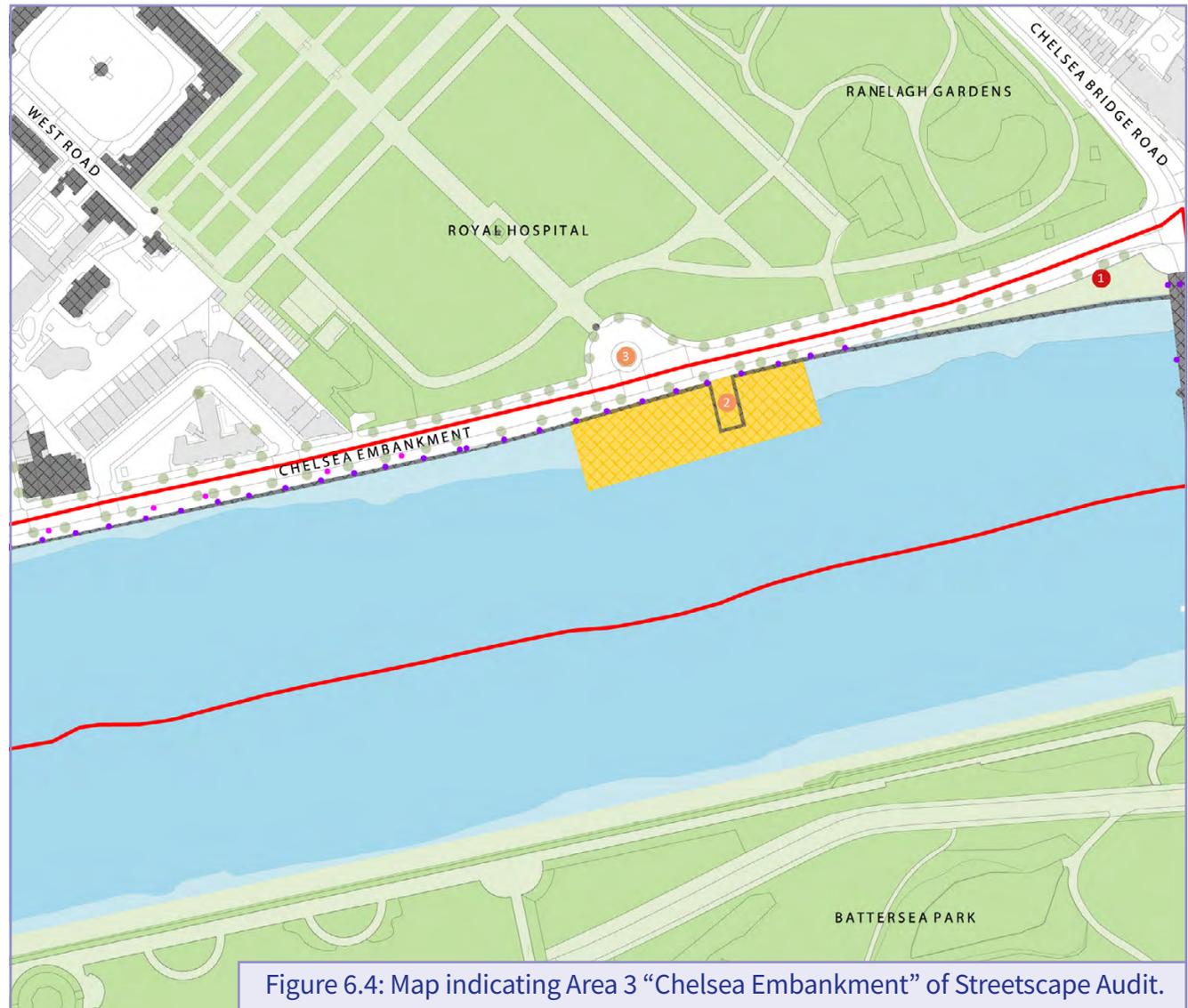
- 1 Sewer vent

Objects in the public realm

- 2 Thames tideway viewpoint
- 3 Royal Hospital forecourt

Street furniture

- Street lamps
- Benches
- Trees
- Listed buildings
- Thames tideway site



Streetscape audit 3

Chelsea Embankment

Listed structures

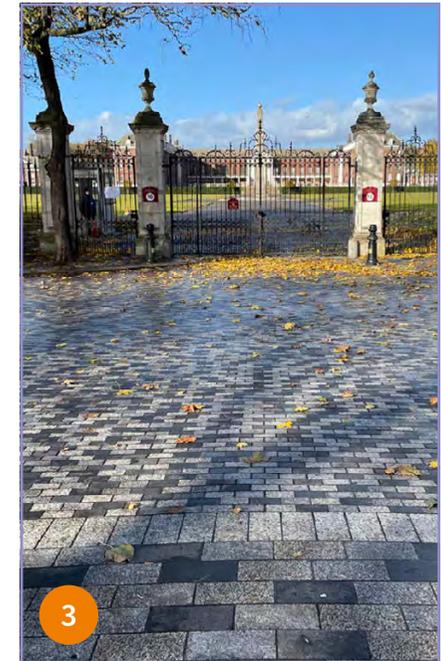
- 1 Sewer vent

Objects in the public realm

- 2 Thames tideway viewpoint
- 3 Royal Hospital forecourt

Street furniture

- 4 Winged sphinx benches
- 5 Cast iron globe streetlamps



7. Potential projects

Public realm updates

- 1 Battersea Bridge Gardens
- 2 Albert Bridge Gardens West
- 3 Albert Bridge Gardens East
- 4 Chelsea Embankment Gardens

The projects illustrated will be subject to funding being available to implement and as such do not have specific timescales allocated.

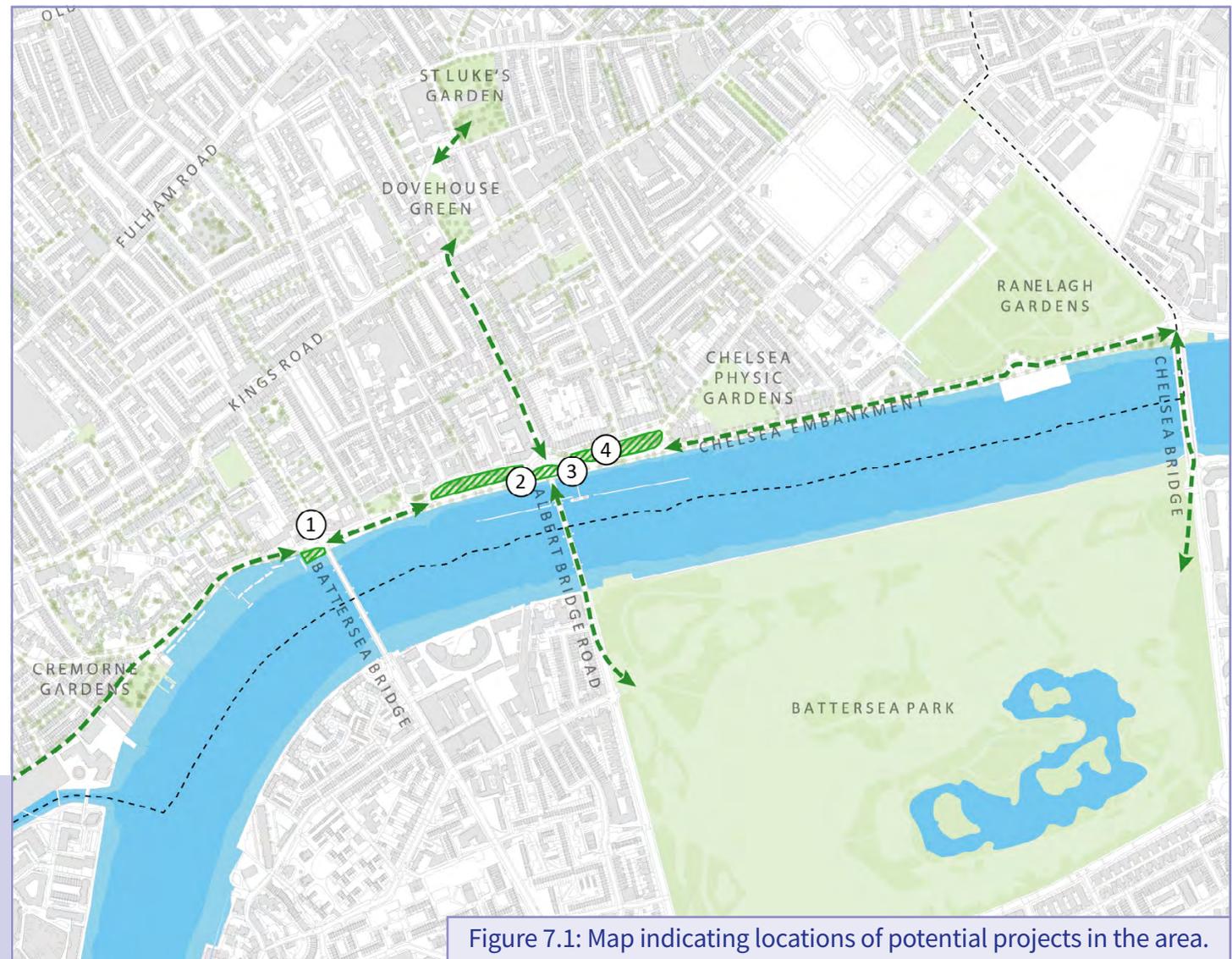
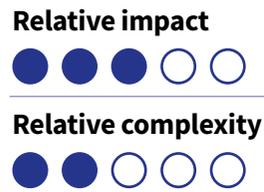
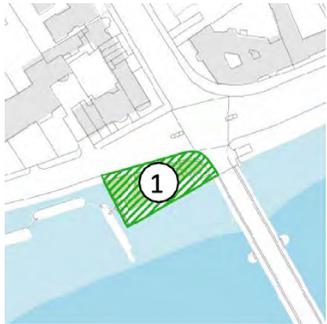


Figure 7.1: Map indicating locations of potential projects in the area.

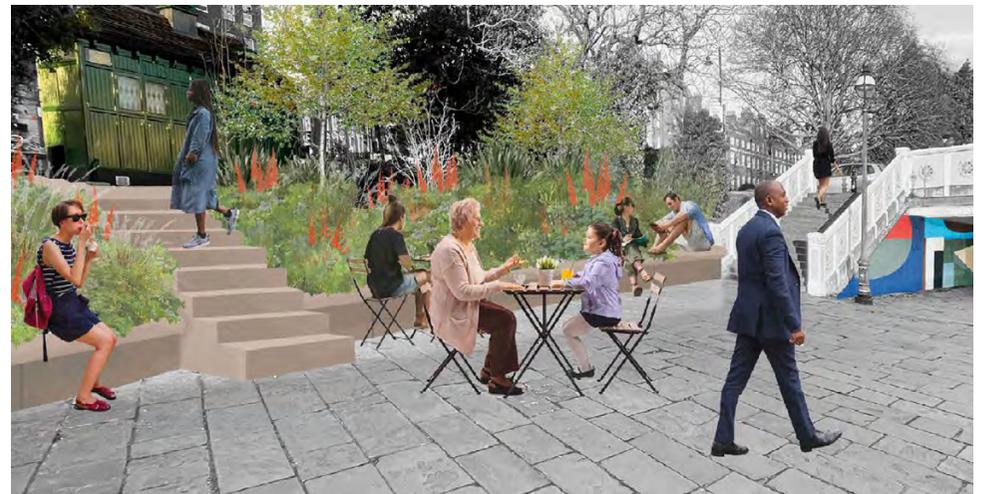
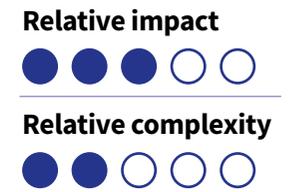
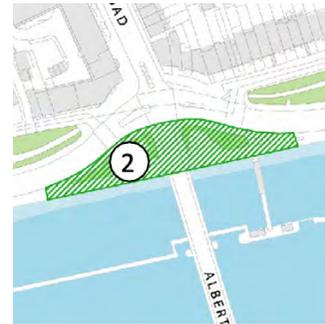
1 Battersea Bridge Gardens

Battersea Bridge Gardens is a small riverside garden at the foot of Battersea Bridge created when the Thames was embanked. The garden has raised beds, seating, curved path, areas of grass and a number of trees including a mulberry tree. It includes one of two listed sewer vents in the conservation area and a statue of James McNeill Whistler that was erected in 2005. Inviting dwelling spaces can be created through improved lighting, wayfinding, and additional seating and greenery. The garden provides an important amenity space for the houseboats docked at Cheyne Pier.



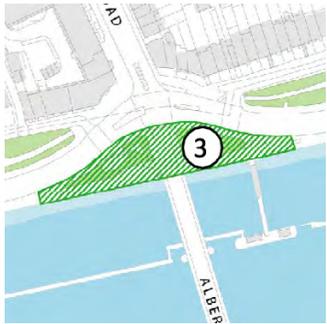
2 Albert Bridge Garden West

The Albert Bridge Gardens are a small public space by the River Thames, near Albert Bridge. It features three listed structures: a K2 telephone box, sculptures Atalanta and The Climbing Boys, and a cabman's shelter an important part of the area's transport heritage which has been converted into a coffee stall. Enhancements could include a boundary wall for seating, reusing the hammer dressed granite retaining wall from the Thames Tideway Site, additional greenery, and using the space as a cafe overflow. Considerations for public art or lighting could enhance the pedestrian experience under the bridge.



3 Albert Bridge Garden East

Improvements slated for the eastern section of Albert Bridge Gardens could encompass upgrading the current cycle parking facilities, replacing broken yorkstone paving, removing graffiti, introducing new benches or seating, and augmenting green spaces with more planting and trees to enrich biodiversity. Integrating public art or lighting fixtures under the bridge could again improve wayfinding.



Relative impact



Relative complexity



4 Chelsea Embankment Garden

Improvements are already underway to Chelsea Embankment Gardens including installing fresh kerb edging, adding new bins, refreshing existing benches with a new coat of paint, and introducing drought-tolerant plants to enrich biodiversity. Furthermore, a new sculpture is in the works to fill the void left by the absence of the 'Boy with Cat'. The potential upgrade of footways with resin-bound gravel could be another promising enhancement for the space.



Relative impact



Relative complexity



8. Guidance for houseboats

Houseboats

The residential moorings featuring houseboats between Battersea Bridge and Cremorne Gardens, generally moored at 90 degrees to the riverbank provide life and interest through their variety of form, colour, cheerful domestic details and planting. Any applications for future new moorings will be considered in the light of Policy GB14 and where new moorings are granted, they will be conditioned to ensure that the size and scale of associated new vessels remains appropriate to this riverine residential environment.

The boats at Chelsea's houseboat village come in various colours, lengths, and ages, collectively forming an eclectic mix, creating one of the most picturesque scenes in the area. This riverside landscape has been deemed 'romantic' since the days of Whistler, the houseboats contributing significantly to the character of this stretch of the river. The houseboats lie within the conservation area and are a feature in the river scene when viewed from Chelsea Embankment, from Battersea Bridge and from the river itself.

With a rich history dating back to World War II, the houseboat community has catered for a diverse mix of celebrities, writers, and those seeking an alternative lifestyle, contributing to

Chelsea's bohemian life. Despite their eclectic mix, the traditional boats reflect vestiges of Chelsea's boat-building tradition, dating back to Tudor times. Indeed, the Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company established in 1935 at Cheyne Walk continues this boat building tradition. In this management plan, boat design adherence to guidelines reflecting traditional proportions and shapes is emphasized, respecting the area's historic working waterway character. Large box-like vessels of more than one storey are not appropriate, as they can significantly detract from this character. Instead, new vessels are encouraged to embrace curved or sloping forms of varied proportions and to be of an appropriate scale.

Changes

Over the years it has become necessary to rebuild many of the houseboats. In view of the conservation area status and the scale of the original houseboats it is important that the design and appearance of any new or reconstructed boat should be in keeping with the riverside scene.

Design advice

These guidelines are intended to give design advice to boat owners and buildings and are aimed at securing further improvements to the river side environment.



Eastern moorings near Cheyne Walk

Planning applications

Whilst planning permission is not required for a new boat that is moored in an existing mooring, this can be formally checked by applying for pre-application advice, details of which can be found here: www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-applications/making-planning-application/get-planning-advice

Separate to planning permission, other permissions may be required in relation to the structure, fire resistance or sanitation or the requirements of private agreements between boat owners and those who own, lease or manage the moorings. You are advised to ensure that all relevant permissions have been gained when considering changes. Even if it planning permission is not required, adherence to the following guidelines should ensure that the character and appearance of the Thames Conservation Area is not harmed and opportunities can be taken for enhancement.

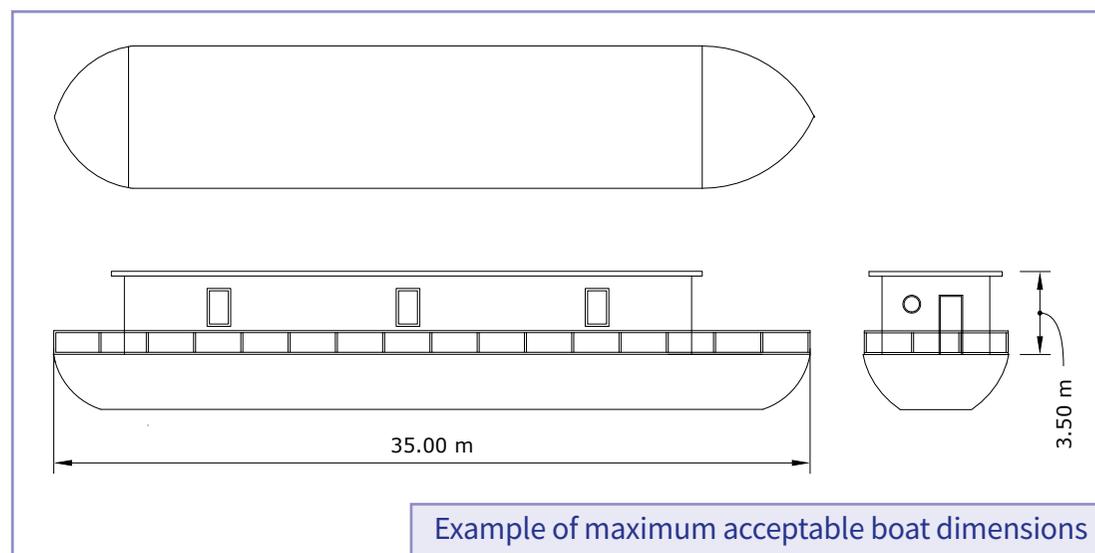
Shape

Although most of the houseboats are not capable of being regularly moved, they are nevertheless floating structures on a major navigable river, moored along a foreshore which has been associated with boats at least since Tudor times. Any structure which, by virtue of its shape or materials, displays no vestiges of the boat-building tradition is very likely to look out of place and these guidelines are intended for the construction of future vessels.

In terms of their size the Council wishes to ensure that the scale of the existing houseboats is retained and on this basis the following guidelines are recommended:

- Any moored residential vessel to individually exceed 35m in length (measured LWL) and 3.5m in height when measured from the main deck and to ensure that no vessel shall have more than two internal floors which will include the floor within the hull.
- A boat shaped hull is preferable to a rectangular pontoon and is likely to result in a less rectangular superstructure.
- The relationship between the height and bulk of the superstructure and the size of the hull is important. The superstructure may

appear to be too large even if it is perfectly satisfactory from the point of view of the boat's stability. As a general guide the overall height from waterline to roof should be kept as low as possible, and should not exceed 2 ½ times the height from waterline to the top of the hull. The superstructure should not a) cover more than 80 per cent of the hull's plan area at deck level, nor b) at any point rise sheer from the water. In the case of pontoon construction the height ratio would clearly need to be exceeded in order to obtain sufficient head room, but such vessels should have only one level of accommodation, to keep the height as low as possible. Two levels may be possible in the case of larger vessels built on more conventional hulls.



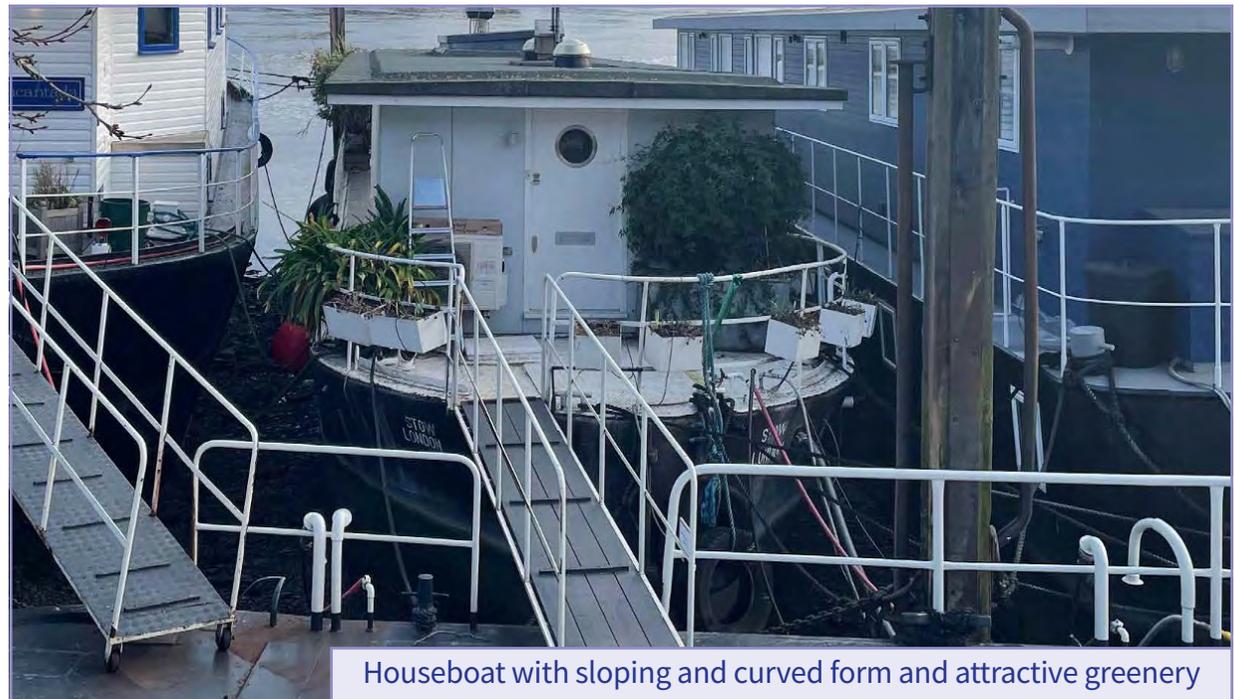
- A large 'box' shape is to be avoided, as it is not associated with traditional boat construction and therefore detracts from the nautical style associated with the river. Boat construction usually exhibits a series of curved or sloping forms, derived from purely functional requirements but which also happen to be visually satisfying. Although the houseboats are not subject to many of these functional requirements, as they are not generally moveable vessels, they nevertheless respect the design tradition of the working waterway alongside which they are located. To design a superstructure to look like a wooden house can be as discordant as designing a building in a conservation area to look like a boat.
- Cabin sides should be sloping. If they must be vertical at least the corners should be rounded or splayed. As a general rule, strong symmetry should be avoided; boats are seldom of symmetrical design as they have a distinct stem and stern. Asymmetry is in any case justified by site conditions (i.e. sun and view to the south, traffic and cold winds to the north), and boat design should respond to these conditions, turning them to advantage to give more interesting forms.

Detailed design: materials

Materials can have very physical impacts, equal to that of boat shape. The following materials are likely to be satisfactory where used externally on the boat superstructure or hull:

Timber boarding – shiplap or tongue and grooved, vertical, horizontal or diagonal	Steel
	Copper and bronze
Exterior grade plywood	Brass (in limited areas)
GRP (glass reinforced plastic)	Zinc
PVC	Dark roofing felt

These are all materials commonly found in contemporary boat construction, and the very nature of the material will frequently lend itself to nautical detailing.



Houseboat with sloping and curved form and attractive greenery

Fascias

A conventional fascia and eaves projection should be avoided altogether, since it is a building rather than a boat detail. Where there are unavoidable fascias and eaves, projections should be reduced to a minimum. A simple metal or plastic trim is preferable, or else the roof finish material should be folded over to form an integral fascia.

Windows

Metal framed portholes are clearly suitable, but larger glazed areas will often be required. Extensive glazing can be satisfactory on the river elevation provided that the individual panes of glass are not large. On other elevations the solid wall should always dominate, with windows never forming more than about 40 per cent of the area. Roof lights will generally be satisfactory, and should be kept low and follow the cross sectional profile of the roof as closely as possible.

Pipes, flues, T.V. aerials, wires and cables

All plumbing should be internal. Rainwater pipes should be integral, or else rainwater must be allowed to drip off the roof or be thrown clear at certain points. Flues should be as short as possible, with unobtrusive cowls. Electricity supply and telephone cables should be at low level, running underneath the access spine, and should not form an overhead wirescape.

Tanks

If water tanks have to be provided on roofs they should be as low as possible, and enclosed in a housing with battened sides. The housing should be faced with the roof finish materials and should be set in from the sides of the superstructure.

Railings

These should always follow the normal ship's railing pattern. Closely spaced uprights belong to buildings and not boats.

Dustbins, bicycles, prams and gas cylinders

Adequate storage space should be provided within the superstructure for these items.



Overall design comments

The houseboats are a longstanding feature of the Chelsea scene, occupying a considerable area of one of the most prominent locations in the borough. They are located in a conservation area and adjoin property included on the statutory list of buildings of architectural and historic interest. It follows that every bit as much care must be lavished on their detailed design and appearance as would be the case with conventional buildings in this part of Chelsea. That is not to say that the end product should be of subdued uniformity, but rather a series of planned variations exploiting the potential life and interest of boat moorings while preventing loss of nautical character and ugly or discordant shapes.

The moorings are in two groups, and the Council intends to retain the gap (53m) which separates them, so that there will be some unobstructed views of the river from Cheyne Walk. It is considered advisable if possible to locate the less attractive boats (i.e. those which are at greatest variance with the suggestions contained in this design guide) in inconspicuous positions, and prevent concentrations of such boats in groups.

Negative or neutral buildings

While buildings or structures have been identified which make a negative or neutral contribution to the character and appearance, their nature –

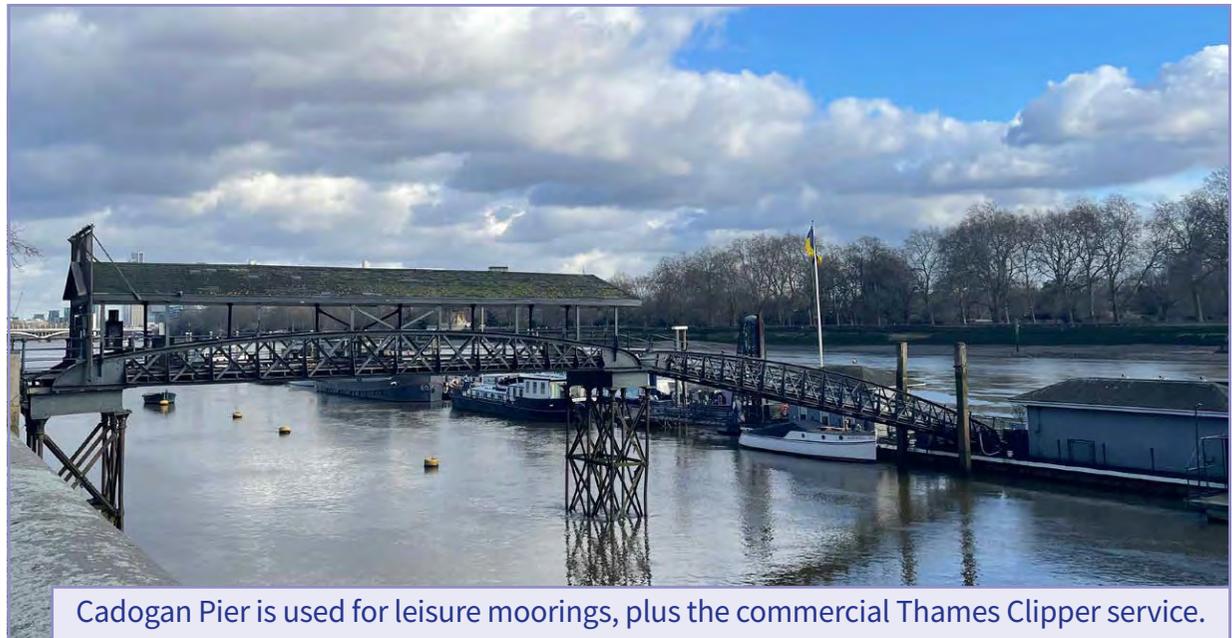
for instance parts of the unlisted Embankment structure – means that opportunities for redevelopment are likely to be limited.

Piers and working boats

The setting of Grade II* listed Albert Bridge is an issue of acknowledged importance. Cadogan Pier sits within this setting and contains moorings of mixed character including for residential and commercial uses. It is the scene of activity on the river through the coming and going of boats, and its effect on the setting is generally positive and appropriate.

However, the pier has been extended twice in recent history, and there is potential for further changes to this structure to harm the setting of the Grade II* listed bridge.

The Council is supportive of retaining the working character of the pier and following the relevant local plan policies (GB14 and CD4) will look very carefully at the creation of further residential moorings. In order to protect the setting of Albert Bridge, the Council will also use its planning powers to ensure that any additional structures other than the two existing cabins and the entrance gates and gangway would not harm the setting of the bridge.

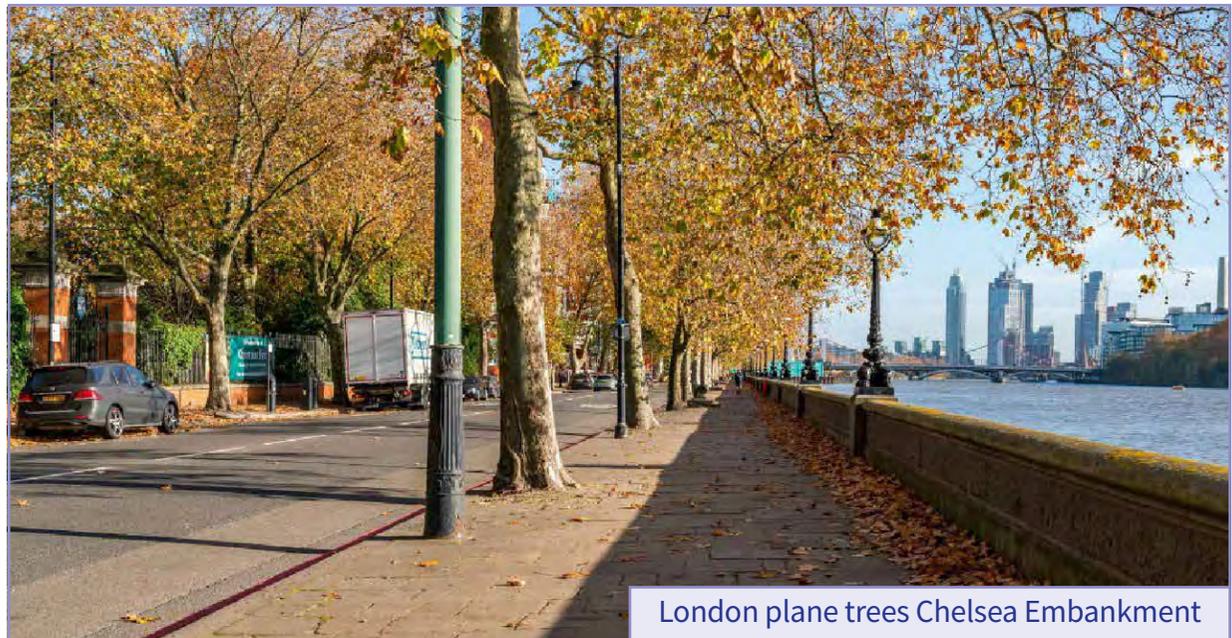


Cadogan Pier is used for leisure moorings, plus the commercial Thames Clipper service.

The pier is also used by the Thames Riverboat Service, and intensification of this use is encouraged in the CAA. However, problems have become evident in relation to erosion of the foreshore and effects on the living conditions of residents of houseboats arising from the powerful wash from the riverboat. The Council remains supportive of the use of the pier for riverboat access. The Council is also supportive of better use of the Thames Riverboat Service but arising from more passengers accessing the service via the Thames Path (further discussed below) and encouraged by the provision of improved waiting facilities on the pier, rather than through the provision of more frequent services.



View of Albert Bridge from Chelsea Embankment



London plane trees Chelsea Embankment

9. Guidelines for views, vistas, open space and public realm

The character of the conservation area is not only dependent on the quality and appearance of buildings, houseboats, structures and open spaces, but also on the interrelationship between them and the spaces and sight lines which define their collective character. The Thames Conservation Area includes a number and variety of vistas, both long and short, generally informal or unplanned but nonetheless significant. The presence of the Thames is particularly important, as it opens up sight lines both along and across river to take in long views into the heart of the city, where iconic buildings can be glimpsed on the skyline; direct views of Battersea Park, a significant urban landscape; and picturesque local scenes such as Albert Bridge or the houseboats viewed against the backdrop of the tree-lined Embankment. Such vistas contribute significantly to the character of the conservation area. Kinetic views are also particularly emphasised due to the linear configuration and patterns of movement through the conservation area.

Important views, as indicated on the views map in the CAA (figure 4.1), deserve particular attention to ensure that all development affecting the view serves to protect or enhance its character. The retention of such views is considered integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The likely

damaging or enhancing effect of development on a view or vista in the conservation area will be taken into account by the Council in exercising its planning powers, and following Local Plan policy CD4, particularly in relation to the vistas specifically identified on the views map within the CAA. Other views, not shown on the views map, which deserve protection may also be identified.

The London View Management Framework relating to strategic views includes a number of “river prospects”, none of which include this part of the river frontage. When the opportunity arises, the Council will work with local stakeholders to identify river prospects that may also be of strategic value to put forward for future inclusion in the London wide Views Management Framework.

In a similar manner development close to the Thames on the north bank (Chelsea) and the south bank (Battersea) in the London Borough of Wandsworth can have an adverse effect on the setting of the conservation area, particularly if this changes the relative scale or dominance of the built form. This Management Plan seeks to ensure that the scale of development respects the smaller scale setting of the conservation area as far as it is possible.

Open space and public realm

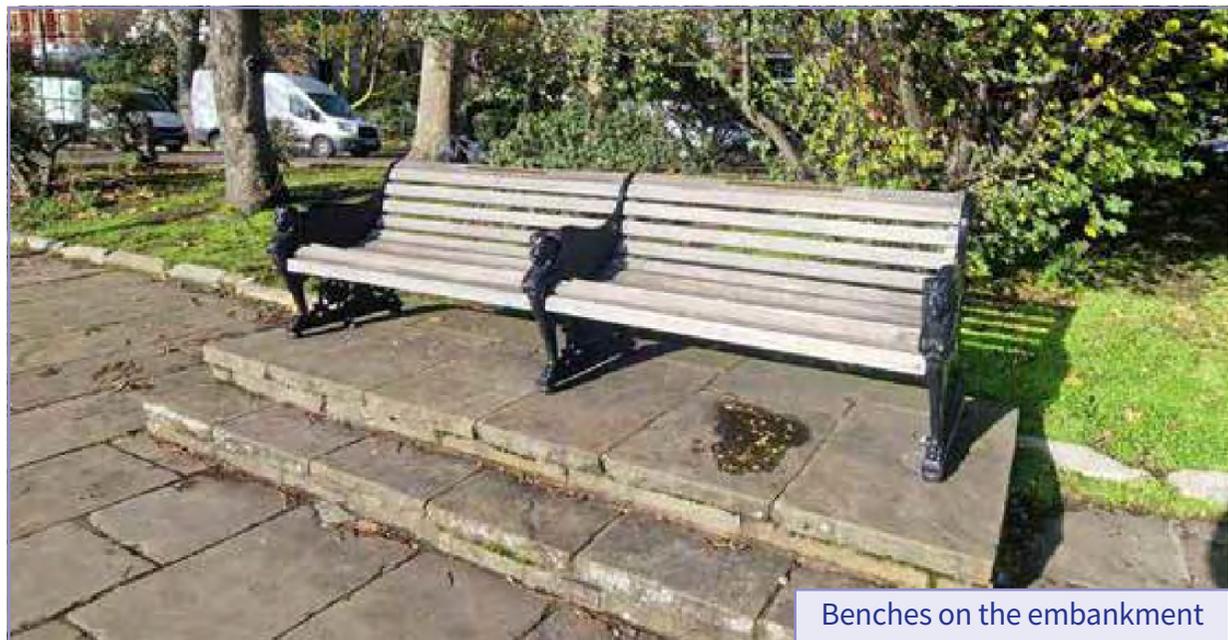
One of the most distinctive features of the conservation area is the counterpoint between the firm engineering lines of the Embankment and the narrow but lushly planted embankment gardens, opening out from time to time into small parklets and strung together like pearls in a necklace by the continuous avenue of mature London Plane trees. The planting, and particularly the tree avenue, help to redeem the environment of the Embankment from resembling an urban motorway, being particularly important both aesthetically and in mitigation of pollution and other harmful environmental impacts such as noise.

Trees contribute immensely to the character of the Thames Conservation Area, where they assist in softening a densely developed townscape, providing tangible and welcome relief to streets which would otherwise appear hard and uncompromising. Their changing appearance through the seasons provides a reassuring and living, growing presence within an overwhelmingly manmade environment. Indeed, the more mature trees are older than some of the buildings which now surround them. As the trees continue to grow, adequate care and attention needs to be taken to ensure their continued well-being.

Despite their importance to the townscape, no trees within the conservation area are covered by Tree Preservation Orders which would control works to them (TPO). However, the Embankment avenue and other trees are on publicly owned land and are managed by the Council, including on behalf of Transport for London (TfL), which has control of the Embankment red route. The Council is aware of their great visual and ecological value and is committed to ensuring their retention wherever possible. The Council's arboriculturists are willing to investigate reasonable requests and proposals for additional street trees in appropriate locations. The provision of new trees as part of redevelopment or other proposals within or in sites adjoining the conservation area is generally welcomed.

Street furniture and other features

Street furniture and other features within the public realm such as railings, benches, bollards, statuary and areas of traditional hard surfacing in the form of York stone or granite setts which positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area are identified in the audit of buildings and structures (see above). The audit also identifies those of greatest heritage interest, whether or not they are formally designated; and identifies areas of greatest heritage and visual sensitivity.



Benches on the embankment



Advertisement boards at Cheyne Walk

Given their often-positive contribution, the Council remains aware of the need to ensure that street furniture and other structures are well maintained and repaired and will continue to ensure this where it is within the Council's control. Structures identified within the audit as of high interest and high need will be prioritised for repair in line with our Streetscape Manual.

Where statuary has been lost or stolen, the Council will seek opportunities for its replacement. Where negative elements have been identified which detract from the public realm, these will be replaced or redesigned at an appropriate moment.

The Council is also committed to the following principles for the replacement of hard surfaces, particularly historic York stone within the public realm:

- Where historic materials are present, they should normally be retained or replaced like for like if necessary;
- Where possible, new traditional materials will be used in areas of highest heritage and visual sensitivity;
- Modern, non-traditional materials may be used in areas of less heritage and visual sensitivity provided no traditional materials will be lost;

- The Council will also seek keep traffic signage within the conservation area under review, and will seek to consolidate it or remove it where it is no longer needed, provided it is safe to do so.

Advertisements

Some external advertising can have a harmful impact on an area of historic townscape, if not managed correctly and with clear policy and guidance. There are two large internally illuminated dynamic advertisements at the intersection of Lots Road, Cheyne Walk and Cremorne Road, which could be improved with better design and more thought about what is displayed with better management of contracts with providers. Where these commercial sites can be improved to better meet the historic context, opportunities will be taken to do so.

The Thames

The River Thames and the national trail, the Thames Path, which follows the riverside where possible are amenities of considerable value in this otherwise densely developed part of London. The Thames itself is a feature of London of the greatest antiquity and historic and natural interest, better understanding of which may enhance the experience of visiting it.

The riverside path provides an opportunity to turn away from the heavy traffic along the

Embankment to walk within or through Chelsea at one remove from the noise and fumes, or to pause and take in the attractive vistas and views along and across the river. The viewing platform created by the Thames Tideway Tunnel Project opposite the Royal Hospital site is a welcome extension of the public realm.

The Council is committed to promoting and maximising the waterfront as a major amenity within the borough, including through identifying opportunities and funding for enhancements. The kind of enhancements which might support and encourage greater use of and engagement with the Thames as an amenity area might include better wayfinding (for instance through well designed signage or finger posts); increased and enhanced interpretation, which might be on site or virtual; and perhaps new public art.

The Thames Path is an important component in accessing the river but is not able to follow the line of the river margin at all points as it passes through Chelsea. For instance, it passes under Albert Bridge through the historic subways associated with the bridge, but pedestrians travelling east and west along the river side have to cross busy junctions at the approaches to Chelsea and Battersea Bridges. Improvements to pedestrian safety at Battersea Bridge and along the Embankment have been put in place by TfL, including a signalised crossing and a reduced

speed limit to be introduced along the Embankment. Sadly, these measures were introduced in response to a pedestrian death. The Council will continue to press for increased safety at these busy junctions.

An area of open land to the west of Chelsea Bridge was identified in the past as a potential site for a riverside walkway with potential to be extended under the bridge. The site has access gates and a path in some form but is now extremely overgrown. While it may have some potential to create a new underpass under the bridge, it also has ecological value as an undisturbed site.

The Thames Path currently diverts from the riverside into Lots Road and passes to the rear of Cremorne Wharf. Cremorne Wharf is a Safeguarded Wharf currently vacant due to the construction of the Thames Tideway Tunnel, and the Port of London Authority have confirmed that the use could still be reactivated for cargo handling when that project is complete. Given its potential to return to commercial use there is no aspiration for a change in the course of the riverside walk in the short or medium term. The Council would support better access to the river at this point at some point in the future if the cargo-handling function of the wharf were to cease, and will also ensure that this future possibility is not compromised by planned changes in the present.

As the Thames Conservation Area contains only the river wall and riverbed adjacent to Cremorne Wharf, with the main body of the wharf within the Lots Village Conservation Area, recommendations for improvements to the pedestrian experience passing around Cremorne Wharf will be dealt with in a future Lots Village Conservation Area Management Plan.

Archaeology

The whole Thames Conservation Area lies within the Tier II Chelsea Riverside Archaeological Priority Area (APA), identified by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS)

who are the Borough's advisors on archaeological matters. This is as a defined area where, according to existing information, there is significant known archaeological interest or potential for new discoveries. A Tier II area is a local area within which the Greater London Historic Environment Record, held by GLAAS, contains specific evidence indicating the presence or likely presence of heritage assets of archaeological interest.

This APA is one of the most archaeologically significant areas of the Royal Borough containing multi-phase archaeology dating from prehistoric times to industrial archaeology in the Chelsea Creek area. Early activity is



Viewing platform created by the Thames Tideway Tunnel Project

revealed by finds from the River Thames which are generally believed to have been deliberately deposited for ritual or votive purposes and include later prehistoric and Roman human remains, weaponry and a cauldron. The most spectacular find from this stretch of the river is the Battersea Shield, dating to c. 350 to 50 BC, found in 1857 and now in the British Museum. Other finds include a Roman anchor, medieval swords, a horse harness and belt mounts as well as post medieval wrecks and river defences.

There is also archaeological evidence for Roman and Saxon settlement in Chelsea close to the river, the nucleus of which was the Chelsea Old Church area. This early settlement area was protected by low-lying marshland to the east and west and set within a wider landscape sparsely populated by farms, large fields and the established prehistoric, Roman and medieval trackway and road systems. Timbers have been found in the Thames just west of Battersea Bridge dating to the period 700-900 AD, which appear to have formed a fish-trap. The fish-trap is thought to have been constructed in the reign of King Offa 757-796 AD. Timber uprights (which are still present) would have once supported wattled panels and funneled fish into a woven basket. It is a very rare example of such a trap which were concentrated in small numbers on the Thames to the west of the City of London.

Until about the 16th century, Chelsea formed a small rural riverside settlement around the church, manor house and alongside the river with two large arable fields, Eastfield and Westfield, to the north. Following Sir Thomas More's move to the area in 1524 and his death in 1535, a succession of prominent residents, notably Henry VIII, occupied his estate, a trend which continued around it, until, by the 17th century, Chelsea became a riverside resort for courtiers and wealthy Londoners.

By 1744 Chelsea village had developed into a small town built along the river with nurseries and market gardens in the hinterland. About this time industry began to develop along the western reaches of the riverside, the most important of which was fine porcelain manufacture, in particular the world-renowned Chelsea Porcelain factory, to the north of the Thames CA.

The area attracted distinguished residents including artists and writers, notably the Pre-Raphaelites, Turner, Whistler, Singer Sargent, Eliot, Wilde and many more. In the 20th century focus of the settlement moved from the riverside to the King's Road reaching its zenith in the Swinging Sixties. The grand areas of Chelsea in the centre of the APA contrasted with the slums of west Chelsea; Turks Row, Paradise Row and the World's End area. Industrial centres grew up in the marshy riverine zones and particularly around the mouth of Chelsea Creek.

The Chelsea Riverside APA encompasses the old waterfront and foreshore, which prior to the construction of Chelsea Bridge in 1856, the Chelsea Embankment in 1857, Albert Bridge in 1873 and Battersea Bridge in 1890, was either formed of coal, hay and timber wharves and small riverside industries interspersed with the landscaped gardens of the great houses stretching down to the water-front.

Applications for development within the Thames Conservation Area which are likely to disturb buried archaeological remains will be expected to be supported at the pre-application state by adequate information, including a desk-based assessment, which determines, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment within a specified area. Where warranted, this information may also include the results of an archaeological field evaluation. Undesignated archaeology which may be affected may be treated as an undesignated heritage asset. If so, based on the information supplied, the Council will follow the requirements of paragraph 207 of the NPPF in planning decisions on the development by making a balanced judgement between the scale of any harm to a non-designated asset of less than national importance and the significance of that asset.

Further information regarding the Archaeological Priority Areas is available on the Historic England website at:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/our-planning-services/greater-london-archaeology-advisory-service/greater-london-archaeological-priority-areas>

The Museum of London's collections can be explored at:

www.londonmuseum.org.uk/search/collections/?q=collections

Artefacts in the British Museum from Chelsea or nearby, including the Battersea Sheild, can be explored in the online collection at:

www.britishmuseum.org/collection

10. Implementation

Following consultation and subsequent amendments, this Conservation Area Management Plan will be adopted by RBKC as a Conservation Area Management Plan which has been prepared under s71 and s72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The guidelines set out in the Historic England document 'Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management' (February 2019) have also been followed.

Both RBKC and building owners and occupiers or those managing the public realm are responsible for the implementation of this plan. It is the responsibility of these parties to gain the necessary consents for any changes to their property. It is RBKC's responsibility to review and determine planning permission for changes within the area, monitor the condition of the conservation area, maintain and enhance the public realm in its ownership, keep building owners informed of the conservation area designation, and to review and update this plan on a regular basis.

