

**SOUTH
KEN
ZEN+**

South Kensington ZEN+

Stakeholder Engagement Report

September 2024

CONTENTS

1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4	APPENDIX	50	
2	SPATIAL DIAGRAM OF COMMUNITY IDEAS	6	1	THE EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KENSINGTON	52
3	THE STUDY AREA	8	2	WHAT IS SOUTH KEN ZEN+	54
4	THE AIMS OF THE ENGAGEMENT	14	3	POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT	56
5	THE EXTENTS OF THE ENGAGEMENT	16	4	ENGAGING WELL WITH PEOPLE ON CLIMATE CHANGE	60
6	HIGHLIGHTS AND HEADLINES FROM THE ENGAGEMENT EVENTS	18	5	WORLD-CLASS EXAMPLES	62
7	PRINCIPLES	24	6	OVERALL APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT	72
8	PROJECT IDEAS	28	7	POP-UP MARKET STALL	74
9	NEXT STEPS	42	8	WALKING AUDIT	76
10	POTENTIAL FUNDING AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES	44	9	ONLINE SURVEY	90
			10	GREAT EXHIBITION ROAD FESTIVAL	116
			11	EXPLORATORY SESSIONS	130

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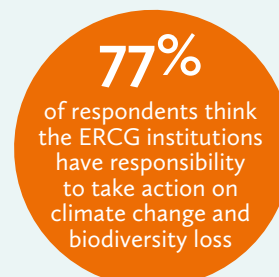
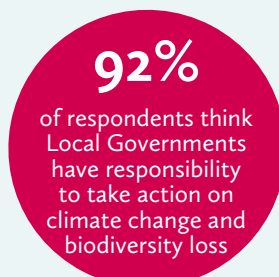
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Introduction to the South Ken ZEN+ project

Allies and Morrison have produced this report in support of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group (ERCG)'s South Kensington Zero Emissions Nature Positive (ZEN+) Programme. It is a synthesis of findings from an extensive stakeholder engagement exercise conducted in South Kensington, London between April and July 2024.

The purpose of the commission was to seek views on how South Kensington can become a greener, more biodiverse, and more climate-resilient place. Evidence was gathered from local stakeholders through a range of different online and in-person engagement activities.

The aim of this study is to contribute towards a more holistic approach to the neighbourhood by highlighting the views of its stakeholders. It is not a technical review of the spaces in South Kensington, rather it is intended as a starting point for exploration of neighbourhood priorities. The hope is that this will lead to new collaborations for the long-term stewardship of this internationally renowned cultural district in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

South Kensington is a world-renowned centre for the celebration of arts, science and innovation. Developed and nurtured as a legacy of the Great Exhibition of 1851, today the area welcomes over 30 million visitors a year. It is also a neighbourhood cherished by tens of thousands of local residents, workers and students.

South Kensington has always been a place of innovation, exploration and foresight. It is in this spirit that the South Ken ZEN+ programme seeks

to address the challenges of human-induced global climate change and biodiversity loss. With the parallel aims of becoming a zero emissions (ZE) and nature positive (N+) neighbourhood, this project forms the baseline for a collective approach that reaches beyond individual organisations to meet these goals.

The Climate Resilience Review (2024)

The recently published 2024 London Climate Resilience Review concludes that more accelerated work should be done to prepare London communities for the impacts of our changing climate. It calls for urgent attention and action to mitigate the severe impacts of extreme temperatures and higher rainfall on our built environment, natural environment, and human health and wellbeing. It also highlights evidence which shows how London's trees, green spaces and blue spaces are under threat from heatwaves and windstorms, weakening London's resilience.

The engagement activities

We have listened to the views of communities locally to better understand what they like and dislike about the area, and gather ideas from them for how to make the neighbourhood greener and more climate-resilient.

The range of activities conducted, both online and in person, reached an estimated 20,000 people in South Kensington, the majority of whom were living, working or studying in the local area. More in-depth interaction was had with approximately 600 people through active participation in the online survey, online exploratory sessions, interviews, on-street discussions, walking tours and an interactive workshop.

38 stakeholder project ideas



EXHIBITION ROAD WAS WHERE MOST PEOPLE WANTED TO SEE CHANGE

6 EMERGING THEMES

 <p>MAKE A CLIMATE RESILIENT PLACE</p>	 <p>NURTURE A BIODIVERSE PLACE</p>	 <p>SUPPORT HEALTH & WELLBEING</p>
 <p>ENCOURAGE WALKING & CYCLING</p>	 <p>RESPOND TO CHARACTER & HERITAGE</p>	 <p>MAINTAIN SPACES & EDUCATE</p>

Themes emerging from the engagement

From the engagement, six key themes emerged. These are:

- **Improving resilience** against warmer weather and higher rainfall
- Increasing climate suitable greening and nature to help recover and encourage **greater biodiversity**
- **Supporting health and wellbeing** of the visitors, residents and students who work, live, study and walk around South Kensington
- **Improving movement** corridors and **prioritising sustainable movement** to make it easier and more pleasurable to navigate on foot and cycle
- **Managing our spaces** and providing opportunities for **people to learn** more about the impacts of climate change in London
- Responding to and reflecting the distinctive and renowned **character and heritage** of the local area

These re-occurring themes demonstrate people’s general awareness of the changing climate. Respondents and participants acknowledged that South Kensington is experiencing higher temperatures, more extreme rainfall, and poor air quality.

As one of the most well-known and well-visited places in London, with a world-class reputation, South Kensington must seek to explore new opportunities to tackle these challenges through innovative ways of designing the public realm. This responds to the call for action from the London Climate Resilience Review.

Next Steps

The themes that have emerged through the engagement work have been translated into principles which are reflected in each of the project ideas that were put forward by the public. This report presents their ideas as suggestions. On occasion these have been lightly interpreted to make sense of them spatially. The report orders the project suggestions in four categories: projects that can be progressed by individual institutions, projects that can be progressed through ERCG or community collaboration, projects that ERCG could advocate for, and suggestions further studies.

There are a total of 38 project ideas identified, many of which have spacial specificity. These ideas provide a list of changes that people with a vested interest in the neighbourhood would like to see.

Whilst not exhaustive, this list of ideas offers a cohesive, community-backed starting point from which to explore projects, funding and support South Kensington’s transformation into a greener, safer and more climate-resilient neighbourhood.

2 SPATIAL DIAGRAM OF COMMUNITY IDEAS

The diagram to the right provides a spatial summary of the priorities and project ideas that were put forward during the many strands of engagement.

This gives an overview of the key types of projects that were suggested and the spaces identified as being best to accommodate them. In some cases, the ideas respond to challenges identified on particular streets or spaces.

Some propositions are the result of many similar suggestions put forward through the survey and events; others reflect more detailed input from key stakeholders. On a few occasions, ideas have been lightly interpreted by the project team. One example of this is that we received a number of comments related to not knowing where the green spaces are. We have looked at how this challenge could be overcome in the public space and suggested that a green thread could be created to serve as a nature corridor, a pleasant walking route, and this could be signposted to support use and navigation of the spaces by all users.

The diagram reflects the themes set out on the previous page and provides a useful introduction to the project ideas which are covered in the following section.



Exhibition road as a green spine, with tree planting, vertical planting, use of the central posts for climbers, permeable surfacing and shade and potential to reduce traffic levels



Redesign Imperial College Road to read more as a public space, consolidating car parking and providing good cycling facilities



Enhance and expand Queens Lawn so that it reads across Imperial College Road and diversify planting



Limit impact of traffic and improve air quality, rebalance space towards pedestrians and create planting opportunities



A continuous green thread and nature corridor, connecting green spaces and introducing pocket spaces from Hyde Park in the north to the Thames in the south, with signposting



A continuous, step free, safe and social route from the station to museums



Public realm works so that RAH steps continue as a public space, connecting to RCM



Suggested potential water feature locations



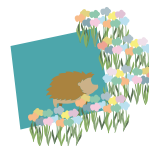
Opportunities for more diverse and pollinator friendly planting in existing open spaces



Priority places identified for tree planting with opportunities for shaded seating



Places identified for pocket spaces with opportunities for seating



Habitat creation and biodiversity knowledge sharing between communal private gardens. Potential to occasionally open these to the public



Priority areas mentioned for rebalancing space towards cyclists and pedestrians



Schools to create safe, green routes to and from with incidental play



Potential areas of woodland planting for biodiversity and shade in Hyde park and Kensington Gardens



3 THE STUDY AREA

The study area straddles the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to the south and west, and the City of Westminster to the north, which is home to Imperial College London, the Royal Albert Hall, Goethe Institute, Royal College of Music, Royal College of Art, as well as arts and cultural institutions within Hyde Park. The South Kensington area is characterised by its many museums and cultural landmarks, which draw millions of visitors annually. Alongside these visitor attractions, are thousands of homes in neighbourhoods including Kensington, Knightsbridge and Chelsea.

Through the range of engagement activities we shared information about the programme with an estimated 20,000 people in South Kensington. We focused on engaging more directly and in-depth with those who have a more long-term interest and understanding of the neighbourhood, such as local residents, amenity groups, local schools, places of worship, community groups, staff members and students. These communities use and experience the areas of South Kensington daily; with their routines and choices affected by their external environment. Visitors to the area were also reached through the one-day market stall, and our stand at the Great Exhibition Road Festival.

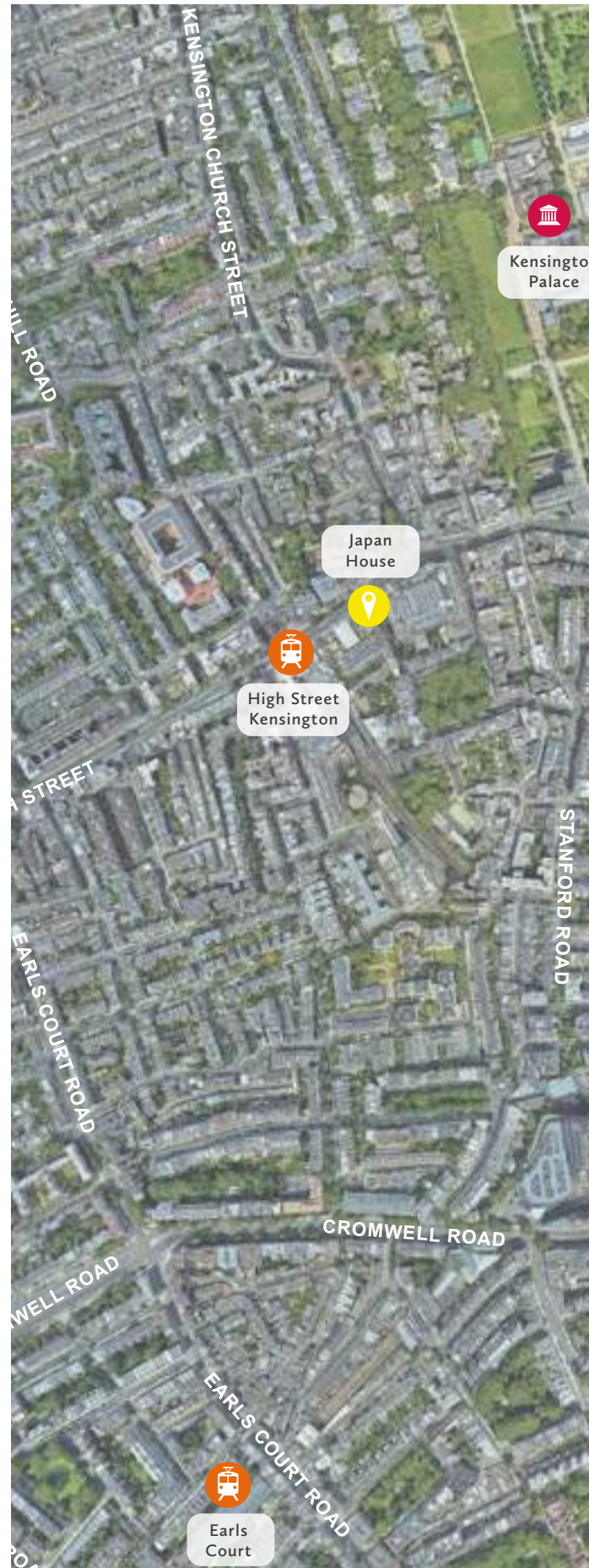


Fig 1 Locations of the ERCG member organisation institutions



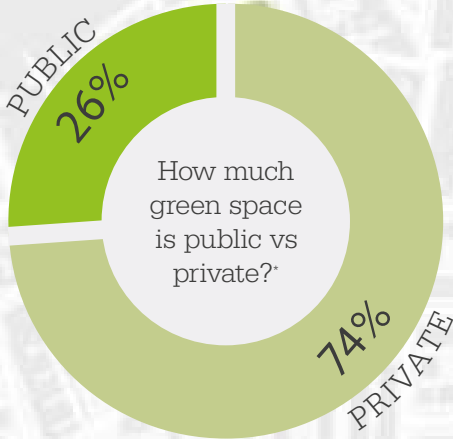
3.1 South Kensington's Green Space

This map shows where the green spaces in South Kensington are. The spaces are split between publicly accessible spaces, and those that are private.

Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) is the fifth most densely populated London boroughs, whilst Westminster (WCC) is the 11th. Only 19% of the RBKC is designated as open space, which gives the least amount of open space per person. Westminster, on the other hand, has around 25% open space. However, when looking purely in South Kensington, aside from Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, the publicly accessible green space measures only 4.01 hectares. Many of the spaces in South Kensington are not publicly accessible, however they are available and accessible to small communities of residents, and of course have the opportunity to be huge refuges and habitats for wildlife and plant life.

South Kensington itself is home to a few sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). These are Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, the Natural History Museum Gardens, and Prince's Gate Gardens.

In addition, RBKC has approximately 18% tree cover and WCC has 16%, behind Camden (26%), Islington (20%) and Wandsworth (20%).



HOLLAND PARK

CHRIST CHURCH KENSINGTON

CORNWALL GARDENS

HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON COURTFIELD GARDENS



Publicly accessible green space



Private green space



Closes at dusk/institution closing time


 KENSINGTON GARDENS
~ 107ha

HYDE PARK
~ 142ha

PRINCE'S GATE GARDENS


 PRINCE'S GARDENS
~ 1.07ha

ENNISMORE GARDENS

 HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON CHURCHYARD
~ 0.56ha

QUEEN'S LAWN
~ 0.29ha

QUEEN'S GATE GARDENS

 NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM GARDENS
~ 2.02ha

YALTA MEMORIAL GARDEN

THURLOE SQUARE GARDEN

STANHOPE GARDENS

ONSLow SQUARE GARDENS

3.2 South Kensington today



**~40,000
residents**

live within a 10-15
minute walk from South
Kensington Station



**~25,800
tourists**

visit South Kensington
every day



**~25,000
students**

study at Imperial College,
Royal College of Music
and Royal College of Art



**~10,000
employees**

work at the art, cultural and
educational institutions in
South Kensington

The impacts of climate change on South Kensington

This project looks specifically at the impacts that global warming is having on our built environment and our biodiversity, plant life and animal life. In 2022, the heatwaves in the England and Wales caused an estimated 3,271 excess deaths 6.2% higher than the five year average¹, and infrastructure struggled to cope, with some of South Kensington's galleries having to close due to excessive heat. 2023 had 11% above average rainfall over the year, and extreme rainfall events show trends that they becoming more frequent year-on-year². Surface water flooding is the primary risk to London as a result of climate change. Our urban landscape is dominated by impermeable surfaces, with water guided towards our antiquated drainage systems unable to cope with the volumes of water. In July 2021, nearly a month's worth of rain fell in parts of London in a day³. At least 350 properties in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea were affected and 120

residents were evacuated from their homes.

In 2000, the GLA identified three Air Quality Focus Areas (AQFAs) in Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, due to the exceedances of the annual mean and 1-hour mean for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and the annual mean and 24-hour mean for particulate matter (PM₁₀) World Health Organisation (WHO) objectives. Two of these are within the South Kensington Area, including A4 Cromwell Road and Knightsbridge/ Kensington Gore/ Kensington High Street.

NO₂

The concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) exceeds the World Health Organisation's (WHO) objectives on Cromwell Road and Kensington Gore



In July 2021 a month's worth of rain fell in part of London during the course of a day. 350 homes in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea were evacuated



2023 was the hottest year on record. In London a heatwave saw temperatures reach 30 degrees for seven days

¹ UK Health Security Agency and Office for National Statistics
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/excessmortalityduringheatperiods/englandandwalesjuneto31august2022>

² Met Office
<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2023/new-research-shows-increasing-frequency-of-extreme-rainfall-events#:~:text=This%20new%20study%20has%20shown,for%20every%20degree%20of%20warming.>

³ <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/projects/london-flooding-response#:~:text=In%20July%202021%2C%20London%20was,capital%20in%20just%20one%20hour.>



4 THE AIMS OF THE ENGAGEMENT

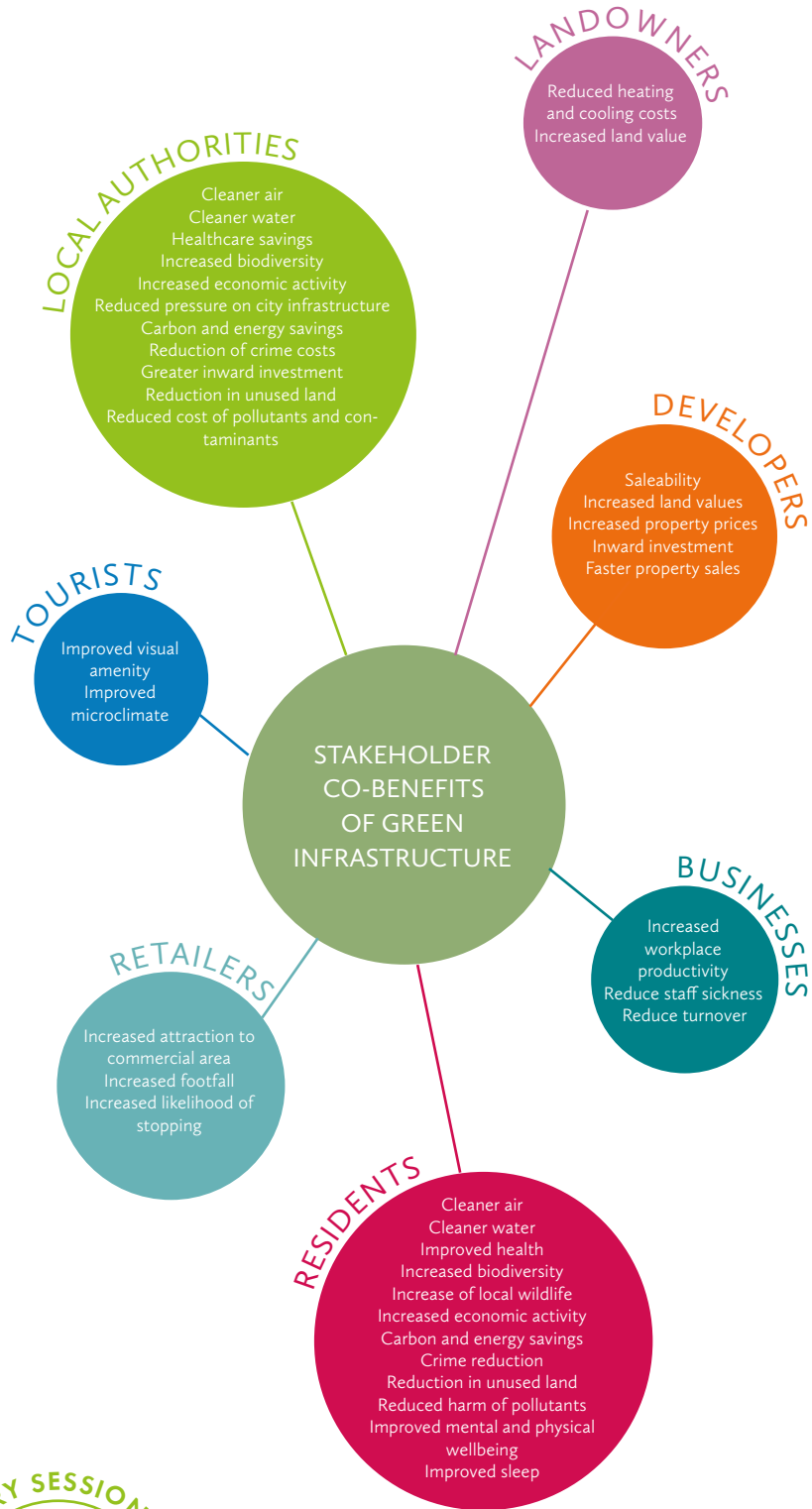
Overall, the aim of the project was to encourage people to better understand the threats that a changing climate poses to South Kensington, and for the public to tell us what matters to them. We then worked with them to generate ideas to make South Kensington better placed to respond to the impacts of climate change and make it a more nature friendly place.

Sharing information and knowledge

The project sought to share information about the impacts of climate change with local communities. Through presentations, conversations, worksheets and signposting to other resources, we were able to show how interventions in buildings, public streets, parks and homes can help to create greater resilience, and better wildlife habitats. We also explored with them how green infrastructure will provide multiple additional benefits to the people who live, work, study and visit South Kensington, including supporting mental and physical health, reducing noise and air pollution and helping to mitigate some of the local challenges that climate change presents, such as the urban heat island effect or flooding.

Local buy-in

This work is the initial stage of a larger ambition to understand how to make the South Kensington neighbourhood fit for the future. Through the gathering of ideas from the public and key local stakeholders, we are taking our first steps towards developing a range of responses that are generated and backed by local communities.





The engagement events included six main activities which sought to offer a variety of ways in which local people could share their thoughts and get involved.

Overall we engaged with around 500 people in detail via the survey, exploratory sessions, and walking tours/audit. At Great Exhibition Road Festival and the Market Stall, we engaged with an estimated 1,000 people in passing, where they participated in a short activity or engaged with our exhibition materials. In total we reached out to around 20,000 people through newsletters, emails and post. More details of the extent of the engagement is on the next page.



DATE	EVENT	NATURE OF EVENT AND TARGET AUDIENCE
Apr-Jul	Online survey	Ask local residents, staff, students and tourists a series of questions around how to make South Kensington greener and more climate resilient
14 May	Market Stall	Talking to passersby about their big ideas for greening South Kensington and their impressions of the place
May-Aug	Exploratory sessions	Targeted towards staff, residents associations and students. Presentation of the impacts of climate change and in-depth discussion around current behaviours in South Kensington and ideas to support climate resilience
June	Walking tours	Walking tours for residents, staff, students and tourists which visits South Kensington's green spaces and share information on the impacts of climate change
15-16 Jun	Great Exhibition Road Festival	Two-day festival, sharing ideas, talking to visitors about climate resilience
2 July	Walking Audit	Detailed workshop with residents, staff and students on the streets and parks in South Kensington; gathering in-situ ideas for a more resilient and biodiverse environment



5 THE EXTENTS OF THE ENGAGEMENT

Throughout this study and engagement work, we have reached beyond the Exhibition Road Cultural Group institutions to work with and understand the views of the surrounding community and additional stakeholders. This included individual employees, residential neighbours, visitors, and students. Our aim for this work is to explore community driven ideas and present a powerful evidence base and groundwork for the delivery of future projects that are community backed and supported.

In order to include the wider community, the study and project has sought the opinions from a relatively large area of South Kensington. As such, the study area is largely undefined. In the survey and communication to the public, we used the words 'South Kensington'. This meant that people could self-define what South Kensington meant for them. For the walking audit, the study area was focussed on Exhibition Road, and surrounding streets; limited by what could be walked and assessed within 45 minutes. A physical flyer door drop was delivered to 9,000 residents from a wider area, shown on the map overleaf.

Local organisations and groups invited to participate in the engagement include:

Residents Associations

- Brompton Association
- Knightsbridge Association
- Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum
- Onslow Neighbourhood Association
- Princes Gate Mews Residents Association
- Queen's Gate Gardens Committee
- Cornwall Gardens & residents
- South Kensington and Queensgate Residents Association
- Stanhope Mews East Residents Association
- Thurloe Owners and Leasholders Assoc
- Thurloe Square Gardens
- Victoria Road Area Residents' Association (VRARA)
- Kensington Society
- The Westminster Society
- Cornwall Mews South (West Side) RA
- Edwardes Square Scarsdale & Abingdon Association (ESSA)
- Egerton Gardens Mews Residents' Association
- Emperor's Gate South Kensington Limited
- Hereford Square Garden Committee
- Ovington Square Gardens Residents' Association
- Kensington Court Residents Association (KCRA)
- Pond Place Residents Association
- Walton Street Association



Fig 2 Flyer Door drop map

Local Employers

- Knightsbridge Partnership
- Opportunity Kensington
- South Ken ZEN+ mailing list
- South Kensington Estates
- Brompton Design District
- DSK Comms and GERF comms leads
- Kensington Chelsea & Westminster Chamber of Commerce
- TfL Local Station Team
- The Egerton House Hotel
- Gem Hotels - (Gem Strathmore Hotel)
- Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, London
- The Exhibitionist Hotel
- Starhotels UK
- Number 16: Firmdale Hotels PLC
- The Kensington Hotel
- Royal Society of Sculptors
- Cromwell Place
- V&A Kensington
- Natural History Museum
- Science Museum
- Imperial College
- Goethe Institut
- Royal Geographical Society
- Royal Albert Hall
- Royal College of Music
- Royal College of Art
- Design Museum
- Royal Parks
- Serpentine Gallery
- Historic Royal Palaces
- Royal Commission for 1851
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
- Westminster City Council
- Institut français
- Ambassade français
- Lycee français

Schools and Youth Groups

- NHM Youth Council
- RBKC Youth Council
- Westminster Youth Council
- City Lions
- Lycee Francais
- Brighton College prep Kensington
- Imperial College Early Years Education Centre
- Marlborough Primary School
- Bousfield Primary School
- Brompton Oratory Scouts
- Guides/Scouts at St. Luke's Christ Church Chelsea

Students

- Royal College of Art student networks
- Imperial College Student networks
- RCM Students
- Residents in Queen Alexandra's House
- Imperial College MA Public Realm Students
- Imperial College Student Societies
- Imperial College Student Union

Local Community Organisations

- Urban Grow Kensington
- K&C Better Streets
- Morley College
- RBKC Community Gardeners
- Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens
- K&C Social Council
- Brompton Oratory
- Christ Church Kensington
- Church of the Latterday Saints
- Holy Trinity South Ken
- Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB)
- St Augustine's (HTB) Queens Gate
- St. Paul Onslow Square (HTB)
- Local Councillors for four wards in two boroughs
- Ismaili Centre

6 HIGHLIGHTS AND HEADLINES FROM THE ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

77%

of respondents think the ERCG institutions have responsibility to take action on climate change and biodiversity loss

92%

of respondents think Local Governments have responsibility to take action on climate change and biodiversity loss

<97%

of respondents are concerned about the loss of nature and wildlife, and about climate change

The following pages showcase some headline results from the engagement events. This includes key statistics on survey respondents' relationships with climate change, nature and the local environment around South Kensington, their favourite places, and types initiatives that they would like to see take place in these areas to make South Kensington more biodiverse and resilient to the changes brought on by climate change.

During the walking workshops and focus groups, we utilised the detailed discussions and on-the-ground format to emphasise the spatial aspect, asking participants to locate where they would like to see change. In this section we have highlighted some key emerging ideas from these spatially-led conversations. The maps that are presented here are an invitation for more detailed analysis focused on these areas to explore what change is possible to create spaces that people want to inhabit and use, and which responds to our climate and biodiversity emergencies.

We also highlight a few drawings from our event at Great Exhibition Road Festival, where many young participants used their imaginations to envisage a new version of Exhibition Road.



"Exhibition Road is where the action happens!"

"Holy Trinity Brompton gardens is my favourite space as it is a quiet open space with plenty of benches and mature trees to enjoy a break at lunch time. It's secluded from some of the crowding of Exhibition Road."

"By providing green spaces, we can provide joy, relaxation and restore the human battery"

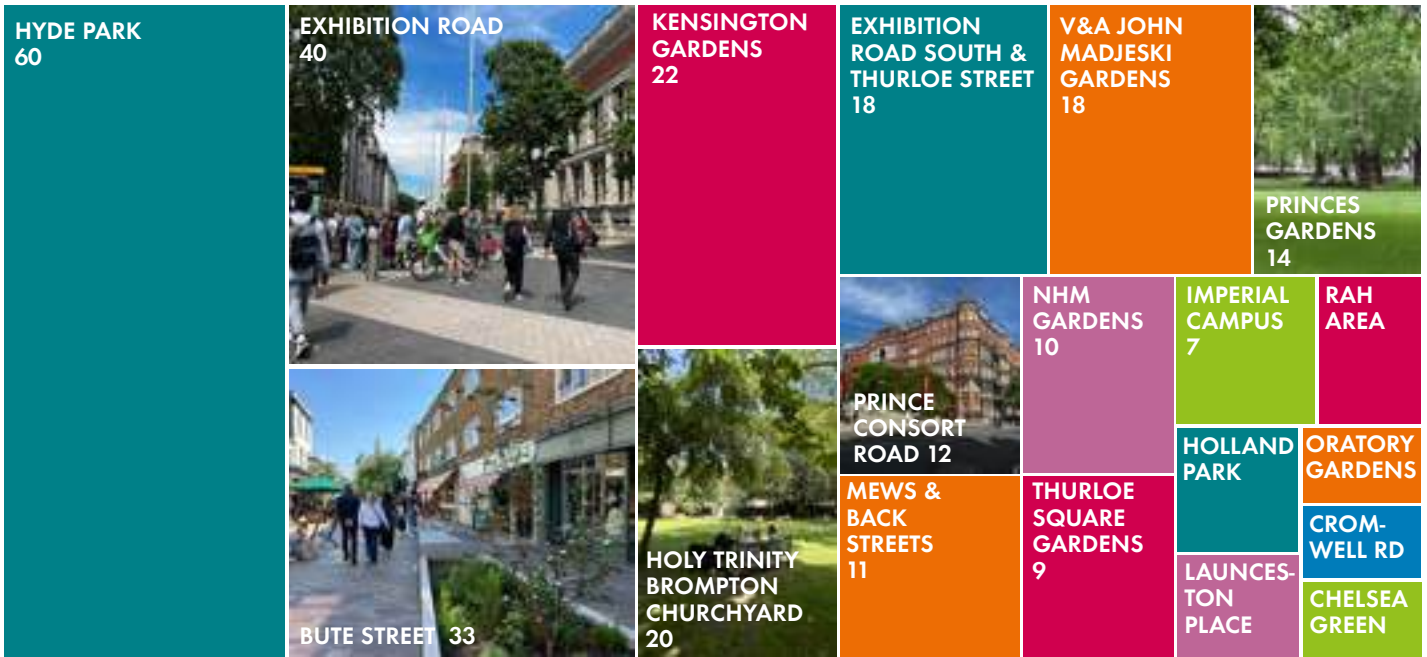


Fig 3 Treemap diagram showing 350 survey respondents' favourite places in South Kensington. Size reflects the number of people voting for the place



"Since the redevelopment Bute Street has become amazing. I love the fact it is a pedestrian area and that there are independent shops and a lovely farmers market on Saturdays. Great sense of community."

"One of my favourite outdoor spaces in South Kensington is the area around the Natural History Museum. I love it because of its beautiful architecture, lush green spaces, and the vibrant atmosphere created by visitors and locals alike."



Planting around trees, pocket gardens, a fountain and climbing plants up the lamposts



Green walls sit alongside a garden for the people and insects; olive trees, herb gardens, fruit trees and a medicine garden are there for visitors to enjoy

Fig 4 Examples from the GERF drawing activity 'Reimagine Exhibition Road'

6.1 Interventions and locations

We asked survey respondents to tell us what kind of initiatives they would like to see in the area and where they would like to see these changes. Fig 7 shows the answers to a question in which respondents chose from a list of 16 initiatives frequently used to address the impacts from climate change and biodiversity loss. Respondents could pick as many initiatives as they wanted to. There was also an opportunity to write other suggestions in a free text box. The results of these are in Fig 6.

Overall, respondents wanted to see **more planting interventions**, including more trees, creation of gardens, increasing the variety of plants, and creation of pocket parks. Over **300 respondents wanted to see additional street trees** in the area. Over 250 respondents wanted to see **harvesting and collection of rainwater** introduced, and this is something that individual ERCG organisations could implement on their buildings and estates.

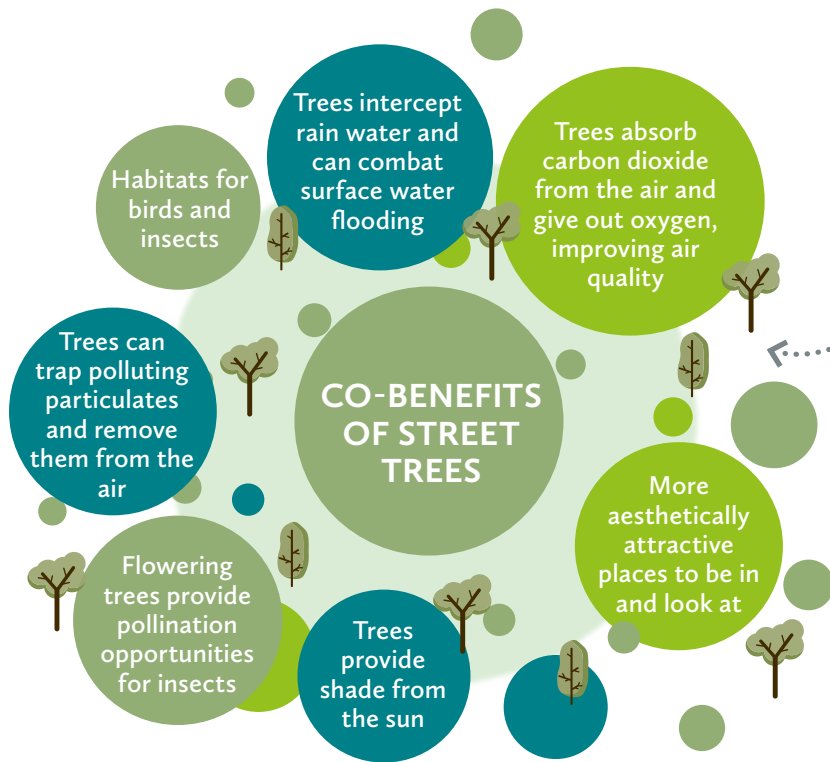


Fig 5 Many people wanted to see more street trees in South Kensington. Street trees can provide a number of co-benefits, making the benefits against their price very valuable



300 PEOPLE
 wanted to see more
 street trees in South
 Kensington



“look at managing the space better: for pedestrians, plants, bikes, then rental cars, deliveries...and last private cars. The order of privilege has to change.”

“Families coming to these places need cheap/ free outdoor spaces to unwind which is lacking in this neighbourhood outside of Hyde Park which is quite a long walk for smaller legs”

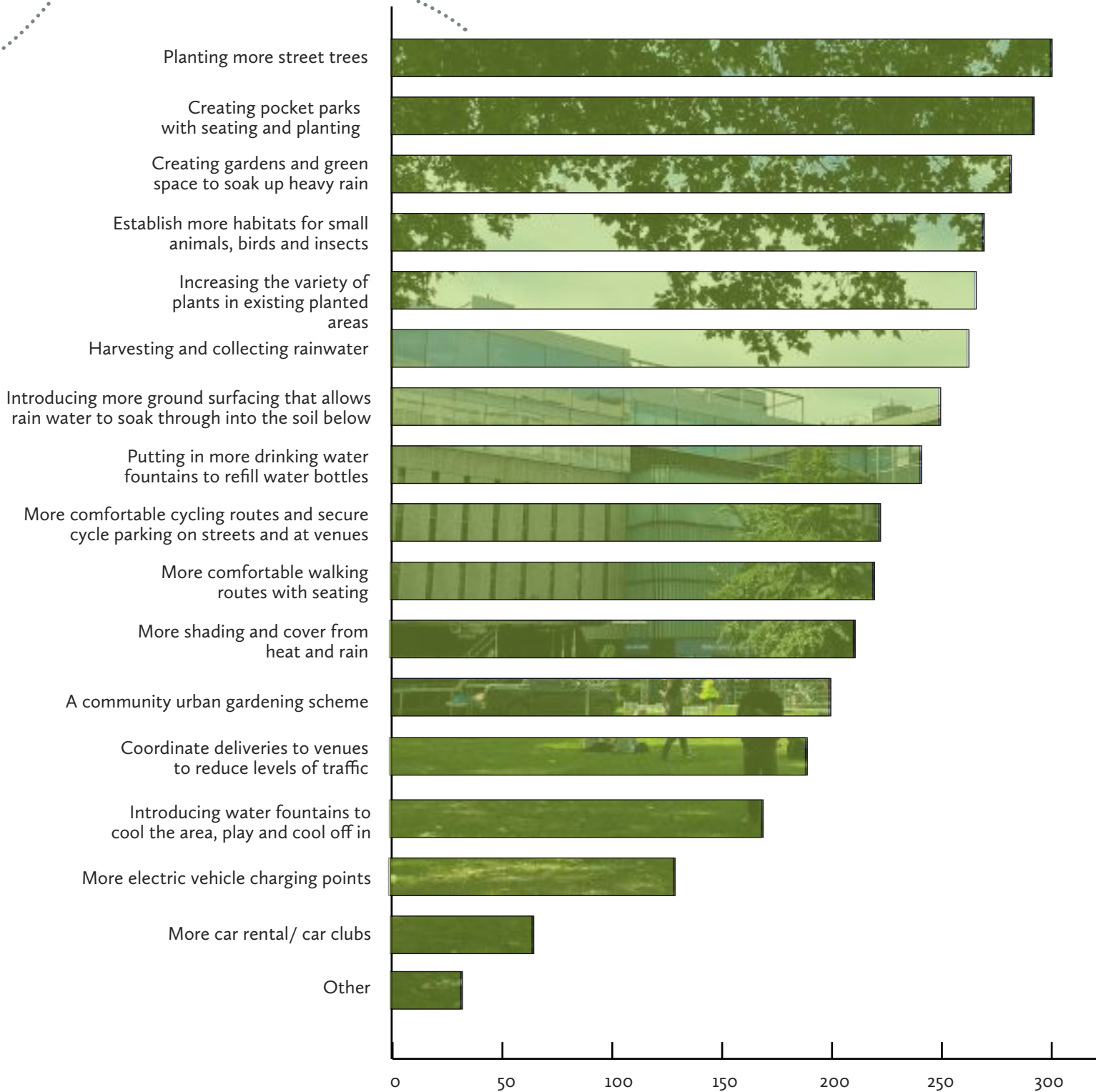


Fig 7 The initiatives that survey respondents would most like to see in the area to address the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss

6.2 Key locations highlighted during exploratory sessions

KENSINGTON GARDENS

These large parks are appreciated as nearby green spaces, but there is a desire for more accessible green areas within South Kensington itself for playing and relaxing.

HYDE PARK

Described as cluttered, noisy, and lacking greenery. Suggestions include adding more trees, planters, and pedestrianizing parts of it to improve the visitor experience.

Opportunities for greening mentioned, particularly in underutilised spaces such as road dividers and rooftops.

Noted for being busy and lacking in tree cover, with suggestions for adding greenery and improving pedestrian routes.

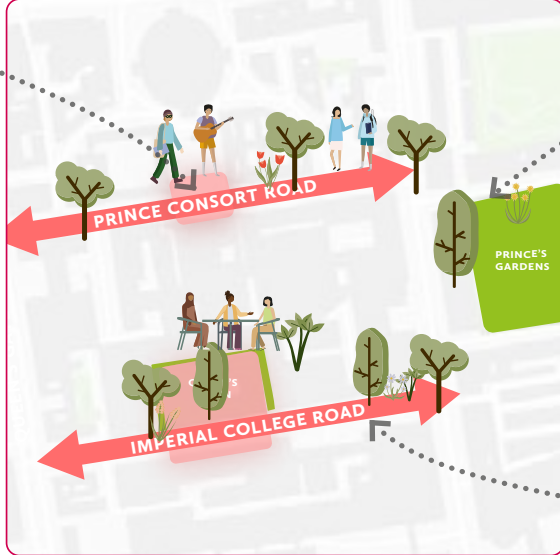
Discussed in terms of biodiversity and challenges with maintenance, particularly regarding issues with the nearby Lycée and concerns about the impact of construction.

Praised for recent improvements that have made it a more pleasant urban environment. It serves as a positive example of what could be achieved in other areas.

The area around the station is seen as hectic and disconnected. There's a desire for more greenery and better public spaces to improve the experience for those commuting through or visiting the area.

6.3 Key priorities and locations emerging from the walking workshop

Make Prince Consort Road work better for people, including larger groups of students from RCM through introducing more seating and a better landscaped area opposite the Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Steps



Succession planting for Plane trees in Prince's Gardens, Imperial College Road and Queen's Gate

Rebalance and landscape Imperial College Road to make it pedestrian priority - create a more 'square/plaza' space for sitting, studying and events

Redesign the V&A courtyard with an award-winning landscape designer



Increase biodiversity and pollinator friendly planting in the Holy Trinity Brompton Churchyard with greater variety of shrubs and planting /wildflower areas - bee and bird habitats

In Yalta Memorial Garden introduce pollinators, hedging or more trees to screen the road, and place benches in the shade

On Cromwell Road reduce width of the road and create a central reservation with lots of green planting and pedestrian refuge when crossing road

Add a water feature to help with cooling the hot area around Exhibition Road



Increase shade on Exhibition Road

Integrate biodiversity into other uses, such as the HVM planters on Exhibition Road

Signage for the wild flower meadow

7 PRINCIPLES

Through this engagement study, we have developed an understanding of how climate change, biodiversity and the urban environment is viewed by local stakeholders. The project sought to understand their concerns and listen to their ideas. Those who engaged with us were eager to see South Kensington achieve its potential to become a greener, more climate-resilient neighbourhood.

The study has highlighted six key principles for South Kensington to guide future development and achieve a place for people, plants and wildlife within our changing climate and in an historic area:

1. RESILIENCE

2. BIODIVERSITY

Core objectives for the project and for South Ken ZEN+

3. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A significant co-benefit of improving climate resilience and biodiversity

4. MOVEMENT

This was a key theme that emerged during conversations on how to make places more resilient

5. MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

6. HERITAGE AND CHARACTER

These are key considerations when designing and developing projects

Whilst this study focused on how South Kensington could become more resilient to climate change impacts, including biodiversity loss, a number of other themes emerged.

Crucially, there were a large number of comments around how climate change is affecting human **health and wellbeing**. These comments focused on shelter from sun and rain, poor air quality exacerbated by extreme temperatures and increased vehicle movement. Many also highlighted the importance of public green spaces when living in high density environments, and balancing these with spaces focusing on biodiversity. Another balance which was highlighted was between spaces for visitors and spaces for residents and employees.

Making sustainable transport modes attractive and pleasant, and reducing the impact of traffic also arose as key challenges, both for visitors and those who lived and worked in the area. Although many comments and project ideas lie outside the scope this project and control of ERCG, we have reflected these thoughts in order to fairly represent the views of those who engaged with this project. Additionally, many suggestions related travel and movement included ideas about greening curb sides, planting street trees and rebalancing spaces.

Management of spaces, stewardship and education were key themes that emerged through the engagement events. These comments focused on the importance of behaviour change, and maintaining green environments to ensure they worked effectively.

Finally, positive comments related to the magnificent **heritage and characterful architecture** of the area. People saw the area as world-class and wanted to see this reflected in its approach to the surrounding public realm.



Ensure that South Kensington is resilient to more extreme weather such as heatwaves and heavy rainfall

- Create an environment that can reduce the impact and risks that extreme temperatures can have on people's health
- Provide shade and sequester carbon and pollution through increased tree planting
- Aid drainage and rainwater runoff through increased permeable surface materials
- Adapt planting schemes to changing temperatures and precipitation
- Introduce succession planting for the existing Plane trees and diversifying tree/plant species
- Provide cooling features in the public realm through water fountains and water features, with the co-benefit of play



Encourage a greater biodiversity by creating habitats where nature and wildlife can grow and thrive

- Work hard to ensure that public green spaces provide amenity spaces as well as biodiversity benefits - these should not be mutually exclusive
- Create new habitats and foster the continuity of existing habitats in the local area
- Support habitat stepping-stones by establishing a green thread connecting green spaces
- Invest in existing public and private green spaces to improve biodiversity
- Invest in infrastructure that allows for natural growth allowing plants to reach full maturity
- Add incidental green pocket spaces where possible with diverse planting
- Find creative ways to increase biodiversity by introducing greenery such as tree planting, climbers, and green roofs where space is very limited
- Raise awareness of biodiversity in the local area



Provide pleasant and comfortable places that visitors, residents and students want to spend time in

- Make existing green spaces more pleasant and usable for communities, including seating, exercise equipment, planting and play
- Provide places of respite from the bustle and intensity of the key streets and spaces - calm and tranquil spaces that support mental wellbeing
- Create spaces for students and staff to spend time in at lunch and between classes
- Address local air quality issues through traffic management, discouraging idling and careful choice of tree species planting
- Address and the broader impacts of heavy traffic in the area, such as noise, pollution, and safety issues
- Increase tree planting to provide shade and improve visual amenity and mental wellbeing
- Introduce more seating and incidental resting points throughout the neighbourhood, with shading and greenery
- Introduce wayfinding and distance markers to publicly accessible green spaces
- Provide cooling mechanisms through introduction of water fountains and water features with a co-benefit of play



Make walking and cycling easier, nicer and more comfortable for all

- Create a walkable green thread through South Kensington, linking the green spaces from Hyde Park to the River Thames.
- Make streets and spaces that are safe, legible and comfortable for families and people of all ages to use
- Improve key walking routes such as to schools, and from stations to museums, with greening and safer crossings
- Address movement conflicts and ambiguity on Exhibition Road and consider options for reducing traffic levels and/or speeds
- Consider changing the layout of broad streets to rebalance space towards pedestrians and provide planting opportunities
- Improve cycle routes and rationalise cycle parking (particularly for e-bikes)



Support the aims of the 1851 Commission for a world-class arts and science destination

- Ensure that planting choices respond to and reflect the impressive architecture of the area
- Consider material palette and design of street furniture such as benches, street lights, bins to create a cohesive space between museums
- Explore the opportunities for vertical planting and consider the structural and aesthetic impacts of historic facades
- Create landscape design which reflects the grandeur and impressive architecture of the Victorian buildings
- Create a world-class landscape which is worth visiting even without going into any of the museums



Work collaboratively, considering long term maintenance, and engaging in education

- Establish South Kensington as a pioneer in climate resilience, being inspiring, innovative and progressive
- Make it easier for visitors and the public to recycle waste in the local area
- Ensure that greening and landscaping acknowledges the need for flexible spaces to accommodate events and different uses across days and seasons
- Balance the needs of the different stakeholders, particularly relating to movement requirements on Exhibition Road (residents, staff, visitor tours, students etc)
- Engage with local schools on potential projects and collaborations with ERCCG institutions
- Improve local appreciation of biodiversity and projects to improve these through knowledge sharing across initiatives
- Consider whether private communal gardens can be made publicly available on certain weekends of the year to welcome in the wider community

8 PROJECT IDEAS

The six identified principles form the backbone for project ideas. The project ideas are presented here as suggestions from the community. On occasion they have been lightly interpreted, however it is important to note that no further assessment on physical or economic viability has been conducted. This list is indicative and should be viewed as a starting point for further exploration in a partnership approach between local stakeholders.

The projects have been split up into four different categories:

1. **Projects that can be progressed through ERCG/ Community collaboration**
2. **Projects that can be progressed by institutions**
3. **Projects that ERCG could advocate for others to progress**
4. **Further studies and analysis to progress initiatives**

Project types 1, 2 and 3 have been looked at in further detail and very briefly assessed for the impact, complexity and timeframe.

The timeframes can be understood as follows:

Short term	0-5 years
Medium term	5-10 years
Long term	10+ years

It is important to note that some projects may be able to progress faster than others due to relevant funding becoming available.

The complexity indicator takes into account factors such as costs, additional survey work, collaborations and planning permissions.

The impact indicates how large an impact the project would have on the biodiversity and climate resilience of the area, although this is only indicative, and further detailed studies would be required to quantify this properly. It also considers the positive impact it could have on people in the area.

Projects have also been categorised in terms of which of the six principles they respond to. In most instances, the projects respond to more than one principle.

7.1 Projects that can be progressed through ERCG/ Community collaboration

These projects are ideas that can be progressed collectively by ERCG institutions or community groups. They will require collaboration to achieve an outcome which will benefit the public realm.

1. Collaborative research
2. Planting guide for residents
3. Greening Exhibition Road
4. Recycling bins
5. Rainwater harvesting
6. Expand the Holy Trinity Brompton Urban Forest
7. Share knowledge from Thurloe Square Gardens
8. Interpretation boards
9. Establish a community garden
10. Exhibition Road drinking fountains

1 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Pool together expertise and resource to collaborate on research around biodiversity and climate change. Collaborators could include Imperial College's Grantham Institute, the Natural History Museum's Biodiversity Intactness Index, as well as the Design Museum's Future Observatory.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	○○○○○	Long term

2 PLANTING GUIDE FOR RESIDENTS

Share knowledge from the extensive biodiversity planting scheme which Thurloe Square Gardens residents have undertaken, and collaboration with learnings from the Natural History Museum's Urban Nature Project to create a planting guide specific to the area with suggested species and methods of planting. Promote and encourage planting on mews streets, balconies, townhouses with lower ground level, railing boxes and gardens.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	○○○○○	Short term



3 GREENING EXHIBITION ROAD

Greening of Exhibition Road through planters on central mast lamp posts such as Belgravia smart living pillars, using pollinator friendly and/or pollution absorbing plants. Expand the pollinator friendly and drought resistant planters on hostile vehicle mitigation bollards. Plant existing and new tree pits with diverse, pollinator friendly plants and flowers.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●	●●●●●	Long term

4 RECYCLING BINS

Introduce standardised recycling bins on ERCG institution owned land, coordinating across the neighbourhood to organise refuse management and collection. This could also include creating economies of scale for the recycling of tricky materials, such as disposable coffee cups, which need a critical mass to be viable.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	●●●●○	Short term

5 RAINWATER HARVESTING

Implement rainwater harvesting mechanisms at institutions, using this to irrigate and water planted areas during drier months, while also reducing surface water run off.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	●●●●○	Short term

6 EXPAND THE HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON URBAN FOREST

Liaise with Holy Trinity Brompton Church on expanding and replicating their urban forest, which uses the SUGi method to build biodiversity and regenerate small urban areas.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●	●●●●○	Long term



7 SHARE KNOWLEDGE FROM THURLOE SQUARE GARDENS

Facilitate expansion of Thurloe Square Gardens biodiversity strategy to other gated gardens across the neighbourhood and identify garden champions within residents' associations.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	○○○○○	Short term

8 INTERPRETATION BOARDS

Erect engaging interpretation boards in key spaces which have introduced biodiversity and nature friendly initiatives. Interpretation boards should show what is happening and what passersby should look out for. This will help to give a sense of ownership in these spaces, ensuring that they are respected and litter is kept to a minimum.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●○○○○	○○○○○	Short term



9 ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Establish a community garden or growing space in the local area to bring together people who may not have access to a communal garden and/or invest in and expand access to the growing space in Princes Gate Garden. This will teach people how to grow their own plants and food, whilst providing a space to gather.



Impact **Complexity** **Timescale**
 ●●●●● ●●○○○ Short term



10 EXHIBITION ROAD DRINKING FOUNTAINS

Provide drinking fountains on Exhibition Road to encourage visitors to reuse water bottles, and provide additional comfort especially during warmer months.



Impact **Complexity** **Timescale**
 ●●●●● ●●○○○ Short term



8.1 Projects that can be progressed by institutions

These projects are ideas that can be progressed by individual institutions that are part of the Exhibition Road Cultural Group, or by community groups, such as residents associations. These project ideas are either spatially located on the land of individual institutions, or are related to a particular building.

1. Prince's Gate Gardens landscaping
2. Imperial College Road and Queen's Lawn
3. Prince's Gardens planting and cafe
4. Imperial College Dalby Square re-landscaping
5. Royal Albert Hall landscaping
6. Goethe Institute green facade
7. Shaded seating
8. Imperial College forecourt
9. Natural History Museum Urban Nature Project findings
10. Green roofs
11. V&A Exhibition Road courtyard
12. Yalta Memorial Garden

1

PRINCE'S GATE GARDENS LANDSCAPING

Imperial College

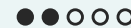
Opportunity to landscape with dedicated amenity and separate pollinator areas. Open the gardens up at weekends when not in use by university or local schools. Potential Partnerships with and funding from The Wildlife Trust and/or RHS.



Impact



Complexity



Timescale

Short term

2

IMPERIAL COLLEGE ROAD AND QUEEN'S LAWN

Imperial College

Conduct an holistic review and redesign of area to increase usable public space, provide more seating, establish diverse planting scheme, including a water feature, consider cycle movements and parking and consolidate vehicular parking. Work on this should be done through the emerging masterplan work.



Impact



Complexity



Timescale

Short term





Resilience Biodiversity Comfort Movement Heritage Communication and maintenance

3 PRINCE'S GARDENS PLANTING AND CAFE

Imperial College

Potential for a dedicated area to be changed from lawn to pollinator friendly planting and potentially a small pavilion kiosk added alongside a fountain



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	●●●●○	Short term



5 ROYAL ALBERT HALL LANDSCAPING

Royal Albert Hall

Look at ways that the exterior environment of the Royal Albert Hall can elevate and reflect the magnificent architecture of the hall. New designs must take account of delivery and production vehicles, as well as HVMS, balanced with planting, seating and permeable surfaces. It should consider how larger groups of people will move through and use the space, considering its many entrances and approaches. Tap into RCA redevelopment



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●	●●●●●	Medium term



4 IMPERIAL COLLEGE DALBY SQUARE RE-LANDSCAPING

Imperial College

Introduce planting and possibly a water feature in the central raised quad behind Imperial Business School to increase biodiversity and provide an inspiring place to study and relax, whilst also retaining its flexibility for events.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●	●●●●○	Short term

6 GOETHE INSTITUT FACADE GREENING

Goethe Institut

Following conversations with the Goethe Institut, look at ways that vertical planting could be implemented sustainably on certain elements of the facade to encourage biodiversity. Balance this carefully with the historic building, ensuring that there is no structural or visual harm to the building.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●○○○○	●●●●○	Short term

7 **SHADED SEATING**
All institutions

Look at ways to introduce more benches or outdoor seating to public areas, particularly in shaded areas.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●	○○○○○	Short term



8 **IMPERIAL COLLEGE FORECOURT**
Imperial College

Re-landscape and increase planting levels for biodiversity and visual amenity on the sunken forecourt on Exhibition Road. Consider introducing a kiosk and opening the space to the public at certain times, whilst ensuring it remains a compliant fire escape route.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●○○○○	●●○○○	Short term

9 **URBAN NATURE PROJECT FINDINGS**
Natural History Museum

Use data and findings from the Natural History Museum Urban Nature Project monitoring points to inform future planting approaches in the neighbourhood to attract certain types of animals and invertebrates.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	●○○○○	Long term



10 **GREEN ROOFS**
All institutions

Review opportunities to introduce green sedum roofs on institutions' buildings and outbuildings, including cycle sheds.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	●●●●○	Short term



11 V&A SQUARE
V&A

Review future opportunities to adapt the V&A square on Exhibition Road to create more shade, drainage and biodiversity benefits. Consider areas for more seating that is not connected to the cafe.



Impact **Complexity** **Timescale**
 ●●●●○ ●●●●○ Medium term



12 YALTA MEMORIAL GARDEN IMPROVEMENTS

V&A

Work with the V&A to make landscape improvements to the Yalta Memorial Garden, including boundary treatment to help better separate the space from the roads, increase tree planting by the benches, new benches in shady areas, look at including a water feature and a water fountain.



Impact **Complexity** **Timescale**
 ●●●●○ ●○○○○ Short term



8.2 Projects that ERCG could advocate for others to progress

The following project ideas emerged through the engagement events. ERCG members may not be able to implement these projects themselves, and some of them lie outside the scope of the South Kensington Zero Emissions Nature Positive (SKZ+) project. However, ERCG members and Discover South Kensington can advocate for these changes to take place to make a more resilient, sustainable and equitable place.

1. Wayfinding improvements
2. Narrowing side road junctions
3. Pedestrianised streets
4. Exhibition Road speed limit reduction
5. Public realm enhancements on Prince Consort Road
6. Thurloe Street enhancements
7. Cromwell Road public realm improvements
8. Recycling bins
9. Queen's Gate increased greening

1 WAYFINDING IMPROVEMENTS RBKC AND WCC

Work with RBKC and WCC to improve directional signage with distance markers to publicly accessible green spaces including Hyde Park, Prince's Gardens, Holy Trinity Brompton Church grounds, Queen's Lawn and Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●○○	○○○○○	Short term

2 NARROWING SIDE ROAD JUNCTIONS RBKC and TfL

Work with RBKC and TfL to narrow bellmouth junctions by reducing carriageway widths on side roads, such as Prince Consort Road to make crossings safer for pedestrian, and provide space for planting, seating, and/or cycle parking.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●○	●●●○○	Medium term



3 PEDESTRIANISED STREETS

RBKC and WCC

Liaise with RBKC and WCC to identify other local streets that can be adapted with traffic removal, rain gardens and seating, as has been done at Bute Street



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●●	●●●●●●	Long term



4 EXHIBITION ROAD SPEED LIMIT REDUCTION

RBKC and WCC

Liaise with RBKC and WCC to explore reducing speed limit to 10 mph on Exhibition Road to create a safer and more welcoming environment for pedestrians, and especially visitors.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●●	●●●●●○	Short term

5 PUBLIC REALM ENHANCEMENTS ON PRINCE CONSORT ROAD

WCC

Work with WCC to consider extending steps from RAH across Prince Consort Road to read as a public space, with traffic slowed. Or, close a portion of the road to achieve this. This will give more space to students at RCM.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●●	●●●●●○	Long term



6 THURLOE STREET ENHANCEMENTS

TfL and RBKC

Advocate to TfL and RBKC for greening and permeable surfaces on Thurloe Street as well as increased seating areas which do not impede pedestrian flow. This could be achieved through the South Kensington Station redevelopment planning process.



Impact	Complexity	Timescale
●●●●●○	●●●●●○	Medium term



9 QUEEN'S GATE INCREASED GREENING

RBKC and WCC

Work with RBKC and WCC to identify spaces on Queen's Gate where greening or trees could be interspersed along the central parking area to reduce dominance of cars and asphalt.



Impact



Complexity



Timescale

Long term

7 CROMWELL ROAD PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

RBKC

Work with RBKC to make Cromwell Road public realm improvements, including widening of pavements in sections to accommodate visitors comfortably allowing greater space between the heavy traffic, adding benches and increasing number of controlled crossings.



Impact



Complexity



Timescale

Long term

8 RECYCLING BINS

RBKC and WCC

Liaise with RBKC and WCC to introduce regular recycling bins on streets and have these collected regularly.



Impact



Complexity



Timescale

Short term



8.3 Further studies and analysis to progress initiatives

Throughout this engagement study, several ideas have arisen which will require more detailed analysis, data collection and assessment in order to outline detailed project plans and implementation.

This section identifies those research pieces for further work, and include surveys, design guides and behaviour analysis reports.

1. Assess and identify streets for potential closure to vehicles
2. GIA/landscape strategy
3. Underground survey on Exhibition Road
4. Footfall count and ethnography study
5. Pocket park landscape review
6. Tech-based innovation
7. Public realm design guide
8. Temperature monitoring stations

1 STREETS FOR POTENTIAL CLOSURE

Assess and identify side streets for potential closure to vehicles and landscaping as has been done in Bute Street. Working with the local authorities, landowners and businesses.



2 UNDERGROUND SURVEY

Undertake an underground survey to establish where additional trees can be planted on Exhibition Road. This should include an archive project to explore where historic tree locations could be reinstated.



3 GIA/ LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

Prepare a GIA/landscape strategy to provide a biodiversity baseline of the area, whilst also assessing constraints, opportunities and viability of ideas generated through community engagement and to introduce a technical evidence base for projects



4 ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY

Undertake a street-based footfall count of Exhibition Road to see how the street is used and how this tallies with tree locations, uses and activities and environmental comfort.





5 POCKET PARK LANDSCAPE REVIEW

Undertake a detailed landscape review to identify suitable locations for pocket parks and incidental green spaces.



6 TECH-BASED INNOVATION

Explore potential for introducing kinetic pavements in a high footfall location in the area to generate energy, through a collaboration between Science Museum, Imperial College and others



7 PUBLIC REALM DESIGN GUIDE

A public realm design guide should be created to ensure the streets, squares and public spaces in South Kensington reflect the high quality design and architecture of the buildings, and help the area with being more climate-resilient and comfortable. This will outline suitable materials, finishes and designs of street furniture, paving and infrastructure.



8 TEMPERATURE MONITORING STATIONS

Located in various parts of the neighbourhood to monitor ambient temperatures over time. These will support the evidence base required to inform data-driven adaptations and interventions.



9 NEXT STEPS

The project ideas outlined in this report provide a list of changes that the local stakeholders would like to see in the area, as well as initiatives they would like to see come forward. These projects have been generated by people with a long-term vested interest in South Kensington, and provide an impetus for further study and work, such as detailed design work. They are a cohesive collection of proposals from which projects can be explored and developed which may lead to applications for funding and/or planning consents.

The page opposite presents a list of potential partners with a stake in the findings of this study. These are essential delivery partners in the development of any proposed changes to the area.

Many of the projects align with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and City of Westminster Local Plans, strategies and Supplementary Planning Documents. Partnership with officers and councillors within the councils is paramount for work to be progressed at pace within much of the public realm.

A number of other organisations are listed who are landowners, potential collaborators or who provide funding opportunities.

Sources of funding

Sources of funding will be a key consideration when prioritising climate adaptation, green infrastructure and biodiversity opportunities for delivery. It is likely that specific projects will not rely on one partner or fund, but on engaging a wide range of delivery partners, including the public sector, private sector, and community groups. A list of potential funders and funds is located in the appendix.

Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy funding could also be secured by working with the local planning authorities and councillors. In addition to this, in 2025, the GLA is expected to develop new funding streams in order to action the recommendations identified in the Climate Resilience Review.

Additional surveys

Some of the opportunities that have been identified will require further survey work to ensure that the site or building is suitable for the proposed initiatives put forward. One of the key next stages of this project is to commission a Green Infrastructure Audit so that sites can be identified where green infrastructure will have the biggest impact on boosting biodiversity, improving quality and amenity of a space, or on mitigating impacts of climate change.

In addition to this, suggestions for planting more street trees will be subject to a detailed assessment to ascertain appropriate and possible locations.

Design advice

Many of the projects will require more detailed design advice, including planting advice, including which species will be beneficial to wildlife, and can provide co-benefits for humans, such as shading; landscape architectural designs, and townscape assessment and design plans. For larger projects planning permission is likely to also be required.

Collaboration and ideas sharing

Discover South Kensington and the Royal Commission for 1851 have a commitment to promoting the South Kensington area. Their charitable aims are focused on a neighbourhood approach, and therefore it is important that part of their role is to ensure that organisations in the area are joined up.

All the organisations in South Kensington have a responsibility to work towards Net Zero Carbon targets as set out by Government. South Ken ZEN+ is helping organisations make sure that they are joined up to collaborate on projects and learn from each other - including those in the public realm. This will help to accelerate the path to Net Zero Carbon.

PARTNER	KEY OUTPUTS/IMPACTS	KEY ACTION/OPPORTUNITY	
 THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA	Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biodiversity Action Plan 2. Parks Strategy 3. Climate Emergency Action Plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with RBKC environment and climate change officers and councillors to update BAP and Parks Strategy to include actions based on stakeholder feedback 2. Apply for Green Fund, Carbon Offsetting fund, NCIL, S106 funding
 City of Westminster	City of Westminster	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biodiversity Action Plan 2. Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with RBKC environment and climate change officers and councillors to partner on fulfilling actions in the CCAP, reflecting locations mentioned in this study 2. Apply for Greening Westminster and NCIL, s106 funding to achieve this
 Transport for London	Transport for London	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cromwell Road 2. South Kensington Station redevelopment (with Places for London and Native Land) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with TfL on Cromwell Road to improve pedestrian experience and comfort, whilst boosting wildlife corridors, and retrofitting SuDS to reduce flood risk 2. Collaborate with Energy Garden to incorporate garden and planting into new designs for the station
 THE ROYAL PARKS	Royal Parks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with community engagement and learning team at Royal Parks/Hyde Park 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with community engagement team on workshops on urban gardening, such as balcony planters, to support nature
 SKE	South Kensington Estates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Estate management including buildings and grounds 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect with key staff to ensure that refurbishment and retrofit of buildings and grounds make climate change adaptations, such as rainwater harvesting, and increase biodiversity 2. Work collaboratively on improvements to the public realm and consider funding opportunities
 GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY	Greater London Authority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate Resilience Review calls on stakeholders to take action in adapting for climate change impacts 2. Local Nature Recovery Strategy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Track the re-opening of Expressions of Interest for the Green Space Funding programmes and develop projects arising from this study for funding bids 2. Contribute to the LNRS Interactive Map using results from this study to indicate where there are opportunities to recover habitats, such as at Prince's Gate Gardens
 IMPERIAL	ERCG member organisations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Imperial College Masterplan 2. Natural History Museum Urban Nature Project 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share report findings with Imperial College Masterplan team and work in partnership to action projects 2. Work with Natural History Museum to share monitoring data to share learnings for future habitat creation
 KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM	Residents associations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum Plan 2. Thurloe Square Gardens Biodiversity Guide 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Forum to align priorities for CIL, the management plan and the neighbourhood plan following the five-year review of the plan's policies 2. Work with resident associations who are innovating to share this knowledge through workshops or shared documentation
 Opportunity Kensington	Opportunity Kensington	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainability and environmental goals to collaborate on 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that Discover South Kensington work together with OK to put forward bids and grant applications and ensure thinking is joined up
 RHS	RHS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Original partners in the Albertopolis estate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential partnership at Princes Gate Garden where they have shown interest

10 TOWARDS A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AUDIT (GIA) SCOPE

This section sets out a scope for a Green Infrastructure Audit (GIA) for South Kensington. It details key considerations for GIA that will result in the identification appropriate locations to deliver clear projects that will help to effectively boost biodiversity and greening in the area.

PURPOSE

The aim of the Green Infrastructure Audit (GIA) is to identify opportunities to improve the green infrastructure in South Kensington. South Ken ZEN+ is a key advocate for the delivery of improved green infrastructure in collaboration with the Local Authorities and the Discover South Kensington partner institutions.

The key objectives for the Green Infrastructure Audit is to identify opportunities that include, but are not limited to:

- Improving air quality
- Reducing flood risk and flooding
- Increasing biodiversity
- Increasing shading
- Creating a more attractive streetscape
- Increasing diverse planting
- Creating habitat/wildlife corridors
- Improving impacts of microclimates such as overheating

The scope of the study has six stages:

1. Policy and guidance review
2. Mapping and audit of existing green infrastructure in the area
3. Evaluation of the functions, quality, character, and benefits of the existing green infrastructure in the area
4. Engagement with landowners and users
5. Identify opportunities
6. Identify the priorities

The study should identify opportunities for interventions at a wide range of scales which could include, but are not limited to:

- Improvements in existing parks and public spaces
- The creation of pocket parks/habitats
- Street trees
- Sustainable Urban Drainage System and rain gardens
- Green walls and roofs

The mapping, analysis, evaluation and opportunities should be presented in a report which is easy to read and understand. Clear and attractive graphics and mapping should be utilised. The report should be intuitive to use and be able to be understood by non-technical people.

1. POLICY AND GUIDANCE REVIEW

Review relevant National, London and Local policy related to subjects included, but not limited to:

- Biodiversity
- Green infrastructure and GI targets
- Urban Greening Factor targets
- Climate resilience
- London Habitat Creation Targets
- Proximity to publicly accessible green space
- National and international best practice

The review should also take into account the results from the South Ken ZEN+ stakeholder engagement work which was undertaken in 2024.

2 and 3. MAPPING AND ANALYSIS

Appointed consultants should undertake an audit of existing data and previous assessments from Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and Westminster City Council (WCC), in addition to analysis based on desk top research, GIS data, photographs, and site visit audits.

This should involve a gap analysis by cross-referencing third-party data to highlight any survey requirements and establish a baseline of existing green infrastructure. This section should also provide quantification of biodiversity and ecosystems provided by existing green infrastructure.

The analysis should consider the following:

1. Audit of existing publicly accessible green amenity spaces:
 - Separate and total areas
 - Facilities and amenities separately and in total
 - Key characteristics of the space
 - Profile, knowledge of, and use of each space
 - Biodiversity profile and performance of each space
 - Proximity/access to green space and identification of areas that are deficient in access to green amenity space
2. Audit of existing private or communal green spaces
 - separate and total areas
 - biodiversity profile and performance of each space
3. Balance of impermeable to permeable ground surfacing in the area
 - Area of each by type of surface
4. Tree audit
 - Tree locations by tree type
 - Tree age and size and estimated future lifespan
 - Qualities of tree type e.g pollution absorbing
 - Any risks to tree types - disease
5. Flat roof mapping
 - separate and total areas
 - (Flat roof mapping and potential opportunities must be developed closely with building owners. There should not be an over-reliance on ability to deliver green roofs on existing buildings due to infrastructure requirements)
6. Planters and raised beds
 - biodiversity profile and performance
7. Review of existing planting character with consideration for historic approaches and recent interventions
8. Species records and habitat data
9. Existence of any environmental designations within the area and the condition of these spaces

Consultants should use this data to create clear

mapping by overlaying multiple analysis strands to develop a picture of the spatial distribution of GI issues and opportunities in the local area.

In addition to the above listed green infrastructure, consultants should overlay this with data which will help to identify realistic opportunities and priority areas. This will include:

- Flooding, including recent surface water flooding challenges
- Air quality
- Ambient temperature
- Footfall data
- Footway, carriageway and junction widths
- Review of utility constraints in key locations to assess potential for in-ground green infrastructure such as trees and rain gardens

3b. ENGAGEMENT

Consultants should undertake a level of engagement which will help to identify areas for opportunity within private landholdings. This should also inform the analysis and evaluation of existing green infrastructure. Opportunities should also be identified in relation to how people use public green spaces.

1. Liaison with local authorities and Discover South Kensington (DSK) regarding any potential issues and opportunities regarding green infrastructure in the local area
2. Liaison with key private land owners, such as Imperial College, Natural History Museum and V&A regarding the profile, use and opportunities related to their green spaces
3. Interviews with people in green spaces, about how often they use them, when typically, what they value about them and what they would like to improve

Scope continues on next page...

11 TOWARDS A GIA SCOPE

4. OPPORTUNITIES

Identify opportunities areas to increase green cover, and quality of green spaces across South Kensington, particularly in relation to providing spaces that are resilient to more extreme weather conditions related to climate change, including heatwaves and extreme rainfall; increasing biodiversity; and increasing amenity and comfort for people.

1. Prepare a summary of GI provision including gaps in provision in the local area, both in terms of quantity and quality. This could be using a traffic light system for various criteria
2. Identify opportunities for increasing levels of amenity green space by type
3. Identify opportunities to improve local climate resilience by type such as tree planting, rain garden creation, permeable surfaces, pocket habitats, and green roofs.
4. Identify opportunities to increase biodiversity levels

Quantifiable benefits of the potential opportunities should be provided where possible, For example, how much rainfall could be harvested or attenuated and the potential energy (kWh) savings per year as a result of implementing different types of green roofs.

5. PRIORITISATION AND DELIVERY STEPS

At least 3 scenarios for intervention extents should be outlined. An ecosystem service assessment across the implementation scenarios should be presented to aid decision making.

Prioritisation of the identified opportunity areas should be given, with outlines for the interventions suitable for the area.

Quick-win projects should be identified that can demonstrate change is underway.

11 POTENTIAL FUNDING AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

NAME	DETAILS
Aviva Community Fund	Aviva Community Fund make grants up to £50,000. They focus on climate action, promoting healthy thriving communities by taking action against the impacts of climate change
City Bridge Foundation	Revenue funding for up to five years up to 50% of applicants turnover per annum. Funding for making London a greener city for all - encouraging local projects to mitigate and adapt to climate change
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	Funding for projects related to the natural world
GLA	Green resilient spaces fund for large scale, innovative enhancements to green and blue spaces and the wider public realm to increase London's climate resilience, and promote health and wellbeing
National Lottery Community Fund	Provides opportunities for grants for creating and enhancing green space, including the Climate Action Fund
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Funding available for parks and nature projects
OurSpace Award	Grants available up to £20,000 funding projects which supports communities and schools in greening their neighbourhoods.
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Carbon Offset Fund which is generated from major developments who do not reach net zero
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	A ward-based community programme that helps residents improve their neighbourhoods by creating opportunities for conversations and providing funding for community activities
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Community Infrastructure Levy
Schroder Charity Trust	Makes grants up to £5,000 towards project costs for registered charities with a focus on arts, culture and heritage; environment; strengthening communities; and health and wellbeing
Section 106 Agreements	Section 106 agreements are drafted between an applicant for planning permission and the planning authority, in order to make a development acceptable in planning terms. S106 agreements must be directly related to the proposed development, so are only applicable if a development is taking place in the vicinity of South Kensington. Where this is the case, funding can be secured for the provision of open space or green infrastructure to alleviate the predicted effects of the proposed development. Discover South Kensington could work with the local authorities to ensure such an agreement delivers new GI features in the area
Tesco	Stronger starts here grand focusing on food security and growing opportunities in or near schools
Transport for London	Funding available for cycling infrastructure, and projects which improve air quality and walking routes. Funding routes include Local Implementation Plans, Liveable Neighbourhoods funding, cycle parking funding, Mayor's Air Quality Fund, and walking and cycling Grants London
Thames Water	SUDS
The Woodland Trust	Free trees for community groups and schools
Veolia	Sustainability funds including Habitat and Biodiversity Grant Funding (between £10,000 and £75,000), and the Environmental Improvement Grand (over £75,000)
Veolia	The Sustainability Fund transforms local communities and environments and funds projects which enhance biodiversity, only available in Westminster
City of Westminster	Greening Westminster is an annual grant funding programme to improve and increase Westminster's green infrastructure and open spaces.
City of Westminster	Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy

LINK
https://www.avivacommunityfund.co.uk/
https://www.citybridgefoundation.org.uk/funding/making-london-a-greener-city-for-all-revenue-funding
https://esmefairbairn.org.uk/about-esmee/
https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/parks-green-spaces-and-biodiversity/green-space-funding
https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk
https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding
https://www.groundwork.org.uk/london/our-space-award/
https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/carbon-offset-fund#:~:text=The%20offset%20monies%20received%20will,of%20carbon%20X%2030%20years
https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/community-and-local-life/community-engagement/city-living-local-life-grant
https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/community-infrastructure-levy-cil
schrodercharitytrust.org
https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/section-106
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/make-application/decisions-your-planning-application/planning-obligations-section-106
https://www.groundwork.org.uk/grants_tesco-community-grants/
https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/boroughs-and-communities/borough-funding
https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/
https://www.veoliatrust.org/funding/index.php?page=Our_Criteria_1
https://www.veolia.co.uk/sustainability-fund
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/place-shaping/greening-westminster
https://www.westminster.gov.uk/planning-building-control-and-environmental-regulations/planning-policy/neighbourhood-cil

APPENDIX

1	THE EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KENSINGTON	52
2	WHAT IS SOUTH KEN ZEN+	54
3	POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT	56
4	ENGAGING WELL WITH PEOPLE ON CLIMATE CHANGE	60
5	WORLD-CLASS EXAMPLES	62
6	OVERALL APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT	72
7	POP-UP MARKET STALL	74
8	WALKING AUDIT	76
9	ONLINE SURVEY	90
10	GREAT EXHIBITION ROAD FESTIVAL	116
11	EXPLORATORY SESSIONS	130



I THE EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KENSINGTON



Fig 10 c. 1771 map of South Kensington and surrounding environs c. National Library of Scotland

Before 1851, the area we now know as South Kensington was largely orchards, nurseries and market gardens supplying the West End of London with fresh produce. In 1801 the population numbered only 8,556. Limited residential development began in the 1840s, with estates such as Thurloe Square and Edwards Estate planned around communal gardens.

The design for the Albertopolis estate had gardens and landscaping at its heart, and after the erection of the building, which is now home to the Natural History Museum, the 1851 Royal Commission made land available for the Royal Horticultural Society to develop an extensive garden.

Fig 11 Plan for the Royal Horticultural Society Garden by W.A Nesfield in 1860 c. National Library of Scotland

Metropolitan and District Railway opens in 1868



The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 was established with Prince Albert as its President to organise the Great Exhibition – celebrating and encouraging manufacturing and design.

The exhibition was a huge success and culminated in a large profit.

Albertopolis is developed

At Prince Albert's suggestion, the Commissioners decided to use the profit to purchase 87 acres of land across the road with the intention of developing an estate to promote science and art; affectionately named **Albertopolis**. At the heart of this estate was green space, which made room for outdoor exhibitions to take place. The Royal Commission made land available for the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to develop an extensive garden. This garden, with its watercourses, flower beds and conservatory continued to dominate the estate until the 1880s.

Over the years, as the ambition and dream of Albertopolis was realised, with the opening of:

- 1857 - V&A Museum opens
- 1871 - The Royal Albert Hall
- 1881 - The Natural History Museum
- 1883 - The Royal College of Music
- 1893 - The Imperial Institute in the place of The Royal Horticultural Society Garden

Great Northern, Piccadilly and Brompton Railways open Brompton Road tube station in 1900





Fig 13 1936 Map of South Kensington showing the full development of Albertopolis and a familiar street pattern to today
c. National Library of Scotland

In the 1950s part of the Imperial Institute buildings were demolished for the expansion of Imperial College, whilst the Queen's Tower remained.

Amanda Levette redesign of V&A piazza on Exhibition Road opens in 2017



Exhibition Road Cultural Group founded in 2006

The Design Museum opens on High Street Kensington in 2016

1928

1950

1970

2000

2011

2016

2024

Science Museum opens in 1928

Serpentine Gallery opens in 1970

Natural History Museum Urban Nature Project opens in July 2024



Fig 12 The International Exhibitions of 1862. A view looking south with the domed exhibition building on the site of what would later become the Natural History Museum. c. London Museum

Exhibition Road redesigned to simplify the streetscape, shift the emphasis to pedestrians and provide a world-class setting for world-leading museums.



2 WHAT IS SOUTH KEN ZEN+

We are facing a planetary emergency through the linked challenges of human-induced global climate change and biodiversity loss. As a species we must urgently tackle these twin challenges together: reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and restoring and protecting our natural environment.

With the parallel aims of becoming a zero emissions (ZE) and nature positive (N+) neighbourhood, we have joined forces to deploy our world-leading creativity and expertise in science and the arts to help us go further and faster via a collective approach that reaches beyond our individual organisations to meet our net-zero, nature positive goals for South Kensington.

The South Ken Zen+ Programme aims to amplify and accelerate the work that is already happening across our membership to reduce emissions, foster sustainable operations and tackle the effects of climate change, through open and transparent collaboration to share knowledge, research, practice and expertise.

Goals for South Ken ZEN+

We have collectively agreed seven stretching goals for South Ken ZEN+:

1. Become a net-zero neighbourhood before 2040.
2. Reduce emissions from our operations by [50%] by 2030.
3. Increase urban green space by [20%] by 2030.
4. Create a significant net gain in biodiversity and ecological connectivity.
5. Reduce waste, and recycle at least [75%] of our business waste by 2030.
6. Increase sustainable and active travel for staff, students, residents and 20m+ visitors.
7. Make transport for [all] our deliveries and services net-zero by 2040.

(Square brackets indicate numbers that will be reviewed in mid-2024 once we have a robust baseline established.)



Four priority areas

These goals have been established from to four priority areas.

- Zero emissions: When the carbon emitted into the atmosphere equals the carbon removed from it.
- Nature positive: When species and ecosystems are restored and regenerating, not declining.
- Circular Economies: The conservation of all resources through responsible production, consumption, reuse and recovery of products and services to minimise the impacts on and improve the regeneration of natural systems.
- Sustainable Travel: The use of low/zero emissions forms of responsible public and private transportation to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions.

South Ken ZEN+ workstreams

The current South Ken ZEN+ programme of work (2023-2026), designed to meet our priorities and help us achieve our goals, is comprised of four workstreams:

- The Toolkit: a data collection and reporting template to measure and decrease our carbon emissions.
- A Charter for Sustainable Procurement: Shaping a sustainable supply chain together via a range of procurement commitments and shared sustainability principles.
- A Knowledge Network: harnessing and leveraging the existing expertise within our network to build a forum for continuous learning and discussion to deploy rigorous, practical solutions and accelerate progress towards our goals.
- Planning for a Greener Neighbourhood: Co-creating transformational greening improvements and identifying opportunities for biodiversity net gain in the places and spaces between our organisations, across the neighbourhood, and in proactive collaboration with our local community.



3 POLICY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Tackling and responding to the climate emergency remains a key priority for the UK Government. Regionally, and locally, policies are in place to address the impacts of climate change. The chapter below sets out the policy, guidance and standards context in which this work has taken place. The work carried out in this project supports these national, regional and local policies relating to the climate, biodiversity and green infrastructure in the public realm.

2.1 National policy and guidance

In 2016, the Paris Agreement was adopted, with the goal to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.

In 2019, the UK Government passed a law to require the UK to end its contribution to global warming by 2050 by bringing all greenhouse gas emissions to Net Zero.

In 2024, the UK Government made Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). It makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development. Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%, meaning that development will result in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before development.

Key National Policy Documents

- + A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (DEFRA, 2018)**
sets out goals to achieve aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats, as well as mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- + The Environment Act (HM Government, 2021)**
puts the government's 25-year plan on a statutory footing and places a legal duty on local authorities to ensure that all developments provide a positive net gain for biodiversity and that spatial nature recovery strategies are put in place.
- + National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2023)**
Chapter 14 sets out policies relating specifically to planning for climate change, including taking a proactive approach to mitigation and adaptation against the impacts of climate change.

3.1 Regional policy and guidance

In 2018, The Mayor of London declared a climate emergency and committed to make London Net Zero-carbon by 2030.

In 2021, the London Plan was adopted with thresholds and criteria for reaching Net Zero by 2030. It also includes some specific policies regarding urban greening, biodiversity and the public realm.

London Plan Policy G5 requires all major developments to include urban greening as a fundamental element of site and building design. It requires development to include urban greening as a fundamental element of designs, 'by incorporating measures such as high-quality landscaping, green roofs, green walls and nature-based sustainable drainage.'

London Plan Policy G6 refers to the 'protection, enhancement, creation, promotion and management of biodiversity.'

London Plan Policy D8 refers to Public Realm. Paragraph I states that green infrastructure such as street trees and other vegetation should be incorporated into the public realm 'to support rainwater management through sustainable drainage, reduce exposure to air pollution, moderate surface and air temperature and increase biodiversity'. Paragraph J states that 'public realm design should ensure that appropriate shade, shelter, seating and, where possible, areas of direct sunlight are provided, with other microclimatic considerations, including temperature and wind, taken into account in order to encourage people to spend time in a place.'

Key London-wide Policy Documents

- London Environment Strategy (2018)**
provides an outline of the Mayor's priorities covering a number of topics including air quality, green infrastructure, adapting to climate change and climate change mitigation
- London Sustainable Drainage Action Plan**
sets direction for the next 20 years and includes 40 actions for the next five years on how to introduce SuDS
- London's Surface Water Strategy**
sets out actions integrated partnerships, community flood action plans, and nature-rich cities
- London Urban Forest Plan**
sets out goals and priorities for expanding London's urban forest and offers a network of key stakeholders and best practice to help implementation
- The London Plan (2021)**
identifies the need to protect biodiversity, tackle poor air quality, provide equal access to green space, and mitigate against flooding
- London Environment Strategy (2018)**
sets integrated solutions to tackle air quality and investing more green infrastructure. It sets out a strategy to use natural capital accounting to present green infrastructure projects in a similar way to other capital assets.
- The London Climate Resilience Review (2024)**
an independent report to take stock of London's preparations for climate impacts with actionable recommendations

3.2 Local policy and guidance

The study area incorporates both the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), as well as a small area of the City of Westminster.

The RBKC Council and Westminster City Council (WCC) both declared a climate emergency in 2019.

Following this, both councils set out biodiversity action plans, and green/climate emergency action plans. These plans dive deeper into their Local Plan policies relating to climate resilience.

RBKC launched a 'Green Fund' in 2020, totalling £10 million over 10 years to be used to enable ambitious exemplary projects, to help deliver their Green Plan.

Additionally, both councils have mapped their flood zones, which include Critical Drainage Areas (Fig 14 and Fig 15). Critical Drainage Areas include areas within South Kensington. It is therefore vital that upgrades to the public realm take this into account, and invest in reducing this risk. Similarly, Air Quality has been measured and monitored in the two boroughs. This has resulted in Air Quality Focus Areas where the NO₂ particulate concentration is particularly high. Areas within the South Kensington study area feature within these focus areas (Fig 16 and Fig 17). Although there are mitigating measures to be taken relating to the number and types of vehicles that use these routes, there are biodiversity and greening interventions that can be implemented to help to reduce the adverse effects of these low air quality areas, such as planting trees and widening pavements to make these places more pleasant for walking and cycling.

Key Local Policy Documents

- + The RBKC Local Plan (2024)**
includes several policies, including GB12 and GB15 relating to protection and enhancement of parks, gardens and open spaces, as well as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) design
- + RBKC Green Plan**
sets out how the Council is going to meet the ambitious goals and transition to a truly sustainable borough
- + RBKC Biodiversity Action Plan (2022)**
includes an aim to develop new and existing collaborations with institutions, community groups and residents to support the delivery of biodiversity projects across the borough
- + Westminster Local Plan**
includes policies, relating to climate change mitigation, including 34, which seeks to protect and enhance the city's green infrastructure
- + Westminster Climate Emergency Action Plan (2022)**
sets out actions for making the borough more resilient to climate change, including education projects and plans to establish a Green Infrastructure Strategy
- + Westminster Biodiversity Action Plan (2020)**
sets out plans to protect, enhance and promote the parks, open spaces and other green infrastructure in the city



Fig 14 Flood zones in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

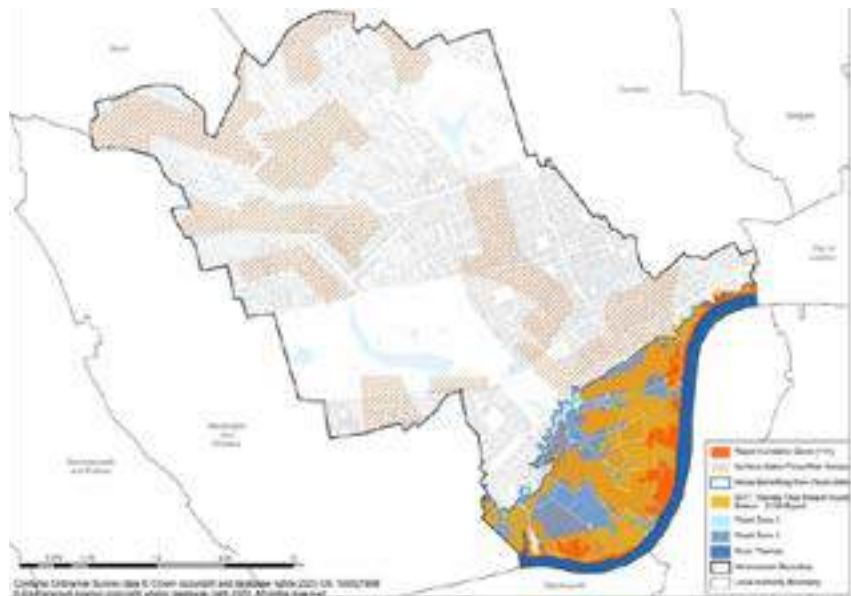


Fig 15 Flood zones in the City of Westminster



Fig 16 Air Quality Focus Areas in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

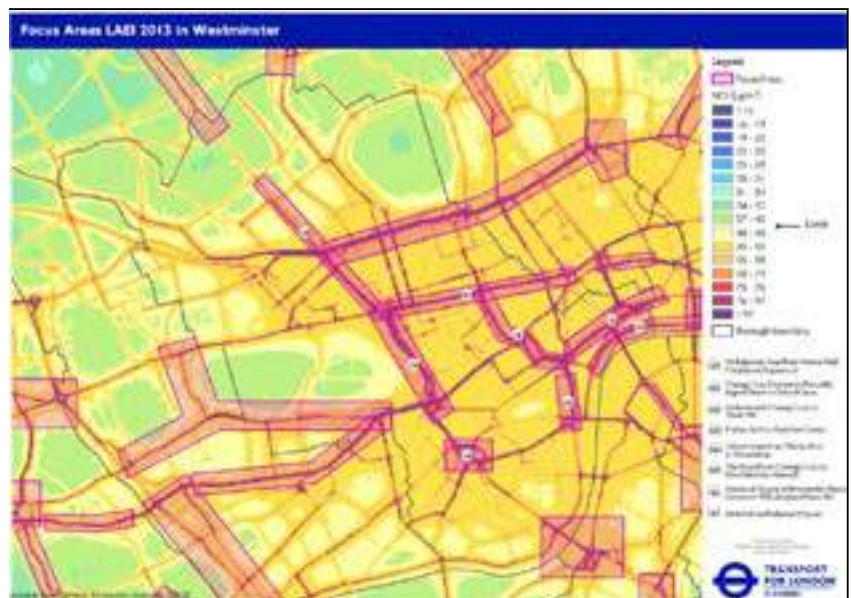


Fig 17 Air Quality Focus Areas in the City of Westminster

4 ENGAGING WELL WITH PEOPLE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Speaking with people about climate change and biodiversity depletion is not a straightforward task. The complex facts and implications require a more nuanced approach than typical engagement messaging around potential neighbourhood improvements and regeneration.

Climate change naturally elicits emotional responses and can feel overwhelming for individuals to engage with. In many cases, the understandable psychological response is one of anxiety and the resulting psychological process is then one of denial. It is, therefore, important to frame the conversation positively and tangibly to make it easier for people to engage with.

Added to this, whilst the topic is emotive, much of the relevant data and evidence on the subject is highly technical, with corresponding scientific language. This can also create barriers to engaging people on the subject and discussions rightly need to be tailored to lay people, as would be the case for broad engagement on any scientific issue.

To maximise overall input and to elicit the most useful and relevant responses from participants, we shaped the engagement approach according to the following principles

Further information can be found in engaging with people on climate change here:

[UN guidance on communicating climate change](#)

[National Lottery guidance on engaging on climate change](#)

Make it tangible



much of the material and discussion reflects on the local impacts of climate change in south Kensington and enables people to reflect on their lived experiences during recent periods of extremely hot weather and sudden heavy downpours.

Frame the conversation positively



the material highlights the likely issues that will face the neighbourhood now and in the future, but focuses the discussion on what can be done to address these, using precedents from across London, the UK and Europe.

Use plain English



the engagement materials, online questionnaire and our in-person discussions all use non-technical language so there are no barriers to participating.

Tailor discussions



However, if people want to engage on a detailed and technical level, they should be able to. The nature of the stakeholders means that some of those engaged by the process are highly knowledgeable of the issues and their technical and philosophical aspects. We want everyone to contribute to the level of detail they feel comfortable with, and for more complex and technical comments to have a forum.



Let's make South Kensington greener and better prepared for climate change

Give us your thoughts



zen.org

Give us your thoughts and ideas!

- How have you experienced the effects of climate change in your area?
- How do you think we can make our area greener?
- What are your top priorities for climate action in your area?
- How do you think we can make our area more resilient to climate change?
- How do you think we can make our area more prepared for the impacts of climate change?

How has the changing climate affected South Kensington?

Rain can affect our water grass

Complete our short survey



5 WORLD-CLASS EXAMPLES

4.1 Southbank Centre, London

The South Bank has transformed extensively since 2000. In 2005, refurbishment to the Southbank Centre also saw the renewal and redesign of the public space surrounding the arts venue. Originally built for the Festival of Britain in 1951, which much like the Great Exhibitions of 1851 and 1861, celebrated arts, science, industry and design, the building's public realm included a servicing road at the front. The 2005 renovation by Allies and Morrison saw the conversion of the undercroft service area to house new retail and restaurant spaces along with landscaping to the river. These transformations have been fundamental in the art centre, and area's, success which today sees over 25 million visitors each year.



Photo: Dennis Gilbert

Key Learnings



Creating a wide area to accommodate a greater number of tourists on foot



Establishing an active frontage to the river, thus better addressing this asset, creating diverse revenue generation through commercial offering



Giving more space for trees, planting and sculptures, whilst retaining flexibility



Places that are better suited for larger groups to gather, providing places to sit, relax and dwell safely and comfortably



Providing a better and more legible visitor welcome

Before

A confused and tangled place with ramps, walkways and service roads which did not engage with the riverside setting, and which felt unsafe at night due to the change in level of roads.

After

2005 improvements transformed the site and connected it to the riverside by closing its front servicing road and using this area for cafes and restaurants. This has made it a place that can comfortably accommodate the large variety of people who pass through the space everyday, and make it a visitor attraction both inside and out.



Photo: Dennis Gilbert



Photo: India Roper-Evans



Photo: India Roper-Evans



Photo: Dennis Gilbert



Photo: India Roper-Evans



5.1 Museumpark and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Rotterdam's Museumpark contains a cluster of the city's museums, including its Natural History Museum, various art galleries, and the Nieuwe Instituut. These are set within a series of 'rooms' forming a park, however certain challenges meant that the park did not have a unifying approach and had some shortcomings. Traffic from Museumstraat, and 1990s redesigns affected the cohesiveness of the space. The area is undergoing a renewal, led by architects Gustafson Porter + Bowman, and which will improve integration between the park and the wider urban fabric. This includes creating flexible spaces, introducing water features and a lake garden, introducing enhanced soft landscaping, removing much asphalt from the area, creating a new entrance to Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen (designed by Mecanoo) on a traffic free Museumstraat.



Before and after by Mecanoo

Key Learnings



Connecting the park directly to the museums by extending the park



Creating a more welcoming entrance to key museums



Improving logistics and servicing access



Restoring national monuments



Providing a grander and more attractive setting for museums, whilst providing a new promenade for pedestrians

Before

Poor integration between the park and museum has meant that spaces have felt separated and difficult to navigate. Interventions over the years have been piecemeal, exacerbating this.

After

A place where museums are set within Museumpark, rather than next to it, creating a greener, friendlier and more welcoming space., with a unified landscape approach.



Mecanoo



Gustafson Porter + Bowman



Gustafson Porter + Bowman



Gustafson Porter + Bowman



Gustafson, Porter + Bowman



Gustafson Porter + Bowman

5.2 Champs-Élysées, Paris

A plan to make the famous Champs-Élysées attractive to Paris residents again. Statistics show that less than 5% of the daily visitors passing through the avenue were Paris residents. Plans are in place to make the avenue more pedestrian and cycle friendly, and less car-laden. This will be achieved by cutting the number of vehicle lanes. Additionally, there are plans to adapt the avenue to respond to the changing climate by increasing the amount of permeable soil by 120%, planting 160 trees, creating a hectare of meadows and flowerbeds, and creating eight 'plant lounges' equipped with seating, shade and a fountain. The aim is to reduce the average temperature on the avenue by 7 degrees Celsius, turning it into a climate refuge during heatwaves.



Key Learnings



Restoring the original plans which saw the avenue as an extension to the Tuileries Garden



Reducing the traffic speed to make it safer for pedestrians, and a nicer place to sit and enjoy the surroundings amongst trees and planting



Creating places for large groups of people to gather



Creating a space that Parisians want to go to

Before

Known for its high volumes of traffic and noise, this historic and impressive boulevard has become dominated by cars, and braved only by tourists. Despite its original plans to be an extension to the Tuileries Garden, it has limited green space, and has become a tourist-centric area.

After

The renovation plans include sustainable development practices, such as using environmental friendly materials, energy-efficient lighting and waste management systems. It will become community and culture-oriented space, making it somewhere for locals and tourists to enjoy as a green corridor.



PCA-STREAM for Comité Champs Elysées

5.3 Smaller Interventions



LIVING LAMPOSTS

Green columns were installed on the Belgravia Grosvenor estate. The columns were installed as part of Grosvenor aims at reducing air pollution, improving urban biodiversity, evapotranspiration cooling and noise reduction.

The green lampposts are fitted onto existing lampposts. They are filled with a range of vegetation to promote biodiversity, purify the air and provide an attractive green focal point.

The green lampposts include a self-powered irrigation system through solar panels embedded in design.

The Smart Pillar was developed by The Scotscape Group and Greenwich University.



MEADOW MATS

To increase wildlife and biodiversity, St James's Park increased the areas of wildflower meadow planting. The Royal Parks used Meadowmat wildflower turf, a pre-grown matting of native wildflowers and grasses, which was supplied by Harrowden Turf. This overcame the problems of growing wildflowers from seed, including resident birds making a meal of the freshly sown meadow.

The Meadowmat contains 34 native plant species, many of which are larval food plants for butterflies.

The wildflower meadows are placed around the lake, combating the bare muddy patches in the grass which have resulted from footfall and lots of duck feet over the years.

Over providing an aesthetic element, the wildflowers will add to the rich lakeside wildlife habitats, encouraging new pollinators and providing shelter and forage for a wide range of species, including birds, invertebrates and small mammals.



COMMUNITY GARDEN

The ecoactive Hackney Urban Garden network is a series of 12 small gardens in Hackney. The gardens consist of existing spaces which have been underutilised, including lawns in estates. The establishing of the gardens has helped to secure funding for raised beds, greenhouses, and equipment for the gardens.

The gardens frequently hold open days and drop in sessions to share skills with the local community and recruit new volunteers to help with the gardens. Training sessions have also taken place, with lessons in pruning, planting bulbs, and growing seeds.

The initiative has also targeted groups of people who suffer from challenges associated with loneliness and isolation.



BEE BUS STOPS

Clear Channel are installing green roofs on top of bus stops. The roofs support bees and pollinators by mixing 13 different native wildflowers and 5 sedum species. The bus stops are designed in collaboration with the Wildlife Trust.

The bus stops help address the need for a healthy ecological network. With many bus stops in the South Kensington area, it is a way to establish a stronger nature corridor.

They also absorb rainwater which falls on the roof, stopping it from falling onto the road below, increasing climate resilience.

They are designed with sustainability at their core and feature 100% recycled or upcycled materials.

Clear Channel is in charge of maintaining the bus stops, overseeing cleaning and maintenance for the entirety of their lives, so there is no cost to the council.



IDEAS!



SOUTH
KEN
ZEN+

Let's South Ken get
greater better pr
for c... change

southk

Some things like this

our key committee

Research for
Council
this in

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

6 OVERALL APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

The main activity for this study took place between April and July 2024. Fig 19 sets out the stages and activities that took place during this period. In April, mapping of the stakeholders was undertaken. Using existing networks, groups and communities, we were able to understand the extent of the engagement.

Stage 2 included the launch of the survey, briefing sessions with ERCG steering group members, a pop-up market stall and online exploration sessions. During these events, information about the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss was shared. As part of these events, in depth discussions followed - these were directed conversations, with key questions asked. The survey included brief information and links where participants could find out more about climate change and biodiversity loss from the Natural History Museum and Imperial College websites.

In Stage 3 we developed these initial ideas that came up in the Stage 2 discussions and reached more people through the Great Exhibition Road Festival. We used the platform of GERF to ask people whether they supported any particular greening and biodiversity interventions through

short interactive activities. We also talked to children and encouraged them to participate in an activity to imagine their future ideal Exhibition Road.

The walking audit provided an opportunity for invited stakeholders from across the local community to look at opportunities on the ground. Fantastic ideas came forward, giving physical and spatial reality to ideas.

Stage 4 included the analysis of the outputs from the previous stages and developed this deliverable. This report is a direct reflection and report of the discussions and results that were generated from the events. The report presents the results from the events, whilst analysing them to understand community priorities and visions. Subsequently, the ideas that were discussed and developed have been drawn up in the potential projects for the Exhibition Road Cultural Group and local community groups to take forward and make a reality.

Overall, the engagement has reached 20,000+ people via institution newsletters, a neighbourhood leaflet drop, our street presence and social media, to raise awareness of the issues and encourage people to get involved.



STAGE	ACTIVITIES	PARTICIPANTS	PURPOSE
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APRIL	<p>STAGE 1</p> <p>Stakeholder mapping and understanding who should be involved</p>			
MAY	<p>STAGE 2</p> <p>Knowledge sharing and insight gathering</p>	<p>Online survey Neighbourhood Vision Group, Steering Group briefing, Online exploratory sessions, popup market stall</p>	<p>Residents' associations, staff and employees, students, local businesses, visitors</p>	<p>Convey key climate messages, explore local issues and appetite for change, identify vision for area</p>
JUNE	<p>STAGE 3</p> <p>Opportunities and developing ideas</p>	<p>Great Exhibition Road Festival, Walking audit workshop One-to-one discussions, Youth Councils session</p>	<p>Visitors, residents, students, families, school groups, key stakeholders</p>	<p>Explore issues in depth and spatially, collaboratively identify themes and priorities, test appetite for action</p>
JULY	<p>STAGE 4</p> <p>Preparation of engagement report and key stakeholder review</p>	<p>Analysis and review, report write-up and identification of key priorities and potential projects</p>	<p>Steering group, ERCG institution representatives, key stakeholders</p>	<p>Test and review the key messages and potential projects and refine the report and conclusions</p>
AUGUST				

Online survey: civic groups, ERCG staff and students, 9,000 local households

Fig 19 Approach to the community engagement

7 POP-UP MARKET STALL

6.1 Overview

The pop-up market stall was the first opportunity to give the SKZ+ project a physical presence in the neighbourhood. The team set up a portable, colourful market stall on Tuesday 14 May that introduced the project and provided a link to the recently launched online survey via a QR code. Team members chatted with passers-by about the issues of climate change and biodiversity loss and the project, and handed out postcards with key information and a link to the online survey.

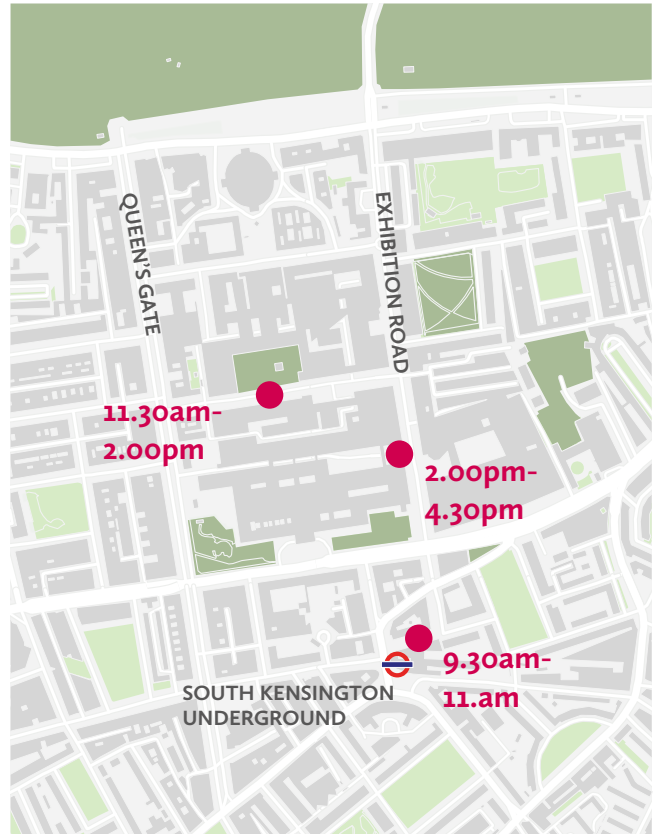
6.2 Methodology

The team set up the market stall at three locations within South Kensington, to reach a broad range of passers-by including students, local workers, residents and visitors.

1. 9.30am - 11am was the north side of South Kensington tube station, on the pedestrianised area of Thurloe Street. This was to catch workers and students on their way in to the neighbourhood at the start of the session, and visitors to the area in the latter part of the session.
2. 11.30am - 2.00pm at Imperial College Road street food market, opposite Queen's Lawn. This was to catch students during their lunch break
3. 3.00pm - 4.30pm on Exhibition Road between the Natural History Museum and the Science Museum. This was to catch visitors to the area and any students heading back towards the station.

The key focus of the market stall was to raise awareness of the project and to encourage people to complete the online survey. Plan showing area and ERCG institutions. The market stall included:

- Exhibition boards with overview of the project
- A map of the local area, showing the ERCG institutions and the general geographical focus for the project



- A comments tree for people to note down their big ideas and for the team to note key messages from conversations
- A QR code link to the online survey
- A5 postcards to take away, with project information and a link to the survey

Following the event, the online survey had received about 35 completed responses and the team had raised awareness of the initiative in the local area.



8 WALKING AUDIT

8.1 Overview

The walking audit was conducted as an interactive workshop events with invited stakeholders. 35 people attended the workshop, with participants made up from local residents, pupils at local schools, students at Imperial College London and Royal College of Music, residents and staff from the member institutions.

The walking workshop provided people with an opportunity to explore opportunities for change on the ground and in real time together with the project team. It encouraged people to look at a place they knew very well through a different lens to understand where opportunities could be taken to make the area more climate resilient. The walking audits were purposefully focus on making change, and therefore lots of ideas for projects were brought up and discussed.

8.2 Methodology

The workshop began with a short introduction before heading out for a walking audit around the area.

The introductory presentation focused on:

- Giving an overview of what a climate resilient and biodiverse place looked like
- Giving examples on adaptation and resiliency interventions could look like
- Looking at the work that was already happening in South Kensington
- Exploring what the next steps could be

The participants were split into three groups of between 10-12. Each group was given a worksheet to explore a particular area of South Kensington via walking route. There were three different routes,

each between 1.5km and 1.8km long. Participants were encouraged to walk slowly to carefully assess key spaces on their walking route, and encouraged to talk and discuss with others on the way.

The worksheets had prompts and guides to spark discussion and thought, split into three main sections on the front, with a large map for annotations. On the back there were hint and a tick list of things that could be spotted on the route, plus a large area for notes.

Following the walking audit, groups gathered back at the Goethe Institute for group discussions, focused on

1. Issues and opportunities
2. Dreams and ideas
3. Priorities

Groups were given 'idea cards' to help prompt ideas that could be realised. The following pages outline the discussions and ideas from each group.



Fig 20 Map of the three walking audit routes



Fig 21 Introductory presentation slides

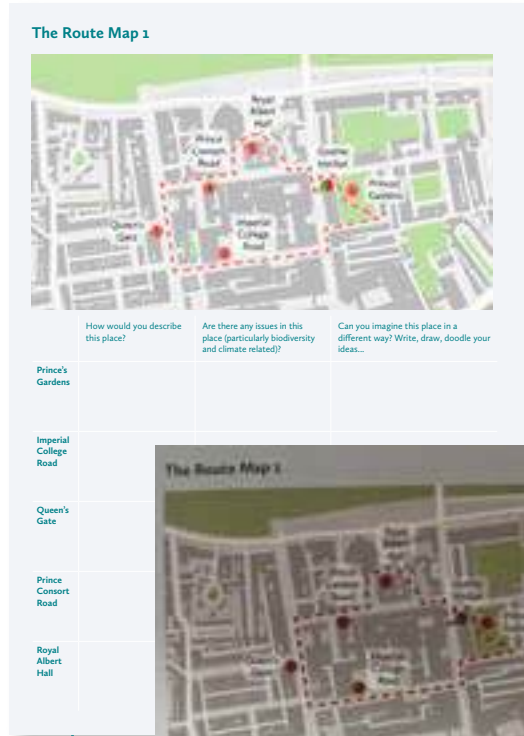


Fig 22 The walking audit worksheet which was filled out by participants during the walk



Fig 23 The group discussion worksheet and ideas cards

8.3 Profile of attendees

The in-person walking audit attendees were made up of residents, students, and employees from the South Kensington area. The walking audit was advertised on the flyer which went to 9,000 local residents, as well being posted in internal communications platforms at the ERCG partner institutions. In addition to this, survey respondents who left their email addresses to be kept up to date were invited, alongside targeted individuals, such as the Youth Council of RBKC and WCC. In total, 31 people attended the workshop, leading to three groups of between 10-13 including workshop facilitators who covered three different routes.

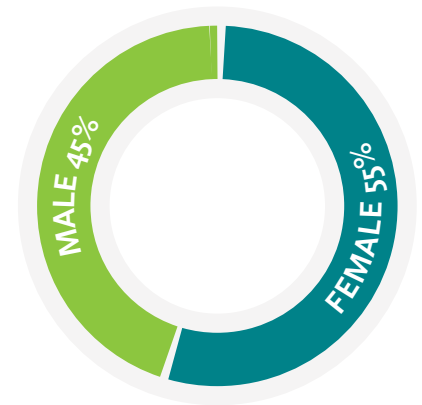


Fig 25 Participants' gender

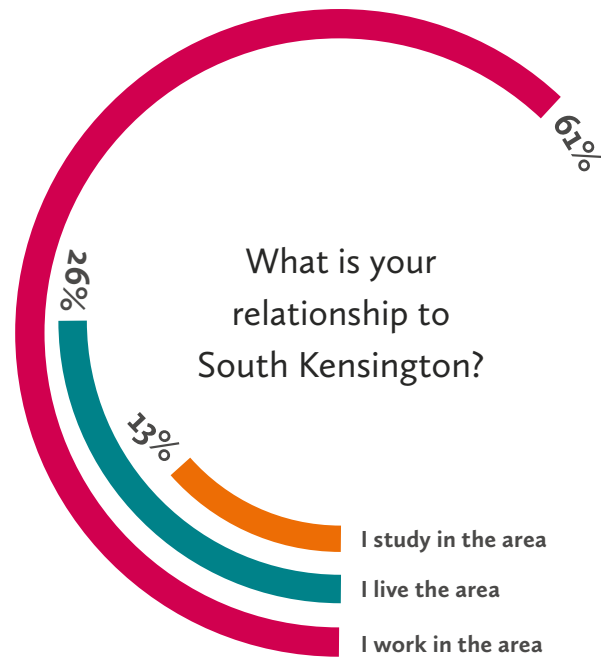


Fig 24 Participants' relationship to South Kensington





8.4 Route 1 - Around Imperial College

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS SPACE?

"I come here for my lunch break. It's the only quiet space close by"

+ *"It's lovely, fresh and simple"*

"It's nice and peaceful in the park"

"There is a monoculture in the park. There is no planting variety"

- *"It's very dark in here when the sun goes down. There are no lights, and the trees obscure the sun"*

"The school children take up all the space playing ball games"

"The grass is dying"

"I like that the road is treelined"



"It is bicycle friendly, but it could be better. The gate at Queen's Gate inhibits movement"

"The weekly market is great!"

"I like the planters at the west of the road."

"There is no structure. It's unclear where I should walk"

"There is lots of hard surfacing"



"There is not much green or outdoor space for the students. Could we remove some of the car to create more space to relax?"

"There are lots of parked vehicles on the road. Are they all needed? Who is parking here?"

PRINCE'S GARDENS



HOW CAN THE SPACE BE IMPROVED?

Ideas to improve Prince's Gardens

A water feature

More diverse planting

Trimming the trees to let more light in

Could it be landscaped more to provide different 'rooms'?

A grove of trees, or fruit trees

A playground for kids and exercise facilities

Benches that are set out in a more social way

IMPERIAL COLLEGE ROAD



Ideas to improve Imperial College Road

The paved part opposite the lawn could be include more soft landscaping and planted areas and benches for students to relax and work outside

Rebalance space more clearly between vehicles, bikes and pedestrians

Water features

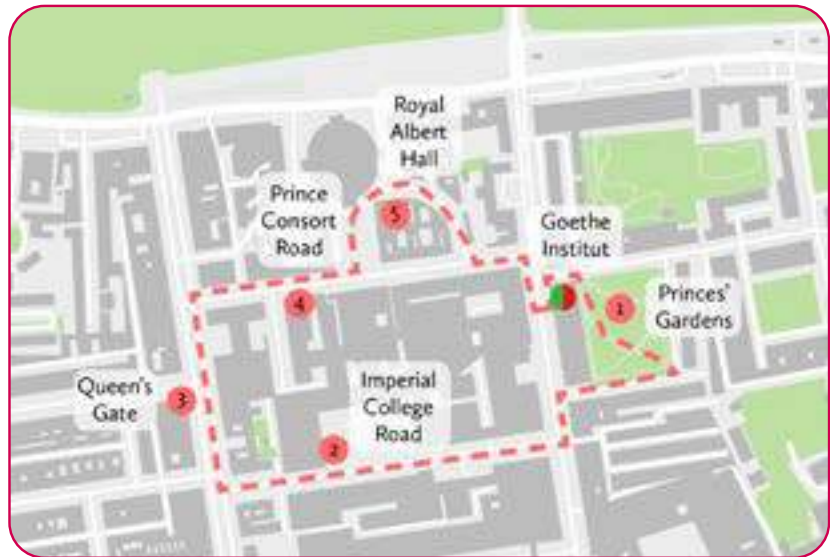
Student gardening club could help maintain areas

A canopy covered area with seating

Seating for students - benches and tables and chairs

More structure to the area including planters for diverse planting

Route one began by walking through Prince's Gardens. There were many people, including children, using the park as it was around 6pm. From there it went across Exhibition Road and into Imperial College Road, where the lack of legibility was noted; many people liked the planter to the west and wanted to see more of this. Queen's Gate and Prince Consort Road were noted as being wide and open, and many thought there was opportunity to reduce the road widths and introduce more planting and seating. At the Royal Albert Hall, participants thought that the grandeur of the architecture should be matched with beautiful landscaping and more seating.



"It's a busy road, but the trees help"

"I like the tree-lined street"

"It feels quite open and very wide"



"The cycle parking is dangerous"

"It is hard to cross the road"

"There are too many ebikes that get dumped here from students"



"It feels more peaceful here"

"Bellmouth junctions make it hard and dangerous to cross"

"The junction with Exhibition Road is so bleak and difficult to navigate"



"There could be more outdoor spaces for students"

"It feels full of cars"



"It is beautiful, with impressive architecture"

"Splendid!"

"Grand, clean and a nice place"

"The steps up to the RAH is beautifully planted"

"The barriers and bollards are not in keeping with the incredible architecture"



"There should be more places to sit"

QUEEN'S GATE



PRINCE CONSORT ROAD



ROYAL ALBERT HALL



Ideas to improve Queen's Gate

Remove some parking from the middle and add planting

Find a solution for the ebike parking within the Imperial College campus

Pocket parks with planting and benches

Cycle parking bays with planting around them

More pedestrian crossings

Reduce the lane width

Ideas to improve Prince Consort Road

Reduce the width of the road

Make the road access only

Traffic management using pavement build outs and planting

Benches and places to dwell outside RCM to listen to the music and sit before classes

Build outs to make it safer to cross the wide road

Ideas to improve the area around the Royal Albert Hall

More seating spaces

Help people introduce more planting on balconies

Barriers should be replaced with flower planters

Make the public spaces more beautifully landscaped

8.5 Route 2 - To Holy Trinity Brompton Churchyard and Cromwell Road

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS SPACE?

"The private greening efforts along mews is good"

+ *"Welcoming with open seating"*

"Peaceful - no noise pollution from traffic"

"Good place to relax"

"A hidden gem"

"Green and open but lack of planting"

- *"Marred by certain users"*

"Not enough variety of planting"

"great volunteering effort on urban foresting"

+ *"Good use of space"*

"The tree cover is beautiful"

"It feels very HOLY :)"

- *"Pretty noisy traffic from Cromwell Road ruins the peace"*

"Parking spaces look weird"

"Too much hard standing"

"Nice wide pavements"

+ *"Nice trees"*

"Cars driving very fast, causing a variety of issues: pollutants, noise etc."

- *"A bit devoid of planting"*

"Horrendous traffic"

"No safe spaces for pedestrians to access V&A"

"Feels hot"

HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON CHURCHYARD



Ideas to improve Holy Trinity Brompton Gardens

Could use more wilding and increased diversity of plants

A wildflower patch

Focus on greenery/plant beds

The west side has opportunity for planting in grassed area

More flowers to hotel lovely insects

HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON FOREST



Ideas to improve Holy Trinity Brompton Urban Forest

More permeable surfaces

Could be more overgrown, creating a more wilding feel

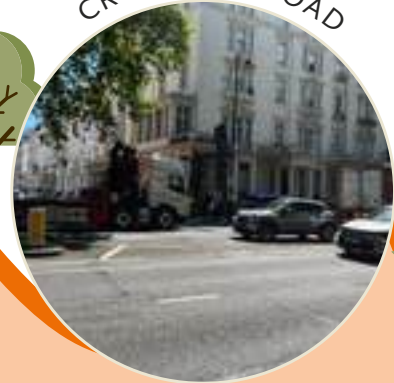
One of the routes could be re-wilded

perhaps convert one path to a meadow area

some seating

The front of the Oratory could do with some tubs, shrubs or a hedge

CROMWELL ROAD



Ideas to improve Cromwell Road

Maybe seating along north side of Cromwell Road along the V&A

Convert car lanes to cycle lanes

Greenery, trees, open ground

There could be a planted central reservation

Another crossing is needed

Fewer cars!

HOW CAN THE SPACE BE IMPROVED?

Route two began by going down Princes Gate Mews where participants noted that some residents had placed plant pots outside their homes, making the streets attractive, interesting and pleasant. Holy Trinity Brompton Churchyard was a surprise to many participants as being very peaceful. The neighbouring Urban Forest is a fantastic projects by SUGi Pocket Forests to introduce a huge variety of plants and trees to a small space. Although you could hear Cromwell Road from the forest, it was still a pleasant space to be in. Cromwell Road was described as noisy, polluted and unpleasant. Whilst Yalta Memorial Garden should have provided breathing room, the garden only amplified the closeness on the roads. due to its exposed location and landscaping. The V&A Courtyard was described as modern, but many found it disappointing that it was not designed with climate change or biodiversity in mind.



"Seating is not shaded"

"Lawns are too bleak"

"Too much hard surface"

— *"Very noisy, small area in the middle of the road"*

"It's trying, but it's too small and therefore not enough"

"Feels unsafe"

"A lot more welcoming than main entrance"



"Peaceful"

"Cutting edge and modern"

"Lovely area which feels like a destination"

"Dystopian, disregarding human needs"



"Too much hard surfacing"

"No thought given to biodiversity"

YALTA MEMORIAL GARDEN



Ideas to improve Yalta Memorial Garden

Could do with more planting trees at the western end

Create a circular space with a water fountain and garden

More benches in the shade

Increased biodiversity through increased planting

V&A FRONT COURTYARD



Ideas to improve the V&A front courtyard

Redesigned for safe surfaces, greening and places for visitors to sit and gather

Add planting and SUDS

Garden focus, planting trees

Some grass and plants could increase biodiversity

Make the entrance interesting in a V&A way

8.6 Route 3 - down Exhibition Road to Bute Street

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS SPACE?

- + *"Historic"*
- + *"Busy, but partly pedestrianised, with pockets of green"*
- *"Exposed to elements and traffic"*
- *"Not enough bike parking for personal bikes"*
- *"Hard to cross the road, it's not clear where the road is"*
- *"Speed of cars is too high"*

- + *"The Cromwell Road trees balance the chaos and calm the area a bit"*
- + *"The Natural History Museum is beautiful. The garden will be amazing!"*
- *"I can smell pollution"*
- *"Thoroughfare which is vehicle dominated"*
- *"Bleak"*

EXHIBITION ROAD



Ideas to improve Exhibition Road

- Green canopies*
- Comfy seating*
- Clearer parking spaces*
- Educational info on the wildflower meadow*
- Green interventions at various points*

CROMWELL ROAD



Ideas to improve Cromwell Road

- Consolidate deliveries*
- Public seating*
- Shaded areas through more tree cover*
- Create a 'tree barrier' between the pavement and road*
- Create stepping stones for nature*
- Traffic screening*
- Need an area for school kids/ crowds. Narrow the road slightly - increase the pavement space for wooden planters/seating areas*

HOW CAN THE SPACE BE IMPROVED?

Route three travelled down Exhibition Road where it stopped to at the wildflower meadow and other greening interventions such as the hostile vehicle mitigation planters. The Natural History Museum's new gardens opened in July 2024 to praise for its creation of a range new habitats for urban insects and animals, including woodland, grassland, hedgerow and wetland. It continued along Cromwell Road, where participants felt the movement of cars overshadowed the grand architecture of the Natural History Museum entrance. The route travelled past the Intitut Francais and towards Bute Street. Here participants mainly liked that the street had been made car free, but some felt more could have been done to increase soft landscaping. Participants saw Thurloe Place as a convivial space, but some commented that it lacked navigability and cohesion due to the number of outdoor seating areas and confusing crossings.



- + *"Lovely outdoor restaurant seating"*
- + *"A meeting point"*
- + *"No cars and lots of greenery"*
- *"No shade!"*
- *"Lots of traffic on the adjoining street"*
- *"Litter in the planters"*

- + *"Socially - great"*
- + *"Lovely busy shops with bustling station"*
- *"Difficult to navigate for those with disabilities"*
- *"Crowded"*
- *"No shade and lots of traffic on the adjoining street"*
- *"Lack of greenery, very open and exposed to sun"*

BUTE STREET



Ideas to improve Bute Street

- Greenery on lampposts and rooftops*
- More well placed bins*
- Natural canopy shading the street*
- Improved cycle way*

THURLOE PLACE



Ideas to improve Thurloe Place

- Green spot to rest where roads intersect*
- Other dimensions, not just street level*
- More control over where outdoor seating for restaurants should be and provide more public seating with shade*
- Replace plastic planting with real plants.*



8.7 Walking audit - Priorities route 1

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Lots of asphalt on Imperial College Road and Queen's Gate

Consolidate car parking on Imperial College Road

Introduce more planting interventions on Queen's Gate

Feels like cars have priority on junctions on Prince Consort Road

DREAMS AND IDEAS

Re-landscaping on Queen's Lawn and Dangoor Plaza - seating, planters, diverse planting, fountain

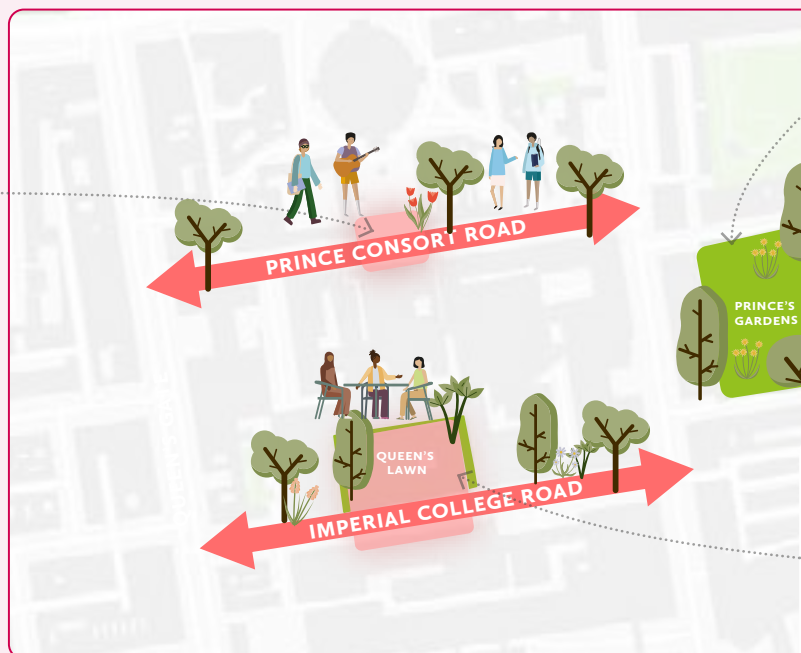
Water feature, shrubs and more cohesive landscaping in Prince's Gardens. Build on its tranquility. 'Rooms' within the larger space. Ensure there is space for games. It primarily needs to serve people and the community

Trim trees in Princes Garden to allow more light in and more planting

Flowering balconies

PRIORITIES

Make Prince Consort Road work better for people, including larger groups of students from RCM through introducing more seating and a better landscaped area opposite the Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Steps



Succession planting for Plane trees in Prince's Gardens, Imperial College Road and Queen's Gate

Rebalance and landscape the space to make it pedestrian priority - create a more 'square/plaza' space for sitting, studying and events

8.8 Walking audit - Priorities route 2

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Cyclists should not be on pavement - make it safe for them to cycle on roads

The impact of traffic is a big issue and could be softened with green infrastructure

Air quality and noise on Cromwell Road

Anit-social behaviour in green spaces

Design of HVM - could all be planted out

Replace grasses with more diverse plants, long grasses, shrubs, flowers

DREAMS AND IDEAS

Signpost green spaces/quiet areas

Fewer lawns and more green spaces that have longer grass and more shrubs and flowers

Encourage active travel

Expand diverse planting on HVM on exhibition road

PRIORITIES

Redesign the V&A courtyard with an award-winning landscape designer

Introduce pollinators, hedging or more trees to screen the road, and place benches in the shade



Increase biodiversity and pollinator friendly planting in the Holy Trinity Brompton Churchyard with greater variety of shrubs and planting / wildflower areas - bee and bird habitats

On Cromwell Road reduce width of the road and create a central reservation with lots of green planting and pedestrian refuge when crossing road

8.9 Walking audit - Priorities route 3

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Joining forces with other projects (west London green corridor)

Improvement to shared space including more inclusive design for visually impaired people

There is no shade from sun and rain on Exhibition Road

Cluttered space - could restaurants do better than plastic plants?

Clutter in urban furniture. It is inconsistent and therefore appears messy/ugly

DREAMS AND IDEAS

Bee bus stop and green roofs

Street trees

Vertical gardens/wall and lamppost

South Kensington station garden with a community group to help maintain it

Improve crossings over Cromwell Road

Pleasant meeting spaces - water feature, shade, rest, water fountain

Create climate improvement districts

Rain gardens to prevent cafés from encroaching on Thurloe Place

PRIORITIES

Add a water feature to help with cooling the hot area around Exhibition Road

Integrate biodiversity into other uses, such as the HVM planters on Exhibition Road

Increase shade on Exhibition Road

Signage for the wild flower meadow



9 ONLINE SURVEY

9.1 Overview

The online survey opened on 17 May 2024 and ran until 10 July. During this time, 350 people submitted responses to the survey. The survey had a completion time of on average 34 minutes. The survey sought the views of people who lived, studied and worked in the area. During our pop-up market stalls, visitors also engaged with the survey.

The online survey was part of the knowledge sharing and insight gathering stage of the process. It had a dual purpose of raising awareness of climate and biodiversity issues and the potential impacts on the local area, and potential approaches to addressing these; alongside gathering insight on people's views on this and what their appetite and priorities were for addressing the issues.

9.2 Methodology

The survey asked 17 questions, with a mixture of multiple choice and open text question, allowing participants to answer in as many words as they wished. The purpose was to gain a broad understanding of how much people knew and were concerned about climate change and biodiversity loss, whilst also seeking to gain an overview of the actions people thought could be taken in South Kensington.

The survey was shared on social media platforms, in staff and student newsletters, via the Discover South Kensington newsletter, at GERF and the pop-up stalls, via Residents Associations and via a leaflet drop which went to 9,000 addresses in the area (Fig 2). It is estimated that the combination of these measures will have reached over 20,000 people. The aim was to both raise awareness of the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss and



Fig 26 Screenshots from the survey

the SKZ+ programme, and to encourage people to participate in the engagement process and contribute their ideas.

The survey also included questions to give an overall profile of respondents, without giving information that could identify individuals. This included age, gender, postcode and relationship with the area and how people travel to/from or through the area.

Participants had the opportunity to provide contact details confidentially, to be kept informed about future activities or to get involved. The online survey also provided a link from which people could sign-up to the more in-depth exploratory sessions



Fig 27 Key statistics from the survey

9.3 Profile of respondents

Q1: what is your relationship to South Kensington?

73% of survey respondents work in the area and 15% of respondents live in the area. This means the vast majority of answers (88%) are from people who know the area well and have experienced it through the seasons and at different times of day and evening. 13% of respondents were visitors to the area and 9% of respondents study in the area. We received responses from 20 people who pass through the area en route to somewhere else or have another relationship, such as they used to study in the area. Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total exceeds 100%. This information is shown in Fig 26.

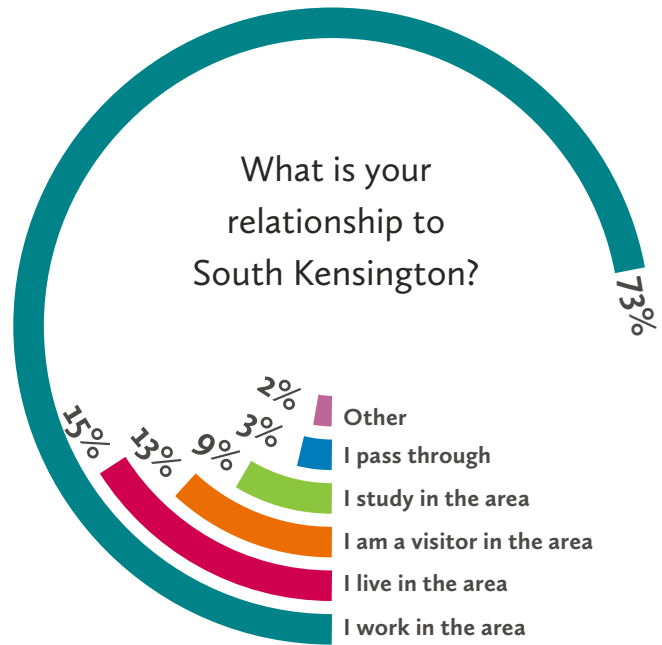


Fig 28 Participants' relationship to South Kensington

Q4: How do you generally travel to/from the area?

A significant majority of respondents travel to and from the area by Tube (75%). There are also reasonably high levels of walking and wheeling, with 51% of people choosing this method. 29% take the bus and 21% cycle to and from the area (this will include e-bikes). There are low levels of private car and taxi use to access the area, which suggests that high levels of traffic are generated by wider tips, with the area being a through route. Respondents could choose more than one answer, so the total exceeds 100%. This information is shown in Fig 27.

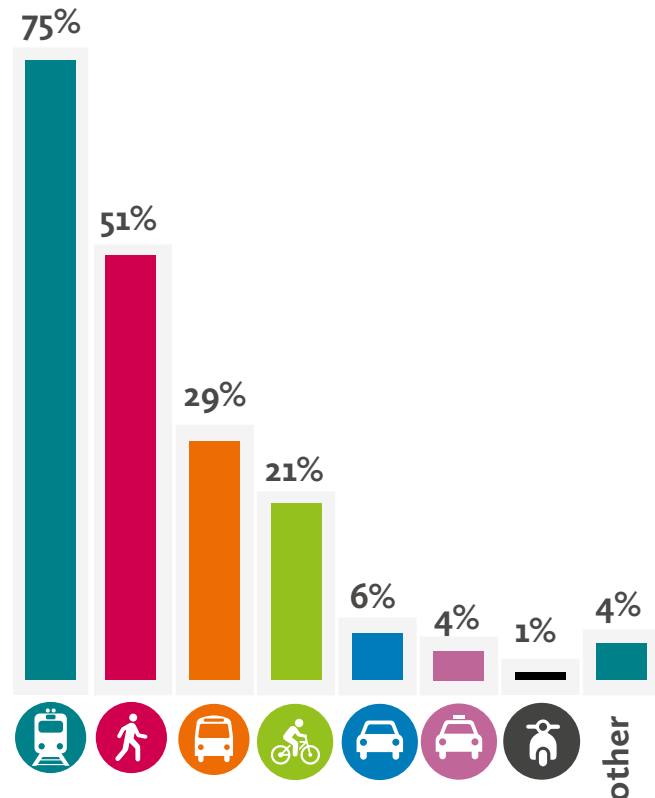


Fig 29 Participants' travel habits in the area

Q19: would you like to be kept informed or stay involved as this work progresses?

Of the 350 people who completed the online survey, 111 said they would like to be kept informed or to get involved and provided their email address to do so. This is a relatively high proportion for similar engagement programmes and shows the level of active interest in the area for improvements to the neighbourhood.



Q20: what is your age?

We had a good range of input from people across a broad age spectrum. This reflects both the variety of methods used to reach out to people and the mixed nature of people who regularly spend time in South Kensington. The greatest input came from people aged 35-49, at 33% of respondents, closely followed by people aged 25-34 (28% of respondents). This information is shown in Fig 28.

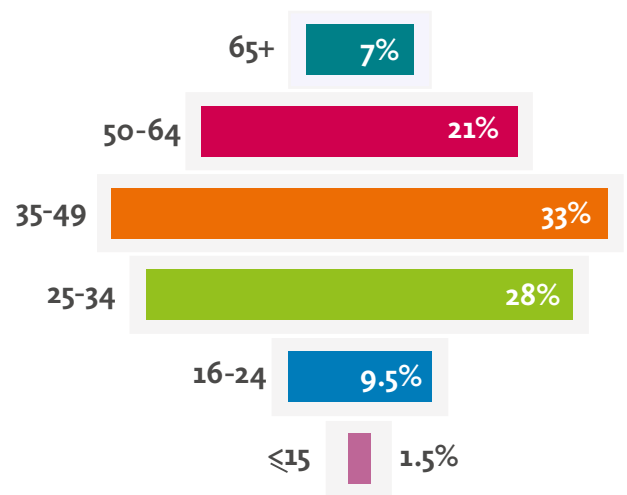


Fig 30 Participants' age profile

Q21: How do you identify your gender?

65% of respondents were women and 31% of respondents were many, with 4% of people preferring not to say or identifying as non-binary. This information is shown in Fig 29.

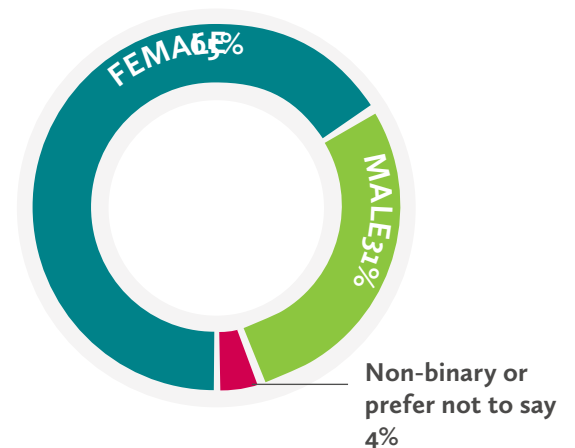


Fig 31 Participants' gender

Q22: what is your postcode?

Respondents came from a very broad geographical area. Although many SW postcodes were given, W, NW, SE, E, TW, UX, AL, BR and DA postcodes were given. This reflects the area's role as a significant employer from the greater London area and a national and international visitor destination.

95%
of participants are
concerned about climate
change



97%
of participants are
concerned about the loss
of nature and wildlife



1. A CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL HUB

Many words related to culture, history, and education highlight an area rich in cultural heritage and educational institutions

“Museums, art, cultural, historical, educational, heritage, learning, inspiring, scientific, academic, Victorian, international”

2. VIBRANCY AND ACTIVITY

Participants conveyed a sense of a lively and active environment with plenty of things happening.

“Tourism, vibrant, lively, dynamic, bustling, exciting, connected, energetic, melting pot, awesome, fun, iconic”

3. OVERCROWDED AND STRESSED

Many people identified a place that is popular with tourists but may suffer from issues related to overcrowding and noise

“Touristy, busy, overcrowded, crowded, noisy, overrun, congested, hectic, loud”

4. AFFLUENCE AND EXCLUSIVITY

The neighbourhood is considered upscale, with some degree of exclusivity.

“Affluent, posh, wealthy, expensive, exclusive, privileged, rich, bourgeois, chic”

5. BEAUTY AND CHARACTER

Most people thought the area handsome and grand, though a few disagreed

“Beautiful, pretty, grand, majestic, attractive, royal, elegant, architecture, historical, village, well-planned, residential, concrete, soulless”

6. TRAFFIC AND ACCESSIBILITY

Some people highlighted potential challenges with traffic congestion and transportation in the area.

“Traffic-ridden, too many cars, busy roads, not pedestrian-friendly, transport, walkable”

7. COMMUNITY AND HOME

People conveyed a sense of community and belonging, indicating that the area is not just a tourist spot but also a place where people live and feel at home.

“Community, neighbourhood, residential, home, beloved, green, leafy”

8. CHANGE AND MULTI-DIMENSIONAL

Many words related to culture, history, and education highlight an area rich in cultural heritage and educational institutions

“Gentrified, changing, misunderstood, disparity, evolving”

Q6: Describe your ideal future South Kensington in three words

330 out of 350 people completed this open text question on how they would like to see South Kensington in the future. Again, some clear themes emerged, which are set out to the right. The word cloud below reflects the number of times a word was mentioned within the responses. The larger the word, the greater the frequency.



Fig 33 Wordcloud illustrating participants' '3 words to describe my ideal future South Kensington'. The larger the text, the more people suggested the word.

1. GREENNESS AND NATURE

There was a strong desire to see more green spaces natural environments and biodiversity in the area.

“Green, greener, nature, natural, trees, leafy, biodiverse, flora, wild, parks, open, shady”

2. SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Many people wrote about wanting to see a greater focus on sustainability in the area, thinking more carefully about environmental impacts of decision to create a more eco-friendly and resilient area.

“Sustainable, eco-friendly, resilient, net zero, carbon emissions, climate-friendly, environmentally friendly, sustainable community, sustainable transport”

3. PEDESTRIANIZATION AND REDUCED TRAFFIC

There was a significant emphasis placed on reducing car traffic, increasing pedestrianised areas, and improving accessibility for non-motorised forms of transport.

“Pedestrian, pedestrianised, fewer cars, less traffic, car-free, traffic-free, pedestrian-friendly, walking paths, integrated bike lane”

4. CALMNESS AND TRANQUILLITY

There were lots of words suggesting a desire for more peaceful and quieter environments, away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

“Calm, quiet, peaceful, tranquil, less noise, relaxing”

5. ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVE

Many spoke about the importance of making the place accessible, inclusive and welcoming.

“Accessible, welcoming, inclusive, human-centric, affordable, public, community, local, residents, multicultural, diverse, affordable markets”

6. CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY FOCUS

People highlighted the strong cultural identities in the area, with an emphasis on ensuring these are preserved and supporting local communities, fostering a vibrant cultural scene.

“Cultural, community, tradition, local, identity, arts, bookshops, cultural destination, cultural centre”

7. CLEANLINESS AND AESTHETICS

There is a desire for a clean, well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing environment.

“Clean, cleaner, beautiful, pretty, organised, well-maintained, preserved, elegant”

8. INNOVATION AND PROGRESS

Participants expressed a want for innovation and forward-thinking approaches to urban planning, sustainability and community development

“Innovative, forward-looking, pioneering, groundbreaking, progressive, inspiring”

9. SAFETY AND COMFORT

These words reflect the need for a safe and comfortable environment where residents and visitors can feel secure, as well as also coming back to the idea of being a place and dwell and relax.

“Safe, safer, secure, comfortable, leisurely”

10. COMMUNITY INTERACTION AND SOCIAL SPACES

There were many words which reflected a desire for more communal and social spaces that encourage interaction among residents and create a stronger sense of community.

“Communal, approachable, social housing, street markets, cafés, public spaces, cultural spaces, family spaces”

These questions sought to understand how people wanted to see the area improve and focus on in the future. This analysis compares how they perceive and experience the area now, to how they would like to see it develop in the future.

Six key focus areas emerged describing how participants would like to see South Kensington in the future.



There is a clear emphasis on sustainability, reducing carbon emissions, and creating an environmentally conscious community, reflecting a strong commitment to combating climate change.



People envision a calmer, quieter, and more tranquil environment, with place to go away from the current hustle and bustle, and overall creating a more peaceful setting.



A strong desire for increased greenness and nature, with more parks, trees, and a biodiverse environment, indicating a shift towards a more natural and eco-friendly area.



Focus on a more inclusive, accessible, and welcoming community, with an emphasis on affordability, diversity, and a human-centric approach that benefits all residents.



A desire for reduced traffic, more pedestrian-friendly areas, car-free zones, and integrated bike lanes, aiming for a more human-centric and less congested environment.



People want to see a stronger cultural and community focus, with preserved traditions, local identity, and vibrant cultural scenes that are more resident-oriented rather than purely tourist-driven.



“Exhibition Road is where the action happens!”

Q7: What is your favourite street or outdoor space in South Kensington? What do you like about it?

324 out of 350 people completed this open text question about their favourite street or outdoor space in South Kensington, with some giving reasons for this. The most popular responses (3 or above) are shown in the tree diagram below. The top responses were:

- Hyde Park, with many references to its green, calming spaces though also requests for more and varied planting and ‘micro-forests’
- Exhibition Road, as the hub of activity and excitement, being ‘where it all happens’
- Bute Street (recently landscaped and made traffic-free) for its shops, seating and sense of community.
- Kensington Gardens, for its planting, and calmness (often mentioned in tandem with Hyde Park).
- Holy Trinity Brompton Churchyard, as a green space that is tucked away but open to all.
- Exhibition Road South, Thurloe Street and the area around the station for its buzzy atmosphere with tables, seating and restaurants.
- The central John Madjeski gardens courtyard within

the V&A for being secluded and away from traffic.

- Prince’s Gardens for being a centrally located, green space open to all (with calls for more planting).
- Prince Consort Road, QEII Jubilee steps and the view of the Royal College of Music.
- Mews and back streets, including Victoria, Grove, Atherstone Mews, Queens Gate Mews, Princes Gate Mews and Kynance Mews.
- NHM Gardens, which was closed for relandscaping during engagement, which likely limited references.

Other places with one or two mentions, include:

- Ennismore Gardens
- High Street Kensington
- Queens Gate Place
- Onslow Gardens
- Tree lined streets
- V&A cafe terrace
- Ismaili Centre Garden
- Kensington Square
- Pelham Crescent
- Queen Anne Terrace
- The garden areas
- Harrods
- South Kensington Piazza
- Kensington Church Walk
- Serpentine gallery
- Brompton Garden
- Emperors Gate
- Petersham Place
- Gloucester Road
- Royal Geographical Society Gardens
- Cornwall Gardens
- Secret Garden
- Science Museum
- St Luke’s churchyard

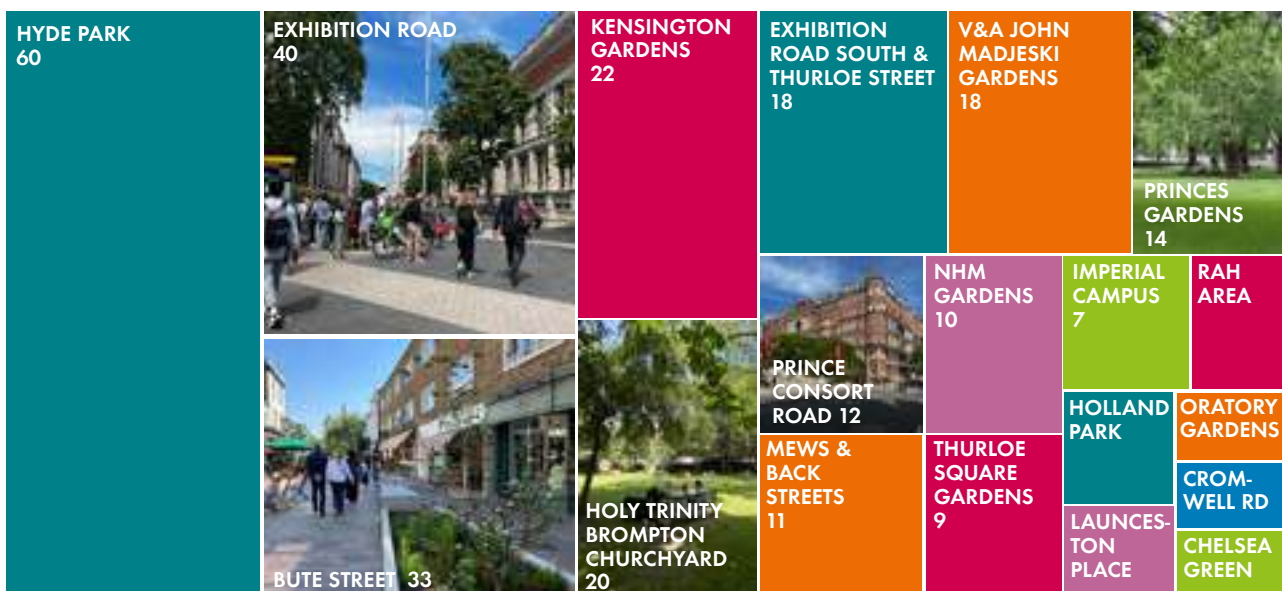
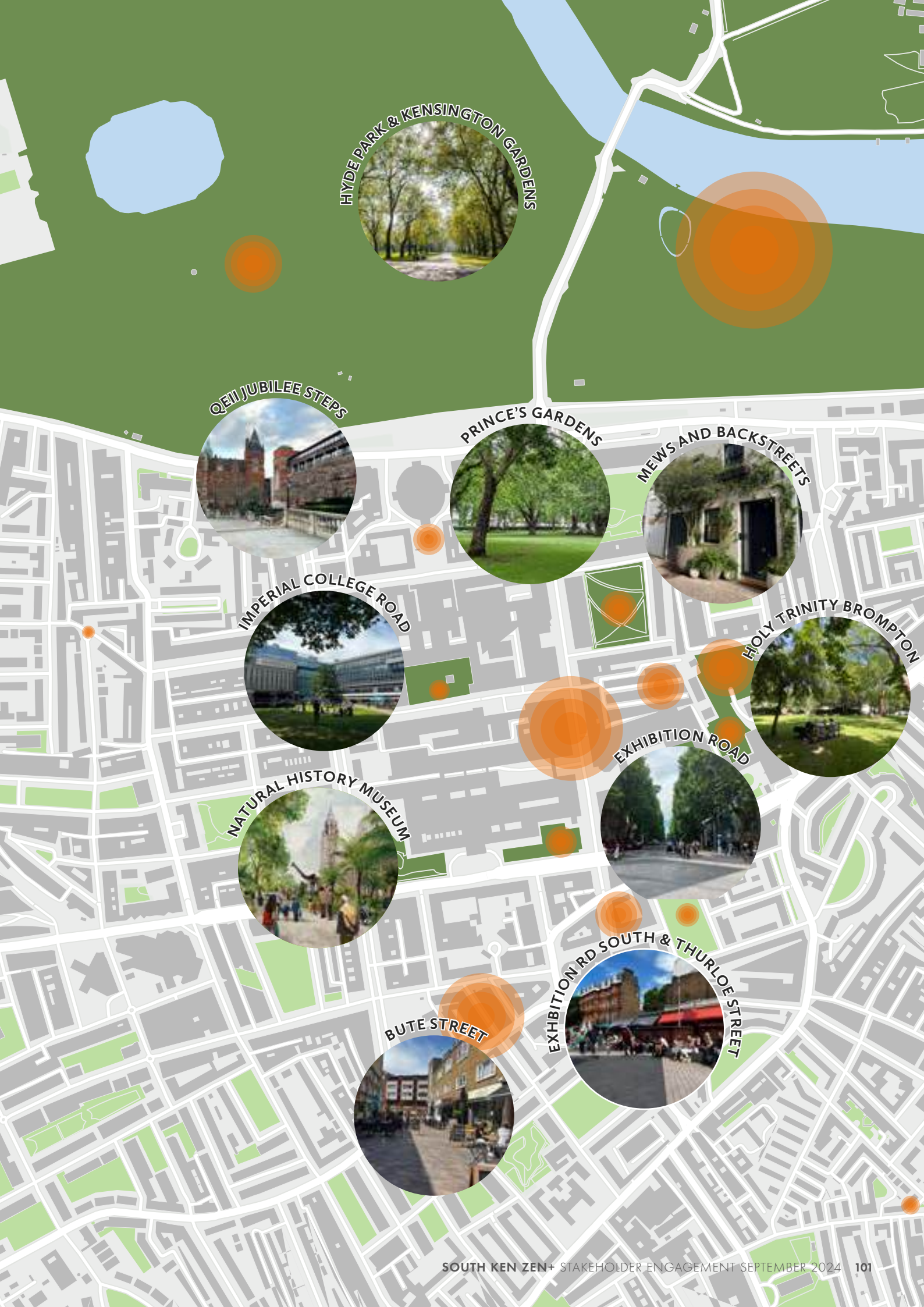


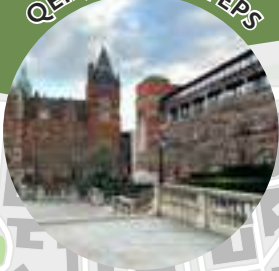
Fig 34 Tree diagram showing people’s favourite places in South Kensington. Size reflects the number of people voting for the place



HYDE PARK & KENSINGTON GARDENS



QUEEN JUBILEE STEPS



PRINCE'S GARDENS



MEWS AND BACKSTREETS



IMPERIAL COLLEGE ROAD



HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON



NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM



EXHIBITION ROAD



BUTE STREET



EXHIBITION RD SOUTH & THURLOE STREET



Q8: How do you think climate change and nature/biodiversity loss will impact this street or outdoor space?

336 out of 350 people completed this multiple choice question. Participants were invited to choose any from the list they considered relevant, and to add others or provide further thoughts in an open text box. The question related to the 'favourite space' that had been identified in Q6 and will reflect the different impact that a changing climate may have on different types of spaces.

The impact considered most likely to affect all of the streets and spaces identified is higher temperatures (77% of respondents). Combined with heatwaves (68%) this reflects the greatest concern

for the future environment of the local area. The impact on air quality (71%), decline in animals and insects (63%) and changes in plant species (53%) were all considered likely by more than 50% of respondents.

In the open text box, many people mentioned that most or all of the options would be felt. Other impacts identified including more extreme cold, more wind damage and noise pollution. A few respondents suggested there would not be dramatic changes in the South Kensington area, with changes more likely felt in more vulnerable areas of the globe.

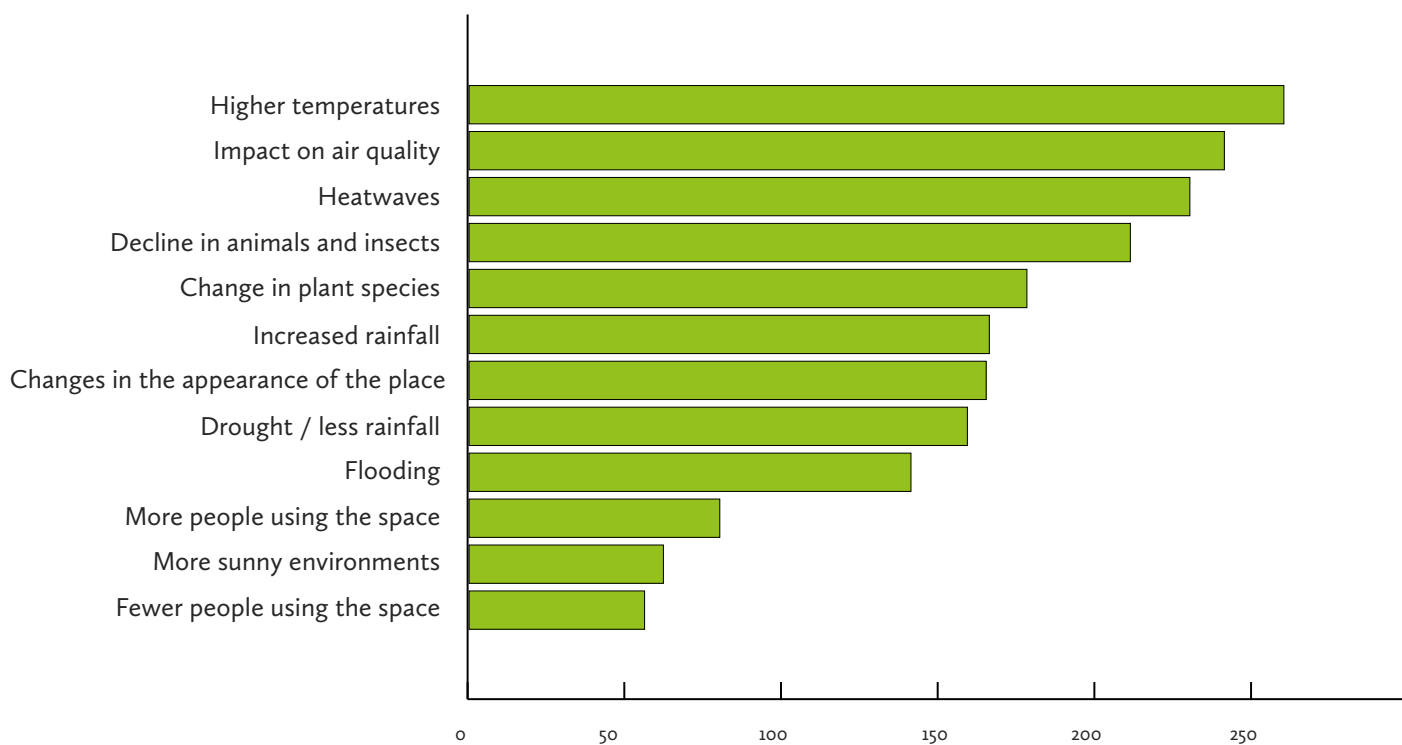


Fig 35 The impacts that people believe climate change will have on South Kensington (number of people)



Q9: Do you think climate change has already impacted any of the following?

All 350 out of 350 people completed this multiple choice question. Participants were invited to choose any from the list they considered relevant. 85.4% of people think that climate change is has already affected other places in the world and 83% think it has affected the UK. In terms of local impacts., 76% of respondents think that climate change has already impacted London; 54% think it has impacted their neighbourhood; 48% think it has impacted Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens and 45% think it has already impacted South Kensington.

57% of respondents stated that it had already impacted their wellbeing. Only 4% think it has not had an impact.

Q10: Briefly describe the impacts that you think have happened.

This open text question provided the opportunity for people to expand on their response to Q9 and was completed by 295 respondents.

A number of key themes emerged from the responses, which are set out in the facing page. Responses very much related to global impacts.

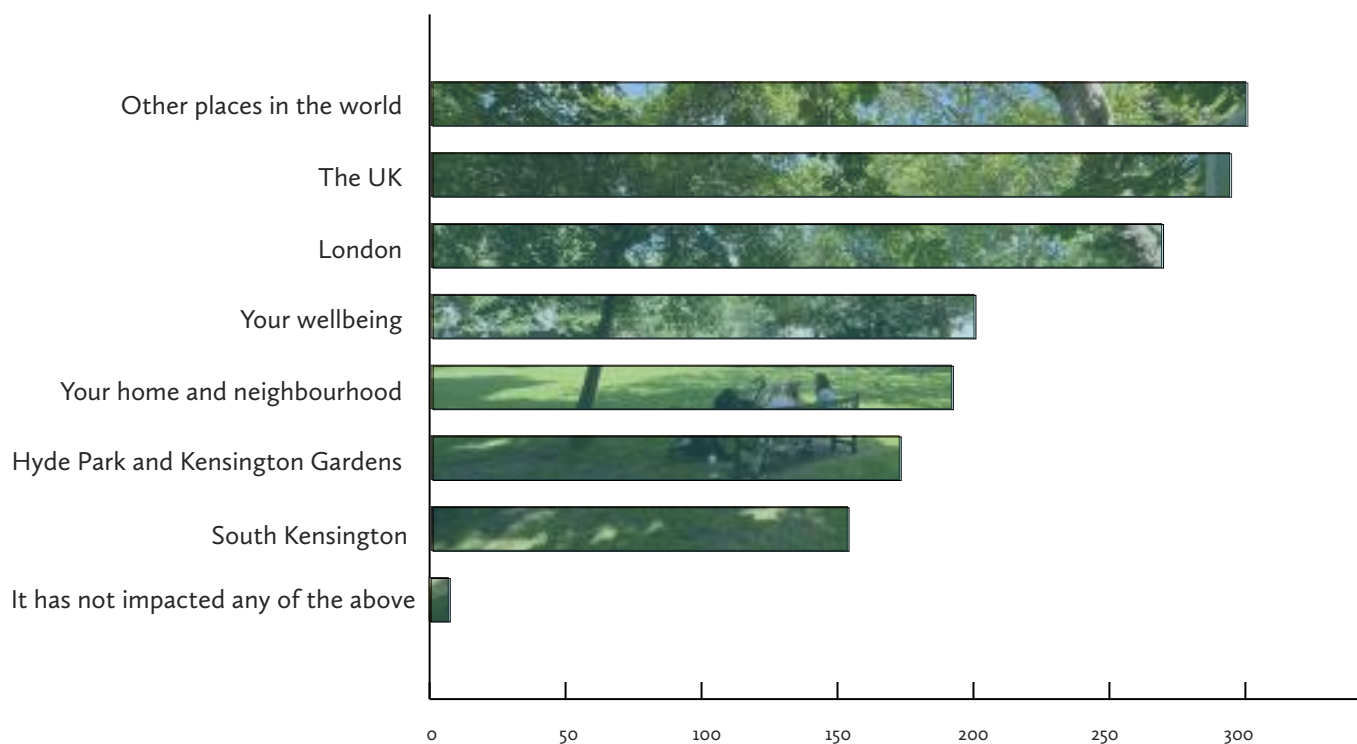


Fig 36 The impacts that people believe climate change has already had (number of people)

EXTREME WEATHER AND CLIMATE IMBALANCE

The greatest number of responses related to the significant impacts of extreme weather (91 references) including heatwaves (32), storms, sudden downpours and flooding (91), and extreme cold. Comments were both global and UK related.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND ANXIETY

Many people identified the anxiety that climate change was causing them personally, and the related mental health issues. Concern for loved ones and children's future lives was mentioned in particular.

BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

A dramatic drop in the biodiversity of animals, insects and plants was mentioned by a significant proportion of respondents. In many cases, this was directly linked to the extreme weather patterns and the loss of habitats resulting from this.

MALFUNCTIONING CITIES

Comments related to London highlighted that it may become too hot to use public transport or enjoy outdoor spaces. Civic buildings unable to successfully regulate interior temperatures may need to close to visitors / users.

AIR QUALITY AND POLLUTION

Increasing pollution and the related drop in air quality was mentioned by 53 people. Many of these identified the chain reaction of an increase in allergies and illness in human beings. These comments were more focused on London and other cities and many mentioned levels of traffic as a cause of this.

MASS MIGRATION

On a global scale, respondents highlighted that some areas will become inhospitable or uninhabitable before others, which will trigger mass migrations, possible to cities such as London.

FOOD SCARCITY AND FAMINE

Disrupted agricultural patterns, food scarcity and eventual famine was identified as an outcome from extreme weather patterns and biodiversity loss.

INTRACTABLE ISSUES

A number of people highlighted the complexity of the issues such as extreme heat leading to greater use of air conditioning systems in London, which will in turn exacerbate climate change and global warming through their production and operation.

Q11: Do you think declining nature/biodiversity has already impacted any of the following?

All 350 out of 350 people completed this multiple choice question. Participants were invited to choose any from the list they considered relevant.

83% of people think that climate change is has already affected other places in the world and 81% think it has affected the UK. In terms of local impacts., 65% of respondents think that climate change has already impacted London; 48% think it has impacted their neighbourhood; 48% think it has impacted Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens and 41% think it has already impacted South Kensington.

49% of respondents stated that it had already impacted their wellbeing. Only 5% think it has not had an impact.

Q12: Briefly describe the impacts that you think have happened.

This open text question provided the opportunity for people to expand on their response to Q11 and was completed by 255 respondents.

A number of key themes emerged from the responses, which are set out in the facing page. Responses very much related to global impacts and overlap with responses to Q10 on the previous spread.

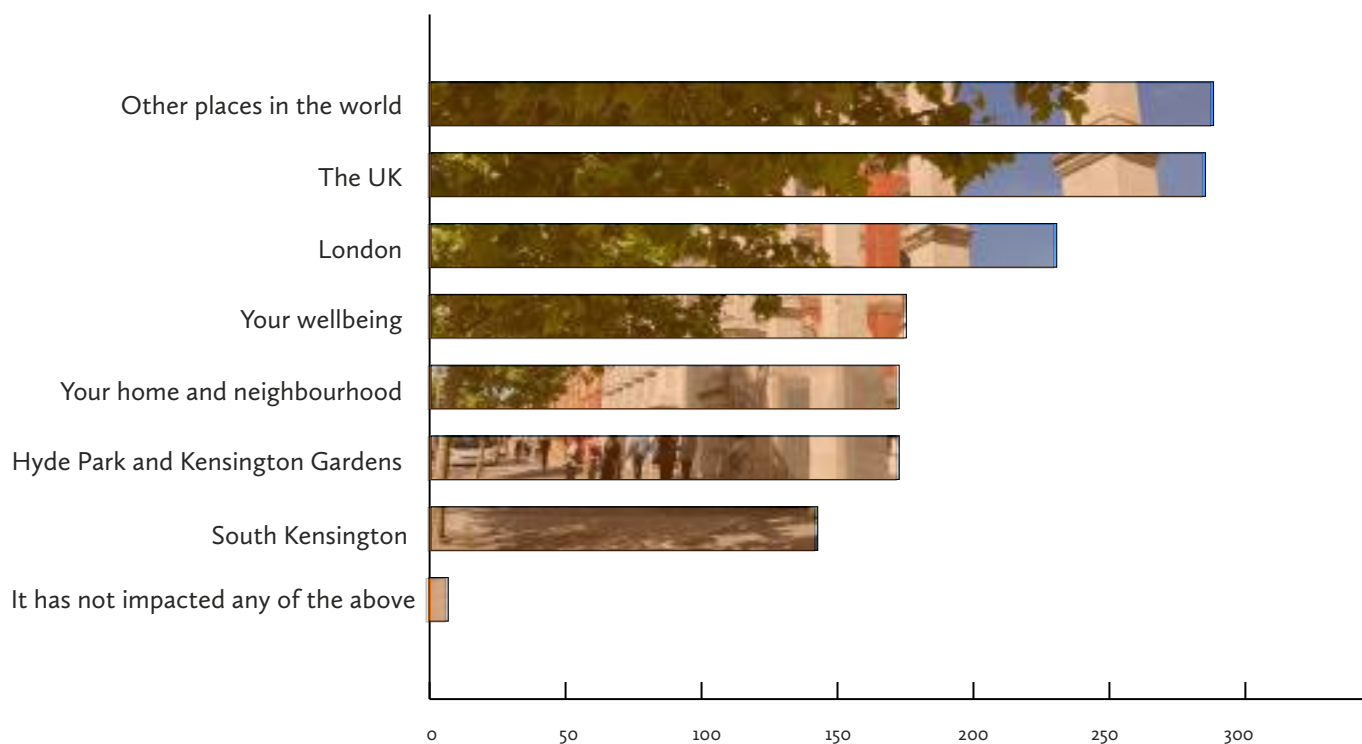


Fig 37 The impacts that people believe biodiversity loss has already had (number of people)

EXTREME WEATHER AND CLIMATE IMBALANCE

Many respondents mentioned the impact of climate change, including rising temperatures, more frequent extreme weather events, and their effects on both natural environments and human life.

FOOD SCARCITY AND FAMINE

The decline in pollinators and other crucial species was mentioned in relation to concerns about food production and security, with respondents worried about the future availability of nutritious food.

BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

Lots of responses unpacked different aspects of biodiversity decline, including the loss of insects, birds, and other wildlife. References tied this to habitat loss, pollution, and climate change, leading to disrupted ecosystems and the potential collapse of food chains.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND ANXIETY

Access to nature is linked to mental health, with the loss of biodiversity and green spaces seen as detrimental to personal and community well-being. The overarching worry here is about long-term impacts of biodiversity leading to feelings of anxiety, sadness, and concern about the future.

LOSS OF GREEN SPACES

Many participants highlighted the reduction in green spaces in South Kensington, alongside concerns about the lack of accessible natural areas for relaxation, mental health, and overall well-being.

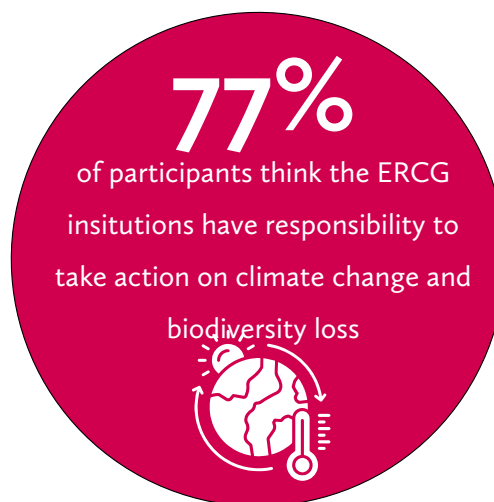
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Respondents frequently mentioned the negative impact of pollution, the replacement of natural areas with concrete, and the high proportion of private green spaces in the local area, which exacerbates mental health issues and limits local amenity value.

Q13: Who has a responsibility to take action on climate change and nature/biodiversity loss in South Kensington?

342 out of 350 people completed this multiple choice question. Participants were invited to choose any from the list they considered relevant. The overall profile of responses suggests that participants think many sections of society and individuals all have an important role to play in taking action on climate change.

92% of respondents think local governments should take action and 90% think central government needs to act. 79% think that individuals and local business need to change their behaviour and take action. 77% of respondents think that the local cultural and educational institutions must take action and 75% think that community and civic groups have an important role to play. 8.5% of people suggested other sources of action.



The most common 'other' response was 'everyone', which reflects the results of the bar chart below. Other common answers included global and big businesses, and particularly those involved in fossil fuel extraction and consumption. Three responses suggested that climate change is is not related to human activity or that environmental initiatives to address it are counterproductive.

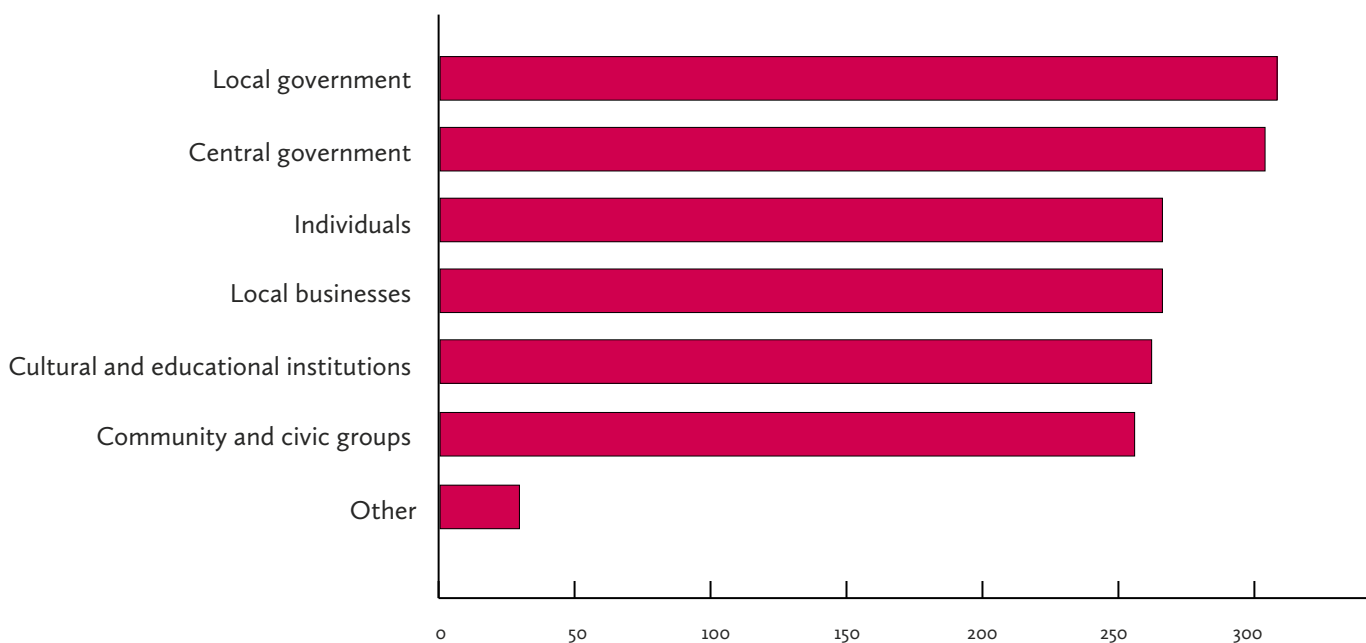


Fig 38 Who has responsibility for taking action on climate change

“ We are fully plant-based, plastic free, carbon neutral and human powered as an office, as well as funding replanting schemes, biodiversity schemes, and having our own nature garden and bee hotel! ”

Q14: Does your place of work/study/residence have any sustainability initiatives in place to reduce the impact of climate change, improve sustainability and increase nature/biodiversity?

All 350 out of 350 people completed this multiple choice question. 77% of participants were aware of sustainability initiatives taking place where they work, study or live. 8.6% stated that there were no sustainability initiatives in place and 14.3% were not sure if initiatives existed.

Q15: Briefly describe what initiatives are in place

239 people responded to this question, which provided an opportunity to expand on Q14. The key initiatives are set out to the right, with the number of references for each highlighted. The responses reflected a generally high level of awareness of sustainability initiatives. A few respondents said they were not aware of initiatives and a few others stated that they felt the initiatives did not go far enough, simply paid lip service or were misdirected.

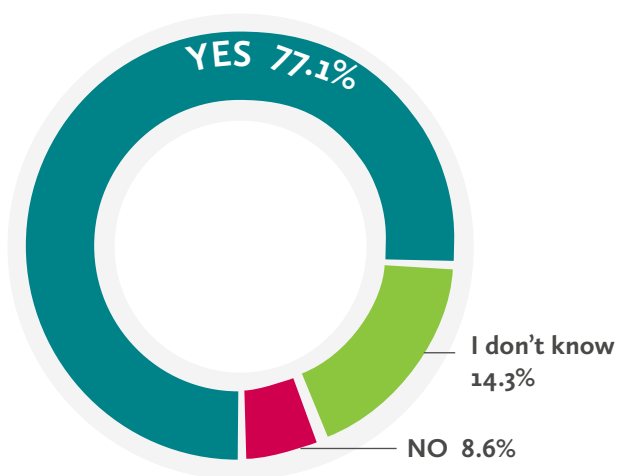


Fig 39 Participants' awareness of Institutions' sustainability initiatives

- 70** A sustainability department or committee with a net zero transition plan or strategy
- 66** Waste management, recycling and composting
- 32** Sustainable travel plan and related initiatives such as cycle to work scheme, bike storage, Dr Bike, business travel by train rather than plane
- 31** Decarbonisation - operational and construction (including renewable energy heat pumps and solar energy production)
- 31** Engagement with staff/public on behaviour change (turning lights off, using less water, using less paper, reusable cups, lowering thermostats) and an annual Green Week
- 30** Energy monitoring and efficiency initiatives such as roof insulation, double/triple glazing and movement sensitive lights and LED bulbs
- 29** Planting and biodiversity initiatives - pollinator friendly and climate resilient planting, wild areas, green roofs and beehives, local and communal food production
- 21** Sustainable procurement practices such as energy suppliers, a reduction in packaging, a shift to non-meat products and removal of disposable coffee cups and non-recyclable food containers, Consolidated last mile and bike powered deliveries
- 16** Circular economy principles: reduction and reuse of materials such as plastic and paper (a switch to digital formats) and reuse of exhibition materials.
- 12** Collaboration with other local organisations (including through SKZ+), school engagement programmes and funding others' research and greening initiatives
- 8** Research: such as collaboration across scientific departments at Imperial College, research into biodiversity loss at NHM at Urban Nature Project, green laboratory initiatives, Design Museum Future Observatory
- 4** Water efficiency, using less and increasing rain water storage
- 1** Water fountains to cool temperatures

Q16: Which of the following actions would you support to help improve South Kensington's nature and wildlife (biodiversity), improve sustainability and lessen the impacts of climate change?

341 out of 350 people completed this multiple choice question. Participants were invited to choose as many from the list as they considered relevant. The most popular initiatives are planting street trees (88.3% of respondents), creating pocket parks with seating and planting (85.6%), creating gardens and green space to soak up rain (82.7%), establishing more habitats (78.3%) and increasing the variety of planting in existing green areas (77.1%). The top 5 responses, therefore, relate to some form of planting and greening, which is a clear steer from participants.

Respondents were also invited to elaborate on their answer using the free text box and the key themes which emerged from this are:

TRAFFIC REDUCTION:

Respondents put a strong emphasis on removing or giving timed access to vehicles in the area, particularly on Exhibition Road and other key pedestrian routes, to improve safety, reduce pollution, and enhance the urban experience. Multiple suggestions were made to reduce the number of vehicles in certain areas, ban certain types of cars (e.g., sports cars, SUVs), and discourage private car use altogether. Proposals include enforcing speed limits, reducing vehicle idling, promoting alternative modes of transport and introducing a Low Traffic Neighbourhood.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND CYCLING:

Related to the point above, calls were made to improve public transportation infrastructure, make tube stations more accessible, and enhance cycle lanes. There is concern about the reduction in cycle parking locally and the need for more of this, both for private bikes and hire e-bikes.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND DRAINAGE

Many further recommendations were made to support rewilding, planting more trees, encouraging roof gardens, birdhouses, and Suggestions also include flood-proofing urban areas and making spaces more resilient to climate change.

COORDINATED WORKING

Many suggestions were made for institution initiatives that can be spread across the area, including proposals for shared heat networks, solar panel installations, improving drainage systems, moving toward plant-based menus in catering. There is also a call for more recycling initiatives and reducing single-use plastics in organisations

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND AWARENESS:

Emphasis was placed on the need for education and awareness initiatives, particularly related to environmental issues and sustainable living practices.

REGULATORY AND POLICY CHANGES:

Some comments suggest more significant policy interventions like renationalising water companies and enforcing stronger regulations on companies.

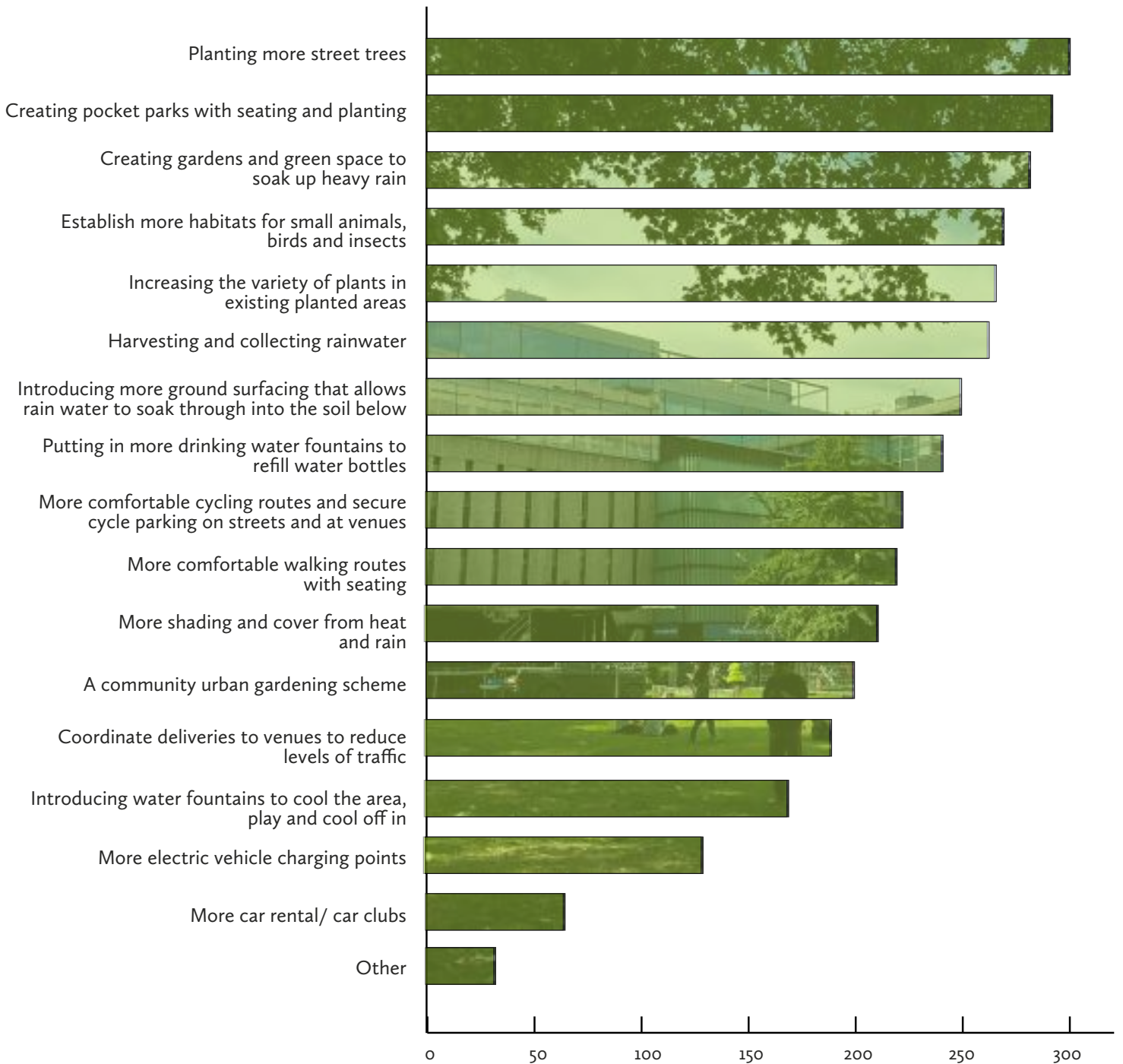


Fig 40 The initiatives that people would most like to see in the area to address the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss

Q17: Are there any areas, spaces or places in South Kensington where you think improvements could be made to introduce more greening, planting and seating?

224 out of 350 people completed this open text question to identify where in the area they would prioritise for improvements. The areas mentioned by far the most were Exhibition Road, South Kensington Tube Station and Thurloe Street and Cromwell Road. Other areas also featured and they are highlighted to the right, along with any specific suggestions that were made.

Places with a few references are set out below.

- 3 Brompton Road
- 3 Building roofs and walls
- 2 Walton Street
- 2 Kensington High Street
- 1 Baden Powell House area
- 1 Yalta Gardens
- 1 Roland Gardens
- 1 Draycott Avenue

91 EXHIBITION ROAD

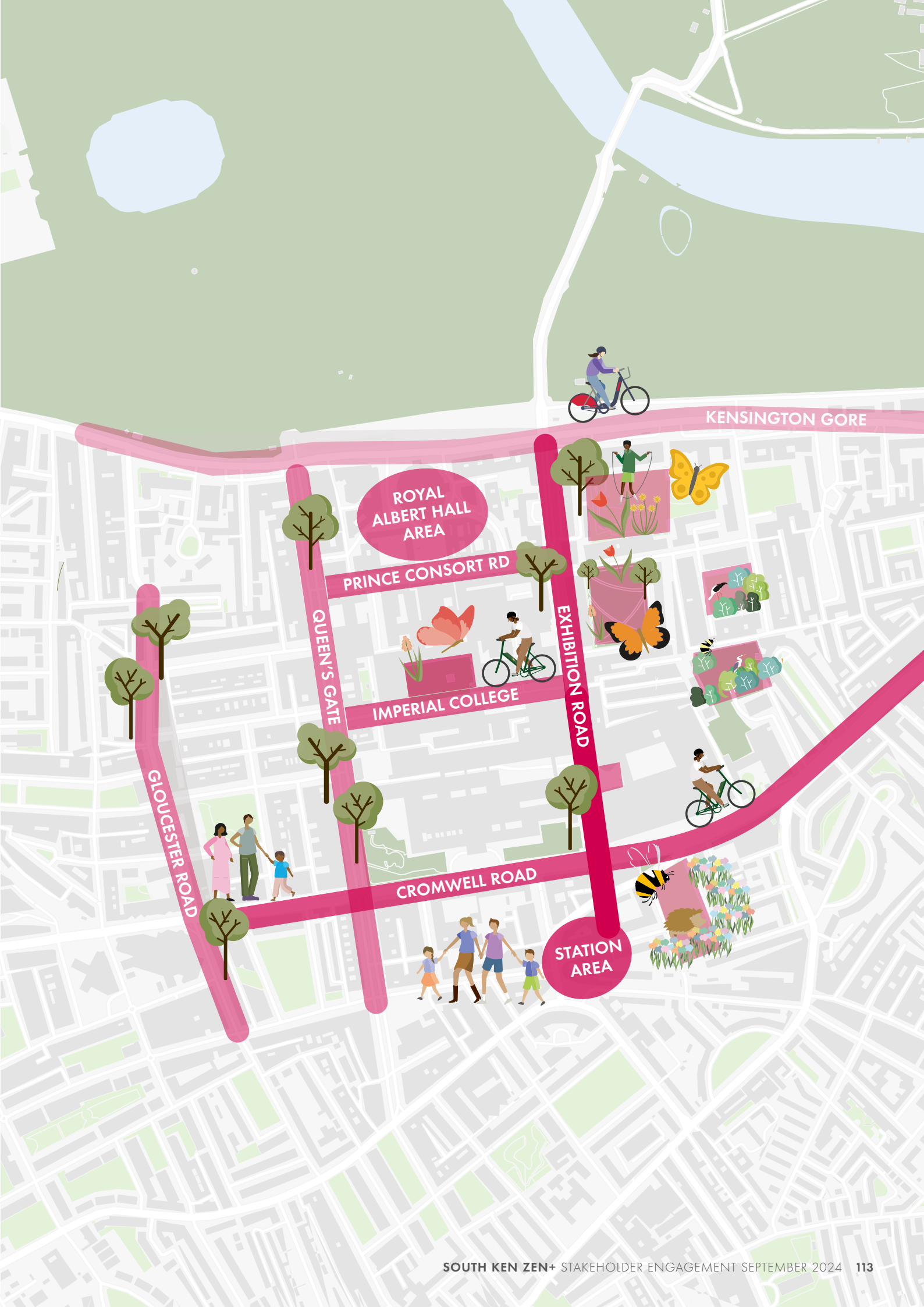
91 people specifically mentioned Exhibition Road. People feel that the hard landscaping on Exhibition Road make it feel concrete, grey and barren and the levels of traffic heavily compromise the environment and safety of the area. Suggestions, in order of preference, are set out below.

A few people said the whole of the street needs addressing, two people specifically felt the northern part should be the focus and 9 people through the southern section should be the focus.

- 27 More green spaces/pocket parks and rain gardens with seating
- 15 Tree planting for greenery and shading
- 14 Remove or reduce cars on all or part of it
- 6 The hard landscaping and materials make it feel 'concreted', grey and barren
- 3 More diverse, resilient and pollinator planting
- 3 Reduce car parking to aid greening
- 3 Create a continuous green connection along the street to Hyde Park (and south to the Thames
- 2 Ivy and pollution absorbers to be wrapped around the tall light poles and other greening up the central corridor
- 1 Removable shelters to protect people queuing
- 1 Extend street cafés further up Exhibition Road
- 1 More cycle friendly routes and cycle parking



Fig 41 The areas in South Kensington that people think can best accommodate interventions



KENSINGTON GORE

ROYAL ALBERT HALL AREA

PRINCE CONSORT RD

QUEEN'S GATE

IMPERIAL COLLEGE

EXHIBITION ROAD

GLoucester ROAD

CROMWELL ROAD

STATION AREA

45 SOUTH KENSINGTON TUBE STATION AND THURLOE STREET

41 people specifically mentioned South Kensington Tube Station. Many highlighted the need for more plants, trees, and better public spaces around the station, as well as making an accessible, step free route from the station to the museums.

- 12 Make it greener with planting
- 3 Tree planting
- 2 More permeable surfaces
- 6 More seating
- 2 Accessible and step free

33 CROMWELL ROAD

33 people specifically mentioned Cromwell Road as a focus for improvements that mostly proposed greening and forms of traffic management. References are set out below.

- 5 Planting and greening
- 2 A tree planting such as a lined central reservation
- 3 Address noise and pollution from vehicles
- 3 Reduce traffic levels, such as by reducing one lane in each direction
- 3 Improve movement for cyclists and pedestrians with a bridge suggested over Cromwell Road
- 2 Move Cromwell Road underground and plant above it

8 RAH AND PRINCE CONSORT ROAD

8 people mentioned the Royal Albert Hall and Prince Consort Road. These generally suggested greening and tree planting opportunities to take advantage of the fact the the street is not heavily trafficked. Increasing seating levels was also mentioned.

7 QUEENS GATE

7 people referenced Queen's Gate in their comments. It was highlighted as a good example of a tree lined street that should be rolled out to other local streets. The pavements were identified as being very wide, with potential for these to accommodate more trees and seating. Some suggested the street could accommodate more traffic, should vehicles be reduced on Exhibition Road.

7 GLOUCESTER ROAD

7 people mentioned Gloucester Road with suggestion relating to improvements around the station area such as tree planting and seating, general greening and increasing space and priority for pedestrians and cyclists.

7 V&A MUSEUM

7 people specifically mentioned the V&A, with suggestions including adjustments such as tree planting within the courtyard on Exhibition Road to help cool the space in hot weather.

6 IMPERIAL COLLEGE CAMPUS

6 people mentioned Imperial College Campus and the need for greening. Imperial College Road was specifically mentioned as accommodating lots of car parking on a very wide road and the potential to rework this for greening.

5 EXISTING PARKS

Existing parks and spaces were identified as having potential to diversify planting to increase biodiversity, such as at Princes Garden. Some suggested the communal private gardens could be open to the public for particular times of day or on particular weekends of the year, to increase access to green space.

4 KENSINGTON GORE

4 people mentioned Kensington Gore, with the focus being on narrowing road widths to limit traffic and using this space for tree planting and greening.

Q18: Are there any other ways in which you think that South Kensington can become more climate ready and support nature/biodiversity? If so, please briefly describe them

182 out of 350 people completed this open text question. Several themes emerge from the comments, which are ordered here by the number of times they were mentioned.

TRAFFIC REDUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Many comments emphasise the need to reduce the number of cars, including calls for more pedestrianised streets, protected bike lanes, better public transport access, and policies to deprioritise private vehicle use in favor of walking, cycling, and public transport.

URBAN GREENING

Numerous responses highlight the importance of planting more trees, creating green roofs, vertical gardens, and adding greenery throughout the area, particularly in and around streets, public spaces, and along roads.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CARBON REDUCTION

There is a strong focus on promoting renewable energy sources like solar panels, installing sustainable urban drainage systems, and reducing carbon emissions through low-carbon heating solutions and energy-efficient practices.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Several comments stress the need for community involvement, education on sustainability, and initiatives that empower local residents and businesses to contribute to environmental goals.

WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY SUPPORT

Suggestions include rewilding areas, creating wildlife corridors, planting pollinator friendly plant species, and providing habitats such as bee hotels and bird boxes.

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

Reducing pollution, particularly from vehicles, is another recurrent theme. Suggestions include reducing idling, increasing the use of electric vehicles, and improving air circulation.

WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING

Some respondents mention the importance of better waste management practices, including increased recycling points on the street, reducing litter at institutions, and establishing proper disposal methods.

FLOOD RESILIENCE AND DRAINAGE

A few comments focus on improving the area's resilience to flooding through measures like permeable paving, sustainable drainage, and flood-proofing infrastructure.

10 GREAT EXHIBITION ROAD FESTIVAL

10.1 Overview

The Great Exhibition Road Festival (GERF) took place on the weekend of June 15 and 16 2024 and was open from midday to 6pm on each day. Discover South Kensington had a stall at the festival and there was also a dedicated South Ken ZEN+ tent, raising the profile of the project, providing family activities and asking for people's views and input to the project. We engaged with an estimated 600+ people over the two days.



10.2 Methodology

The SKZ+ tent was designed to be colourful, eye-catching and welcoming, to encourage as many people as possible of all ages to engage with the topic and activities. The tent had large exhibition boards giving an overview of the project, an 'A' board in front of the tent and decoration, tables and seating within the tent.

A range of feedback options were provided at the event, including:

1. **Big idea bunting**, which invited people to jot down their big ideas, wishes for the area or project suggestions on colourful triangular cards which could then be pegged to string suspended across the roof of the tent. In total, 67 pieces of big idea bunting were written, sketched or decorated.
2. **Exhibition boards** hanging from a clothes rail showcasing good examples of initiatives to make places more climate ready and biodiverse from London, the UK and Europe. Visitors were invited to vote for the examples they felt could best be adopted in South Kensington. There were 214 sticky dots at the end of the two days, voting on the 8 project precedents.



3. **Drawing opportunities** for young visitors, to draw up and colour their ideal future Exhibition Road, using wire framed hand drawings prepared by the team as the base. These provided an opportunity for team members to chat with parents whilst children were happily engaged, as well as the children setting out their visions for the future. We had 50+ drawings completed at the event, with some of these taken home to pin on the wall!
4. Encouragement by team members for visitors to complete the **online survey**, using QR codes on the exhibition materials. It is not possible to pinpoint online surveys completed as a direct result of the festival.

In addition to the engagement activities and feedback options, the team had many interesting and fruitful conversations with people who visited the tent and jotted these ideas down.

The team gave out small business cards that included the QR code for the online survey and a brief overview of the project. These each had a flower or butterfly shaped wild flower seed paper attached and instructions for planting these were included on the card.

Lastly, the team also gave out postcards about the project, with links to the Discover South Kensington site and the online survey.

600+

people visited the stall



67 big ideas
bunting pieces



214

dots voting for good
practice precedents



200

seed papers
given to visitors



50+

drawings of
Exhibition Road by
young visitors

Fig 42 Key statistics for GERF







10.3 Big idea bunting

At the festival, visitors were invited to complete a Big Idea Bunting triangle to peg to the line in the tent. Contributions could be short statements, detailed project ideas or sketches illustrating their idea and we had a mixture of all three in the 67 pieces that were completed.

A number of themes emerged from the bunting suggestions, which were made by people of all ages. These are set out below:

GREENING AND TREE PLANTING

- Increase the number of trees in the area and focus tree planting on Exhibition Road
- Establish green walls and roofs, such as on the side of the Natural History Museum
- Consider which trees are effective at absorbing pollution and improve air quality
- Establish allotments /community gardens for people
- Establish priority areas for biodiversity

BIODIVERSITY MEASURES

- Establish fruiting trees and pollinator friendly planting
- Establish flower gardens in appropriate spots for pollinators and pleasure

REDUCING TRAFFIC AND ITS IMPACTS

- Make Exhibition Road traffic-free
- Establish smaller no vehicle zones (as at Bute Street)
- Prioritise cycling infrastructure and safety to encourage a switch from cars to bikes
- Focus on traffic reduction to improve air quality

IMPROVE COMFORT LEVELS FOR PEOPLE

- Add much more seating, that is sustainable and with materials that will stay cool in hot weather
- Add water fountains and ponds to the local area
- Improve signage to green spaces and wayfinding
- Adding play spaces for children
- Open up private communal gardens at certain times to the public
- Extend the activated street space northwards towards Hyde Park
- Provide places to have picnics
- Provide shady space for homeless people

CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- Respond to future flash floods and heatwaves
- Introduce more permeable surfaces in the area
- Provide seasonal shelter, that is removable
- Deculvert London's secret rivers

COMMUNICATION

- Raise awareness of the issues locally using plain English, so everyone can be included
- 'Nudge' people with legislative and financial incentives to make the right choices
- Understand the political agenda and how that impacts people's views
- Continue to speak with young people and get their ideas

ENERGY AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

- Put solar panels on nearby apartments
- Use pedestrian movement in high footfall areas to generate energy with kinetic paving
- Add recycling bins for the public to use throughout the neighbourhood, especially on Exhibition Road
- Use recycled 'grey' water, where possible



“I want more fresh air!”

“By providing green spaces, we can provide joy, relaxation and restore the human battery!”

“Let’s use pedestrian movement to supply alternative energy in the area!”

“Recycle all the cars to books!”



* Larger versions of the good practice project examples can be found in the appendix

10.4 Good practice examples

The tent showcased nine examples of climate resilience and biodiversity projects from elsewhere in London, the UK and Europe and visitors were invited to vote with stickers on which they think can work well in South Kensington.

The most popular example by some way was the introduction of permeable surfaces throughout the neighbourhood, as has been done successfully in White City, Tottenham and Barcelona. This includes permeable hard standing as well as areas of planting, with drainage channels.

Joint second place was taken by bee friendly bus stops, which have wildflowers and sedum planted on bus shelter roofs (along with a PV panel for energy generation); and rain gardens with play, as seen in Leytonstone. These include turning paved area into permeable, planted areas which are lower than surrounding hard surfacing, encouraging run off. These can incorporate incidental play elements and stepping stone paths.

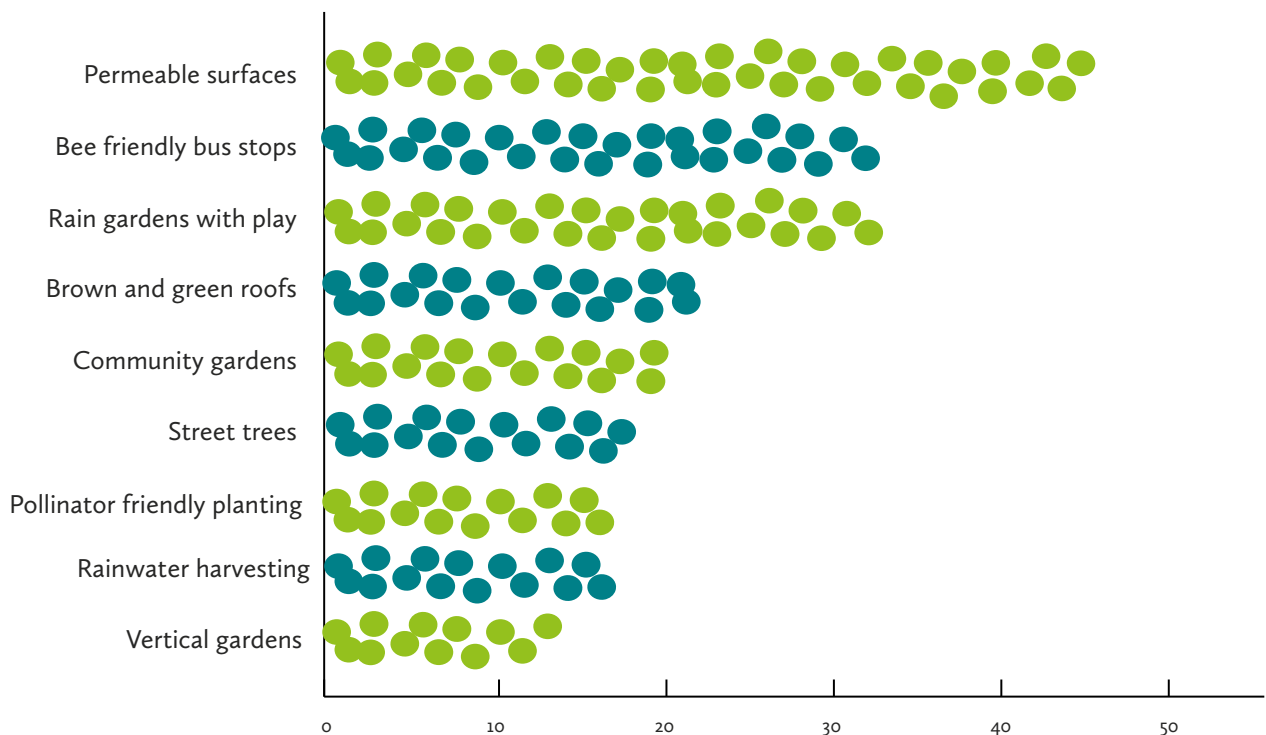


Fig 43 The project examples that people think can work best in South Kensington

PERMEABLE SURFACES



WHAT? Permeable paving surfaces which absorb rainwater and direct water to planted basins
WHERE? Passeig de Sant Joan, Barcelona; Bridget Joyce Square, White City, White Hart Lane, Tottenham
BENEFITS? Reduction in local flood risk & water pollution, increased biodiversity
ANYTHING ELSE? Integrated play elements which allow users to interact with area and shaded benches allow for rest and relaxation

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

BEE BUS STOP



WHAT? Clear Channel are installing green roofs onto existing bus stops
WHERE? Across the UK
BENEFITS? The roofs support bees and pollinators by mixing 13 different native wildflowers and 4 sedum species
ANYTHING ELSE? They also absorb rainwater which falls on the roof, stopping it from falling onto the road below. They are low maintenance

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

RAIN GARDENS with PLAY



WHAT? Removal of 7 parking spaces to introduce a pocket park
WHERE? Leytonstone, London
BENEFITS? Incorporates a garden which helps absorb rainwater and provides a path for play in a once under-utilised area
ANYTHING ELSE? The pocket park is community run and supported by the Council

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

BROWN & GREEN ROOFS



WHAT? Dryflower grassland on the roof
WHERE? Laban Dance Centre, Chelsea College of Arts and Science Museum, London
BENEFITS? Provides habitat space for local species, improved urban biodiversity, nature corridors
ANYTHING ELSE? Can use construction waste for rubble and strengthens ecosystems

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

COMMUNITY GARDENS



WHAT? Using previously unused small plots of land for community gardens and kitchen gardens, management of pocket parks
WHERE? Kensington and Hackney, London; Newham, London; Milton Keynes
BENEFITS? Promoting biodiversity, education, creation of a social element for wellbeing
ANYTHING ELSE? Helps to maintain greening and gardens at a lower cost

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

STREET TREES



WHAT? Trees in big pots and planters
WHERE? Leiden University, High Street Kensington, Museum Quarter Vienna
BENEFITS? Increased greenery, new habitats for birds and insects, shading, no need to dig into the ground
ANYTHING ELSE? In the Museum Quarter in Vienna, the trees are still growing like they would in a plant nursery. The trees will eventually be planted either in the square or elsewhere, once they are big enough

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

POLLINATOR FRIENDLY PLANTING



WHAT? Sewing wild flower seeds and reducing mowing of lawns
WHERE? Dublin, Ireland; Dessau, Germany; Barcelona, Spain
BENEFITS? Restoration of natural areas, reduction in city pollution, increased biodiversity
ANYTHING ELSE? Overall the process increases the resilience of local ecosystems

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

RAINWATER HARVESTING

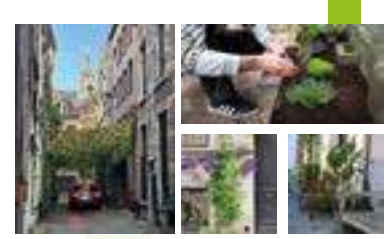


WHAT? Capturing rainwater and using for plant watering, irrigation, toilet flushing
WHERE? Schwalbe Offices, Reichshof, Germany; City Hall, London; METAFORM, Luxembourg City
BENEFITS? Conserving groundwater, saving energy, nourishing plants, reducing run-off
ANYTHING ELSE? Lower reliance on mains water supplies

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

VERTICAL GARDENS



WHAT? Gardens against the side of buildings or up vertical structures
WHERE? Antwerp, Belgium
BENEFITS? Introduces greenery in constrained areas by removing only a small portion of the footway or carriage way and can provide shade
ANYTHING ELSE? Climbing plants provide greenery and flowering climbers provide a useful pollinator for insects

ADD A STICKER BELOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS?

10.5 Imagine your dream Exhibition Road



A green central reservation and a fountain in the foreground. Flowering plants are seen across Exhibition Road.



A child skateboarding down the road. Bushes and trees line the street and buildings. There are window boxes with flowers on the buildings.



Lots of animals and insects roam around in the street and sky



A home for insects



Green walls sit alongside a garden for the people and insects; olive trees, herb gardens, fruit trees and a medicine garden are there for visitors to enjoy



Flags adorn the lampposts in the centre of the road, and a water feature stands at the top of Exhibition Road.



Raised beds for plants and flowers that grow at the base of trees



A colourful Exhibition Road with celebratory flowers



Planting around trees, pocket gardens, a fountain and climbing plants up the lamposts



Buses travel up Exhibition road, green edges and flowering trees also line the street



Green pockets with interwoven paths



A sunny and green landscape where gardens and a focal tree are the focus



This drawing imagines exhibition road with a variety of trees and flowering plants



Bikes, a pond and trees in the centre of the Road is what this young artist imagined



This artist imagined lots of planters along the street planted with green bushes



Trees in the centre of the road create an urban forest



Green Kensington shows off its green walls and expansive tree canopy



Flowers beds and lots of trees are part of this imagining of Exhibition Road



A garden to ride your scooter and enjoy the green surroundings



A world where all lifefoms are welcomed



Flowers, and trees running down the centre of Exhibition Road



Greenery lines the street where pedestrians walk easily and happily



Colourful trees and a place full of wildlife



A celebratory scene where fruit trees, flowers and flags create a world-class welcome

Key ideas from our younger visitors

Whilst our younger visitors enjoyed the colouring in, we took the opportunity to ask them what they loved when they were out and about, and directed them to draw these elements on their colouring pages. There were a few reoccurring themes which appears:

1. Places to scoot

Many young children enjoyed being out on their scooters. They liked places which allowed them to do this more freely. Smooth surfaces and not much traffic were key to this. Many scooted to school, but also enjoyed scooting at the weekend.

2. Water features

The weather was quite warm on the days we were at GERF, and lots of children drew water features on their colouring pages. Playable water features are always a huge hit with children and families, providing a fun way to cool off in the summer months when you are in the city.

3. Fruits and flowers

Trees with fruits on them and colour flowers featured heavily in drawings. Not only are they nice to look at, but these types of flowering and fruiting plants are excellent pollinators, and attract a wide range of insects and animals, increasing biodiversity.



How would you make Rakhitien Road greener?

11 EXPLORATORY SESSIONS

11.1 Overview

The exploratory sessions were intended for residents, students, employees and other interested individuals to join the project facilitators in smaller groups to explore how climate change and biodiversity loss was and may impact the South Kensington Area. The sessions also allowed participants to engage in a more detail discussion about what changes they would like to see in South Kensington to make the area more climate resilient and adaptable. The sessions were advertised on the flyer that went out to 9,000 residents, was included in the South Ken Zen+ monthly newsletter, and was shared out by DSK partner institutions to their staff and student networks.

11.2 Methodology


One session for Resident Association chairs was held at the Royal Geographical Institute, whilst two further sessions were held online.

The sessions began with an introductory presentation which focused on:

- Giving an overview of what a climate resilient and biodiverse place looked like
- What impact climate resilient interventions could have on South Kensington
- Examples of climate and biodiversity resilience interventions that are happening elsewhere
- A look at how South Kensington is adapting to climate change


Following this, a facilitated discussion with leading questions helped to guide conversation and dive further into questions, considerations and ideas.

- 1 Introduction and purpose of the project
- 2 What difference can a climate change-ready environment make?
- 3 Ideas from other places
- 4 Your ideas




NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM GARDEN

WHAT	Urban Nature Project - transformed five acre gardens at the Natural History Museum
WHERE	Natural History Museum
BENEFITS	A place to explore, reflect and connect with nature. Ponds, wilded areas, walkways, benches
ANYTHING ELSE?	The garden will feature a network of sensors to collect environmental data to become a studied urban site that can be a testbed for conservation science innovation
WHERE ELSE IN SOUTH KEN?	Elements of the garden such as the wild areas and places to eat lunch could be ideas for other gardens




Credit: Natural History Museum Trustee

Do you feel like the area caters for your needs in terms of available and accessible green spaces?



What are the most important changes to make to the outdoor spaces to make them more climate change ready and resilient?

Are there any specific places where you would like to see these changes?



11.3 Discussion questions

The neighbourhood and climate change

1. What do you associate with South Kensington in terms of the environment?
2. Do you feel like the area caters for your needs in terms of available and accessible green spaces?
3. Do you think climate change is affecting the area?
4. If yes, how do you think it is affecting the area?
5. Does it affect you?

Ideas and priorities

1. What are the most important changes to make to the outdoor spaces to make them more climate change ready and resilient?
2. Are there any particular locations or initiatives where you think these could be implemented?
3. Specifically on Exhibition Road, are there any change that you would like to see happen?
4. Have you seen any greening initiatives elsewhere that you think would work well in your local area?

Challenges and barriers

1. What do you think the key challenges will be in making any climate related investment in South Kensington?
2. Do you have any thoughts on overcoming these?
3. Are there any issues that you are grappling with that the project could help inform or address?

11.4 Places mentioned during the Exploratory Sessions

KENSINGTON GARDENS

These large parks are appreciated as nearby green spaces, but there is a desire for more accessible green areas within South Kensington itself for playing and relaxing.

HYDE PARK

Described as cluttered, noisy, and lacking greenery. Suggestions include adding more trees, planters, and pedestrianizing parts of it to improve the visitor experience.

Opportunities for greening mentioned, particularly in underutilised spaces such as road dividers and rooftops.

Noted for being busy and lacking in tree cover, with suggestions for adding greenery and improving pedestrian routes.

Discussed in terms of biodiversity and challenges with maintenance, particularly regarding issues with the nearby Lycée and concerns about the impact of construction.

Praised for recent improvements that have made it a more pleasant urban environment. It serves as a positive example of what could be achieved in other areas.

The area around the station is seen as hectic and disconnected. There's a desire for more greenery and better public spaces to improve the experience for those commuting through or visiting the area.





11.5 Key themes from exploratory sessions



GREEN SPACES AND BIODIVERSITY

The importance of accessible green spaces is highlighted, with comments on the privatisation of existing green spaces. However, it was acknowledged that these spaces were good for residents and for biodiversity. There's a call for more pocket parks, street greening, rain gardens, and living walls to enhance biodiversity, whilst making the area more pleasant for residents and visitors. Specific examples include the lack of greenery on Exhibition Road and suggestions to introduce more trees and plants in the area, by removing some of the hard landscaping. Queen Street car park and Gloucester Road Sainsbury's site were mentioned as areas where greenery could be incorporated into new developments using S106/CIL contributions.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SPACES

The need for more spaces where people can socialize and engage with the community, particularly for families who may not have time to visit larger parks, but want spaces on the way to school. There is also mention of the social role of green spaces, and the importance of making them more inviting and accessible.



CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

Balancing the preservation of heritage buildings with the need for modern, sustainable interventions. ESSA have created a renovation design guide for residents under three different housing typologies that will help homeowners navigate renovations to their historic properties. There was emphasis on the importance of maintaining historical character while adapting to contemporary needs. There was some concern about the impact of new developments on existing green spaces, and so it was highlighted that green space should be protected and more offered for new residential development.





CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

There was discussion on how climate change is affecting the area, with references to high temperatures in older buildings and the need for retrofitting to make them more resilient for future comfort and use. Issues with water runoff and flooding, particularly in relation to the 19th-century buildings, and the need for permeable paving and other sustainable infrastructure.



URBAN DESIGN AND PUBLIC REALM

There were several comments on the cluttered and congested nature of certain streets, such as Exhibition Road, and the desire to create more cohesive and attractive public spaces.

The discussion includes the idea of enhancing the area's aesthetic with planters, benches, and pedestrian-friendly designs that integrate more greenery.



TRAFFIC AND CARS

A number of people had concerns about the overwhelming number of cars, especially in areas like Exhibition Road, where speeding, noise pollution, and safety are significant issues for an area which sees lots of visitors and groups.

Suggestions for reducing car use, such as pedestrianising certain streets, such as Bute Street, implementing playing-out schemes at the weekend or at certain times during the day, and improving pedestrian safety through putting in more crossings with integrated greening.



