



Thames Conservation Area Appraisal

February 2020



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Adopted: 18 February 2020

Note: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this document but due to the complexity of conservation areas, it would be impossible to include every facet contributing to the area's special interest. Therefore, the omission of any feature does not necessarily convey a lack of significance. The Council will continue to assess each development proposal on its own merits. As part of this process a more detailed and up to date assessment of a particular site and its context is undertaken. This may reveal additional considerations relating to character or appearance which may be of relevance to a particular case.

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1 Introduction

What does a conservation area designation mean?

1.1 The statutory definition of a conservation area is an “area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. The power to designate conservation areas is given to councils through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act, 1990 (Sections 69 to 78). Once designated, proposals within a conservation area become subject to local conservation policies set out in Chapter 22 of the Council’s Local Plan and national policies outlined in part 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Our overarching duty which is set out in the Act is to preserve or enhance the historic or architectural character or appearance of the conservation area.

1.2 A conservation area appraisal aims to describe the special historic and architectural character of an area. A conservation area’s character is defined by a combination of elements such as architecture, uses, materials and detailing as well as the relationship between buildings and their settings. Many other elements contribute to character and appearance such as the placement of buildings within their plots; views and vistas; the relationship between the street and the buildings and the presence of trees and green space.

1.3 This document has been produced using the guidance set out by Historic England in their document, *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1 (2016)*. This appraisal will be a material consideration when assessing planning applications.

Purpose of this document

1.4 The aims of this appraisal are to:

- describe the historic and architectural character and appearance of the area which will assist applicants in making successful planning applications and decision makers in assessing planning applications
- raise public interest and awareness of the special character of their area
- identify the positive features which should be conserved, as well as negative features which indicate scope for future enhancements

Summary of Character

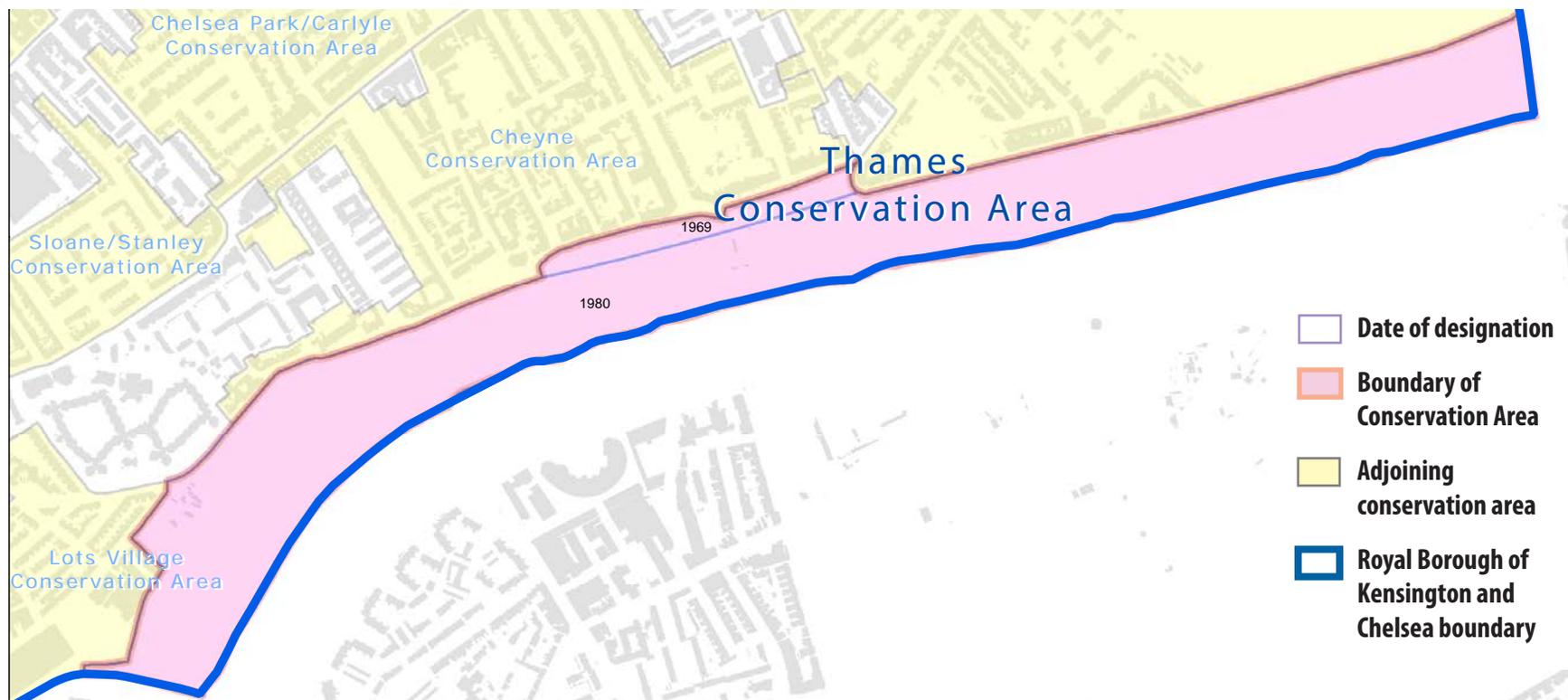


Fig 1.1: Conservation area boundary map

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1.5 Thames Conservation Area was designated in 1981 and encompasses the Royal Borough's entire southern boundary on the River Thames. It stretches from the City of Westminster in the east, to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham in the west and to the centre of the river, which is the boundary with the London Borough of Wandsworth. The dominant built structures within the conservation area are the Thames bridges and Chelsea Embankment.

1.6 The character of the conservation area comes from the riverside of the Thames

and Chelsea Creek, with piers, moorings and a wharf and of transport infrastructure and adjacent public gardens and trees. The infrastructure includes the Chelsea, Albert and Battersea bridges, the carriageway of Chelsea Embankment which covers the sewer beneath and its granite river walls and lamp standards. These structures are softened by the surrounding public gardens and treed areas of Embankment Gardens, Cremorne Gardens, the plane trees along the Embankment and the greenspaces at the foot of each bridge. Interspersed among the gardens and

embankment land are various statues and important street furniture that contribute to the high urban quality, design and openness of the area. The Thames Path has an important role as a popular recreational walkway.

1.7 The importance of the Thames river to London as a whole cannot be overemphasised. It is a mighty, natural resource and the reason that the capital has evolved to where it has. It is a key feature in itself as well as creating a sitting for the south of the borough, the embankment and all development along it.

Location and Setting

1.8 The Thames Conservation Area is centred on the river and is within Royal Hospital (SW3) and Chelsea Riverside (SW10) wards. It is surrounded by high quality townscape that is within the adjacent conservation areas, Royal Hospital, Cheyne and Lots Village. It also abuts conservation areas within adjoining boroughs, such as Battersea Park Conservation Area in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

1.9 On the north boundary from east to west are the Royal Hospital and its riverside grounds, red brick Arts and Crafts style mansions and mansion flats built on land released for development through the building of Chelsea Embankment, glimpses beyond its boundary railings of Chelsea Physic Garden, the built form of the former village of Chelsea, including the old Parish Church, river frontage houses and Lots Road Pumping Station and the former Lots Road Power Station. The distinctive high rise buildings of the World's End estate are also dominant in views at the western end.

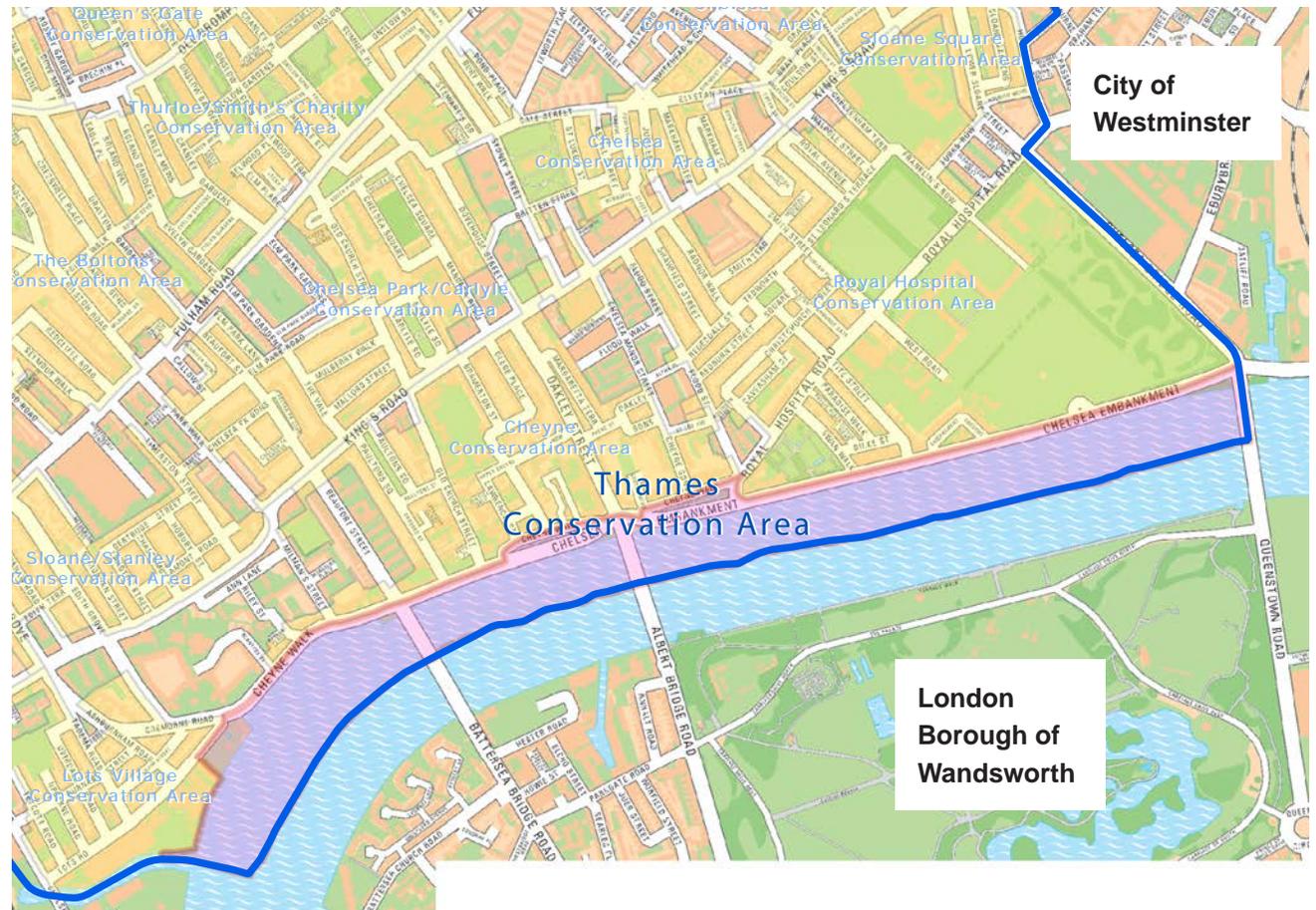
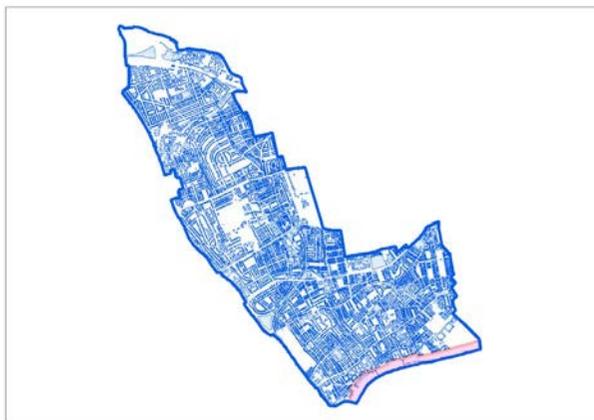


Fig 1.2: Conservation area context map

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1.10 This context gives the north-eastern boundary of the conservation area a green and leafy character with grand, dignified adjoining buildings. At the north-western end, the adjoining buildings set an industrial character and appearance with the pumping and power stations and a safeguarded industrial use wharf.

1.11 To the south-eastern boundary is the extensive riverside frontage of Battersea Park. The trees of the park mirror the riverside plane trees within the Thames Conservation Area and this reinforces the prevailing character of the conservation area between Chelsea and Albert Bridges of a lush green river frontage.

Archaeology

1.12 The whole conservation area lies within the Chelsea Riverside Archaeological Priority Area, a “tier 2” area defined by Historic England. It is one of the most archaeologically significant areas of the borough containing multi-phase archaeology dating from prehistoric times to industrial archaeology in the Chelsea Creek area. The riverine context can often mean that archaeological deposits can survive in a well-preserved state. The most spectacular find from this stretch of river is the Battersea Shield, dating to c.350 to 50 BC found in 1857 close to the site of the new Chelsea Bridge.

1.13 Chelsea is first mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles in 785 AD and there is some evidence of a pre-Norman Conquest settlement. For instance, timbers found in the river west of Battersea Bridge date to the period 700-900 AD and appear to be a fish-trap. Prior to the building of Chelsea Bridge and Chelsea Embankment, Chelsea riverside encompassed a waterfront and foreshore with coal, hay and timber wharves and small riverside industries interspersed with the landscapes of aristocratic houses that stretched down to the riverfront. Interesting archaeological evidence of the area’s industrial heritage could also survive in the Chelsea Creek area.

1.14 More information can be found on Historic England’s website in their Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Archaeological Priority Area appraisal, August 2016. <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/planning/apa-kensington-chelsea.pdf>



Lindsey Wharf and Cremorne Road, photo by James Hedderly

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2 Townscape

Urban Form/Street Layout

2.1 The urban form is consistent from Chelsea Bridge to Battersea Bridge, being characterised by the river and river frontage, the largely straight line of Chelsea Embankment, the tree cover provided by the avenue of plane trees and surrounding greenspaces. Houses are visible beyond the boundary, but are set back behind the northern carriageway or behind Chelsea Embankment Gardens.

2.2 West of Battersea Bridge the urban form is markedly different and it is more reflective of the historic north bank character of the River Thames with the historic relationship of the connection between riverside houses and the river better preserved.

2.3 In terms of street layout, the conservation area is characterised by one major road, Chelsea Embankment, running across the width of the borough from Chelsea Bridge to Battersea Bridge at which point it terminates. To the west of Battersea Bridge, the road continues on the riverside following the natural curve of the river until reaching Cremorne Gardens, where it swings north. West of Cremorne Gardens, the conservation area boundary encompasses the river and riverside only.



Chelsea Embankment

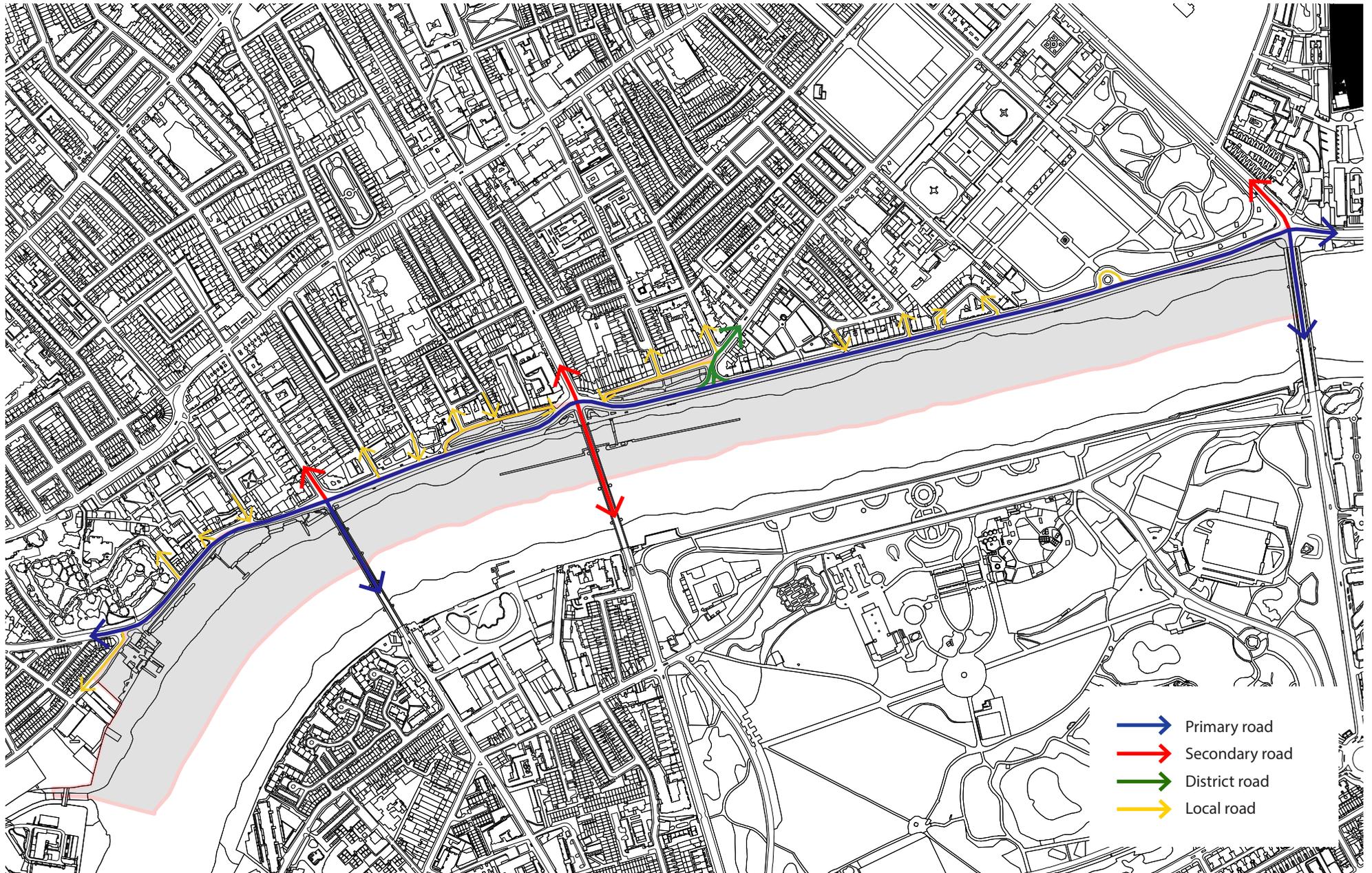


Fig 2.1: Road hierarchy map

Land Uses

2.4 The predominant use within the area is transportation and travelling or movement, and some leisure uses. The movement is vehicular along the riverside road and across the bridges and by boat along the river, including the Transport for London public river boat service at Cadogan Pier. There is also pedestrian and cycling movement and on Cheyne Walk the pavement serves as an official shared route for bicycles and pedestrians.

2.5 Cremorne Riverside Centre provides canoeing and kayaking facilities for young people from a site within Cremorne Gardens. It has two purpose-built buildings and a slipway into the Thames.

2.6 The leisure character of the area is also manifested in the public gardens alongside Chelsea Embankment. Benches are provided within the gardens and on raised plinths on the pavement facing the river. The Thames Path trail from the source to the barrier in east London runs alongside the river, with the exception of the frontages at the pumping and power stations.

2.7 Residential use occurs in houseboats between Battersea Bridge and Cremorne Gardens. They are moored at 90 degrees to the riverbank with the houseboat bows facing into the river. At the Chelsea Yacht and Boat Company site adjacent to Cremorne Gardens there is a boatyard and dry dock facility and stock brick buildings.

2.8 Cadogan Pier extends to the east and west of Albert Bridge and has a range of moorings that are parallel to the river wall. The pier was used as part of the Diamond Jubilee flotilla



Cremorne Riverside Centre



Benches on raised plinths, Chelsea Embankment



Chelsea Embankment Gardens



Cadogan Pier

Green Space

2.9 Greenspaces within the conservation area make an essential contribution to its character and appearance, as do those outside the boundaries, such as Ranelagh Gardens, Royal Hospital South Grounds, Chelsea Physic Garden, Roper's Gardens and Battersea Park.

2.10 Within the conservation area there are various parks and greenspaces, including the land at the foot of all three bridges and Chelsea Embankment Gardens on the far side of the road either side of Albert Bridge. The planting is informal shrubbery, trees and bedding. Chelsea Embankment Gardens also have areas of informal lawn. The embankment has an avenue of plane trees which are also present on the river side of Cheyne Walk.

2.11 The Chelsea Embankment trees and the greenspaces contribute a visual softening of the otherwise firm built form of the linear granite walled embankment and the surrounding buildings. It also mitigates the noisy near-constant road traffic by providing a soft barrier between vehicles and residents.

2.12 The other greenspace within the conservation area is Cremorne Gardens. This Council park has a grassed area, tree planting, bedding areas and shrubs and a parks office/depot building. The entrance way is laid in granite setts. Cremorne Gardens was re-landscaped in 1981 and is a vestige of the original much larger Cremorne Pleasure Gardens that operated between 1845 and 1877. One set of the original wrought iron entrance gates has been restored and set up as a feature



Cremorne Gardens

within the current gardens. The park has river piers and can be approached from the river.

2.13 Cremorne Gardens provides a visual counterbalance to the otherwise dominant and striking industrial architecture of the former Lots Road Power Station and Lots Road Pumping

Station and former warehouse buildings that line the river immediately upstream. It is an important visual break and provides the only relaxing greenspace within the conservation area that is shielded from the heavy vehicular traffic of Chelsea Embankment and Cheyne Walk.

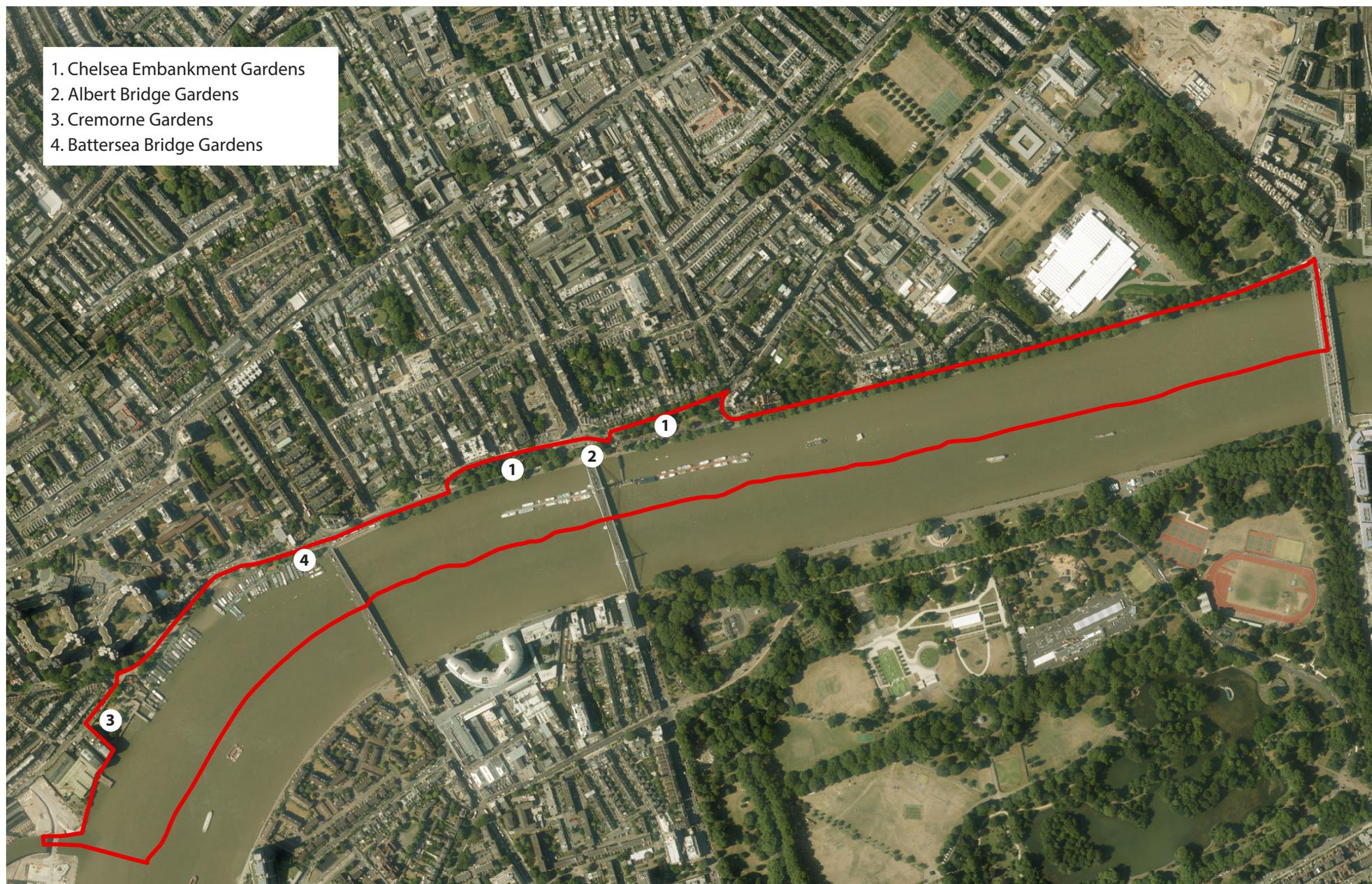


Fig 2.2: Green spaces aerial photo (2015)

Gaps

2.14 There is an open character to the conservation area that comes from its position on the river. It also comes from the open character of the embankment structure that forms a barrier between the river and the houses of Chelsea, thus preventing built form appearing at the river's edge.

2.15 West of Battersea Bridge there are residential houseboats in two groups of moorings with a gap between them. This allows a clear view of the river from Cheyne Walk and separates the line of large boats. This gap is important to the character and appearance of the conservation area giving visual access to the river at this western end.



Views of the River Thames, Battersea Bridge and beyond from Chelsea Embankment



Gap between groups of boat moorings



The open character of the embankment structure

Materials and Finishes

2.16 Materials used in the conservation area are predominantly natural such as granite and York stone, or traditional historic materials such as cast iron, steel and bronze.

2.17 Natural or traditional materials used in the conservation area include:

- Stone

2.18 For the piers and cutwaters and abutments of the bridges

- Granite: for Chelsea Embankment wall and in sett form within Cremorne Gardens
- York stone: for some of the pavements
- Brick: dark bricks in the river wall
- Metal
- Cast & wrought iron and steel: for the bridges,
- Cast iron: the Chelsea Embankment lamp standards and bench ends.
- Bronze: for the statuary in the public open spaces



Granite



Cast iron



Cast iron, wrought iron and steel



Modern yellow and black brick

Buildings Audit

2.19 The buildings audit map shows the contribution made by buildings to the historic and architectural character of the area. For all buildings identified here as positive buildings, change must be managed to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance their significance in accordance with national and local planning policies. Where particular sites, buildings or additions to buildings are harmful or out of keeping with the broader character of the conservation area as outlined in this appraisal, the Council will support proposals and where possible, take opportunities to make improvements and enhancements in line with Policies CL1, CL2 and CL3 of the Local Plan.

Listed Buildings

2.20 A listed building is a building designated by the Government on the advice of Historic England as a building of special architectural or historic interest, which local authorities have a statutory duty to preserve or enhance.

Positive Buildings

2.21 These buildings make a positive contribution to the historic and architectural character and appearance of the conservation area. They are a key reason for the designation and significance of the conservation area.

Neutral Buildings

2.22 These buildings may blend into the townscape by virtue of their form, scale or materials, but due to their level of design quality, fail to make a positive contribution.



Chelsea Embankment river wall, grade II listed

Negative Buildings

2.23 Negative buildings are those which are out of keeping with the prevailing character of the conservation area.



Fig 2.3: Buildings audit map

3 Architecture



View of Albert Bridge from Battersea Bridge



View of Albert Bridge from Chelsea Embankment

Bridges

3.1 The bridges across the Thames are a key feature of the conservation area. From east to west, they are Chelsea Bridge, Albert Bridge and Battersea Bridge. All three are within both Kensington and Chelsea (centre of river to north bank) and Wandsworth (centre of river to south bank) but Chelsea Bridge, additionally, has the eastern portion of its north bank section within the City of Westminster.

3.2 Albert and Chelsea Bridges have a similar appearance with their suspension cables, and

as a pair enhance the architectural surroundings of the river, although Albert Bridge is particularly elegant and picturesque. Their lighting schemes pick out features of their design and enhance their visual delicacy at night.

3.3 Common features of the three bridges are lamp standards, decorative elements such as heraldic shields, cast iron panels, pedestrian pavements and night-time illumination. Either side of the bridges the land is informal greenspace with tree and shrub cover.

Albert Bridge

3.4 This is the oldest surviving bridge of the three in the conservation area, built in 1873, although it is not the oldest crossing point. The bridge was repainted and a new lighting scheme installed at the beginning of the 21st century. It is the only central London Thames bridge that retains its toll booths and has a distinctive sign instructing troops to break step when crossing. It is also the only one of the three with a continuous pedestrian path that passes under the bridge.



Close up of Albert Bridge



Stairs from Chelsea Embankment to Albert Bridge



Road and pedestrian walkways on Albert Bridge

Battersea Bridge

3.5 Old Battersea Bridge was the first bridge in Chelsea and was built between 1771 and 1772. It was timber and although picturesque and depicted by local artists in their paintings, it was demolished in 1885, having become increasingly unsafe. The current Battersea Bridge was built by Joseph William Bazalgette and was officially opened in 1890. It is of five spans of unequal radii with stone piers that carry wrought iron spans.



View of Cheyne Walk and houseboats from Battersea Bridge



Pedestrian walkway on Battersea Bridge



View of Battersea Bridge from Cheyne Walk



Chelsea Bridge

Chelsea Bridge

3.6 Dating from 1935-7, this is the most recent of the three bridges. It replaced a bridge dating from 1851 that had been built on the site of a ferry crossing. It is a self-anchoring suspension bridge, the first of its kind in the UK, with an early use of high tensile steel for the cables.

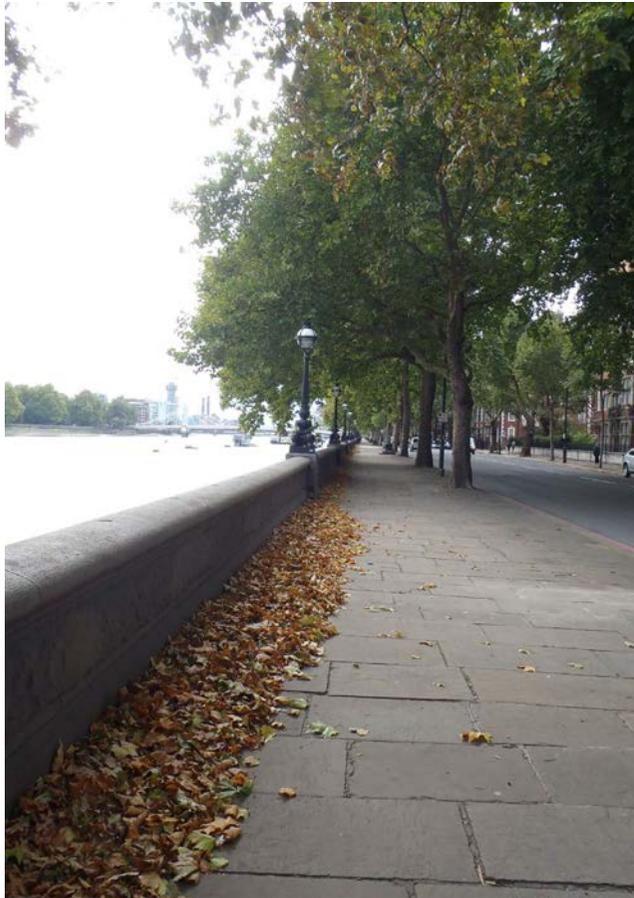
3.7 On all four corners of the bridge there are two heraldic shields: one of the LCC and one of the respective boroughs in which the bridge lands. The shields are surmounted by golden galleons.



LCC heraldic shield on Chelsea Bridge



View of Chelsea Bridge from Grosvenor Road (outside of conservation area)



Chelsea Embankment, between Chelsea and Albert Bridges

River Wall and Chelsea Embankment

3.8 Chelsea Embankment from Battersea Bridge to a point opposite the south-western corner of the Royal Hospital grounds is an esplanade retaining wall finished with hammer dressed granite. It was built by J.W. Bazalgette



River wall west of Battersea Bridge

and completed in 1874. It has a dual function, as a thoroughfare along the river, but also as a covering for the main low level sewer that serves west London.

3.9 West of Battersea Bridge, there is a river wall that follows the natural curve of the Thames. It was built by the Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea in 1953-4 following previous

unsuccessful lobbying of central government to embank the river as far as Cremorne.

3.10 The Chelsea Embankment changed Chelsea from a separate riverside village with historic buildings linked to the river with wharves, landing stairs and piers into a connected part of urban London carrying through traffic out to the west of London.



Chelsea Embankment, between Albert and Battersea Bridges

Other buildings



Cabman's shelter

3.11 There is a cabman's shelter to the west of Albert Bridge. It is the traditional London shelter design of vertically planked timber with a pitched roof and is painted in their standard green colour. It is a rare survivor of an historic characteristic of the London streetscene and is expressive of the transport character of the area.

3.12 Within Cremorne Gardens, the Cremorne Riverside Centre operates from two award winning corten clad buildings that resemble upturned boats and are a distinctive quality addition to the riverside.

3.13 The park has a brick depot/office building that is a recessive utilitarian structure that makes



The Cremorne Riverside Centre

little impact on the character or appearance of the area. It adjoins the more historic stock brick building of the Chelsea Yacht and Boat Club.



Chelsea Yacht and Boat Club

Boundary treatments

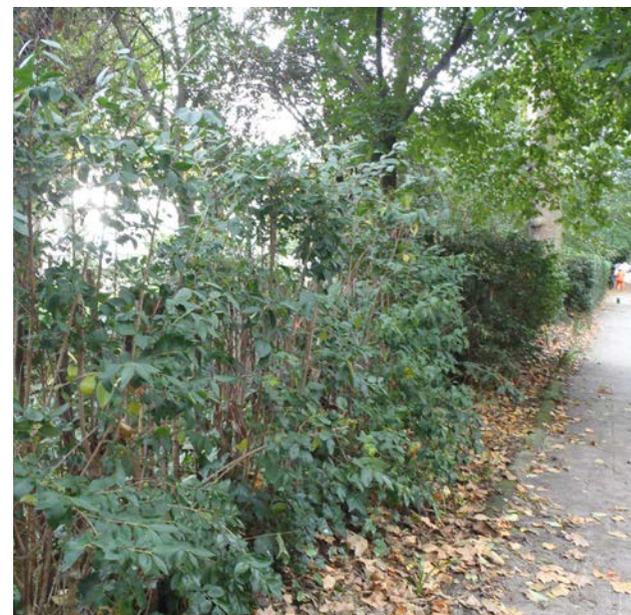
3.14 The hammer dressed granite wall of Chelsea Embankment is the most noticeable boundary treatment of the area providing a solid, firm edge to the river. Further west, the river is marked by a river wall and the wharf and industrial forecourts to the Lots Road Pumping Station and the former Lots Road Power Station.

3.15 The boundaries of the greenspaces in the area are poorly-defined. They are marked with coping stones, but many are broken or missing. In places they have been infilled with inappropriate concrete blocks.

3.16 The boundary of Cremorne Gardens with Lots Road is provided by a modern brick wall surmounted by modern metal railings painted black. There are also boundary metal railings around the greenspaces adjacent to Chelsea and Battersea Bridges. There are wooden gates to Chelsea Yacht and Boat Club, and metal railing gates to the Riverside Centre and to Cremorne Gardens.



Hammer dressed granite wall, Chelsea Embankment



Boundary of Chelsea Embankment Gardens

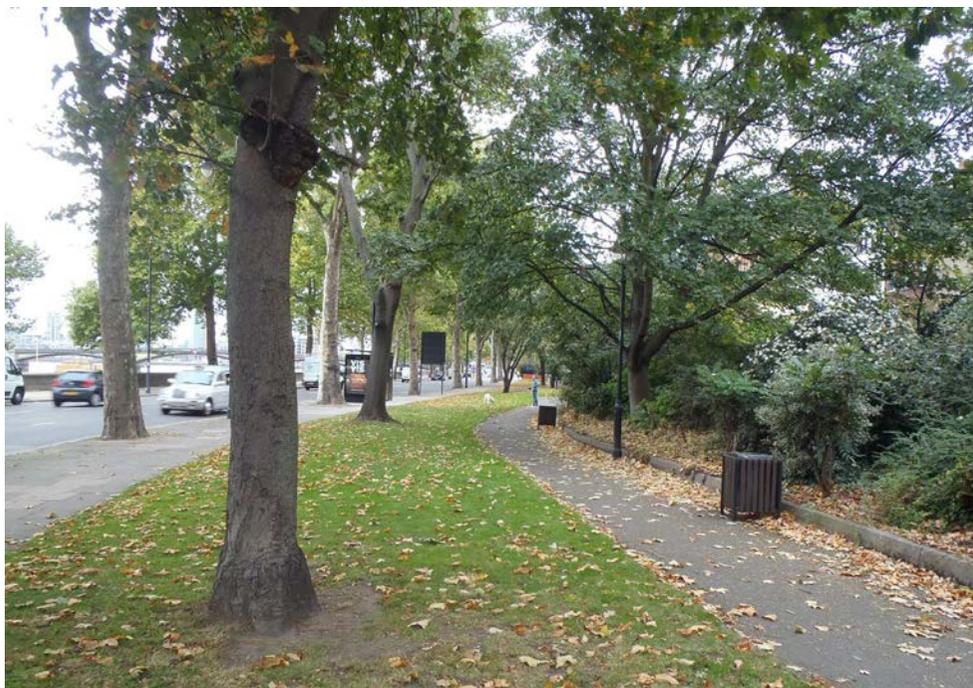


Restored original gates of Cremorne Gardens



Metal railings, Battersea Bridge Gardens

4 Public Realm



Trees at Chelsea Embankment Gardens



Trees at Cremorne Gardens

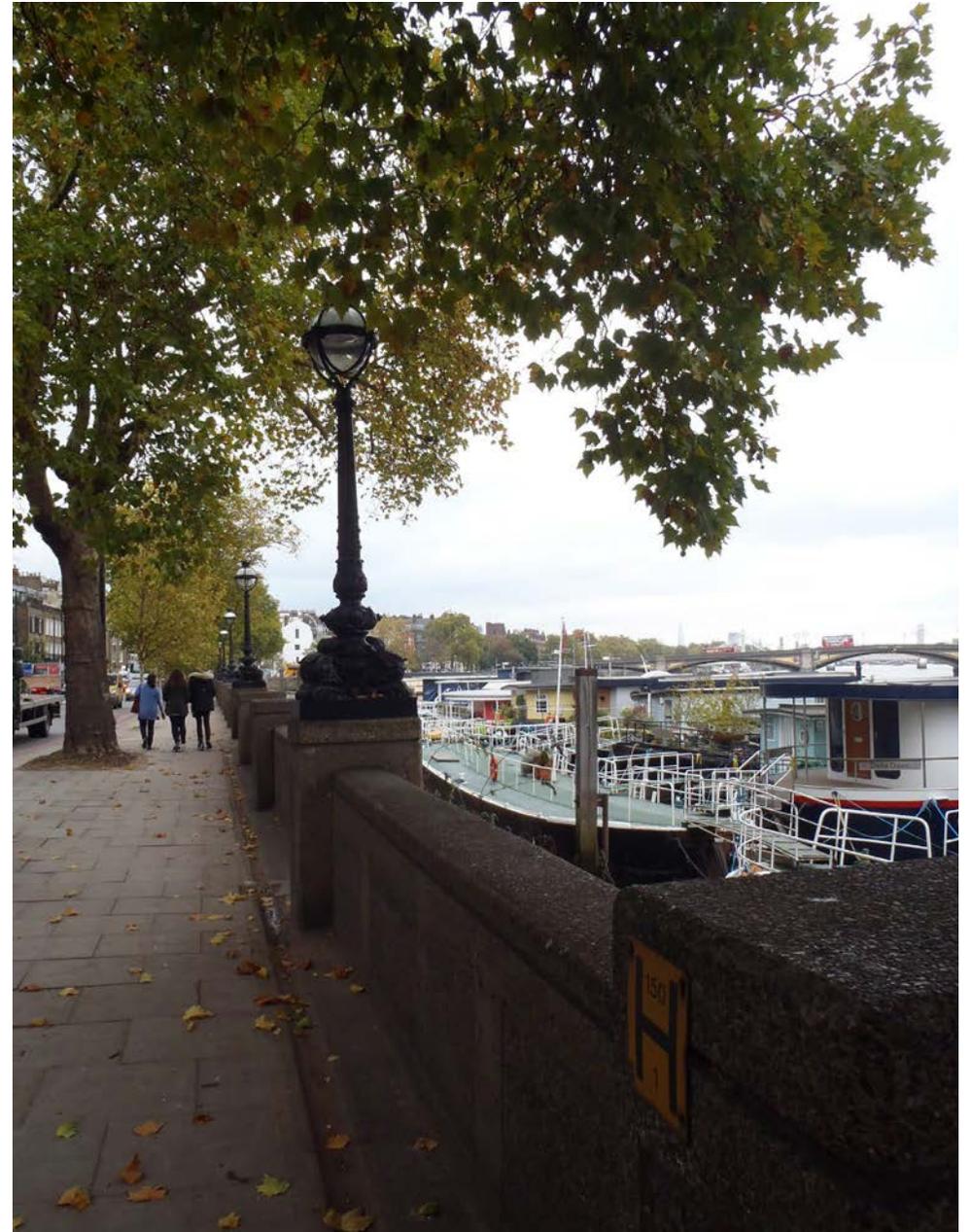
Trees

4.1 The tree cover of the Thames Conservation Area is dominated by the mature London Plane trees *Platanus x hispanica* growing along the Embankment. The trees are owned and maintained by Transport for London and are the continuation of this tree planting along the riverside from Blackfriars all the way to Cremorne Gardens. The section of trees planted opposite Battersea Park is particularly impressive when viewed from Albert Bridge or the river itself. Some are younger smaller trees that have been planted in succession to felled diseased or damaged trees.

4.2 The planted areas known collectively as Chelsea Embankment Gardens are managed by the Council. Containing a mixture of mature trees and shrubs these areas provide a useful green barrier reducing noise and traffic pollution from the busy Chelsea Embankment. Within these gardens can be found excellent mature specimens of Holm Oak *Quercus ilex*, Common Walnut *Juglans regia*, Tree of Heaven *Ailanthus altissima* and at least two examples of the Weeping Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* 'Camperdownii'.



London Plane trees, Chelsea Embankment

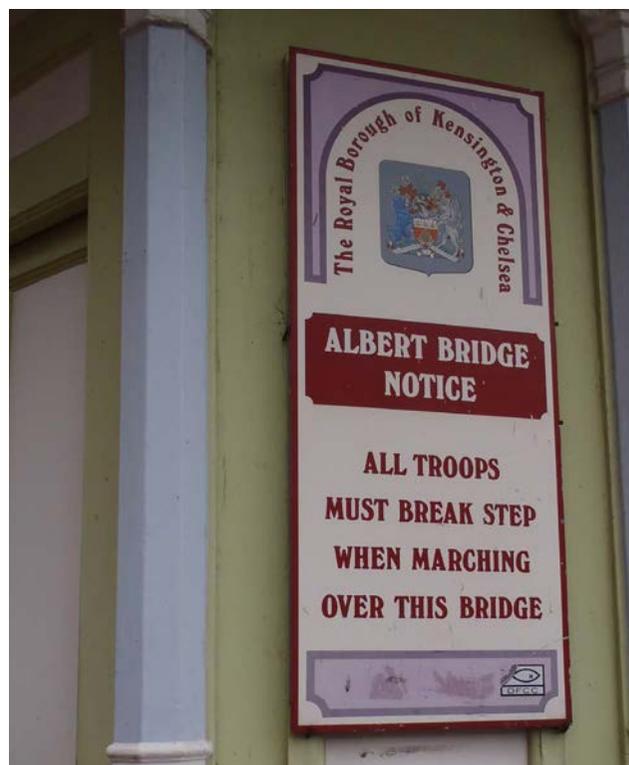


London Plane trees, Cheyne Walk

Street Furniture



K2 telephone box, Albert Bridge



Albert Bridge notice



Cast iron globe street lamps, Chelsea Embankment

TELEPHONE BOX

4.3 There is a listed K2 telephone box on Albert Bridge next to one of the toll booths and a notice instructing troops to break step when crossing. There is plaque recording the opening of the bridge in 1874. This street furniture, the listed statues to either side, including the statue of climbing figures surmounted by a light and the traditional cabman's shelter, form a visually rich and pleasing streetscape around the bridge that contributes positively to the character of the conservation area.

STREET LIGHTING

4.4 The regularly placed decorative cast iron lamp standards on the embankment wall are a key feature of the streetscene and their regular rhythm is a critical part of the character of the riverside. The lamp is a glass globe and it is surmounted by a black painted metal crown feature. The vehicular carriageway is lit by tall modern street lights.

4.5 Each of the bridges has lamp standards. Those on Albert Bridge are decorative single

lamp posts, those on Battersea Bridge are either grouped branches of lights on a standard or standards with single lamps and Chelsea Bridge is decorated with sets of lamp posts topped with model galleons.

4.6 Chelsea Embankment Gardens contain lamp posts that are reflective of the design of Chelsea Embankment's lamp posts. The lamp standard of climbing figures positioned near Albert Bridge that records the opening of Chelsea Embankment is a key feature (with its matching counterpart in Cheyne



Street lamps, Chelsea Bridge

Conservation Area) of the historic importance of the embankment. The view looking upriver from Whistler's Statue next to Battersea Bridge provides a remarkable vista.

BENCHES

4.7 At regular intervals along the pavement are benches that are raised on Yorkstone plinths. They have wooden slatted seats and cast iron mid-span support and ends in the shape of sphinxes. They form an ensemble with the cast



Street lamps, Battersea Bridge

iron lamp standards on the embankment wall. Many of the plinths have inset circular metal plaques with dedications relating to the benches' restoration in the late 20th century.

4.8 Benches within the public gardens are of a less elaborate design than those on Chelsea Embankment but are also wooden and of traditional appearance.



Bench, Chelsea Embankment



Bench, Chelsea Embankment Gardens

PLAQUES AND SIGNS

4.9 The visual richness of the surfaces of the conservation area is enhanced by historic individual and small plaques and fixtures. There is a Port of London Authority metal plaque on the embankment wall that records the flood level of the major 1928 flood and a discreet plaque records the opening of Albert Bridge. A small Thames Path roundel with the acorn brand has also been fixed onto the Chelsea Embankment street sign. Redundant, colourful or dominant signs can detract from the conservation area's appearance.



Thames Path roundel



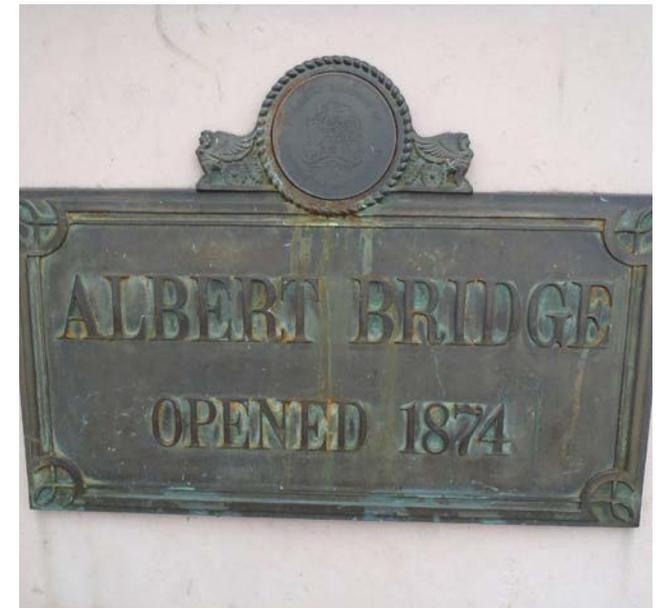
Street name sign



RIBA regional architects award plaque



Plaque of major 1928 flood



Plaque recording the opening of Albert Bridge

PUBLIC ART AND STATUARY

4.10 Public Art makes a great contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and the pieces have considerable artistic significance in their own right. There are many statues within the conservation area principally within the Chelsea Embankment Gardens but also in the greenspaces alongside the bridges. Notable examples, such as the statue of Thomas Carlyle, are also statutorily listed.

4.11 Details can be found in the Council's guide, *On public view: A journey around the Sculpture of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea* by David Nolan and Caroline Starren available on our website.

4.12 A recent addition to public art in the area is the installation on the Tree of Heaven in Cremorne Gardens that also serves as nesting boxes for wildlife.

BOLLARDS

4.13 There are bollards on the pavement close to Albert Bridge. They are modern but being of traditional design and colour, fit with the character of the conservation area

SEWER VENTS

4.14 There are five sewer vents in the conservation area and two are statutorily listed. They are the visible reminder of the major

engineering project of the embankment. The tall height of the cast iron columns is to draw vapours off the sewer to discharge them at high level. They are decorative in design with a tapering fluted base that is ringed with a lotus leaf frieze.



Statue of Thomas Carlyle





Statue on a column



Tree of Heaven public art installation



Modern cast iron bollards



Sewer vents



Street Surfacing

HISTORIC PAVING

4.15 Chelsea Embankment is largely paved in riven York stone but there are also sections of pavements in the conservation area that are concrete slab paving. Many of the kerbs are in granite. Where the York stone and granite survives, these are of the greatest heritage significance to the conservation area.



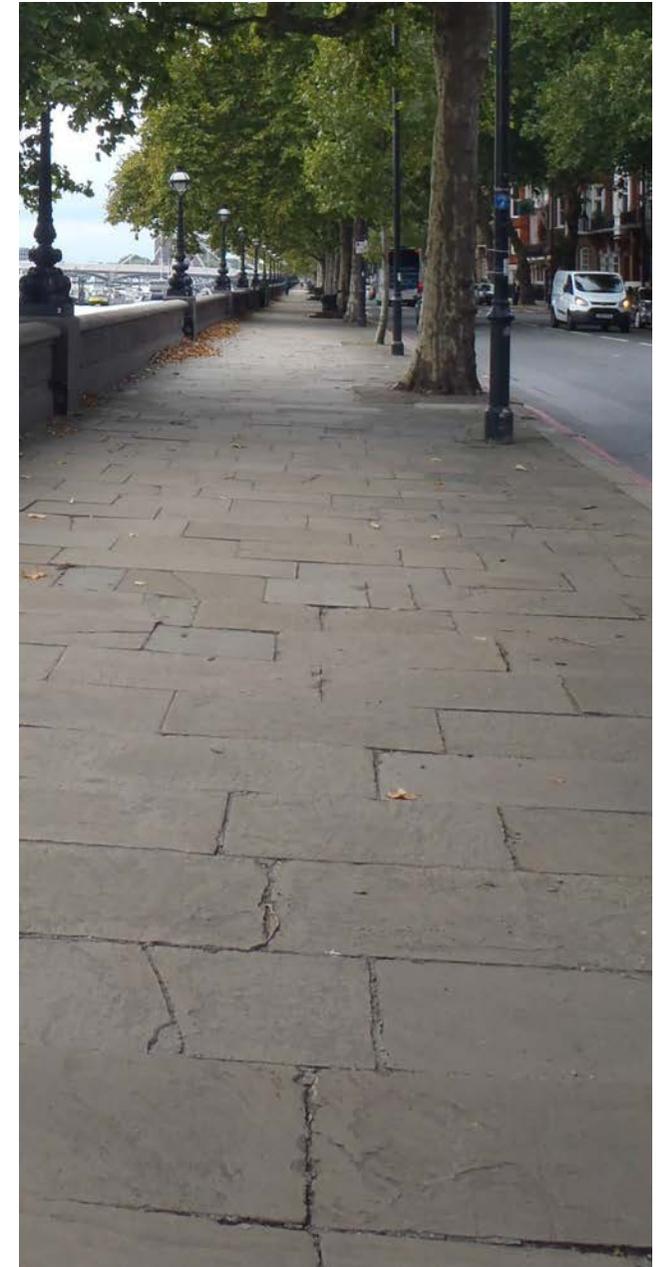
Granite kerbs and concrete slab paving



Riven York stone



Granite setts



Riven York stone

Views and Landmarks

4.16 Views form an important part of the character of the conservation area that is desirable to preserve or enhance. Here are some examples of views in the Thames Conservation Area:

- Views from Battersea Bridge of the houseboats. The collection of houseboats is an established part of the character and appearance of the area, with lively shapes and colours. The combination of their low height and moorings being in two parts with a gap mean that these structures that do not block appreciation of the river.
- Views of Cadogan Pier and its moorings from Albert Bridge and from Chelsea Embankment.
- Views from Chelsea Embankment and Cheyne Walk of the Thames bridges.
- Views, kinetic, from the bridges, and stationary looking at the Embankment
- Views from the carriageways of the bridges up Beaufort Street, Oakley Street and Chelsea Bridge Road
- View into the Royal Hospital
- View of Chelsea parish church tower
- Linear views up and down the Embankment pavement showing the line of lamp standards and avenue of plane trees
- Views from the riverside promenade of Cremorne Gardens back to the bridges, houseboats and river
- Views from the south bank of both the Cheyne Walk houses and the Embankment further east.
- Views of the riverside when on river transport (kinetic).
- The remarkable vista looking upriver from Whistler's Statue next to Battersea Bridge.



View eastward from Old Ferry Wharf



Views of houseboats and Cheyne Walk from the River Bus service



View from gaps in houseboats off Cheyne Walk



View of Cadogan Pier from Battersea Bridge



View of Albert Bridge from Chelsea Embankment



View westward from Chelsea Bridge



Fig 4.1: Views map

5 Negative Elements and Opportunities for Enhancement



Cabman's shelter with faded paintwork

5.1 This section itemises some of the negative elements that detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area and sets out some opportunities for enhancement. The National Planning Policy Framework and the Council's policies require opportunities to be taken when and where possible to enhance the significance of heritage assets.

5.2 Generally, the overall condition of the conservation area is good, with the built structures and gardens benefiting from suitable maintenance. Exceptions are some of the Chelsea Embankment benches and the Cabman's shelter which is showing signs of a

deteriorating condition with faded paintwork and blocked gutters. Timely cyclical maintenance of these would be beneficial to the appearance of the area.

5.3 Some of the existing statuary are replica pieces replacing stolen originals. The Boy David on the granite pier in Chelsea Embankment Gardens is a fibreglass copy and Atalanta on the west side of Albert Bridge is a replacement of 1994. The statue Boy with a Cat at the south end of Lawrence Street in the gardens has not been replaced following its theft, leaving only a Portland stone plinth with its worn inscription. Replacing the statue on a restored plinth would enhance the area.

5.4 A number of the feature metal studs embedded in the top of the retaining wall of the staircases and abutments of Battersea Bridge are missing and their reinstatement would be a visual benefit to the listed bridge.

5.5 The boundaries of the public greenspaces are poorly-defined. The original coping stones or kerbs are broken or missing and in places poorly-matched concrete coping stones have been laid.

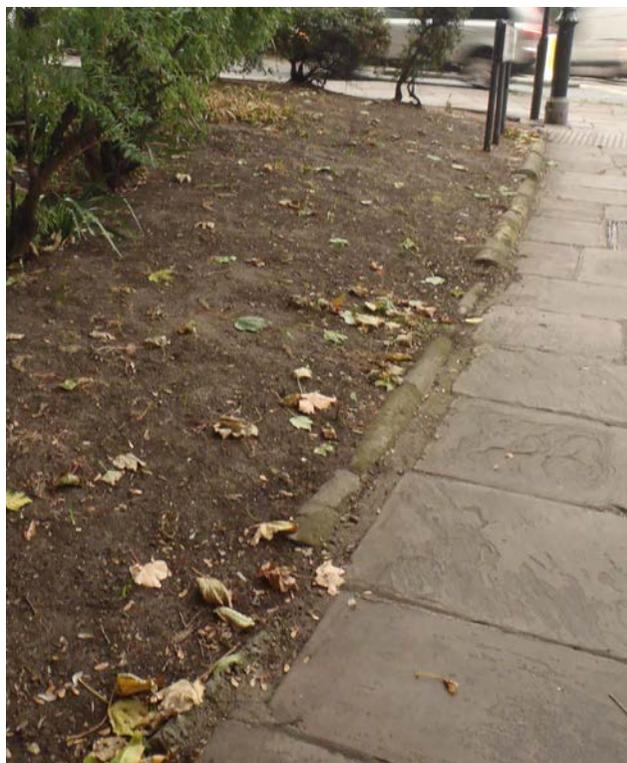
5.6 The national trail, the Thames Path, currently diverts from the riverside into Lots Road and arrangements to keep the trail at the river's edge west of Cremorne Gardens would



Missing metal studs on top of retaining wall

enhance pedestrian experience of the riverside character of the conservation area, as would a reduction in the amount of vehicular traffic using Chelsea Embankment and Cheyne Walk.

5.7 The riverside path currently has to rise to cross Chelsea and Battersea Bridges and there is no public access to the green and treed space on the west side of Chelsea Bridge. Adaptation of the bridges and river wall to allow continuous access, provided this were structurally and visually appropriate, might enhance the area. Phased pedestrian crossing signals at the



Missing original coping stones

bridges would aid pedestrians including those using the national trail.

5.8 There are two large internally illuminated dynamic advertisements at the intersection of Lots Road, Cheyne Walk and Cremorne Road displayed within tall vertically planked timber hoardings. These are visually dominant and out of scale with the fine grain historic terraces of Lots Road and the lively small scale appearance of the moored houseboats adjacent. Their removal and the replacement of the timber hoarding with a discreet brick boundary would enhance the visual amenity of the area.



Poorly matched concrete coping stones

5.9 The bus shelters on Chelsea Embankment have also recently been changed and now display internally illuminated advertisements. Reversion to plain bus shelters without advertisements would fit better with the area.

5.10 Currently the Transport for London river bus at Cadogan Pier provides a very limited weekday only rush hour service on their only route between central and south-west London. Better use of river transport through provision of a frequent daily service from Cadogan Pier and points further west, for travel across London



Illuminated electronic advertisement boards



Recently installed bus shelters with illuminated advertisements

might help alleviate the effect of the heavy traffic in the conservation area.

5.11 The conservation area's general openness and the key importance of views in and out of it mean that surrounding development can have a negative impact on its character and setting. Recent developments of the new tall buildings at Lots Road Power Station are adversely affecting the panoramas of the Thames by protruding visually in the centre spans of Albert and Battersea Bridges. The view of the bridges in the downstream direction is adversely affected by the recently built cylindrical Vauxhall Tower, again protruding in their centre spans. This detracts from their

design and river dominance. Development on the south bank of the Thames can also affect the conservation area and the large block of sinuous glass riverside flats adjacent to Albert Bridge is not representative of the finer grain scale of the conservation area opposite and the delicacy of the structure of the bridge.

5.12 At the time of writing (2017), construction of the Thames Tideway Tunnel is in its preparatory stages and land to the west of Chelsea Bridge is sectioned off. A new pedestrian accessible river viewing plaza is going to be built into the river opposite the Bull Ring Embankment entrance to the Royal Hospital as part of the legacy of the required

infrastructure in this location. The Thames Tideway Tunnel is an engineering project to help with flood defence and sewer capacity. It will run across the borough's river frontage and will have an impact in the area whilst in its construction phase.

5.13 There are a number of statutory undertakers' cabinets and Council storage containers in the area. Whilst necessary in the streetscene, their appearance could be improved if they are reduced in number and placed in unobtrusive positions and it is important that maintenance continues to keep them in good visual order.



Views of Battersea Bridge protruded by new tall buildings at Lots Road



Views of Chelsea Bridge protruded by Vauxhall Tower

5.14 Road transport signage and other signage should be kept under review and consolidated or removed if no longer needed.



Bicycle storage racks



Council storage containers in poor condition

PIERS

6.5 The following information on piers is also from the History of the County of Middlesex

6.6 *“There was insufficient accommodation on the riverbank for the boats in the 1840s and piers were built into the Thames to accommodate them. Cremorne Gardens had its own landing place, with a regular service from London.... In 1840 Old Swan pier and Chelsea Mall pier served the steamboats, but by 1841 Earl Cadogan had erected Cadogan pier in Cheyne Walk, designed by N. Handford, catering for a large number of summer passengers... In 1846 Chelsea improvement commission believed that additional piers were still needed,...but provision for piers in plans for the embankment c. 1852 was not put into effect. ... Another pier was built east of Battersea Bridge by 1865, .. known as Chelsea and later as Carlyle pier; it was presumably rebuilt following completion of the embankment in 1874... Cadogan pier was also rebuilt c. 1875 to accommodate Albert Bridge. ... By 1894 Victoria pier had been put up near the Royal Hospital, just outside the parish’s eastern boundary, ...but was disused in 1901. ...The LCC acquired Cadogan pier from the Thames Conservancy Board and Carlyle pier from the Thames Steamboat Company and repaired them in 1905; passengers travelling higher up the river changed boats at Cadogan pier, but services operated from Carlyle for only a few months. ...All three piers survived in 1963, ... but only Cadogan pier still stood in 1996 when it was bought by Cadogan Pier (Chelsea) Limited from the Port of London Authority. ...Public and*

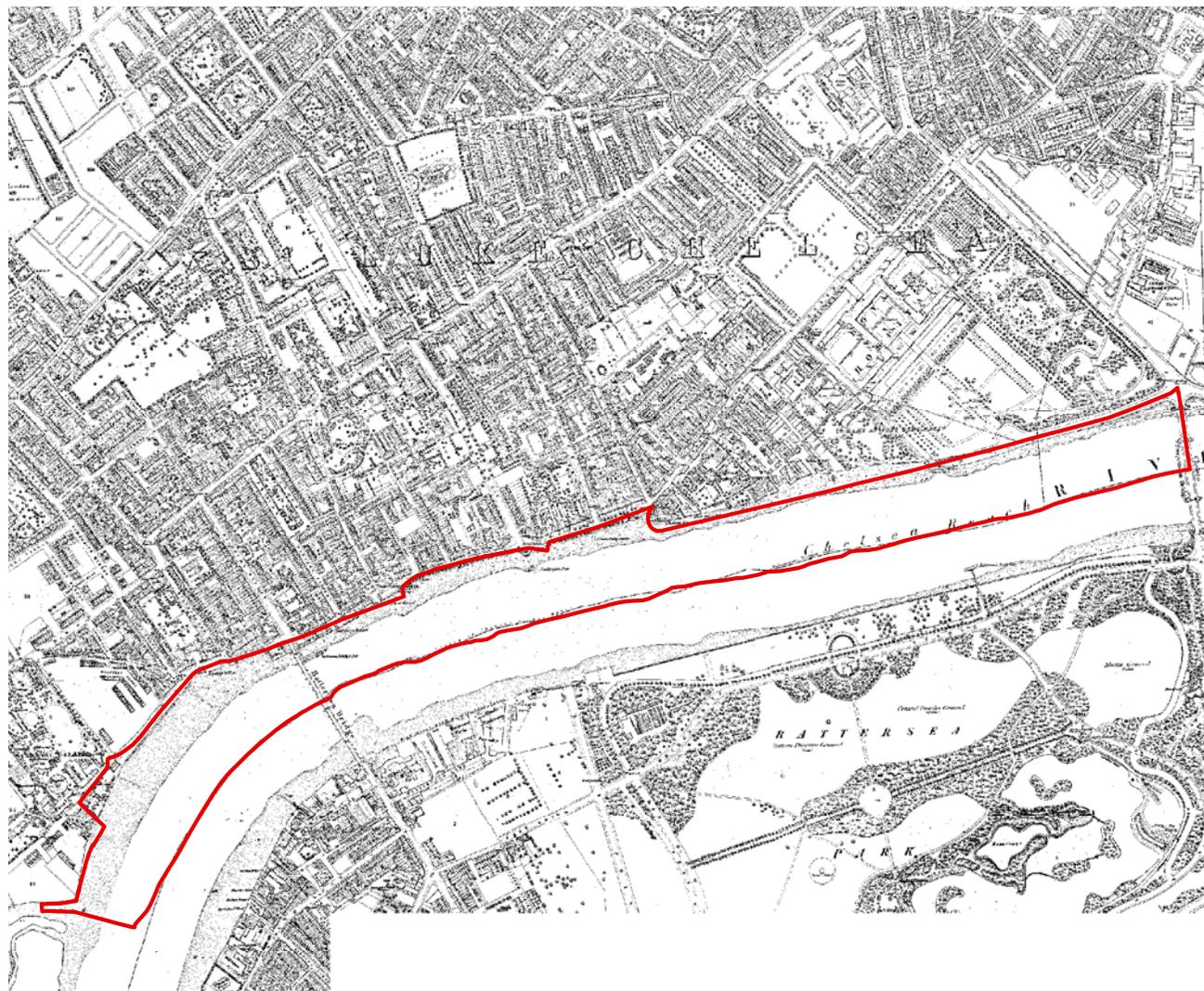


Fig 6.2: Map of 1869

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private charter services operated from it in 2000
” A History of the County of Middlesex



Old Ferry Wharf, photo by James Hedderly

Reproduction thanks to RBKC Local Studies and Archives



The original timber Battersea Bridge, photo by James Hedderly

Reproduction thanks to RBKC Local Studies and Archives

RIVER CROSSINGS

6.7 Battersea Bridge was the first bridge crossing in the area and was built between 1771-1772. It was a timber bridge that was 28 feet wide and had so many piers that the bridge was considered a hazard for passing shipping. It was the last surviving timber bridge in London and is famously represented in the works of local artists such as JMW Turner and Whistler, including the latter's *Nocturne in Blue and Gold- Old Battersea Bridge* that is now in Tate Britain.

6.8 The next bridge to be built was Chelsea Bridge, originally called Victoria Bridge and was a suspension bridge. It was begun in 1851 and opened in 1858 by Queen Victoria. It linked the north bank with the newly-created Battersea Park on the south bank. Its tolls were thought to make poor industrial workers in Chelsea, an area with few parks, disinclined to cross to benefit from the park and there were demonstrations against the imposition of tolls.

6.9 The proposed opening of Albert Bridge had led to the owners of Battersea Bridge successfully petitioning to have the promoters buy their bridge. When Albert Bridge opened in 1874 it caused a drop in usage of Chelsea Bridge. Ownership of Chelsea Bridge transferred in 1877 to the Metropolitan Board of Works (the MBW). The MBW then bought Battersea and Albert Bridges in 1879 when all three bridges were declared toll free.

6.10 Built in 1873, Albert Bridge was designed by Rowland Mason Ordish who had patented his straight chain system for supporting suspension

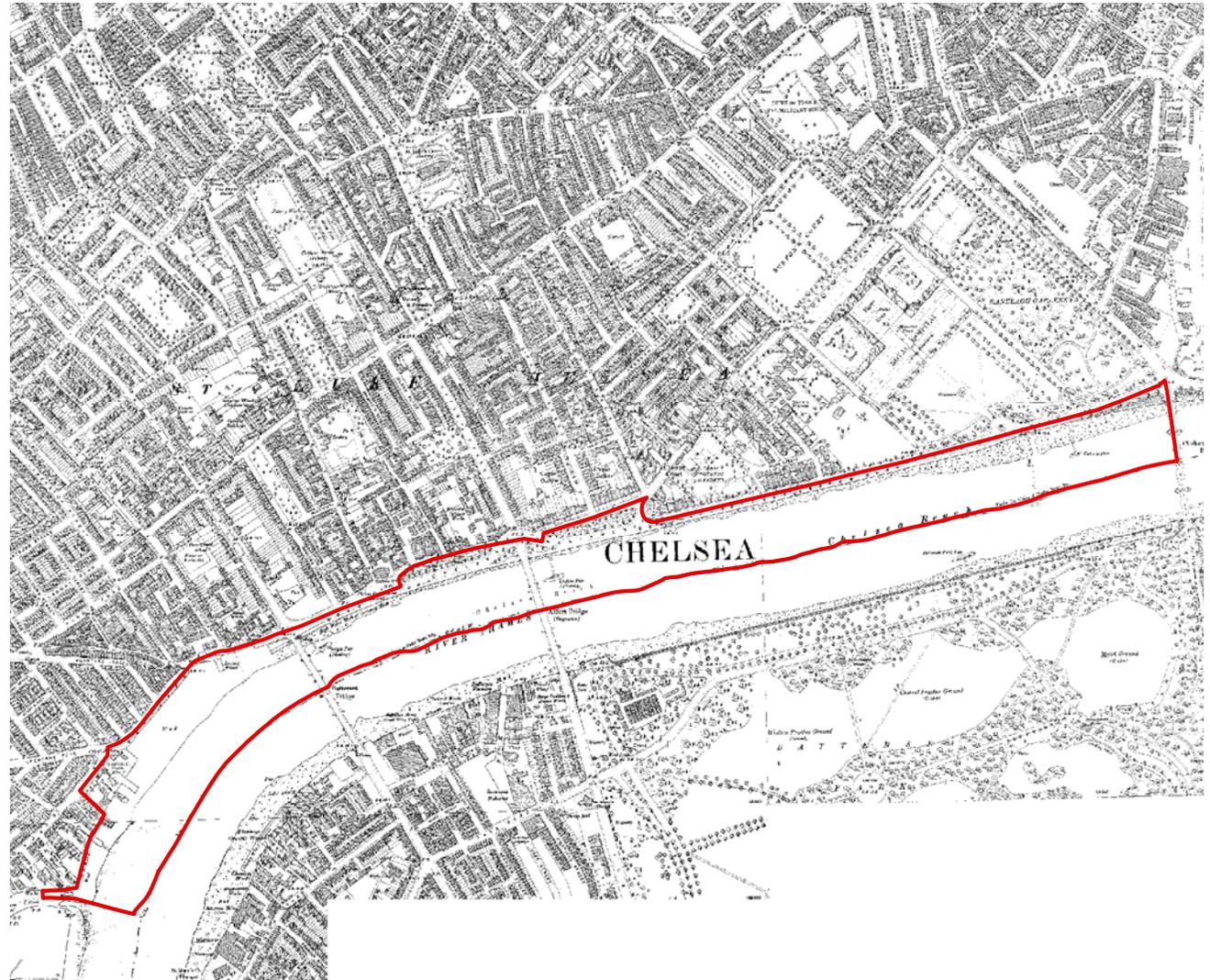


Fig 6.3: Map of 1896

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bridges in 1858. The roadway is a rigid girder supported by straight inclined chains, which are anchored to the two original pairs of piers. In the 1950s the Greater London Council added two additional piers in the centre of the span in

the river following concerns about the bridge's stability. In the 1970s, in response to further concerns, a two-ton weight limit was imposed for vehicles crossing.

6.11 The current Battersea and Chelsea Bridges are both replacement structures. Battersea was rebuilt in the 1880s to a design by Bazalgette and opened in 1890 by Lord Rosebery. Victoria Bridge was renamed as Chelsea Bridge in 1861: concerns about its stability had led to careful dissociation with the royal family. Eventually the concerns led to its total rebuilding in 1935. It was designed by the London County Council (LCC) engineers' department led by Sir T Peirson Frank with consulting engineers Rendell Tritton and Palmer and consulting architect George Topham Forrest. It gained funding from central government with the undertaking that all of its materials were to be sourced from within the British Empire. In recognition of Canada's contribution of timber, the Canadian Prime Minister opened the bridge in 1937.

CHELSEA EMBANKMENT

6.12 The history of the repair and maintenance of Chelsea's riverside walls is full of disputes and includes calls made by the vestry in 1815 for the Lord of the Manor and neighbouring freeholders to repair the dangerous wall opposite Lindsey House. Various schemes for embanking the river in Chelsea were made in the 19th century but early schemes failed to be implemented.

6.13 In 1853-7, the north bank of the river from the centre as far west as Ranelagh Gardens was embanked and a turning circle was provided at its termination point. The Metropolitan Board of Works (the MBW) was keen to continue the works and obtained an Act in 1868 to progress

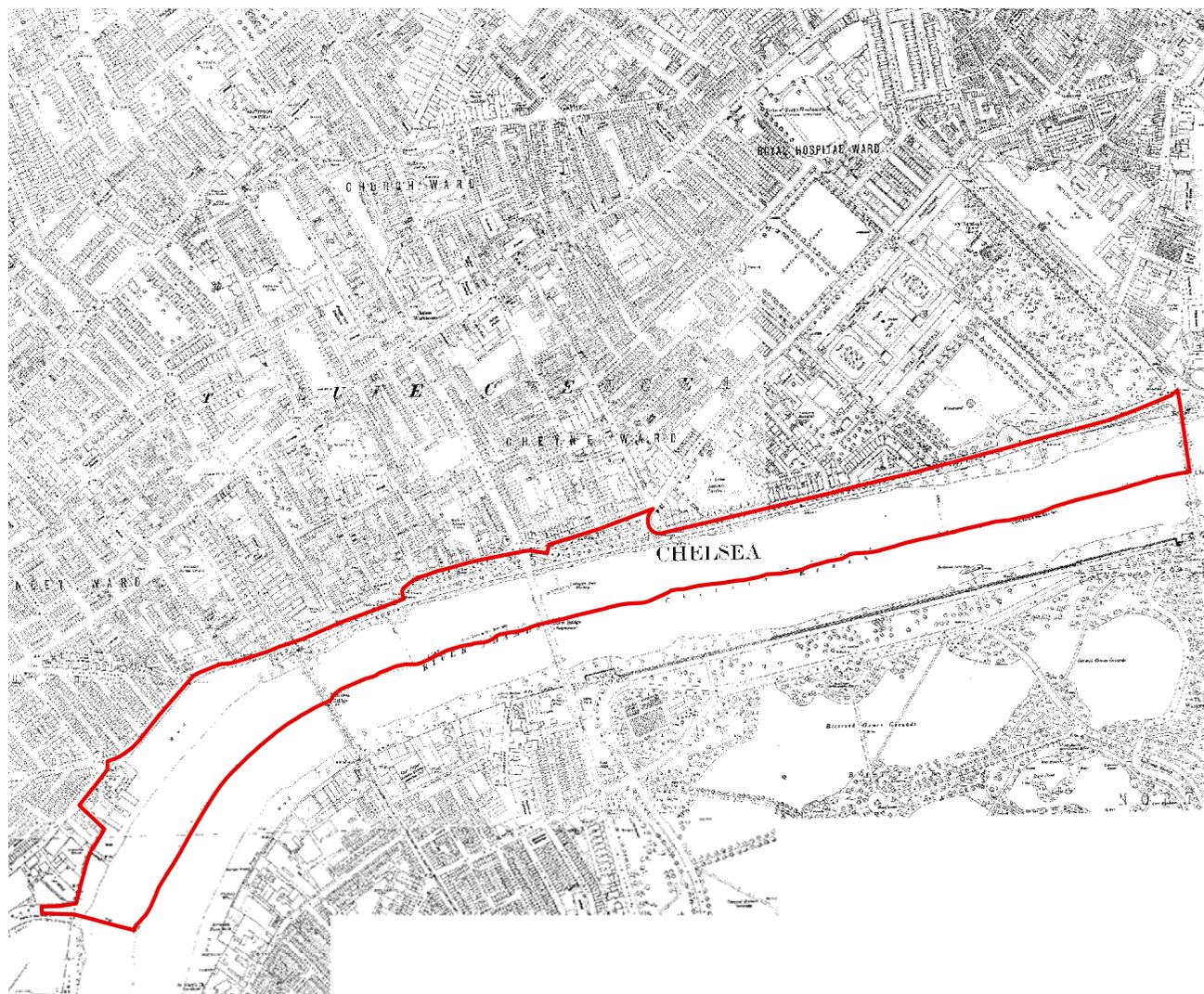


Fig 6.4: Map of 1915

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as far as Battersea Bridge. The Bazalgette engineered scheme was built between 1871 and 1874 and became the Chelsea Embankment. It reclaimed 9 ½ acres from the river and provided a 70-foot-wide roadway. It entailed

the demolition of buildings in Duke Street and Lombard Street, the removal of wharves and stairs into the river and thus fundamentally altered the character of Chelsea by separating it from the river.

6.14 Nonetheless, the vestry lobbied to have it extended further west. From 1872 the plan they promoted to the MBW and then the LCC was to extend it to Cremorne Gardens. This was eventually rejected by parliamentary committee in 1897, largely on aesthetic grounds. Until 1951 there were various plans to embank the river west of Battersea Bridge, one to extend as far as Putney Bridge, but the Council was opposed by local amenity groups and residents and eventually from 1953-4 the river wall was instead rebuilt on the natural river edge.



Fig 6.5: Map of 1955



Chelsea Embankment under construction, photo by James Hedderly

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Appendix 2: Historic England Guidance

Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1 (2016)

This guidance sets out ways to manage change in a way that conserves and enhances historic areas through conservation area designation, appraisal and management.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-designation-appraisal-management-advice-note-1/>

The checklist below has been taken from this publication and has helped to identify the buildings that make a positive contribution to the historic and architectural character of the conservation area.

- Is the building the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?
- Does it have landmark quality?
- Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?
- Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?
- Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?
- Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?

- Is it associated with a designed landscape eg a significant wall, terracing or a garden building?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?
- Does it have significant historic association with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?

Additional criteria set by the Council:

- Does the building have architectural, historical, archaeological, evidential, artistic or communal significance that contributes to the character or appearance of the conservation area?
- Has the building retained its original design, materials, features and setting or ones that are appropriate to its style and period?
- Does it contribute to the evolution and diversity of the conservation area?
- Was it built by an important local builder or one who also built other significant buildings in the area?

Conservation and Energy Efficiency

Historic England have produced useful guidance on how homeowners can improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions whilst still respecting the historic and architectural significance of their properties. For more information follow this link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/your-home/saving-energy/>

Archaeological Priority Areas (APA)

Further information on the archaeological significance of the APA within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are outlined in their Archaeological Priority Areas Appraisal document, available on Historic England's website.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/planning/apa-kensington-chelsea-pdf/>

Appendix 3: Relevant Local Plan Policies

The table opposite indicates those policies in the Royal Borough's Local Plan, which have particular relevance to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area.

These policies are the primary means through which the Council ensures that proposed development within designated conservation areas preserve or enhance the area's character and appearance.

This list is not comprehensive and any development proposals will have to take account of the whole suite of policies contained within the Council's Local Plan. Please consult the Council's website.

Chapter 21: An Engaging Public Realm	
Policy CR4	Streetscape
Policy CR5	Parks, Gardens, Open Space and Waterways
Policy CR6	Trees and Landscape
Chapter 22: Renewing the Legacy	
Policy CL1	Context and Character
Policy CL 2	Design Quality
Policy CL3	Heritage Assets – Conservation Areas and Historic Spaces
Policy CL 4	Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeology
Policy CL 6	Small Scale Alterations and Additions
Policy CL7	Basements
Policy CL8	Existing Buildings – Roof Alteration/Additional Storeys
Policy CL9	Existing Buildings – Extensions and Modifications
Policy CL10	Shopfronts
Policy CL11	Views
Policy CL12	Building Heights