

# Local Plan Partial Review Issues and Options Consultation Summary



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

## Section 6: Shops and centres

**Issue 1: The Council needs to ensure that the vitality and viability, and the diversity and character of the centres is maintained. What policies should the Council adopt to ensure this is achieved?**

### Question 1

Should the Council continue to take a town centre first approach to new shops and other town centre uses?

#### **25 responses (including 3 “don’t know”). Key points:**

- General / universal support for the Council continuing to take a “town centre first approach to new retail uses”. This reflects the view that town centres are foci for growth and therefore policies which support their vitality should be encouraged. The Mayor of London also takes this view.
- Some suggest that the town centre first approach may make sense in some parts of the country, but less so in London, where public transport accessibility is so high.
- The Kensington Society notes this approach should include all employment uses, and in particular B1 business uses, rather than just the A class uses.
- Those representing the South Kensington Museums noted that whilst the museums do not lie within a designated town centre they include significant retail elements. These play an essential role in allowing the institutions to raise income. It is suggested that the policy be amended to recognise the role that such “out of centre” A class uses can have in supporting the cultural quarter.
- The Earl’s Court Partnership supports a town centre first approach to new town centres uses. However, it is concerned that there is currently no rationale for directing new retail floorspace to the larger centres. The new Local Plan should actively promote new retail floorspace wherever suitable opportunities arrive. This should include smaller as well as the larger “higher order centres”.

### Question 2

Should the Council continue to set its own size threshold for proposals which require an impact assessment?

#### **17 responses (including 4 “don’t know”). Key points:**

- Majority supported the locally set (400 sq m) threshold, many of whom noted that this threshold allowed the Council to have regard to the nature of local area when determining a planning application.
- Few reasons were given by those who supported the use of the NPPF 2,500 sq m threshold other than it would free individuals from bureaucracy.
- Sainsbury’s stated that a retail impact assessment should not be required for the

relocation of the existing Sainsbury's store within the Kensal Canalside site.

### Question 3

Should the Council continue to influence the nature of new shop units being provided within a centre?

#### 25 responses (including 1 "don't know"). Key points:

- Majority supported some controls on the nature of shops being provided as part of new large scale retail proposals. In particular there was support for a diversity of unit types where these could assist in the provision of independent and affordable shops – shops which are of particular relevance to the local community.
- Property owners stressed the need for flexibility/pragmatism in terms of both unit size and type to ensure that we do not hinder the ability of retailers and property owners to respond to changing retail patterns.
- The Council may have to take an approach beyond that offered through the planning system if diversity is to be achieved. This may include, for example, offering lower business rates.
- A small majority did take the view that any such controls were inappropriate, and that the market should be allowed to operate freely.

### Question 4

Should the Council continue to seek the provision of affordable shops in new large scale retail developments?

#### 20 responses (including 2 "don't know"). Key points:

- No consensus: an even split between for and against.
- The policy has proved ineffective and has not, to date, delivered any affordable shops. Seeking a range of unit sizes a better approach as encourages a diversity of operators.
- Will have a detrimental impact upon overall viability, likely to discourage landowners and developers from bringing new retail proposals forward.
- Is a crude tool that will not let landowners manager their estates in a long term and sustainable manner.

### Question 5

Should the Council continue to use percentage based frontage policies to ensure that a mix of uses exists within centres, amending them to reflect the greater freedom offered by the GPDO?

#### 19 responses (including 3 "don't know"). Key points:

- No consensus.
- A percentage based frontage policy can prove effective in maintaining the diversity of uses within a centre – a diversity which makes the Borough's centres the successful places that they are.
- The approach is an impediment to growth and upon the evolution and ultimate vitality of town centres. The approach could be seen as overly prescriptive and not allow the required flexibility for a rapidly evolving retail industry. In addition, a frontage based policy was seen by some as too blunt a tool, with it being better to consider the appropriate balance of uses on a case by case basis. If the ambition is to achieve variety of operators,

some considered that a percentage based approach could work against this aim.

- Current approach may no longer be appropriate with the recent liberalisation to the Use Classes Order. Many of the changes of use which previously required permission, no longer do so. An overly restrictive approach could encourage owners to make use of these new freedoms.
- Could include the current policy but to offer a series of criteria by which exceptions could be assessed.
- Interest in the nature of particular occupiers in whatever use, rather than the mix of uses itself. Local and independent shops and services serving the needs of local residents.

#### **Question 6**

Should the Council relax its percentage based policies in parts of the South Kensington District Centre to reflect its role in serving those visiting Exhibition Road and the Museums?

#### **21 responses (including 5 “don’t know”). Key points:**

- The representations from residents’ groups were vociferous in their objection to any increased flexibility. They were of the view that the needs of visitors and the desires of many of the large museums have been given undue prominence over those of residents. A future relaxation of controls will compound this effect. Such an approach would seriously erode the special quality and character of the area and have a most damaging effect on the amenity of local residents.
- This was not a view shared by some of the larger cultural institutions who were of the view that a range of eating places were necessary if the visitor experience was to be maintained.
- Others noted that a balance between providing the premises which serve the needs of residents and those visiting South Kensington was essential if the centre is to serve its dual role. This balance could be achieved by maintaining the existing restrictive approach in the south of the centre but offering greater freedom in the north

#### **Question 7**

Should the Council continue to ensure that street markets remain a vibrant part of the Borough’s retail offer?

#### **17 responses. Key points:**

- Support for maintenance of the borough’s markets. Consultees also draw the Council’s attention to the value that farmers’ markets and “pop-up markets” could have upon the borough’s retail offer.

**Do you have any other comments, issues or options (reasonable alternatives) you would like to raise regarding this section?**

#### **3 responses. Key points:**

- Concern that the Council is seeking to manipulate the retail sector to promote its own agenda.
- The Council needs to pay more attention of neighbourhood centres as local places.
- The importance of maintaining the historic character and built form of the Borough’s town centres.

**Issue 2: There has been a mismatch between the ‘need’ for new retail floorspace and its provision. Should the Council adopt policies to bring forward new retail floorspace?**

**Question 1**

Should the Council prioritise the provision of Class A1 retail and other town centre uses on suitable sites in order to meet an identified need?

**18 responses (including 5 “don’t know”). Key points:**

- Support for allocating new sites for retail floorspace, but few identified any specific sites except for a representation which supported the identification of a new town centre at Kensal.
- Need to support existing centres be this through helping maintain their character and their diversity or by only supporting new retail sites where these complemented rather than competed with existing centres. Sites outside centres can provide retail, service and employment needs to meet the needs of the community.
- The Council needed to better explain what they mean by the “miss-match”.

**Question 2**

Are there any sites that should be considered as a site allocation as part of the Local Plan Partial Review for Class A retail or other town centre uses? If so, please complete the Call for Sites section of the Consultation Response Form.

**9 responses (including 2 “don’t know”). Key points:**

The following sites were identified as have the potential for new retail floorspace.

- Sainsbury’s supermarkets have identified the Kensal Gasworks Site as an area suitable for a new shopping centre. It suggests that the centre should be of the scale and nature which can meet the needs of both the Opportunity Area and its surroundings. No indication of floorspace has been given at this stage.
- Opportunity for new retail floorspace as part of the redevelopment of the Pembroke Road depot site. No further details have been given.
- New retail frontage at North end of Pavilion Road (7-49 Pavilion Road) at the edge of the Knightsbridge International centre.
- Additional small scale retail accommodation at the southern end of Pavilion Road, adjoining the King’s Road (East) Principal Shopping Centre.
- Thurloe Street and the redevelopment of the South Kensington London Underground Station.
- Newcombe House, Notting Hill Gate.

**Do you have any other comments, issues or options (reasonable alternatives) you would like to raise regarding this section?**

**2 responses. Key points:**

- Reiteration that the existing policies support the needs of visitors over residents in South Kensington. Concern that the provision of any additional shops in Pelham Street would “block this busy street”.
- The Local Plan should allocate in centre, or edge of centre sites to meet the need for any additional retail floorspace.

**Issue 3: The Borough's centres must be seen in the context of a hierarchy of centres. Do the Borough's centres lie within their correct position within this hierarchy, and are the boundaries of these centres still correct?**

**Question 1**

Should the Council designate the Earl's Court Road Neighbourhood Centre as a District Centre?

**8 responses (including 2 "don't know"). Key points:**

- Re-designation as a District Centre is a positive approach which should strengthen the centre.

**Question 2**

Should the Council de-designate Ifield Road as a Neighbourhood Centre, considering it to be a small concentration of out of centre shops?

**7 responses (including 2 "don't know"). Key points:**

- De-designation would be appropriate as long as the remaining shops and the Finborough Arms Pub/Theatre would have sufficient protection.

**Question 3**

Should the Council designate the concentration of shops and other town centre uses at the junction of Talbot Road and Powis Mews as a Neighbourhood Centre?

**8 responses (including 5 "don't know"). Key points:**

- Designation could help local businesses get "more support."

**Question 4**

Should the Council designate a new Neighbourhood Centre at Latimer Road, close to the underground station?

**11 responses (including 3 "don't know"). Key points:**

- Support a new centre as a magnet for employment.
- If a new centre is to be designated it must serve the needs of current residents.
- Concern that designation may result in increasing congestion/ traffic generation
- Support the provision of new shops and services in the area.
- Question the need for a new centre given the number of vacancies in the vicinity.

**Question 5**

Should the Council designate a new Neighbourhood Centre at Kensington High Street close to the junction with Warwick Road?

**9 responses (including 3 "don't know"). Key points:**

- New centre useful as can serve the new developments on Warwick Road and reduce the need to travel elsewhere to shop.
- The Council should consider adding the shops at the end of St Mary Abbot's Place to the newly formed centre, to offer them greater protection.

**Question 6**

Should the Council subsume the properties within the Fulham Road/ Brompton Cemetery Neighbourhood Centre into the secondary frontage of the Fulham Road (West) District Centre?

**8 responses (including 5 “don’t know”). Key points:**

No issues were raised.

**Question 7**

Are there any other parades of shops currently lying outside of any centre which are of a scale or nature that should be designated as a Neighbourhood Centre, or any Neighbourhood Centres which no longer function as such?

**5 responses. Key points:**

- Add the units in Pelham Street to the South Kensington centre
- Need to protect the shops in the Cremorne Estate for the major chains.
- Need to preserve the shops on the King’s Road between Edith Grove and Beaufort Street.

**Question 8**

Do you have any comments on the Council’s other proposed changes to the boundaries of existing centres?

**11 responses. Key points:**

- Need to preserve the parade of shops at the World’s End.
- Pedestrianise Pelham Street to expand the Brompton Cross centre.
- Expand the Portobello Road centre to reflect the ambitions for new town centre uses within the Westway SPD
- Need to reclassify Nos. 1 to 35 Kensington High Street as primary rather than secondary frontage in order to help improve the quality of both the retail offer and appearance of this part of the centre.
- Include the newly created A class properties to the rear of 127-135 Sloane Street as part of the secondary shopping frontage of the King’s Road (East) major centre.

**Do you have any other comments, issues or options (reasonable alternatives) you would like to raise regarding this section?**

**6 responses. Key points:**

- Ledbury Road South should be considered separately to Westbourne Grove Special District Centre. The Council should resist the proliferation of “quasi cafes/restaurants and bars” in this parade.
- Review the boundary of the South Kensington District centre to include the museums complex.
- Need to ensure that the King’s Road does not “become just another shopping area”, and the need to support smaller independent businesses. In particular, support the creation of local shops serving local needs.
- Need to increase the emphasis on the physical appearance of the shops on the King’s Road.
- Crossrail station is incompatible with the central aim of preserving small businesses on

the King's Road.

- Need to let the Borough's town centres evolve naturally. No need for any designation of centres.
- Need to prepare Article 4 directions to control the changes of use of shops to cafes and restaurants and to estate agents.