

PUBS IN KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

This is a background document to provide the evidence base for a new planning policy for the Kensington and Chelsea Core Strategy. It provides evidence on:

- the origins, growth and decline of pubs in Kensington and Chelsea
- the growth of pubs and beer houses during the 19th century
- the loss of pubs since 1900; and
- an analysis of the losses and the escalating pressures for change of use, especially to housing, in the last ten years in the absence of a policy to resist the loss of pubs.

The background includes details of the Chelsea Society's 2005 Exhibition on the rise and fall of pubs in Chelsea and the detailed analysis of changes.

Definition

Origins, Growth and Decline

The story of pubs in Kensington and Chelsea is the story of the development and redevelopment of the area, the growth and decline in population, changing social patterns and, most recently, the pressures of the property market.

The pubs that we still have today are “survivors” of several phases of development:

Before 1830:

- the original villages of Chelsea and Kensington [there were more than 20 pubs on the south side of Kensington High Street alone built before 1800]
- the taverns along the main roads into London, the King's Road, Fulham Road, Bayswater/Notting Hill Gate and their junctions with north-south routes such as the Queen's Elm on Old Brompton Road,
- “resorts” and “destinations”, such as the Chelsea Riverside, pleasure gardens (Ranelagh Gardens and Cremorne Gardens) and, even, the World's End; and
- “clusters” such as round the Royal Hospital.

1830-1900: Period of Rapid Urban Development:

The number of pubs and beer houses grew rapidly during the period between 1850 and 1900 as the Borough became almost completely developed.

- new pubs along main roads – King's Road, Fulham Road, Notting Hill Gate /Holland Park Avenue, Portobello Road, Ladbrooke Grove

- pubs built as an integral part of speculative developments as estates were developed;
- redevelopment of original pubs by larger, more modern pubs on the site of earlier pubs, such as the Goat in Boots (Fulham Road), the World's End (King's Road), the Queen's Elm (Old Brompton Road); and
- beer houses, sometimes associated with small, local breweries.

But the development and redevelopment process was not just about growth – it also resulted in demolition and redevelopment, as well as changes of use. Some of the main causes of losses were:

- **redevelopment** - as the pre-19th century buildings were removed, especially in the last quarter of the 19th century many pubs were swept away, such as the very large cluster around the Royal Hospital, and for new development, such as the department stores in Kensington High Street;
- **major infrastructure**, such as the Chelsea Embankment in the 1870s, which swept away a large number of pubs along bank of the Thames, road widening of Kensington High Street (1880s),

Post 1900:

The peak number of pubs was about 1900, which also coincided with the peak population. For example, the number of pubs in the former Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea in 1901 was 83.

Few pubs were built or rebuilt after 1900. A few pubs were destroyed in the Second World War, but there were significant losses due to demolition in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly:

- road widening of Notting Hill Gate (1960s), and the building of Westway and the West Cross Route in the 1970s, which swept away a whole swathe of pubs;
- clearance of housing for new council housing estates in the 1970s, especially in North Kensington, but also in south-west Chelsea; and
- a small number redeveloped for individual houses or block of flats.

Since the 1980s there has been a significant number of pubs that have changed use to restaurants, other types of drinking establishment (wine bars, cocktail bars), shops and estate agents – none of which required planning consent – as well as conversions to housing (individual houses or as flats) and offices.

Distribution of pubs today

The pattern of pubs in Kensington and Chelsea today still reflects the original pattern of development of the Borough – the “villages”, the main roads and the neighbourhood local pubs – although some of the original “clusters”, such as Kensington High Street, Notting Hill Gate and the Chelsea Riverside, have been drastically thinned out by redevelopment and major road projects. In recent years the losses through change of use to housing, restaurants and other uses have not been evenly distributed.

| | North of Holland Park Avenue/Notting Hill Gate | S. to Old Brompton Road | South of Old Brompton Road | Total |
|-----------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| 1980-2002 | 27 | 8 | 16 | 51 |
| 2002-2012 | 11 | 9 | 14 | 34 |

From the map produced as part of the consultation, from which the above figures are taken, it is evident that some areas have seen large losses of pubs since 1980, in particular:

North Kensington:

- the area west of Ladbrooke Grove and north of Holland Park Avenue, which, if the Duke of Clarence (203 Holland Park Avenue) were included, shows a **loss of 19 pubs** – leaving only 7 still open today. Norland Ward in particular has lost almost all of its pubs to housing. The Prince of Wales being the most recent and most high profile;
- the area to the east of Portobello Road, north of Notting Hill Gate, which saw a **loss of 13 pubs** – leaving 6, but only 3 south of mainline railway. Colville Ward has lost all its pubs east of Portobello Road; and
- the pubs along Portobello Road south of Westbourne Park Road account for a high proportion of those remaining in North Kensington.

Central and South Kensington:

This area showed a **loss of 16 pubs** since 1980, with pockets of losses such as Notting Hill Gate (3), Abingdon Ward (4)

Chelsea

Overall, the former Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea – everything south of Fulham Road – lost 24 pubs between 1980 and 2012.

Fulham Road has **lost 9 pubs**, especially concentrated in the western section (5), leaving only 3 still operating today from South Kensington to the Borough boundary.

South-west Chelsea – south of Fulham Road and east as far as Beaufort Street (most of Cremorne and Stanley Wards) – **lost 10 pubs** – mainly to restaurants. These are mainly on Fulham Road and the King's Road.

A new gap - area of potential losses - is emerging between Beaufort Street and Oakley Street, following the loss of 50 Cheyne Walk to a restaurant, where two pubs – the Cross Keys and the Phene are now under threat from conversion to housing. If these were lost, more than half (7 out of 12) of the pubs south of King's Road – the original concentration of pubs in Chelsea – would have disappeared.

There is further small concentration of losses in South East Chelsea – in the backstreets west of Sloane Avenue - to houses and shops.

Overall, the picture varies across the Borough, from wholesale stripping out of pubs in North Kensington – Norland, Notting Barns and Colville – mainly lost to housing; in South-west Chelsea – to restaurants and housing; and southeast Chelsea to housing and shops.

More resilient areas are: Portobello Road, Notting Hill Gate, Earl's Court, parts of South Kensington and the eastern part of the King's Road.

The main threat at the moment is to neighbourhood pubs recently sold by major pub chains.

Contribution of pubs to the character and appearance of the Boroughs neighbourhoods

A feature of the location of pubs generally, not just in Kensington and Chelsea, was the choice of prominent sites – whether street corners or otherwise highly visible locations. For example, a recent survey by the Council of street corners on Portobello Road showed that a high proportion of street corner sites were occupied by pubs. Indeed, the vast majority of pubs are on corner sites and, therefore, provide focal points in the Borough's streetscape. Others still are or were major landmarks, such as the Queen's Elm (Old Brompton Road) and the World's End in the King's Road.

A large number of pubs in Kensington and Chelsea were built as an integral part of the development speculative housing estates. The pubs were part of the “selling point” of these developments and often were prominent features in the estate. (eg Prince of Wales, Princedale Road)

In residential areas in particular, the presence of a pub makes a distinctive contribution to the sense of place, transforming a street from an homogeneously residential street into one with a building with a “live frontage” with distinctive architecture. Nevertheless, because the pub was usually built at the same time as the surrounding housing, it is very much an integral part of the special character of the area. Thus, since most of pubs were developed between 1840 and 1900 they contribute to the special character and appearance of the area.

Although only a small number are listed, almost all pubs in the Borough are in conservation areas, except those in the Kensal area (Golborne Ward).

Contribution of pubs to the social life of the Borough and its neighbourhoods

Whilst pubs as buildings make a special contribution to the streetscape of the Borough as a whole, to main streets, but particularly to its neighbourhoods, the main contribution of the building is the focus it provides to the community and the resulting activity.

Pubs contribute to the identity of an area, whether their contribution to the market atmosphere and character of Portobello Road or the tucked-away neighbourhood pub, such as, in Chelsea, the Cross Keys in Old Chelsea village, The Phene (Phene Street) or the Surprise (Christchurch Street) or neighbourhood pubs in Kensington, such as the Builders’ Arms (Kensington Court Place), the Elephant and Castle (Holland Street) and, until recently, the Prince of Wales (Princedale Road).

More???

ANNEX 1:

Chelsea Society's Exhibition 2006

This phenomenon was charted in the Chelsea Society's 2006 Exhibition "Last Orders for the pubs of Chelsea?" by plotting, as far as it was possible, all the pubs and beer houses found in histories (eg Victorian History of Middlesex and histories of pubs in London), directories (eg Kelly's Directory for 1902), guides and books on Chelsea and guides to pubs in London. The evidence was mapped on a very large map of Chelsea from 1865, matching names and addresses with the map for:

- pubs still in existence;
- pubs where the buildings were still there but the use had changed; and
- the sites of former pubs and beer houses where the exact address was known.

In addition, there were a number of pubs marked on the map where the name of the pub could not be identified and names on the list for which there was no more than a street name rather than a full address, which could not be mapped.

The Exhibition was also illustrated with:

- contemporary painting and prints for pubs predating photography, such as those along the Thames, and those since redeveloped, such as those around the Royal Hospital and those now in their second or third incarnation;
- pub signs of pubs long gone;
- early photographs, including pubs on the Thames;
- photographs of the social life in pubs from the "swinging sixties" in the King's Road; and
- a current photograph of all pubs where the original pub building has survived, even if its use as a pub may not.

The captions for each of the pubs for which a history could be compiled considered the history of the building, including how it may have been changed over time, as well some of the social history, personalities and anecdotes.

ANNEX 2: LOSS OF PUBS SINCE 1900

Chelsea Pubs

Loss of pubs

Pubs of South West Chelsea

This was one of two main concentrations of pubs centred on the village of Chelsea – Church Street and the Chelsea Riverside. The 1865 map used for the Chelsea Society exhibition showed seven pubs along the river between Beaufort Street and Oakley Street, with a further two in Church Street and The Cross Keys in Lawrence Street, between the Thames and the King's Road.

By 2005 of these ten pubs only two were left. So what happened?

The building of the Chelsea Embankment completed in 1874 cleared away a number of the pubs such as:

- Adam and Eve, Duke Street by the Old Ferry
- Admiral Keppel, Duke Street
- Rising Sun, Lombard Street at Old Church Street
- The Waterman's Arms, Lombard Street
- White Hart, Duke Street
- The Cricketers, Cheyne Walk
- The Feathers, 49 Cheyne Walk
- The Three Tuns, 46-48 Cheyne Walk
- The Pier Hotel, 31 Cheyne Walk
- Red Anchor Pieces, Cheyne Walk
- Yorkshire Grey, 14 Cheyne Walk
- The Rose, Old Church Street

Kensington pubs

Loss of pubs 1900-1953

In this period, 18 pubs were lost: 5 were demolished (1 due to bomb damage), whilst conversion to other uses included to retail (5), housing (4), a bank (1), industrial (1), office (1) and one not specified

Loss of pubs 1954-2000

30 pubs were demolished, for Notting Hill Gate road widening (3), Westway (11), West Cross (A41(M)) (3), for housing (1) and 10 for other reasons

33 changed use, to a restaurant (12), housing (8), retail (5), offices (4), estate agent (1), hotel (1) and other (1)

Loss of pubs 2000-2012

In this period, **19 pubs were lost**: 5 were demolished (of which 3 were for housing), 5 are vacant awaiting demolition or conversion to housing, 9 changed use to restaurants (5), housing (2), estate agent (1) and to retail (1)

Sources

Historical References

Victorian History of Middlesex:

Volume xx : Chelsea

Survey of London:

Whilst the Survey of London covers most of the former Royal Borough of Kensington in three volumes (Volume 37: Northern Kensington (1973), Volume 38: The Museums of South Kensington and Westminster; Volume 41: Southern Kensington; and Volume 42: Southern Kensington: Kensington Square and Earl's Court), the former Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea has only one volume dating from 190xx, which was largely about architecture and there was little interest in pubs. The lack of an up-to-date volume of the Survey of London for Chelsea is a major "gap" in the history of the Borough.

Data on losses:

Kensington: Database originally compiled by Mrs Yan-Kit Martin (died 2001), author and expert on Chinese cooking, who lived at 11 Gordon Place, London W8: extended, verified and updated by Michael Bach

Chelsea: Database compiled by Chelsea Society for Chelsea Society's Exhibition in 2006.