

Public Examination of Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s Core Strategy with a focus on North Kensington DPD

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s Additional Statement

Matter 4 – Keeping life local

Modifications to Chapter 7: Portobello/Notting Hill place

This paper sets out the Council’s proposed modifications to Chapter 7, Portobello/Notting Hill in order to address the concern that there was insufficient emphasis on the local role of Portobello Road in particular.

Green text indicates precious text that is moved:

- double struck through shows that the text has been moved to another location.
- double underlined shows text that has been moved to a new location

Blue text indicates changes to text:

- struck through is text to be deleted
- underlined is new proposed text.

Chapter 7 Portobello/Notting Hill

7.1 Introduction

~~7.1.1 This area consists of two quite different characters of retail trading: Portobello Road and Westbourne Grove. Internationally the two areas are known as 'Notting Hill'. Golborne Road, which lies some 300 metres to the north of the Portobello Road centre, is also an integral part of this area. However, given its own distinct identity it has its own Place and its own vision. (Chapter 6.)~~

7.1.2 Portobello Road and Notting Hill are internationally known for their “bohemian” character, a character which derives from the eclectic mix of local shopping, bookshops, antiques and other second hand goods. This character has been eroded since its height in the early 1970s, with dramatic increases in property prices, particularly since the 1990s, resulting in changing demographics and changes in the types of shops in the area. However, the community remains vibrant and people are passionate about maintaining the character and the diversity of the area.

7.1.3 Portobello Road offers a unique retail experience that combines a strong tradition of street markets, antique trading, vintage and ‘edgy’ fashion, and local shopping.

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7.1.4 Portobello Road is an internationally celebrated cultural asset and tourist destination, but only for, at most, two days of the week. The antiques and flea markets attract very high footfall to the road on Friday and during the weekend(53), but for the remainder most of the week, therefore, the centre primarily serves local needs. There is concern that the unique character of the street is being lost to 'clone' retailers, however, only 18% of the total retail floorspace within the centre is occupied by *multiple retailers* (compared with 60-80% in the major centres in the Borough)(54). The fact that footfall is only high for part of the week probably makes the Portobello Road less attractive to multiple retailers.

7.1.5 On Fridays and Saturdays the Portobello Road street market divides into three main sections: antiques and bric-a-brac in the south; new goods and fruit and vegetables in the centre; and a flea market in the north. During the week only the central section of the market operates. This is in contrast to the Golborne Road Market to the north, seen by the local community as being an extension of Portobello Road Market. It operates on all days of the week, other than Sundays and Thursday afternoons.

7.1.6 The Portobello Road antiques trade is an integral part of the heritage of the centre and a major draw for visitors. The market stalls, individual shops and large subdivided antique arcades dominate the southern part of the centre. This trade, however, is currently experiencing some difficulties. There is some evidence that the bona fide antiques traders are unable to pay the higher rents being sought by some landlords who are, as a result, converting shops and arcades to other retail uses. Increasing rents, and rates, are not just affecting the antique trade, many of the smaller independent shops which serve the day-to-day needs of the area's residents are also struggling.

7.1.7 The number of the traditional fruit and vegetable stalls is also in decline as fewer young people see it as an attractive career option(55).

7.1.8 By contrast Westbourne Grove has gradually changed from antiques and local food shops to a cluster of some of the most up-market fashion retail in London. This cluster offers a pleasant shopping environment that provides a real alternative to London's larger retail centres and shopping malls like Westfield London.

7.2 Vision

CV 7 Vision for Portobello/Notting Hill in 2028

~~As Special District Centres, Portobello Road and Westbourne Grove will both remain internationally known vibrant retail areas. By improving pedestrian links between Portobello Road, Westbourne Grove, All Saints Road and Golborne Road, the area as a whole will be strengthened, while the qualities of the very different individual centres will be maintained.~~

Portobello Road will remain a jewel in London's shopping crown, a place of world class antiques hunting alongside shops meeting the day-to-day needs of local people, ~~of cutting~~

edge fashion, and above all a place which has not been overrun by identikit multiples. The centre will maintain the rich variety of shops with a predominance now so rare in London, of independent retailers offering 'something different'. The existing antiques arcades are a key ingredient of this variety.

Portobello Road's strengths: its international antiques trade and the diversity of the retail offer, including vibrant small shops offering personal service, will continue to be built upon. Its less glamorous role as the provider of the range of shops and services essential to support of the day-to-day needs of its 'village minded' local community is no less important and will be maintained.

Running the length of the Portobello Road, the street market, with its antiques, fashion, crafts, and fruit and vegetables will act as both a key driver to achieve this vision and an opportunity to strengthen the existing close links with the Golborne Road Special Neighbourhood Centre to the north.

Portobello Road is, however, more than a shopping street, it will continue to be the international antiques market, and an inspiration for designers and a seed-bed for new entrepreneurs.

As Special District Centres, Portobello Road and Westbourne Grove will both remain internationally known vibrant retail areas. Westbourne Grove will retain its difference from Portobello Road and its position as a specialist shopping destination providing high end fashion retailing. By improving pedestrian links between Portobello Road, Westbourne Grove, All Saints Road and Golborne Road, the area as a whole will be strengthened, while the qualities of the very different individual centres will be maintained.

7.3 Priorities for Action

7.3.1 The priorities for action for Portobello/Notting Hill 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.

Keeping Life Local and Fostering Vitality

7.3.14 Portobello Road in particular provides local shops and community services (such as health care) to local residents. The Council recognises the importance of this role and will work towards improving it. The initiatives set out within Fostering Vitality (Chapter 31) section to assist independent retailers are as relevant for the local shopkeeper (or service provider) as they are for the independent retailer. Both require the same thing, a unit which is affordable.

7.3.15 In particular the Council will work with stakeholders to increase the provision of banks in the northern end of the Portobello Road town centre(67).

7.3.16 The Council recognises the valuable role that the fruit and vegetable stalls play in meeting the day-to-day needs of local people and will continue to support this sector(68).

7.3.2 The Council will work with arcade owners, retailers, market traders, residents and other stakeholders to promote the Portobello/Notting Hill area(56). In particular there is an

opportunity to make tourists aware of the full extent of the unique Portobello/ Notting Hill retail offer. This will be achieved through marketing and by improving linkages through the area(57).

7.3.3 The Council views the Portobello Road street market as a major asset which makes the centre the vital shopping street that it is. The antiques, bric-a-brac, fashion and crafts attract visitors of all ages from across the Capital. The Council will work with other stakeholders to take a proactive role in revitalising all elements of both the Portobello Road and Golborne Road street markets and ensuring that they have a sustainable long-term future. The Council will promote the markets as an opportunity for local entrepreneurs and will encourage school leavers to consider market trading as a career option(58). The Council will also work to help the markets move with the times and take advantage of the opportunities presented by the changing tastes, lifestyles and requirements of the local community(59).

7.3.4 The Council will support initiatives which will help unify the Portobello Road and Golborne Road markets and which will draw visitors north up the Portobello Road, past the Spanish School up to Golborne Road (60). These initiatives will include the provision of electricity points in this part of Portobello Road to make life easier for market traders and their customers.

7.3.5 A well-designed scheme of street lighting could also prove useful in the creation of a visual linkage between the two centres, a linkage which could further encourage visitors to continue north. Other possible initiatives to inject more life into the area could include the development of a speciality market in this area or the use of the blank wall opposite the Spanish School as an ever-changing 'Art Wall' or outdoor exhibition space for artists.

7.3.6 This initiative will assist the Council's ambition to try to draw people north from Notting Hill Gate, past a 'renewed' Wornington Green, right up to Ladbroke Grove and a possible new Crossrail station in the Kensal area.

7.3.7 The Council will use its planning powers to the full in protecting the special retail character of the centres, but the Council cannot use planning controls to specifically protect individual shops or a type of retailer. So, for example, permission is not required for a unit occupied by an antiques dealership, (be this an individual shop or part of an arcade), to be occupied by another type of 'shop'. It is the land owners who have the ultimate say as to whom they are willing to let their properties.

7.3.8 The Council will continue to work with landlords to promote the diverse retail mix characteristic of the area, be this the antiques trade, the independent retailers or the local convenience store(61).

7.3.9 The Council can, however, use planning powers to resist shops changing to other non-shop uses, uses such as estate agents or restaurants. For this purpose, the Council will extend the primary retail frontage of the Portobello Road shopping centre to include the southern end of the Centre. The loss of any retail floorspace at ground floor level within this primary frontage will be resisted. This will assist in the protection of the highly-valued antique arcades from the transition to non-shop uses(62).

7.3.10 The Council will continue to lobby the Government to change the law to give local planning authorities the opportunity to offer the antique arcades better protection and to resist the loss of the small units most suitable for the independent retailer or the 'local shop'(63).

7.3.11 In order to maintain a supply of the type of units most suitable for the smaller independent retailer, the Council will resist the amalgamation of small shops into larger units within the Portobello Road wherever this is possible. The Council will also require any future large-scale retail developments in the Portobello Road, were this seen to be appropriate, to include a mix of unit sizes, and where appropriate, 'affordable shops'(64).

7.3.12 The Council endorses initiatives by which it can take a pro-active role in enhancing the long-term retail health of Portobello Road. Improving links between Portobello Road and surrounding retail areas is important. Where opportunities arise, the Council will support the provision of more small retail units at ground floor level of the Portobello Road town centre(65), particularly where these would help maintain the retail continuity of the street and support the needs of independent retailers. The Council will also look for opportunities to increase its own property portfolio, for it is only as a landowner that the Council can directly influence the nature of the shops on the Portobello Road. All shops owned by the Council are managed under the Council's Neighbourhood Shopping Policy, a scheme which allows us to provide affordable accommodation for independent retailers.

7.3.13 Westbourne Grove is dependent on maintaining a high proportion of shops within it if it is to retain its position as a specialist shopping designation providing high end fashion retailing. The entire centre has therefore been designated as primary retail frontage(66).

Keeping Life Local

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Renewing the Legacy

7.3.17 The physical environments of Portobello Road and of Westbourne Grove are crucial to their character and their success. Designated conservation areas cover almost all of Portobello Road, Westbourne Grove and the surrounding area. Maintaining this historic fabric and ensuring that the limited opportunities for new development reinforce this character is essential. But so too is realising that this historic environment is a working retail street in the 21st century. New shopfronts, be these of a traditional or a modern design, must

be of the highest quality and reflect the character of the shopping street. Shopfront grants are available from the Council to help achieve this aim(69).

An Engaging Public Realm

7.3.18 The Council seeks the removal of all non-essential street furniture throughout much of the Borough. It does however, recognise that wayfinding is required within the Portobello Road to assist the many thousands of visitors(70).

7.3.19 The Council will re-opening the Talbot Road underground WC.

Better Travel Choices

7.3.20 The area is served by three underground stations and good bus services. However, pedestrian routes and wayfinding from the stations and to neighbouring town centres is not as effective as it could be and will be improved.

7.3.21 As an internationally-renowned tourist attraction, Portobello Road draws in huge numbers of pedestrians (71). As a result pedestrians dominate the area on market days and vehicle traffic is light and slow moving. The Council will continue to assess the need for improvements to the pedestrian environment to ensure it remains an attractive and vibrant area(72).

Diversity of Housing

7.3.22 The Council supports initiatives to bring the vacant properties above shops back into residential use(73)where this is not at the expense of existing town centre uses, to maintain activity after the shops and markets close. There are also high quality established residential areas immediately behind the street. These areas will continue to be supported(74).

Respecting Environmental Limits

7.3.23 Much of the interest of the retail offer of the Portobello Road is derived from the fact that it is based on reused and recycled goods, be this exquisite antiques or vintage clothes. The Council supports initiatives to maintain this character and for Portobello Road to become one of the 'greenest' shopping streets in the country.

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