



The Chelsea Society

Registered Charity 276264

Founded in 1927 to preserve and improve the amenities of Chelsea for the public benefit.

SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION

South Kensington is one of London's most iconic underground stations, but it has been allowed to become rather run-down and needs to be restored and improved. Also it is unable to cope with the very large number of passengers who now use the station. However, its restoration and improvement should, in the view of the Chelsea Society, be conservation-led and should reflect the station's original heritage and style. This does not preclude additional commercial development, but such development should retain where possible the character and proportions of the existing station and its setting.

Although this station is just outside the geographical area served by The Chelsea Society, it is used by many of our members, and is a site of such importance as to warrant consideration by the Society. In this respect we are grateful for information supplied by the Brompton Association, The Pelham Residents Association, and the Kensington Society. We also attended the TfL exhibition at the Lycée.

A. THE STATION ITSELF





The proposals for the refurbishment of the station itself, for which planning permission and listed building consent have already been given, are welcome, and The Chelsea Society requests that they be implemented as soon as possible. They are not dependant on approval being given for the Around-station Development (see below). We note in particular that the following improvements are proposed:

1. The existing platform will be reserved for westbound passengers, and the disused north platform will be brought into use for eastbound passengers. Each platform will have its own staircase from the ticket hall. This will relieve overcrowding of the platforms and staircases at busy times.



2. Each platform will also have a lift from the ticket hall. This will be a much-needed improvement for those with reduced mobility, but there will still be no step-free access from street level to the platforms.
3. However, another lift will be provided in the next phase from Thurloe Street to the ticket hall. This is welcome.

4. The ticket hall will be redesigned, and the number of access gates will be doubled. This is welcome provided that the historic features of the ticket hall are not removed or damaged.

B. THE “AROUND STATION DEVELOPMENT”

5. The latest proposals for “Around Station Development” which TfL has put forward are too dominant and obtrusive in style and would not reflect the character of the station or its setting. We urge TfL to amend them in the ways suggested below.
6. A Planning Brief was written in December 2016 by Deloitte Real Estate for TfL. It was reviewed by planning officers of RBKC and should have been the basis for a Supplementary Planning Document. It should be respected today. TfL committed itself to work with local amenity groups to develop its proposals for the site and initially did so. We understand however that its latest plan was drawn up without any involvement with these groups. This is disappointing. We urge TfL to resume discussions with local residents’ groups and The Chelsea Society about its proposals, and to explain why it has departed from the Planning Brief agreed in 2016.
7. The Chelsea Society recognises that Transport for London is a public authority with a responsibility to use assets to produce capital and income to finance activities. We are not therefore opposed to their proposals in principle. However:

C. THURLOE STREET



8. TfL wish to demolish and rebuild the whole Victorian building on the south side of Thurloe Street, preserving only the façade of the building. We like our old buildings to be old, and we are opposed to facadism. We would agree to it only if there were no reasonable alternative and the “around station development” were in other respects satisfactory. We would prefer the building to be refurbished to provide shops, offices, and flats to a good standard. Of particular importance are the shop-fronts, all of which should be carefully preserved. See the drawings by Peregrine Bryant below.



D. THE BULLNOSE



9. This is the semi-circular building at the west end of the station, which is of poor design and cheap construction, and should be completely demolished. It should be replaced by a well designed and constructed building on the same footprint.

10. The new bullnose should be designed so as to expose on the inside the original front wall of the station which lies behind the present building and can be seen in the photographs above and below.



11. The George Sherrin arcade must be preserved.



12. The Victorian shop-fronts in Thurloe Street shown in the Bryant drawing above should be continued right around this building to the Pelham Street entrance, and through the arcade.
13. The new building could be larger, so as to provide office-space, but this should be limited to a ground and two upper stories in order to preserve the open aspect of the area in front of the station and to preserve views of the Natural History Museum. The second storey should be set back.
14. The RSHP (Rogers Stirk Harbour) proposal is incongruous in style and volume/height- It is in essence a most inelegant proposal when considered as a whole and not just shown from the curved streetscape. Walking north from Onslow Square/Sydney Place one would see it as a half-finished building,
15. We urge TfL to produce for public consultation an amended design for the Bull Nose which reflects these concerns.



E. PELHAM STREET



16. TfL wish to build a block of 40 flats on the north side of Pelham Street from the station to Thurloe Square. This would not be welcomed by residents in the houses, and lower levels of the flats, in Pelham Street who presently have a long view over the station. However, if these flats are built:

- (a) They should have no more than a ground and two upper stories above the level of Pelham Street. A low-scale terrace in Pelham Street along the lines illustrated in the Brief has the potential to enhance the street scene, but it will require high quality design and great sensitivity and care. The Chelsea Society would wish to

be consulted on the design, as the proposed design is not suitable for this sensitive area.

- (b) As this is community land, some of the ground-floor premises on Pelham Street should be made available for community uses eg. doctors, dentists, etc., and meeting rooms for local organisations. Also for offices, especially for start-up businesses. Permission should not be granted for retail or restaurant use, except in the westernmost 50 yards of Pelham Street. We urge RBKC to insist, in its pre-application advice to TfL and in its response to any eventual planning application, that these requirements are imposed.

F. THE FLATS THEMSELVES

17. The flats should not be sold on the open market, because many of them would become “buy to leave” flats and would make no contribution to housing local people. Instead they should be let on medium-term tenancies, providing an income stream for TfL. As this is community land owned by a public authority, one third of the flats should be made available to RBKC for social housing, one third should be subsidised by TfL and/or RBKC for key workers, and one third could be let on the open market.
18. The flats should not be eligible for residents’ parking permits.
19. The flats should have the most up-to-date sound insulation, as they would have a busy street on one side and noise from trains and loudspeakers on the other. Generally in residential areas we think that loudspeakers should be used on stations only for special messages.
20. Careful thought must be given to refuse disposal, perhaps via a footpath for wheeled bins at the rear of the flats, and for bicycle storage.
21. Solar panels should be installed on all the buildings where possible and where not unsightly.
22. We urge TfL and RBKC to co-operate so as to ensure that the flats meet these conditions and thus provide social, and not just commercial, value.
23. Heavy materials should be carried to and from the site by rail at night, subject to consultation on noise with the immediate neighbours.