

STREETSCAPE



ENTER →



Street furniture

A good practice guide



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

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STREET FURNITURE

The finest streetscapes have the minimum amount of street furniture. Only items that make a positive contribution deserve a place in the street.

GENERAL POLICIES

- Plan ahead – consider all requirements at the preliminary design stage
- Keep street furniture to a minimum
- Remove superfluous or redundant items
- Ensure that street furniture is well designed and appropriate for the locality
- Co-ordinate designs and colours
- Position items thoughtfully

CO-ORDINATION OF STREET FURNITURE

The predominant element of street furniture in any street is the street lighting. For this reason we will generally co-ordinate any other items of street furniture with the lamp columns in terms of colour, material and design.



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STREET LIGHTING

We design street lighting schemes to provide uniform illumination along the street to prevent dark areas and avoid light pollution.

We use light sources that produce a white light that shows far better colour rendition. Benefits include the production of clearer CCTV pictures as well as providing an attractive night time environment. All street lights incorporate full directional control which limits light pollution and sky glow.

In some locations it is possible to reduce clutter by removing lamp columns and fixing lights to buildings as part of a sensitively designed scheme. Where columns are needed their design will depend on local context and the correlation between the height and spacing of the light sources. Where possible surviving historic light fittings are preserved and if appropriate re-introduced.

The Royal Borough installs five types of lamp column, which are selected to enhance the areas in which they are used.

Major roads:

- Contemporary modern style column in a silver-grey colour
- Royal Borough Heritage style.
- Hybrid Heritage style

Residential roads:

- Chelsea Coronet
- Historic Kensington Patent (KP) cast iron columns.

There are other styles in mews and at specific locations.

For major roads we are also researching additional column designs. We will also take advantage of new legislation that, if passed, will simplify the legal process that allows us to mount street lights on buildings where appropriate.

Depending on the type of column, its height, condition and location, items that can be attached to lamp columns include traffic lights, litter bins, banners, hanging baskets and Christmas lights.



Heritage style



Kensington Patent



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Natural History Museum – South Kensington



The Michelin Building – Fulham Road

LIGHTING OF BUILDINGS

Within the Royal Borough there are a significant number of fine buildings and architectural features that are enhanced by external lighting. Well designed lighting helps to reduce street crime and benefits commerce as well as giving a new dimension to the night time street scene. However, this must be done with care and the daytime aesthetics of the light fittings, controls and other equipment must be considered as well as the light effects.



Albert Bridge



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BOLLARDS

Wherever possible we aim to remove any existing bollards where their presence is no longer justified. However we recognise that in some locations local residents and businesses are often reluctant to lose bollards, which they feel improve safety for pedestrians or help to protect their property.

We retain and continue to maintain any historic bollards in the Borough.



Historic bollard



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STREET CABINETS AND FEEDER PILLARS

Cabinets and pillars are required for a broad range of purposes by the Council and utility companies. Although we would prefer these to be located underground this is not always a practical solution due to the number of underground services in our streets. We do however minimise their visual impact as far as possible by ensuring, wherever possible, that they are co-ordinated with other street furniture in the immediate vicinity. It is important to note that we do not have any control over the placing of equipment on street by utilities, which have statutory rights in this regard.



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SEATS

Seats may be provided in areas that are well used by pedestrians if there is sufficient room on the footway to prevent them causing an obstruction. The design, colour and materials must be co-ordinated to harmonise with other items of street furniture. All seats must have arms to prevent them being used for sleeping.



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Traffic signals mounted on lamp column – Kensington High Street

TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Although traffic signals are not the responsibility of the Council, we have strong views on how they should be installed. As signals are updated the number of signal heads should be reduced. We are working with the signal authority for London (TfL) to ensure that wherever possible signals are fixed on lamp columns to reduce the clutter of posts.



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LITTER AND RECYCLING

LITTER BINS

We provide litter bins where they are needed. Free-standing bins with liners are suitable for most locations. However, at some locations, such as Kensington High Street, King's Road and Fulham Road, we have taken the opportunity to mount bins on lamp columns as this helps to reduce street clutter and improve cleansing. The provision of litter bins around the Borough is currently under review.

Discarded cigarettes and gum are a major problem in the Borough generally and particularly near stations or other busy locations where smoking is not permitted. It is unattractive, messy and detracts from the overall appearance of the street.

In these circumstances ash and gum bins combined with litter bins can be effective. In locations where we have identified a problem of discarded gum or cigarettes we will consider their use. We will continue to lobby for a tax or penalties on non-biodegradable gum.



Litter bin with ash and gum bin mounted on a lamp column

RECYCLING

Much of the Royal Borough's recyclable waste is collected directly from premises; therefore waste bins on the streets are less necessary than in many other boroughs. Sites are only implemented after extensive public consultation and recycling bins are chosen carefully as even the best designs are difficult to reconcile with the streetscape.



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The Council's policy is that we will not introduce new guardrail except where it can be fully justified.

We continue to review the need for existing guardrail at pedestrian crossings and, where it does not contribute to improved road safety, our policy is to remove it. Before making any decisions on the removal of any length of guardrail we carry out a full assessment, looking at the effects on pedestrians and cyclists. We are conscious of both the positive effects in reducing conflicts between pedestrians and traffic and the negative effects of visibility of pedestrians, the possibility of cyclists being squeezed between the guardrail and large vehicles, particularly at junctions and the effect on vehicle speeds.

At pedestrian entrances to schools, particularly where the footway is narrow, we recognise that children may run straight out into the road. Under these circumstances a short section of guardrail is sometimes appropriate.

Excessive lengths of guardrail can be counterproductive, encouraging pedestrians to walk on the wrong side or to jump or climb over to avoid lengthy detours. Our approach at all locations where guardrail is used is therefore to ensure that we restrict this to the minimum length required to meet safety requirements.

The benefits of removing guardrail are illustrated by the Kensington High Street scheme, where over 700 metres of guardrail was removed. Monitoring of the scheme has shown that a surprising number of pedestrians choose to use the formal pedestrian crossings and that the safety record is as good as other crossings with guardrails. Dispensing with the guardrail has created a sense of openness for pedestrians who are no longer trapped in 'cages' and wheelchair users are impressed with the improved visibility as traffic is no longer partially screened from them by the railings.



Sydney Place - before and after removal of unnecessary guard railing



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CAMERAS

The Royal Borough is within the geographical area covered by the London Safety Camera Partnership which sets strict criteria for the introduction of speed cameras. These criteria, based on speed related collisions resulting in a fatality or serious injury, are set by the camera partnership and are not within the control of the Council. Currently these criteria are not met on any of the Borough's roads.

Over recent years the use of CCTV cameras has been increasing to combat crime in high streets and residential areas. Wherever possible they should be mounted on buildings or existing street furniture to minimise their visual impact and the number of new posts necessary.



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STREET NAME SIGNS

Street name signs make a significant contribution to local charm and character. Local variations in design, materials and lettering add richness and variety to the street scene. To add a sense of historic continuity, where older signs survive they should be retained and restored rather than replaced.

Normally signs are fixed to boundary walls, fences or railings or buildings at the back of the footway. Signs are not placed on new posts. Where appropriate, street name signs include 'no through road' signs to reduce the need for additional signs and posts.



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Old telephone boxes – Kensington High Street

HISTORIC STREET FURNITURE

Existing historic street furniture, such as post boxes, seats, drinking fountains, cattle troughs, monuments and cabmen's shelters are a cherished part of our past. In the Royal Borough they are preserved in-situ and where possible brought back to use.

The Council has compiled a list of items of interest and has established clear lines of responsibility for future maintenance. In some cases local amenity societies have assisted.



Wall mounted lantern– Drayson Mews



Drinking fountain – Holland Park Avenue



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CYCLE PARKING

To meet the increasing demand for cycle parking we continue to provide stands at locations throughout the Borough. These stands provide cyclists with a secure alternative to chaining their cycles to railings and lamp columns where they may cause an obstruction.

The recommended design for general use is the Sheffield type. The preferred colour for most locations is black but we take care to choose colours to suit the location and to co-ordinate with other street furniture, as in Kensington High Street and Fulham Road where we have used a stainless steel version.



Kensington High Street

We have pioneered cycle parking along the central island of roads such as Kensington High Street. This allows a large number of stands to be provided in areas of high demand without cluttering the streets or obstructing pedestrians.

Where we have been unable to accommodate cycle parking on the footway, we have installed cycle stands in the carriageway, rather than construct footway build-outs to accommodate them. However on occasions these have sustained damage. To tackle this we are continuing to develop the design to improve visibility of the stands.

At locations where there is a demand for cycle parking, but insufficient space for a standard cycle stand we use small hoops attached to existing sign posts. Cycles attached to these are more secure and less likely to fall over and obstruct the footway than if they were chained directly to a lamp column or post.



Black Sheffield cycle stands on Notting Hill Gate



Stainless steel Sheffield cycle stands on Fulham Road



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In certain circumstances a wall mounted cycle hoop can be appropriate. Approval from the property owner is always required.

Where opportunities arise we also explore alternatives to on-street cycle parking, working in partnership with other organisations to provide cycle parking facilities available for public use on private land as we have done as part of our improvement scheme outside the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Although we have retained some on-street cycle stands, we have de-cluttered the footway outside the hospital and, with the agreement of the hospital management, installed new stands in the hospital's basement car park and in the hospital grounds.



Post-mounted cycle hoops

Abandoned cycles, private padlocks and chains left attached to cycle stands, posts, trees or any other item of street furniture will be removed.



Chelsea & Westminster hospital – before



Chelsea & Westminster hospital – after



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Docking Stations in Exhibition Road

CYCLE HIRE DOCKING STATIONS

The Council has worked closely with Transport for London (TfL) in bringing the Mayor of London's cycle hire scheme to Kensington and Chelsea. We welcome the scheme and are looking forward to seeing it rolled out across the whole of the Borough.

We have indicated to TfL that we do not want build-outs and bollards unless there is a proven need for these.



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TABLE AND CHAIR LICENCES

The Council licenses tables and chairs on the highway (footway). Applicants must satisfy strict criteria to ensure the safety of pedestrians and the amenity of local residents. We are also receptive to requests for tables and chairs in special locations where the criteria may not be suitable, such as the southern section of Exhibition Road.

Licences are reviewed annually on an individual basis. The Directorate of Transportation and Highways produces guidance on tables and chairs licences and situations where planning permission is also required.



Enjoying outside dining in Exhibition Road



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PUBLIC AMENITIES

Ideally, all items should be combined with others into a co-ordinated design. Using this principle bus shelters have been combined with bus stop signs, payphones and even public lavatories. When new facilities are selected or commissioned the following points should be considered:

- Fitness for purpose
- Durability
- Low maintenance
- Visual amenity
- Architectural quality
- Public safety
- Appropriate to urban design context



Combined bus stop and public lavatory – Kensington High Street

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Flower stall – Wright's Lane



A busy day in Portobello Road

MARKET STALLS

The Royal Borough has a long history of street trading with traditions going back many generations in some families. All together, there are approximately 300 street trading pitches throughout the Borough. The majority of these are in the two street markets, at Portobello Road and Golborne Road, although there are also a significant number of isolated sites around the Borough, primarily flower sellers and newspaper sellers. Market stalls add life and colour to the street scene but must be properly maintained and controlled.

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TREES AND OTHER PLANTING

The environmental benefits of urban trees – clean air, shade, a home for wildlife and their role in signifying the change of seasons and the passages of time are well understood. Trees are an integral part of the urban landscape and its architecture, where they contribute to local character and help to make the Borough a pleasant place to live and work.

The Royal Borough has some of the earliest plantings of street trees and many mature trees in parks and private gardens, all of which interact with a wide range of styles and periods of building from grand Italianate terraces, thorough to those of the picturesque Arts and Crafts style. Today, the Royal Borough has approximately 8,000 street trees comprising 162 species and varieties.

The Council is keen to plant new trees and has been successful in this regard in recent times despite the increasing difficulty of finding new and suitable sites without underground services or vaults. Careful consideration is given to all new sites to ensure that trees will complement the built environment and that the right species is selected. Street trees should be regarded as inescapably architectural features. It is therefore important that all new trees should complement the existing architecture in both colour and scale without obscuring important buildings or monuments.

The Council seeks to be a good and responsible manager of its trees and uphold its duties of care and maintenance. It was one of the first Councils in London to employ Arboricultural Officers, responsible for the care of street trees, and has developed a tree policy with a strategic aim of ensuring trees are planted, preserved and managed in accordance with sound arboriculture practice whilst regarding their contribution to creating a sense of place.



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Porous bound gravel tree surround

TREE GRILLES

We avoid using traditional tree grilles around the base of trees as these can often be a trap for rubbish. Our current approach is to use unbound gravel around the base of trees. However, we are currently carrying out trials of alternatives such as the use of porous bound gravel which may require less maintenance.



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PUBLIC ART

Public art can enhance the physical fabric of an area, making a major contribution to giving a place character and identity. The Royal Borough positively encourages the introduction of good quality pieces of art.

When commissioning new works a clear brief is essential. This should take into account the wider streetscape context, as well as materials, durability, lighting, visibility from all directions and maintenance. In every case great care is taken to relate the piece to the size, scale and landscaping in which it sits.



The elephant – Notting Hill Gate



Bela Bartok – South Kensington

