



**Draft planning policy for the protection of public houses and a draft planning policy relating to use and character**

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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

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# 1 Introduction

## **Review of the Core Strategy**

- 1.1 The Council adopted its Core Strategy in December 2010, a document which looks ahead to 2028 setting a clear policy framework with regard to where new development should be located, the nature of this development and what uses should be protected.
- 1.2 Central to the Local Development Framework system is the recognition that planning should readily adapt to changing circumstance. So some eighteen months on, the Council has in monitoring the effectiveness of its newly adopted policies asked two questions: are the Council's ambitions articulated by the policies within the Core Strategy still appropriate; and secondly if they are, are the policies within the Core Strategy working as expected?

# 2 The Issue

## **The current policy position**

- 2.1 A central tenet of the Core Strategy, a theme running strongly within the Keeping Life Local and Fostering Vitality Chapters, is that of 'diversity'. What makes the Borough the special place that it is? The Core Strategy sets out that central to our distinctiveness is the finely grained mix of uses such as shops, businesses and arts and cultural facilities, and what the Core Strategy termed, 'local borough functions', or the local shops and community facilities which support the Borough's residential character.
- 2.2 The Council cannot simply let the market decide what uses go where, for despite the current period of austerity residential land values will continue to out compete nearly any other use. Left to its own devices the market will preside over increasing homogenisation of Kensington and Chelsea as a high quality residential area.
- 2.3 One of our strategic objectives in the Core Strategy is for Keeping Life Local so that residential communities can flourish. In effect this means curbing the excesses of the market, and protecting uses that have lower land values, but remain of high value to the community. As such, Policy CK1 sets out to protect a wide range of social and community uses, uses which include medical facilities and care homes; hostels; launderettes; libraries; petrol filling stations; places of worship; places of education and sports facilities. The full list is set out in paragraph 30.3.5 of the Core Strategy.
- 2.4 Particular reference was made to the Borough's public houses. Whilst these were considered to be a form of social and community facility, the Council concluded that given so few public houses had been lost in the last decade, there is too little evidence to resist their loss at the present time. The Core Strategy did, however, recognise that any loss is of concern and that this position would be "kept under review".

### 3 The Issues and Options consultation

- 3.1 With regard to the Issues and Options consultation, the majority of respondents (48%) chose Option Four as their favoured option. This related to resisting the loss of Drinking Establishments (Class A4); Financial and Professional Services Uses (Class A2) and Restaurants and Cafes (Class A3) where the facility acted as a community facility and/or contributed to the character and appearance of the area. The next favoured option was Option One which 20% of the respondents supported. Whilst the results of the consultations are the matter of a separate paper it is clear that the majority of respondents support the protection of a wider range of uses within the A Use Class.
- 3.2 In view of the fact that uses such as shops, financial and professional services uses and restaurants/cafes are valued, not only for the service that they provide, but for their wider social role a holistic policy has been developed. This acknowledges that it is the mix of uses in the Borough's predominantly residential areas, which not only makes these areas highly desirable places in which to live, but helps provide local services to the community and adds to the character and distinctiveness of the borough as a whole. Protecting a broader range of services also brings greater benefit to the wider community, rather than favouring a particular group within it.
- 3.3 In view of the fact that Financial and Professional Services uses (Class A2) and Restaurants and Cafes (Class A3) together with Drinking Establishments (Class A4) are all uses that are considered to contribute to the finely grained mix of uses in the Borough which support its residential character a separate policy has been developed. This deals specifically with use and how this can contribute to the character and significance of an area and its sense of place. It is of relevance to the protection of public houses in the Borough.

### 4 Draft Policy and Reasoned Justification for Public Houses and other uses which provide a wider social role

- 4.1 *The continued loss of the Borough's stock of public houses over the past 30 years has eroded a readily accessible social focus for the community. From 181 premises in 1980 to 110 in 2012, well over one third have been lost and with escalating residential property prices, this trend is set to continue.***
- 4.2 *Public houses not only make a valuable contribution to the community and cultural life of the Borough, but at neighbourhood level they offer a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence – in short the essential ingredients of a sense of community and place. They are part of that fine grain mix of uses, which provide not only historical continuity, but contribute to the vitality of our residential communities and the character of an area.***
- 4.3 *However, it is not only public houses that display these distinctive characteristics. Other uses such as shops, financial and professional services uses and restaurants/cafes are also valued,***

*for both the service that they provide, and their wider social role. This essential mix of uses in the Borough's predominantly residential areas, not only makes these areas highly desirable places in which to live, helping to provide services locally for the community and beyond, but adds to the character and distinctiveness of the borough as a whole. The approach of protecting a broader range of uses also brings greater benefit to the wider community, rather than favouring a particular group within it.*

### **Public Houses and other uses which provide a wider social role**

The Council will resist the loss of Public Houses and other Drinking Establishments (Class A4) throughout the Borough; and Restaurants and Cafes (Class A3) and Financial and Professional Services (Class A2) outside of Higher Order Town Centres.

## **5 Draft Policy and Reasoned Justification for Character and Use**

- 5.1 The distinctive character of many buildings may come from their use as much as their physical appearance. Their use may also contribute to the character of an area and to a sense of place.*
- 5.2 The Borough contains a scatter of incidental uses within its residential neighbourhoods which offer variety, surprise and delight, punctuate the street scene and add to the vitality and character of the area.*
- 5.3 Strong residential land values have led to pressure for the change of such incidental uses to residential use. However, their loss diminishes the character of the townscape, the cherished local scene and the vitality of the area.*

### **Character and Use**

The Council will resist the change of use of any building where the current use contributes to the character and significance of the surrounding area, and to its sense of place.