

Core Strategy

for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
with a Focus on North Kensington
Development Plan Document

Adopted: 8th December 2010

Chapter 11 Kensington High Street

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 Kensington High Street has been one of London's top retail streets for the last 100 years. The centre lost some of its original *raison d'être* as the biggest concentration of department stores outside Oxford Street with the closure of Pontings and Derry and Tom's in the early 1970s, and more recently Barker's. In the seventies Derry and Tom's became the home of the legendary Biba emporium (once described as 'the most beautiful store in the world'), making Kensington High Street a fashion destination. With the closure of Biba in the mid seventies, this role was continued by Hyper Hyper in the eighties and Kensington Market, which survived until comparatively recently, and remains reflected today in the cluster of young fashion shops in the eastern end of the centre.

11.1.2 At its western end there is a highly unusual cluster of bespoke travel agents and outdoor leisure shops that attracts destination shoppers. However, other shops, such as hardware, are not well represented. Women's fashion also remains strong, and the centre is anchored by Whole Foods Market and Marks and Spencer in the eastern end. The side streets contain many bars, pubs and restaurants.

11.1.3 Kensington Church Street and the surrounding side streets are home to fashion retailers, antique shops, cafés and delicatessens. Many of these shops are independently-owned rather than chain stores.

11.1.4 With the opening of Westfield London in 2008, Kensington High Street was identified as the most likely of our centres to suffer. The street is a long one, and it is difficult to maintain retail vitality along its full length. The High Street performs more strongly in the summer because of visitor attractions and events.

11.1.5 As well as being a major shopping destination, Kensington High Street also serves a large, densely-developed residential community that can walk into the centre.

11.1.6 The centre has a significant amount of office floorspace with the Associated Newspaper Group located in the upper floors of the old Barker's

building, Kensington Town Hall adjacent to the High Street, as well as Sony and Warners and other smaller offices.

11.1.7 The centre has benefited from comprehensive public realm improvements, that have gained international acclaim. This has put in place high-quality, York-stone paving, created a central reservation bike park and removed street clutter, particularly guard railing. These improvements have made crossing the street much easier, the pedestrian environment more comfortable and encouraged higher footfall on the northern side of the street (previously footfall was heavily concentrated on the southern side).

11.1.8 Despite the public realm improvements, people still perceive traffic congestion and the irregularity of the District and Circle Lines to be issues. High Street Kensington Station is a major public transport interchange and the High Street is also served by a large number of buses. The Circle Line service is due to be extended to Hammersmith via Paddington in December 2009.

11.1.9 The Grade II* Listed Commonwealth Institute building is at the western end of the centre. A high-quality public institutional use could help to enhance the attractiveness of the High Street and attract more visitors. To that end it is included as a Strategic Site Allocation within this Core Strategy - see Chapter 24. A planning application was received in 2009 which included modifications to the building for the Design Museum, with enabling residential development also on the site. The Council is minded to grant permission subject to a s.106 agreement.

11.1.10 The Odeon cinema is opposite the Commonwealth Institute. Maintaining a high-quality cinema in this location is essential.

11.1.11 The eastern end of the Kensington High Street runs to the south of Kensington Gardens. The London Plan considers that both the Royal Park and the area immediately to the west (an area which contains a number of embassies) to form part of the 'agglomeration of vitally important activities that define London's role as a world city'. As such it has been included within the Central Activities Zone (CAZ). The London Plan offers an 'indicative boundary' for the CAZ and notes that this should be refined by the local planning authority. The detailed boundary is confirmed within the Proposals Map in Section 2a, Chapter 28.

11.2 Vision

CV 11

Vision for Kensington High Street in 2028

Kensington High Street will have redefined its role to ensure that it distinguishes its offer from Westfield, Knightsbridge and King's Road. The centre will have continued its long tradition as Kensington's High Street, serving residents, workers and visitors. It will continue to provide a good range of food and other convenience retailing and remain a destination for fashion and certain niche markets. Ease of pedestrian movement will be central to this success. Re-use of the former Commonwealth Institute for a significant public institution will have attracted increased visitor numbers and developed a further niche retail cluster at the western end of the High Street. The cinema will have been maintained.

11.3 Priorities for Action

11.3.1 The priorities for action for Kensington High Street have been set out under the Strategic Objectives for the Core Strategy as a whole. The Strategic Objectives are not listed in the same order for each place, instead they have been listed in order of importance for delivering the vision for each place.

Fostering Vitality

11.3.2 The Council will work with retailers, landlords, residents and other stakeholders to build upon and market the existing strengths of the centre: the young fashion cluster, bespoke travel and outdoor leisure goods, and independent retail in Kensington Church Street. In particular there is an opportunity to publicise the retail offer and other attractions of the area - Kensington Palace, Leighton House, Linley Sambourne House, Holland Park Opera, Kensington Gardens and Holland Park

- to visitors staying in hotels near the centre, to encourage them to visit or to stay longer particularly during the summer⁽¹⁾.

11.3.3 Due to its high public transport accessibility, Kensington High Street will be a preferred location for large-scale offices. New office developments, both large and small, would be particularly welcome on upper floors, particularly to grow the media industry in the centre. The Council supports offices rather than homes above shops in primary retail frontages⁽²⁾.

11.3.4 In order to support the key shopping role of the centre, the loss of shops will be rigorously assessed to ensure the necessary flexibility does not undermine the vitality of the centre⁽³⁾.

11.3.5 The Council will work to establish a new public institutional use for the Commonwealth Institute⁽⁴⁾. It will also require the retention of a high-quality cinema on the Odeon site⁽⁵⁾.

Keeping Life Local

11.3.6 The Council supports the centre continuing to offer a wide range of convenience retailing, with particular emphasis on food retailing, from specialist delicatessens to supermarkets, and services like the library, for local residents, workers and visitors⁽⁶⁾.

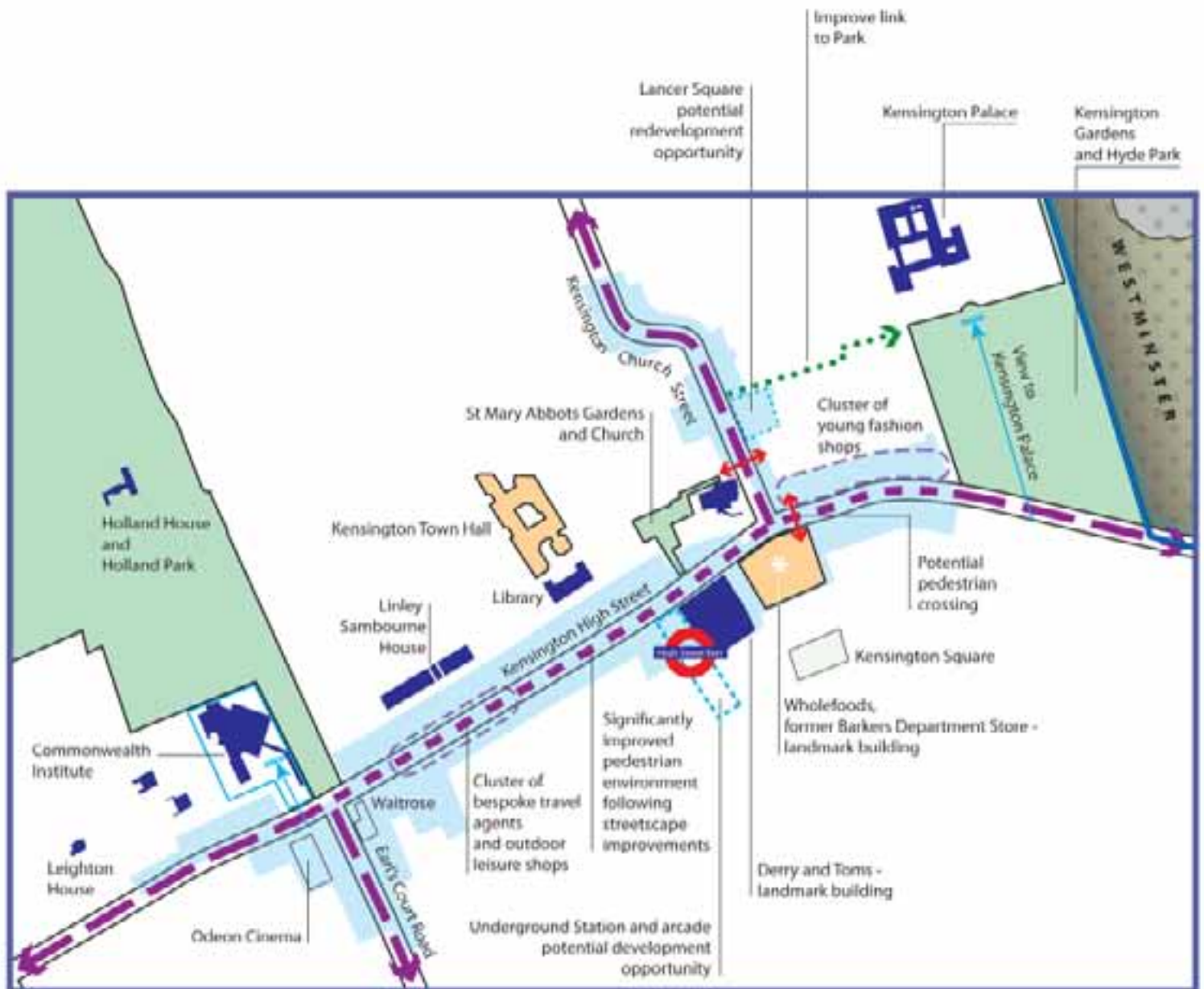
Renewing the Legacy

11.3.7 There are a number of listed buildings in and adjacent to the centre: the former Vestry Hall/Library, the 'Art Deco' former department stores (Derry and Toms (Grade II*) and Barkers), St Mary Abbots Church, at the Kensington Church Street junction; the former Commonwealth Institute (Grade II*), and Kensington Palace and Holland House (both Grade I) at either end of the High Street. Most of the High Street also falls within designated conservation areas, and just to the rear of the Barkers building lies Kensington Square, one of the first Garden Squares in London.

1 See Corporate and Partner Action 1, in the Fostering Vitality, Chapter 31.
 2 See Policy CF 5, Location of Business Uses in the Fostering Vitality, Chapter 31.
 3 See Policy CF2, Retail Development within Town Centres and Policy CF3, Diversity of Uses within Town Centres, in the Fostering Vitality Chapter 31.
 4 See Policy CK1, Social and Community Uses, in the Keeping Life Local, Chapter 30, the former Commonwealth Institute Strategic Site Allocation within Section 2a Allocations and Designations and the Tent in the Park Adopted SPD.
 5 See Policy CK1, Social and Community Uses, in the Keeping Life Local, Chapter 30.
 6 See Policy CK1, Social and Community Uses and Policy CK2, Local Shopping Facilities, in the Keeping Life Local, Chapter 30.

11 KENSINGTON HIGH STREET

Key Issues and Potential Opportunities



SYMBOL DESCRIPTION

	Create new link		Designated Shopping Centre
	High traffic volumes		Public Open Space
	Improve pedestrian access		Private green spaces (not all private green spaces are shown)
	Vista		Strategic development sites, allocated in the Core Strategy
	Grade I and II* listed buildings		Potential development sites
	Selected Grade II listed buildings (not all Grade II listed buildings are shown)		Central Activities Zone

11.3.8 The versatility of our built heritage is shown by the way the department stores have been remodelled to meet current retailing requirements. Similarly, the former Commonwealth Institute can be adapted to a new public institutional use that can anchor the west end of the High Street⁽⁷⁾. The Design Museum is actively interested in moving to this site, and the Council fully supports this initiative⁽⁸⁾.

11.3.9 The Council also supports proposals to improve visitor facilities at Kensington Palace⁽⁹⁾.

11.3.10 Lancer Square, Kensington Church Street, was redeveloped in the eighties but the square is not a particularly successful public space so the Council would support redevelopment of this site⁽¹⁰⁾.

11.3.11 High Street Kensington underground station is not inclusive for all as it does not allow step-free access. The station is not listed, and thus represents a potential redevelopment opportunity, although the arcade will be retained⁽¹¹⁾.

An Engaging Public Realm

11.3.12 Significant investment has already been made in streetscape and pedestrian improvements, and the scheme has been praised as a beacon of good design in the public realm. However, there remains an opportunity to improve the southern end of Kensington Church Street, and to improve the pedestrian crossings on Kensington Church Street and the east end of the High Street⁽¹²⁾.

11.3.13 There is a cluster of three open spaces behind St Mary Abbot's Church, north of the High Street, that provides a small green oasis for workers and shoppers.

11.3.14 The Commonwealth Institute and the space in front of it makes a welcome contrast to the High Street. To bring the Commonwealth Institute back into use enabling development might be required, which could include development on the frontage⁽¹³⁾.

Better Travel Choices

11.3.15 Since the significant public realm improvements to the High Street, cycling has increased in popularity.

11.3.16 The design of High Street Kensington Station is such that there is no step-free access and the capacity of stairways to the platforms is often not sufficient to meet demand, which can cause delay and safety problems. The Council supports refurbishment of the station to improve safety and provide step-free access⁽¹⁴⁾. The High Street is very well served by a range of bus routes but there is a need to improve visitor information on bus routes, particularly to Notting Hill Gate for Portobello Road⁽¹⁵⁾.

Diversity of Housing

11.3.17 The centre is surrounded by some of the most prestigious housing in the Borough, including Kensington Square, one of the oldest squares in London.

11.3.18 Providing a diversity of housing is important and schemes which would deliver additional affordable housing would be welcomed as long as this was not at the expense of the vitality of the centre⁽¹⁶⁾.

7 See Policy CK1, Social and Community Uses, in the Keeping Life Local, Chapter 30, the former Commonwealth Institute Strategic Site Allocation within Section 2a Allocations, and Designations and The Tent in the Park Adopted SPD.

8 This paragraph will be updated in line with events.

9 See Policy CL3, Heritage Assets and Policy CL4, Heritage Assets, in the Renewing the Legacy, Chapter 34.

10 See Policy CL1, Context and Character and Policy CL2, New Buildings and Modifications to Existing Buildings in the Renewing the Legacy, Chapter 34, Policy CF2, Retail Development within Town Centres, Policy CF3, Diversity of uses within Town Centres, and Policy CF8, Hotels in the Fostering Vitality, Chapter 31.

11 See Policy CT1, Improving Alternatives to Car Use and Corporate and Partner Actions 1, in the Better Travel Choices, Chapter 32.

12 See Policy CR4, Streetscape and Corporate and Partner Actions 1, in the An Engaging Public Realm, Chapter 33.

13 See Policy CK1, Social and Community Uses in the Keeping Life Local, Chapter 30, the former Commonwealth Institute Strategic Site Allocation within Section 2a Allocations and Designations and the Tent in the Park Adopted SPD.

14 See Policy CT1, Improving Alternatives to Car Use and Corporate and Partner Action 1, in the Better Travel Choices, Chapter 32.

15 See Corporate and Partner Action 1, in the Fostering Vitality, Chapter 31.

16 See Policy CH1, Housing Targets, Policy CH2, Housing Diversity, in the Diversity of Housing, Chapter 35 and Policy CF3, Diversity of Uses within Town Centres, in the Fostering Vitality, Chapter 31.

Respecting Environmental Limits

11.3.19 Kensington High Street is a busy road and it experiences a high level of pollution due to high traffic flows. The Council will support initiatives to improve air quality to reflect the Borough's designation as an Air Quality Management Area⁽¹⁷⁾.

11.4 Changes to the Town Centre Boundary

11.4.1 The boundary of the Kensington High Street centre largely follows that as shown within the Unitary Development Plan. The only exception is to the west of the centre, where the northern part of the Commonwealth Institute Local Centre has been subsumed into the 'secondary' frontages of the Major Centre. This section contains the Odeon Cinema and post office, as well as other shops which function as part of the centre. The nature of uses, with a high proportion of non-shop town centre uses would make a 'primary' frontage designation inappropriate.

11.5 Delivery

Development Management

11.5.1 Development Management Policies to implement the actions identified above are found in Chapters 30-36, and referenced by footnotes in the text above. However, in making a planning decision, it is often necessary to weight different policies against one another in a particular case. The Vision set out for Kensington High Street guides that decision making process but to ensure the place shaping role is given due weight within the planning process, a place shaping policy for Kensington High Street is required.

Policy CP 11

Kensington High Street

The Council will ensure the continued success of the High Street as a high quality shopping street serving residents, workers and visitors by paying close regard to the need to enhance the character of the area, support existing retail niches, attract new trip generating uses and ensure it is inclusive for all.

Quantum of development

11.5.2 There is one strategic allocation for Kensington High Street, the former Commonwealth Institute. A detailed map and the proposed allocation and site potential are given in Section 2a Allocations and Designations Chapter 24. This sets out that the site should be retained for a public institutional use with potential for some enabling development.

11.5.3 Two potential development sites have been identified which are shown on the Key Issues and Potential Opportunities map. Lancer Square and Kensington High Street station would both be suitable for retail use on the ground floor with other appropriate town centre uses on upper floors. The ground floor footprint of these sites is approximately 4,200sq.m (approximately 45,000sq.ft). These sites will be brought forward for development as market opportunities arise.

Infrastructure needs

11.5.4 The following infrastructure⁽¹⁸⁾ that would help to deliver the vision for Kensington High Street has been identified:

- refurbishment of High Street Kensington station to provide step-free access and increase the capacity of the platforms;
- improvements to the southern end of Kensington Church Street and the pedestrian crossings on Kensington Church Street and the east end of the High Street.

Future plans and documents

11.5.5 The following plan and document will be brought forward for Kensington High Street:

- Kensington High Street Town Centre Action Plan identifying the priorities and timescale for actions to support the commercial vitality of the centre. This is being brought forward by the Council's Town Centre Initiatives Manager and will not form a document within the LDF⁽¹⁹⁾.

17 See Policy CE5, Air Quality, in the Respecting Environmental Limits, Chapter 36.

18 See Infrastructure Schedule in Section 2c.

19 See Corporate and Partner Action 1, in the Fostering Vitality, Chapter 31.

Monitoring

11.5.6 The Vision: The focus of monitoring for Kensington High Street must be the extent to which the Vision has, or has not, been achieved. The following output indicators will be used to monitor the Vision.

1. Has the role of Kensington High Street been redefined to ensure it distinguishes its offer from Westfield, Knightsbridge and King's Road?
2. Has a new public institutional use been found for the former Commonwealth Institute?
3. Has the cinema been retained?
4. Have visitor facilities at Kensington Palace been improved?
5. Have Lancer Square and Kensington High Street station been redeveloped?
6. Have improvements been made to the southern end of Kensington Church Street and the pedestrian crossing on Kensington Church Street and the east end of the High Street?
7. Has visitor information on bus routes been improved?

11.5.7 The Priorities for Action: a separate monitoring framework has not been established for these. Instead, cross references are made through footnotes to policies and actions elsewhere within the plan that are monitored in the framework set out in Chapter 38.

11.5.8 Development Management: this policy is not separately monitored. The policy is a mechanism to ensure that those aspects of the Vision that can be controlled through development are accorded due weight – it is thus the Vision rather than the policy that should be the focus of monitoring.

11.5.9 Quantum of Development: this will be monitored through Policy CP1 – additional criteria are not required.

11.5.10 Infrastructure: this will be monitored through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, from which the place specific infrastructure has been drawn for inclusion in this *Place* chapter. Additional monitoring criteria are not therefore required.

11.5.11 Future plans and documents: progress on the preparation of these documents will be recorded in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report, published in the autumn of each year.



High Street Kensington