

3 Function

Land uses

The adjacent plan shows ground floor land uses within the study area boundary and the immediate vicinity, which provides a general picture of the area. However, it is useful to note some of the other significant land uses not reflected by the plan:

- Campden Hill Towers and Ivy Lodge contain residential dwellings on upper floors.
- Newcombe House, Astley House and United House contain office floorspace.

The broad configuration is a mixed use district centre surrounded by residential neighbourhoods.

There are some instances where active/public uses occur beyond the main frontage, such as Hillgate Street & The Mall.

The main retail centre reaches along Notting Hill Gate from Ladbroke Terrace in the west to the Borough boundary at Ossington Street in the east, also extending north and south to some degree along Pembridge Road and Kensington Church Street.

More specifically, Kensington Church Street is the location of a number of specialist retail units including antiques shops and galleries. Pembridge Road, and to some extent the north east side of Notting Hill Gate, have a high proportion of independent shops specialising in music and fashion, perhaps reflecting the passing trade afforded by visitors to Portobello Road in search of an alternative shopping experience.

The retail centre is smaller than competing centres within close proximity. Notting Hill Gate therefore tends to cater for the day to day needs of residents and office workers rather than attracting shoppers from further afield. This issue is explored in more detail in the Analysis of Retail Evidence, which forms part of the evidence base for the SPD.

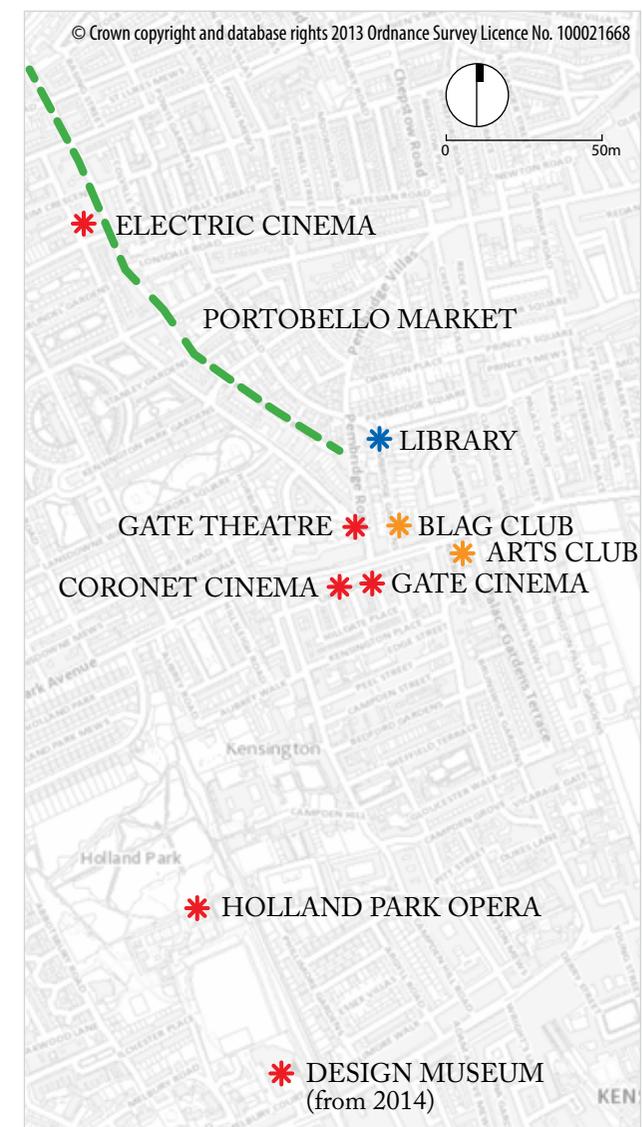
There are a range of places to eat and drink throughout the district centre. The nature of these units varies, with some catering for daytime office users whereas others are cafes/restaurants and pubs/bars which are active during the day and into the evening. There are also a number of fast food takeaways.

Pembridge Gardens has a concentration of hotels, where large detached villas have leant themselves to this type of conversion. There are a number of Faith establishments around the periphery of the district centre - Kensington Temple, Essex Unitarian Church, Second Church of Christ Scientist and Bethesda Baptist Church. In terms of education use, Fox Primary School is located towards the south of Hillgate Village.

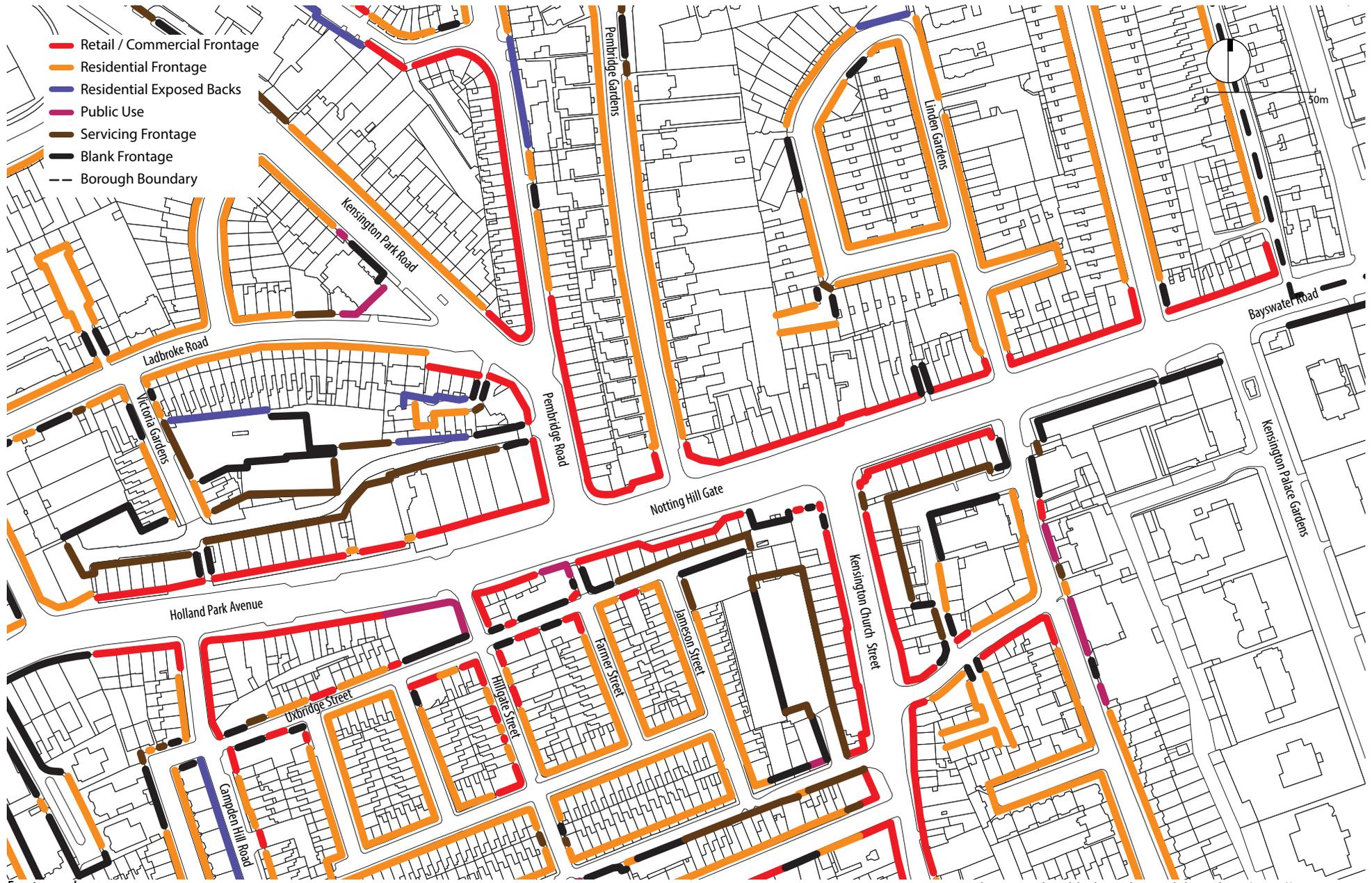
The area has a long-standing reputation for arts and culture. A number of arts and cultural venues are located in the study area, notably:

- The Gate Theatre
- The Gate Cinema
- The Coronet Cinema

These and other uses such as Notting Hill Arts Club and Blag Club, along with pubs, bars and restaurants, generate activity into the evening.



Cultural facilities plan



Frontages plan

Frontages

The plan denotes ground floor frontages and illustrates where activity from the buildings activates the street (to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the building use).

It is evident that the majority of retail / commercial frontage activates Notting Hill Gate, Pembridge Road and Kensington Church Street. The quality of the shop fronts which make up the district centre retail core varies. The podium arrangement at Newcombe House creates a poor interface with the street.

Beyond the retail centre, the arrangement of streets and buildings is such that most streets have an almost continuous residential frontage, with only a few instances where the rears of residential properties are exposed, creating a blank frontage onto the public realm.

The rear of a number of the buildings developed during the 1950's/1960's are dominated by inactive frontages due to servicing. These include Astley House, Newcombe House, David Game House and the block from United House to Gate Hill Court. These buildings effectively turn their back on the surroundings, detaching them from the adjacent setting. This has a particularly detrimental impact on Uxbridge Street where buildings face onto the rear of properties lining Notting Hill Gate.

The issue is compounded where pedestrian routes run through these blocks, connecting Notting Hill Gate to the surrounding neighbourhoods (notably at the bottom of Victoria Gardens and at the top of Farmer Street). These blank frontages onto narrow pedestrian routes makes them unappealing to pedestrians and gives the perception that they are unsafe.

Traditional shop front, Kensington Church Street



The Churchill Arms, Kensington Church Street



The Book Warehouse, Notting Hill Gate



Recent shop front improvements at Notting Hill Gate



Astley House



Uxbridge Street looking towards Newcombe House



Pedestrian access to Notting Hill Gate from Farmer Street



Pedestrian access to Notting Hill Gate from the rear of Newcombe House

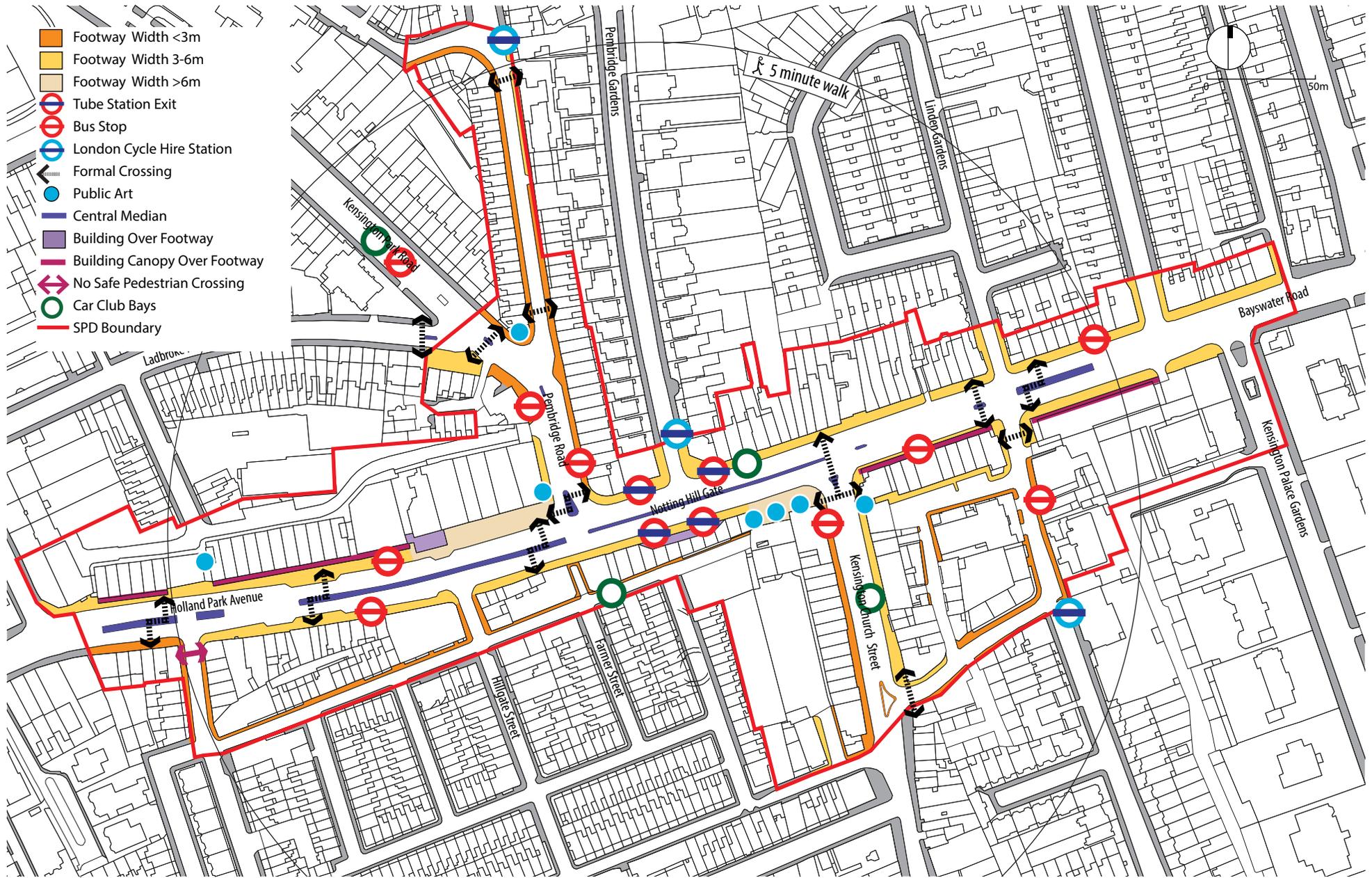


Pedestrian access to Notting Hill Gate from Victoria Gardens



Car park to the rear of Newcombe House





Movement plan

Access and movement

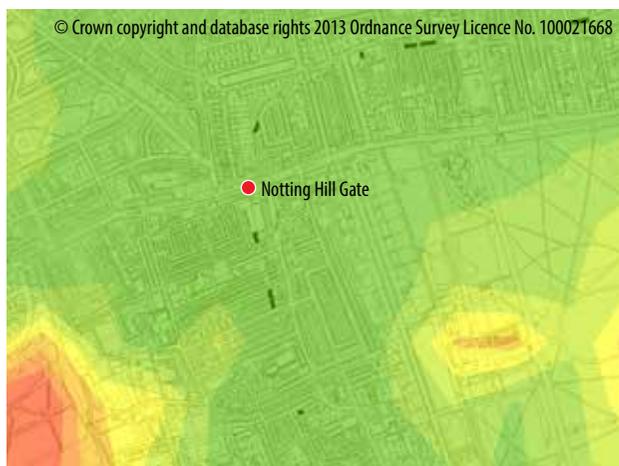
Road network

Notting Hill Gate originated as a settlement along a Roman road running east-west. This route, now the A402 remains a major route between London and the west and is part of London's Strategic Road Network. Pembridge Road and Kensington Church Street form one of only a few north-south routes in the Borough. This increases traffic on the section of Notting Hill Gate between the two junctions leading to congestion, particularly as the route is heavily used by buses. As such, this stretch is often dominated by traffic at the expense of a comfortable pedestrian environment.

Parking and Loading

Some pay and display parking is available on Notting Hill Gate, however on street parking is limited and occupancy is high. There are 49 parking bays within the SPD area, and a further 52 in side roads in the immediate vicinity.

There is service access to the rear of United House and Newcombe House via Uxbridge Street. Some loading takes place on street, although loading restrictions are in place on Notting Hill Gate.



Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)

Public transport infrastructure

Notting Hill Gate has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating of 6a (excellent) owing to the busy bus network and proximity to Central, and Circle and District underground lines. There are station entrances on the north and south side of Notting Hill Gate with a concourse under the road, with escalators leading down to Central line. The underground entrances are congested at peak times, particularly at weekends when visitors arrive here for Portobello Road and market.

Pedestrian and cycle facilities

Movement space is constrained and priority is mainly given over to vehicles at present. This leaves little space for cyclists, although advanced stop lines are provided in some locations. Docking stations for Barclays Bikes are located on Pembridge Road and Pembridge Gardens and a number of cycle stands are provided throughout the district centre, although this adds to footway clutter in places, creating an obstacle for pedestrians.

The retail centre is relatively compact, the majority falls within a 5 minute walk from the underground station. However, the pedestrian environment is poor and footway overcrowding is an issue around the tube entrances and towards Portobello Road at weekends, particularly on the eastern side of Pembridge Road where the narrow footway is at odds with high footfall (see overleaf for the level of service plan and opposite for the movement plan). The sense of arrival and townscape legibility on arrival at Notting Hill Gate give visitors a poor first impression and the main route to Portobello Road is not immediately clear. Legible London wayfinding signage has been introduced to try to address this.

With three vehicle lanes in each direction (between Pembridge Road and Kensington Church Street), the main road represents a significant barrier to pedestrian movement. Guardrail along the central median, constrained staggered crossings and the proliferation

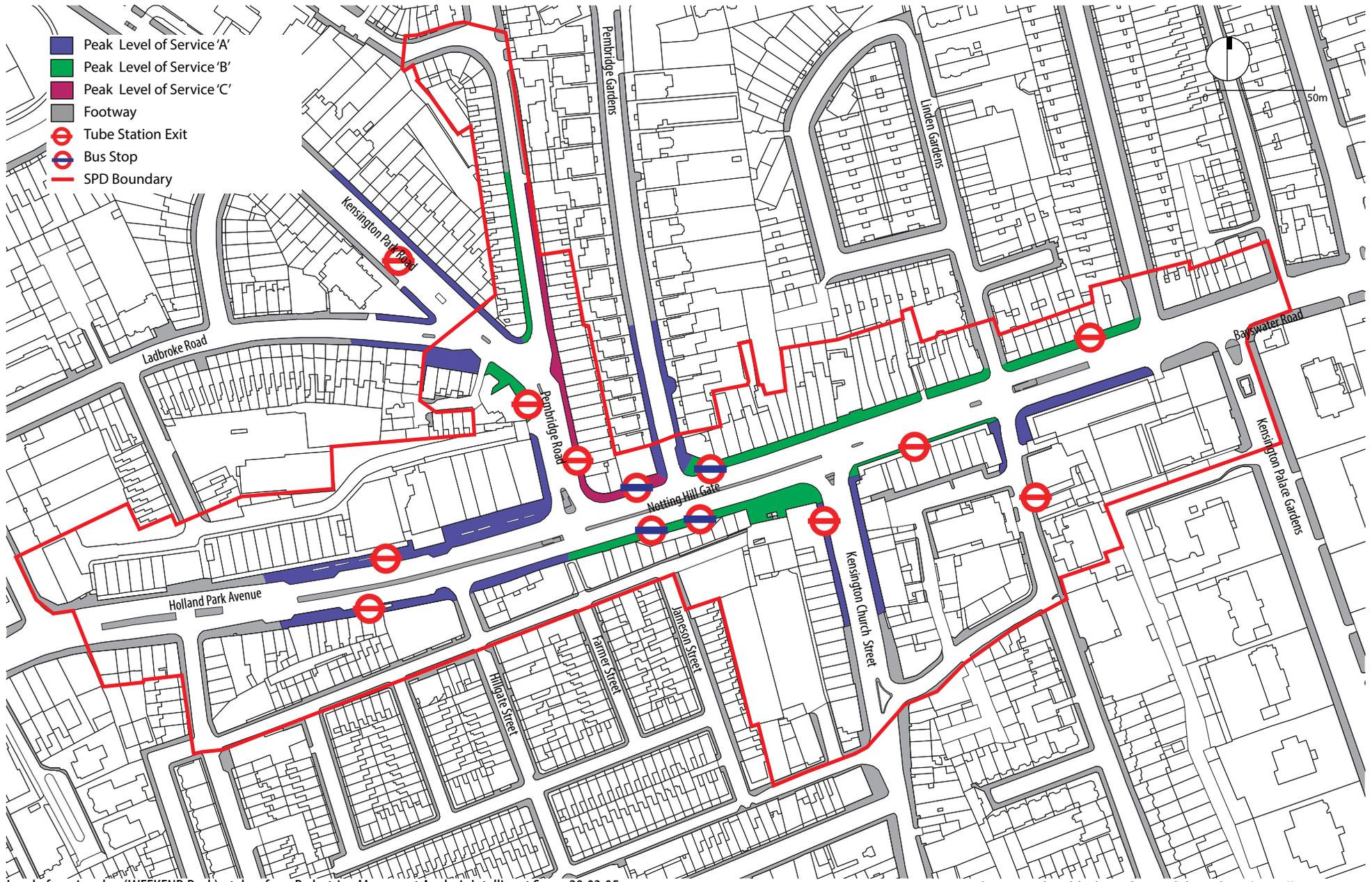
of street clutter restricts pedestrian movement and the footway capacity is insufficient for peak times. Pedestrian crossings are inadequate and are not provided at all across Campden Hill Road or the eastern arm of Notting Hill Gate / Pembridge Road junction. Attempts have been made to improve the public realm through numerous small scale public art interventions (see plan). Fundamental improvements to the quality of the townscape and public realm may open up the possibility of exploring the idea of embedded art as an alternative to a piecemeal approach to public art.

On the level of service plans overleaf;

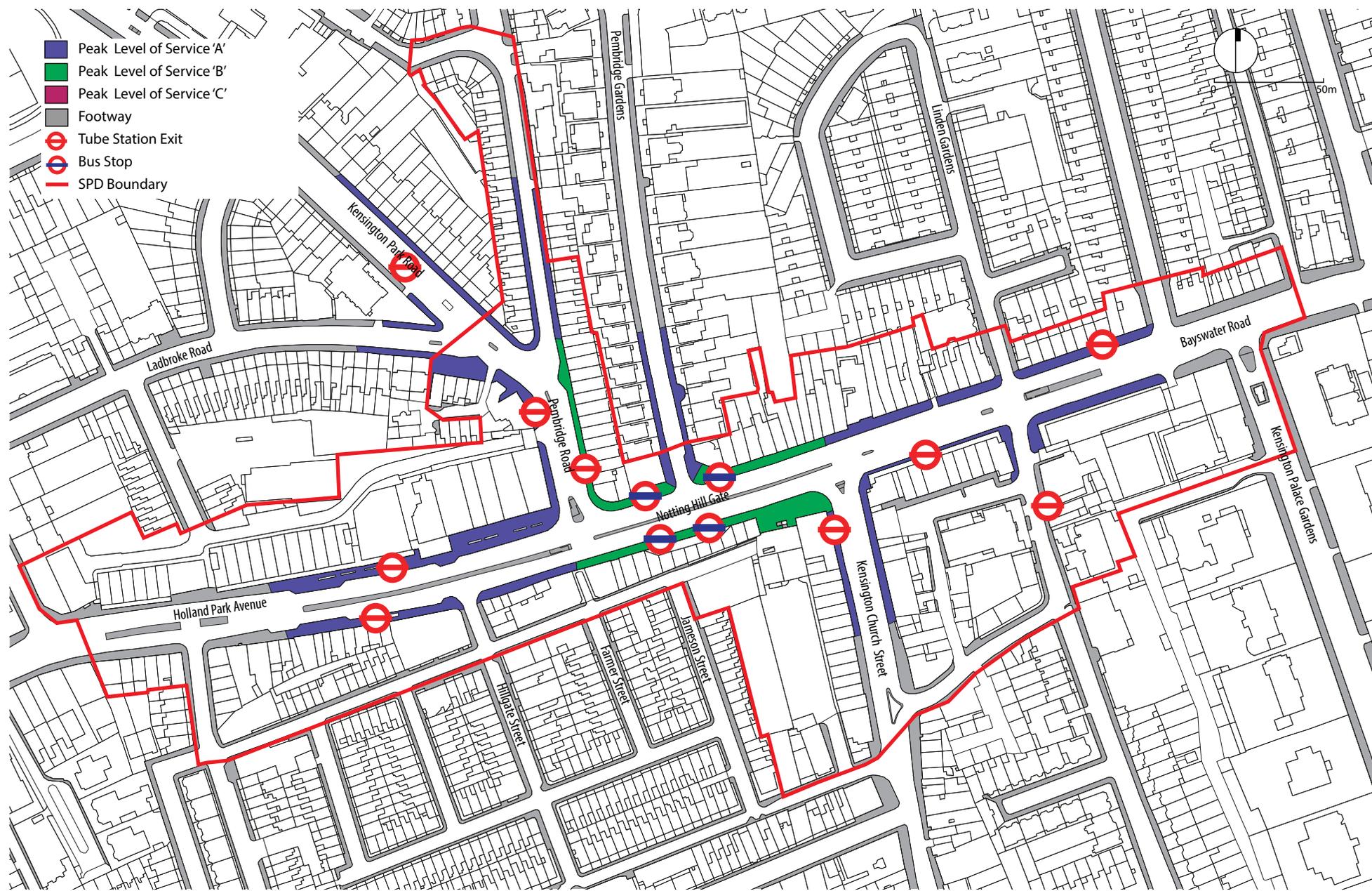
- 'A' represents sufficient area for pedestrians to freely select their own walking speed, to bypass slower pedestrians and to avoid crossing conflicts with others.
- 'B' represents sufficient space for normal walking speed and bypass other pedestrians in primarily one directional flows. Where reverse direction or pedestrian crossing movements exist, minor conflicts will occur.
- 'C' represents the freedom to select individual walking speed and freely pass other pedestrians is restricted. Where pedestrian cross movements and reverse flows exist, there is a high probability of conflict requiring frequent adjustment of speed and direction to avoid contact.

The weekend level of service plan highlights the severity of the footway overcrowding on Pembridge Road in particular. At weekends when visitor numbers to Portobello Market are high, different transport modes compete for the limited space available and the eastern footway on Pembridge Road becomes a level 'C'. The plan also indicates other locations which are under some pressure particularly at the weekend peak (level B):

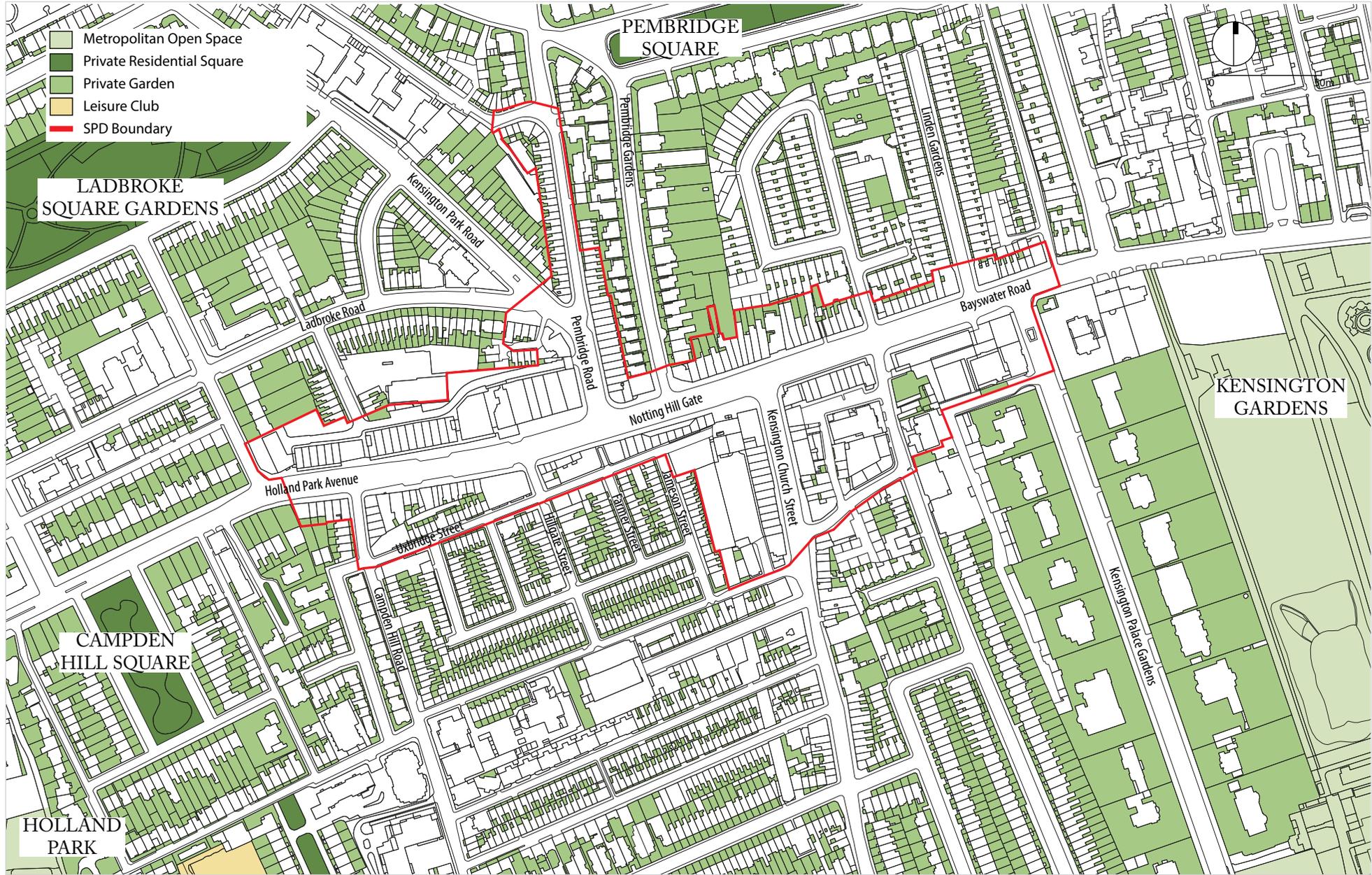
- Northern side of Notting Hill Gate from Pembridge Road to Clanricarde Gardens
- Footway outside Newcombe House and David Game House
- Areas on the western side of Pembridge Road



Level of service plan (WEEKEND Peak) - taken from Pedestrian Movement Analysis Intelligent Space 29.03.05



Level of service plan (WEEKDAY Peak) - taken from Pedestrian Movement Analysis Intelligent Space 29.03.05



Open space plan

Open space

The open space accessibility plan in the Borough's Core Strategy identifies the majority of the study area as beyond 400m of public open space. However, Notting Hill Gate benefits from proximity to two large metropolitan open spaces – Kensington Gardens and Holland Park, which are high quality public parks. This is very positive in relation to the standard set by the London Plan by which residents should be within 3.2km of metropolitan open space.

The amount of open space reduces towards the centre of Notting Hill Gate reflecting the built up urban character of the district centre. The combination of open spaces and urban high street complement one another, with the large parks providing respite from the busy urban centre. There is scope to improve and 'green' the public realm in Notting Hill Gate to create a high quality, walkable network of streets and spaces.

For residents, the lack of public open space is compensated in part by the garden squares which characterise the conservation areas.

There are three garden squares in the vicinity: Pembridge Square, Ladbroke Square Gardens and Campden Hill Square nearby. These are a typical feature of Kensington and Chelsea, and provide well maintained communal green space for residents. The garden squares, along with street trees, make a

significant contribution to greening what is a relatively dense and built up area. There is a clear pattern of smaller private gardens in Hillgate Village (compared with surrounding areas), due to the fine urban grain and the smaller scale of the properties.

In general the quality and function of the public realm in Notting Hill Gate is inadequate. Pedestrian space is constrained and excess street furniture and guard rails create barriers to movement.

There are wider pavement spaces on the north side of the street between Campden Hill Towers and Pembridge Road and the space in front of Newcombe House. These suffer from the negative impact of wind, exacerbated by the adjacent tall buildings. The latter is often in the shade of the buildings due to its orientation and has a poor interface with the adjacent buildings due to the blank frontage created by the podium arrangement at the base of Newcombe House. Trees and artworks have been introduced in an attempt to improve these spaces but there is scope to significantly improve the design of the public realm and the quality of materials.

Potential improvements to the public realm have been identified in more detail in the evidence base work carried out by Project Centre.



Mature avenue of trees on Kensington Palace Gardens



Younger street trees on Notting Hill Gate

Public realm quality



Overcrowded footway, Pembridge Road



Handmade sign directing visitors to Portobello Market



Footway space restricted by underground entrance



Severance of the street by guard railing



Community artwork introduced to improve alleyways



Wider footway with seating and street trees



Previous improvements to the space in front of Newcombe House introduced seating and tree planting



Public art introduced to improve public space but fundamentally the poor interface between the building and the public realm undermines the quality of the space

Key issues

Appraisal of the functional townscape at Notting Hill Gate identifies the following issues that any policy, guidance or scheme must address:

- That the district centre lacks a significant anchor, and is not well placed at present to withstand competition from surrounding centres that have a better quality of retail and mix of unit sizes
- That the street currently has positive and active frontages, and gaps need to be resolved in any redevelopment and the quality of the retail environment improved
- How to make the street much more pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists, by reducing the domination of the car, and addressing pavement congestion
- Providing good residential quality of life, without the need for the provision of further open space
- The existing office stock is outdated and in need of being upgraded to cater for modern requirements.

