



Conservation Area Proposals Statement De Vere, Kensington Court and Cornwall Conservation Area



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Foreword

De Vere, Cornwall and Kensington Court Conservation Area cover part of the heart of the Royal Borough and includes a great variety of residential property. Before the 19th century the area was composed of nobleman's houses and market gardens but by 1825, piecemeal development by small builders had begun.

Today the whole area retains its residential character and diversity even though it is subject to the commercial pressures common to all residential areas close to the heart of London.

The original De Vere Conservation Area (including Cornwall) was designated in May, 1969 under the then recently introduced Civic Amenities Act 1967. In 1980, Kensington Court was designated as a separate conservation area and Cornwall in 1985.

This conservation proposals publication sets out the factors which led to the designations and the statutory provisions and Council policies by which it is hoped they may be conserved.

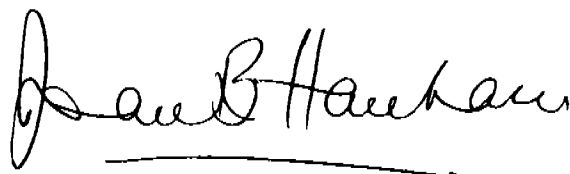
Possibilities for improvements, extensions and alterations have been defined for householders who wish to maintain and improve their properties while conserving and enhancing the character of the area.

The distinctive features of buildings are easily destroyed by careless alterations, both large and small, and also by insensitive repair and maintenance.

I hope that this publication will lead to a better appreciation of the historical and architectural heritage of the area and that it will be interesting to all living and working there. It should be useful also to architects, solicitors, estate agents, surveyors and all those thinking of acquiring or altering properties.

A list of other publications for conservation areas elsewhere in the Royal Borough can be found on the rear cover of this book.

The Council and its officers wish to express their appreciation to all the residents and local groups for their support and involvement in the preparation of this publication.



Councillor Mrs. Iain Hanham
Chairman — Town Planning Committee

Introduction

STATUTORY BACKGROUND

Under Section 277 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, local authorities are obliged to determine which parts of their areas are of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas. They are further obliged (under 277B) to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas: to present such proposals for consideration at a public meeting and to have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by the persons attending the meeting.

In accordance with the first requirement above, the original De Vere Conservation Area (then known as Kensington New Town Conservation Area) was designated in May, 1969, with additional areas designated in subsequent years. In 1980, Kensington Court was designated as a separate conservation area. This document fulfils the second requirement, whilst the public meeting held in January 1985 fulfils the third.

ADOPTED BY THE TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEE
ON 25 FEBRUARY, 1985

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSALS STATEMENT

The statutory duty of the Council is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area as an area of architectural and historic interest. This does not mean that no change should take place, for conservation is as much concerned with ensuring that changes are compatible with their surroundings as with retaining the exact appearance of the area and its buildings.

The purpose of the Proposals Statement is twofold:

1. To provide an indication of the Council's likely response to planning applications for development such as house conversions and additional storeys. In situations where development can be allowed, the Proposals Statement also provides guidance on the appearance and other details. In this way the document is intended to be a useful guide for residents in the area, and people intending to carry out developments, as well as for the Council's planning department.
2. To indicate where physical improvements can be made, for example in the maintenance of buildings, and state where the Council will carry out improvements, such as providing street trees, or using more sympathetic paving materials.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

The Council is committed in its District Plan (adopted in June 1982 and covering the whole of the Royal Borough) to the preparation of Proposals Statements for its conservation areas. Within the Plan are to be found general policies governing the control of development and in particular (in chapters 4 and 17) policies and standards regarding conservation, design and related matters.

The major aim of the Plan is to "maintain and enhance the character and function of the Borough as a **residential** area" (Section 3.3.1). Its policies include presumptions against change of use from residential to other uses and against development other than residential development on previously residential vacant land. (Sections 5.4.4 and 5.4.2). These policies apply particularly to conservation areas because the maintenance and enhancement of their character is best served by residential activity. Therefore underlying this Conservation Areas Statement is a continued resistance to any change of use from residential in the area, and also to any change of use which causes extra traffic generation.

The Plan also states (in para. 4.3.13) that "the aim of each statement will be to identify the characteristics which contribute to the special nature of the conservation area, and to formulate policies which ensure its protection..... Guidelines for the design of new building work (including extensions and alterations to existing properties), as well as proposals for enhancement work to be carried out by the Council itself will be included."

In particular, specific commitments are also made in the Plan (in paras. 4.9.4 and 4.12.2(a)) to prepare detailed policies showing where permission will or will not be granted for additional storeys and forecourt car parking. Comments for this statement on these two issues are therefore subsidiary to and should be read in the light of the Council's general restrictive policies, set out in section 4.9 and 4.12 of the District Plan.

Those parts of the District Plan most relevant to the issues discussed here are issued as a separate booklet, available from the Council's Information Offices.

NOTES ON FORMAT

The first two chapters contain the background to the policies and proposals, dealing with the history and growth of the area in the first, and describing their present character in the second. The remaining chapters discuss the Council's policies and proposals to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation areas, divided into two main sections — streets and buildings.

Any statements of a 'policy' nature, which are distinguished by the use of bold type, should be read as a more detailed out working of the general policies in the District Plan, and this statement for the Kensington Court, Cornwall and De Vere Conservation Areas will be an important material consideration when the Council is considering planning applications.

Finally, proposals for enhancement are included which rely for their implementation on voluntary commitment by property owners, or on positive action by the Council, when finances permit. These are shown by an asterisk.

Policies and proposals of all kinds are listed as an appendix, together with the agency upon whom implementation depends.

South End and Ansdell Terrace are within the Kensington Square Conservation Area and are therefore considered fully in the Proposals Statement for that area. However, they are also included within this statement, reflecting their contribution to the character of both the De Vere and Kensington Court Conservation Areas.

PROCEDURE

This Proposals Statement has been produced under the direction of the Borough Planning Officer, Alan Sanders ARICS, by the Council's consultants, Miller + McCoy, in liaison with representatives of several of the local residents' associations including:

The Kensington Society,
Cornwall Gardens Residents' Association,
Emperor's Gate Housing Association,
Kensington Court Residents' Association,
Victoria Road Area Residents' Association.

Following the Public Meeting, a period of over one month was set aside for receiving written or verbal comments on the draft. Comments made either at the Public Meeting or during the following month were referred to the Town Planning Committee of the Council. Following the Committee's adoption of the report (with alterations as necessary) as Council policy, this final edition was printed and is available at a price of £3.00.

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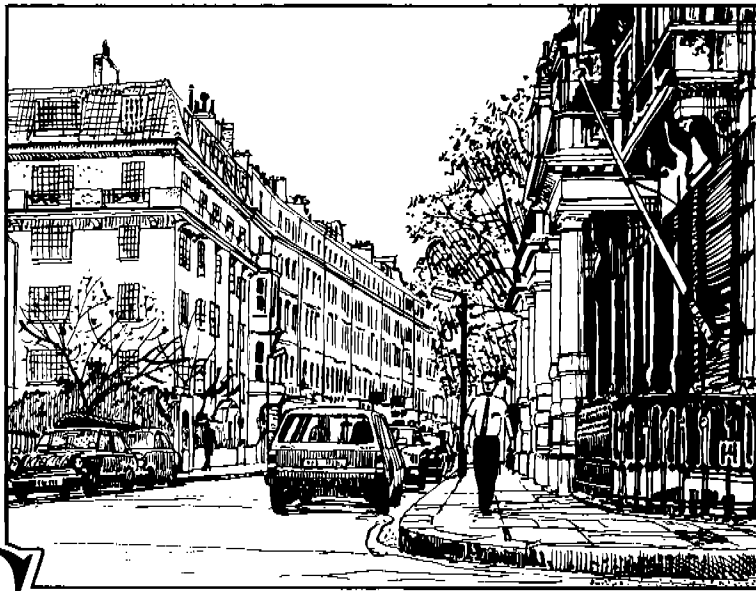
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DE VERE, KENSINGTON COURT AND CORNWALL



Boundaries



CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

INTRODUCTION

The original De Vere Conservation Area (at that time known as Kensington New Town Conservation Area) was designated in 1969, and was centered on the streets around Launceston Place and Victoria Road, together with Cornwall Gardens to the south. The boundaries have been reviewed and extended several times. In 1980 Kensington Court was designated as a separate conservation area, with the transfer of a number of properties which had formerly been part of either the De Vere or Kensington Square areas. In January, 1985, the boundaries were further modified. Cornwall Gardens and the streets to the south were designated as a separate conservation area. The map on page 4 shows the boundaries of the three conservation areas as of February, 1985.

Northern Boundary

Kensington Road forms the northern boundary of both Kensington Court and De Vere. This road forms a natural divide with Kensington Gardens to the north, part of which is included in the Kensington Palace Conservation Area.

Eastern Boundary

The boundary turns south from Kensington Road down

Palace Gate and along Gloucester Road, sharing a common boundary as far as Cromwell Road with Queen's Gate Conservation Area.

Southern Boundary

The boundary runs along the middle of Cromwell Road from its junction with Gloucester Road, before turning north along Grenville Place and then west to include Emperor's Gate, McLeod's Mews and Osten Mews. The redevelopment site at the east end of Emperor's Gate and the West London Air Terminal are both outside the boundary, as neither are appropriate for inclusion. The boundary continues westward along the rear of Cornwall Gardens and Cornwall Gardens Walk.

Western Boundary

The boundary turns northward behind Cornwall Gardens Walk but then extends to incorporate Lexham Walk and the three properties flanking the passage.

Both Lexham Gardens and St. Mary Abbot's Hospital are clearly separated from De Vere/Cornwall Conservation Areas. Neither are currently with a conservation area, but they do not need to be considered in relation to this review, as they are not part of the conservation areas.

The boundary continues along the eastern edge of St.

Mary Abbots Hospital. Although the hospital includes a number of buildings of architectural merit this complex is not considered geographically to be part of the conservation area, and there is no access into the hospital grounds from the adjoining streets in De Vere.

The boundary continues northward to Kensington Road. Kensington Square Conservation Area directly adjoins the Kensington Court and De Vere areas in this north-western corner, so there is no opportunity for further extensions of the boundary. However, as a result of piecemeal additions over the years the boundaries between these areas reflected neither the architectural nor the social character of the area. The boundaries therefore have been revised recently in order to make a more rational pattern.



Albert Place



Kensington Court Place — east side

CONCLUSION

The boundaries of the conservation area were substantially amended and extended, especially in the south and west of the area, in the two most recent reviews undertaken in 1982 and 1983. The criteria governing the designation of conservation areas has not been altered since the last review, and as none of the buildings added has been substantially altered in the intervening period, there would appear no reason to amend the southern and western boundaries. The northern and eastern boundaries run continuously along Kensington Road, Palace Gate and Gloucester Road and no further additions are possible.

DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

This section reviews the planning and listed building consent applications received in the De Vere and Kensington Court areas over the last ten years — 1975-1984. It provides an indication of any pressures for development which are currently or have recently been significant.

The records of applications received over the last ten years were examined and categorised according to type, (for example rear extensions). Where an application involved more than one type of development — for example, change of use and rear extension — it is shown under both headings. Many new developments follow two or three alternative applications of which only one of the proposals will be built, or an acceptable modified application may follow one or more refusals of permission. The table therefore shows applications received, not developments built, and they are thus not a factual analysis of actual development but an indication

of pressure for development. In addition it must be remembered that many alterations which may have a significant impact on the individual property as well as on the streetscene remain outside planning control — planning approval in the form of listed building consent, for example, is required for elevational and internal changes to a single family dwelling house only if the building is listed. (see *Development and the Law*, pages 81,82).

The table of planning applications is largely self-explanatory. The majority of applications received were for the subdivision of houses into flats (70), followed by roof alterations (67), rear and side extensions (57), and changes of use from residential to commercial (55). Together these accounted for 60% of the 418 applications received over the ten year period.

Two categories of development where the rate of refusal

Applications 1975-1984

Category	Number received	% Total applications	Number refused	% of the category refused	Streets most affected
Roof alterations	67	16	20	30	Cornwall Gardens Stanford Road Victoria Road
Rear/side extensions	57	14	8	14	Eldon Road Kelso Place Stanford Road Victoria Road
Change of use to commercial	55	13	21	38	Kensington High Street De Vere Gardens Gloucester Road Palace Gate
Conversion to flats	70	17	2	3	Cornwall Gardens De Vere Gardens Grenville Place Kensington Court
Front boundaries	9	2	4	44	—
Changes to elevations	25	6	4	16	Kensington Court

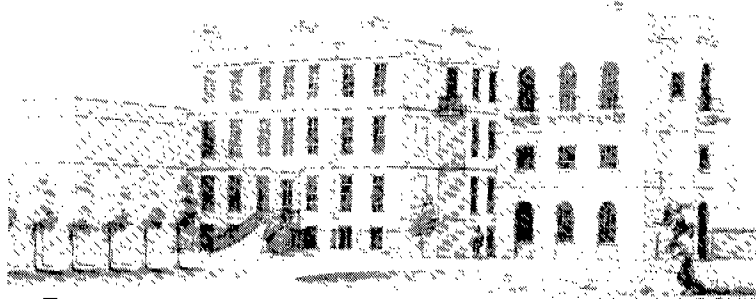
The applications not included in this table were too diffuse in nature for their analysis to be helpful.

was particularly significant are changes of use to commercial (38%) and roof alterations (30%). The first category is to be expected given that the area is primarily residential and the Council is stringent in resisting the encroachment of office uses into residential areas. The rate of refusals for roof extensions serves to emphasise the difficult problems of achieving an acceptable roof alteration without spoiling the appearance of the individual property or unacceptably disturbing the roofline of the street. It also represents a concern about the density of residential development and attendant traffic/parking problems. Although only a very few applications were received for changes to front garden boundaries, it is important to note that almost half of these were refused. (Most of these applications involved the demolition of front garden walls and railings, presumably for forecourt parking).

The final column of the table shows which streets were most under pressure from the different types of applications. Applications for roof and rear extensions

were, in the main, concentrated in the Kensington New Town area which is composed largely of substantial, single family dwellings on plots with space for extension. By contrast, the trend to convert properties into several flats have occurred in the areas to the north and south of the Kensington New Town area. The large houses in these areas were designed to accommodate a number of household servants and consequently are too large for today's family units. The commercial pressures were concentrated, not surprisingly, on the streets bounding the conservation area where there is an existing concentration of commercial uses.

These statistics on planning applications should not be interpreted as an estimate of the chances of obtaining planning permission for a given type of development. The chapters on policies and proposals describe the criteria by which planning applications will be determined and it is the suitability of the particular application and the degree to which it conforms with the criteria which is important.



Rear of Kensington House

HISTORY

BEGINNINGS

The Manor of Kensington dates from Saxon times and was granted to Aubrey de Vere by William the Conqueror for services to the Crown. By 1260, the Abbot of Abingdon Abbey had founded the church of St. Mary Abbot's at the heart of the parish by the junction of the High Street and Church Street.

That part of the parish south of Kensington Road was renowned as rich market gardens and nurseries for hundred of years. Kensington Road was an important east/west route, and had been developed from at least later medieval times. The frontage between the present Kensington Court and Young Street was the site of the ancient Red Lion Inn which survived till 1760.

17TH – 18TH CENTURIES

Such attractive and clean country surroundings within easy reach of Central London soon attracted aristocratic development. Sir Heneage Finch, Lord Chancellor and Earl of Nottingham built Nottingham House on a site north of Kensington Road in 1681. By 1685, Kensington Square was being laid out as noble town houses. Royal favour in 1689 confirmed the attractions of the area when William III bought Nottingham House and commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to transform it into Kensington Palace, a refuge from the dirt and damp of Whitehall.

Kensington Road

The presence of the court and its officials engendered

development on Kensington Road such as the noble Kensington House on the future site of Kensington Court and Colby House nearby. The narrow irregular sites of the south side of Kensington Road preserve the ancient plots which still contain some 17th century buildings, most complete on the upper floors in Nos.19-21.

Despite the fact that the Court left Kensington Palace in 1760, development continued apace. Between 1773 – 85, William Jennings, a harness maker and saddler, built 23-33 (odd) Kensington Road, of which 23, 25 and 31 survive in a mutilated state. Taverns and Inns were a feature of Kensington Road and the 1880 rebuilding of the "Goat" Public House contains remains of an early 18th century building. Wheelers Restaurant at No.17 was once the "Marquess of Granby" Public House and the "Green Man" in the late 17th century.

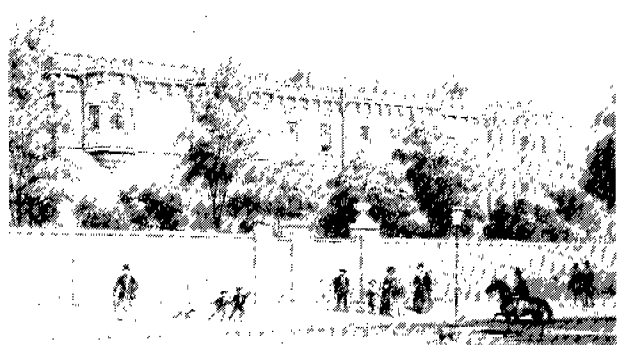
Behind William Jennings' houses were 30 cottages forming Jennings Court and New Court. These mean dwellings were reached via New Tavern Yard, now the alley that links Kensington Court with the main road. Similar cramped working class courts stretched back to Kensington Square and became notorious slums.

Personalities

The Duchess of Portsmouth was one of the early residents of Kensington House. She had been a mistress of Charles II and moved here to be close to Kensington Palace in order to press her suit with William III for a royal pension. In the 18th century James Elphinstone ran a school here and invented phonetic spelling. The

essayist Leigh Hunt referred to this originator of a little-used language aid as "an honest pedant". The relentless downward spiral in the house's social status continued when it became in turn a French emigre school for revolution refugees and a Roman Catholic boarding house. The most notable resident was Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald, the only authoress with whom Sheridan could bear to hold a lengthy conversation. Unfortunately Mrs. Inchbald died of over-tight lacing of her girdle.

Sir Thomas Colby lived at Colby House from the early 18th century, and seems to have died as a direct result of mistrust of his servants. He is said to have risen in the middle of the night to look for the cellar key for fear his servants would steal his drink, only to catch a chill and die as a result.



Kensington House

The Last Years Of Rural Peace

By the end of the 18th century the area south of Kensington Road was still in use as market gardens and nurseries. Development was limited to the fringes of Kensington Road with its crowded inns and noble houses now clearly in decline. The next century was to see the whole area transformed beyond recognition.

CHANGES – THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

The gradual decline of Kensington House encouraged attempts to develop at least part of the park-like garden. In the 1820's, Jonathon Hamston, a local builder, ran up some terraced houses in Southend, west of what is now Stanford Road. When Hamston died, the neighbouring estate of the Vallotton family bought this landholding (see p.30).

The Vallotton estate was the largest in the immediate area. The future of the locality was to be conditioned by the variety of other small estates and the different landlords who dictated development.

THE VALLOTTON ESTATE (KENSINGTON NEW TOWN)

The Vallotton Family were business people and ware-housemen for fancy goods. The estate was acquired in

two parts; 13.5 acres south of what is now St. Albans Grove in 1824 for £3,980 from Viscountess Bulkeley, and land to the north in 1827 from the estate of Jonathan Hamston, the local builder. It may well be that Howall Vallotton (d.1858) sought to confirm the family fortune by becoming a man of property.

Initially, the estate was composed of market gardens, open fields and Hamston's terraced houses which may well have looked incongruous in this rural setting. With the cutting of Victoria Road joining the estate to Kensington Road, the development potential was obvious. John Crake, pupil of Decimus Burton, was appointed architect. Work started on houses flanking the new Victoria Road, but now the modest terraces of builder Hamston were rejected in favour of small groups of fashionable semi-detached stucco villas, clearly intended for the nouveau-riche middle class. The first homes (Nos.23-25, 31-33) were occupied by 1836 and work continued southwards throughout the 1840's, quickening in pace as Vallotton applied for sewer construction works in parts of Victoria Road, Albert Place and St. Albans Grove in 1842. At this time Duro Place was just a gap site.

From 1846, Frederick Woods of Moscow Road, Bayswater laid out the gap site that became Douro Place under a lease from the estate. Nos.9-12 were built circa 1851 of stock brick with canted bay windows and stucco dressings. The flat neo-Greek restraint of John Crake was now being replaced by a coarser Victorian house architect.

In 1850-56 the south side of St. Albans Grove and the north side of Cottesmore Gardens were completed, still retaining much of the trim stucco domestic classical design of the 1840's villas.

In the twenty years after 1830, the variety of house architecture, which is such an enjoyable feature of the Vallotton Estate, came about due to the number of different developers taking leases from the estate. Unlike the Grosvenor Estate in Belgravia, for example, where an aristocratic landlord had the means and the will to control all development to a planned design, the Vallotton family required other developers, capital and involvement to exploit the estate's potential.

Personalities

The medium scale of the stucco villas and their trim streets and gardens provided a civilised and homely context for middle-class life. In 1881, when the area must have been in its maturity, W.S. Clarke wrote in "The Suburban Homes of London" that Victoria Road was notable as an area for artists to live "— and its villas are certainly beautiful miniatures themselves".

Samuel Palmer painter of Shoreham's "valley of vision" lived in 6 Douro Place in 1851. For an artist of Palmer's

