

5.15 Kings Cross

Brief description

The majority of the area to the south of Kings Cross mainline station is designated as Conservation Area, and is either within Kings Cross St Pancras Conservation Area or Bloomsbury Conservation Area. A small area is included within neither and that is therefore considered within this character study. This area is defined by Euston Road to the north, Grays Inn Road to the east, Woburn Place to the west and Tavistock Place / Sidmouth Street to the south.

The area is diverse with the busy Euston Road to the north lined by offices, hotels, shops and cafes and the streets behind offering a mix of residential and employment functions. There are numerous small hotels within the area. The wider area is laid out as a grid of streets with buildings generally fronting directly onto them. A number of squares including Cartwright Gardens, Regent Square and Corams Fields provide breathing space.

The Brunswick Centre to the south and Marchmont Street provide local facilities.

The form of development is mixed in both scale and architecture and ranges from tight terraces of Victorian homes to large and impressive mansion blocks. A number of post war estates contrast with the prevailing context and disrupt the connected street pattern and frontage condition.



Figure 5.58: Kings Cross Context Analysis



Figure 5.59: Kings Cross Historic Plan 1862

Historical development

Plans dating from 1746 show the Kings Cross area as open fields however by the mid 19th Century the area had been comprehensively developed with a grid of streets across the area and Grays Inn Road and Euston Road providing the main routes. Corams Fields was the site of the Foundlings Hospital and other squares including Cartwright Gardens and Regent Square are evident in the street pattern. Many of the blocks are very small with tight alleys between them indicating that these may have been developed as lower quality housing to serve the nearby stations.



Figure 5.60: Kings Cross Historic Plan 1890

The historic layout is largely in place today though some blocks notably on Harrison and Cromer Street, have been redeveloped in the post war period.

Public transport accessibility

The area has good public transport accessibility and is PTAL 6a.

Socio-economic issues

The area ranks as:

- Within the 10-20% most deprived areas in respect of Index of Multiple Deprivation (part);
- Within the 10% most deprived in respect of income deprivation (parts, other areas 10-20%); and
- Within the 10-30% most deprived in respect of employment deprivation and health and disability deprivation.

Existing character

The wider area provides a robust historic character of street blocks and city squares. This area contrasts with that context by breaking the regular street pattern and aligning buildings away from the streets so that they look over internal spaces. The area provides a mix of early 20th Century blocks, post-war housing estates and Victorian mansion blocks.

Some of the post-war blocks are particularly insensitively sited with the 12 storey Glynde Reach immediately adjacent to the modest Holy Cross Church. This block in common with other post-war blocks is concrete panel and render construction. This contrast with older buildings in the area which are constructed in brick.

Identity

Two spaces, Cartwright Gardens and Regent Square Gardens provide interest within the block structure and aid legibility.



Figure 5.61: Kings Cross Character Areas

Retaining character

The mansion blocks and early 20th Century estates provide robust building forms that are in single ownership. This allows control and management of the building fabric and ensures that a consistent approach can be taken to maintenance of the common areas and to door and window furniture essential to retaining their character.

Opportunities for change

There is potential to remodel some estates to create a better connected area and one that is more sympathetic to Regent Square and the adjacent Conservation Areas.



From top left, clockwise:

Post-war blocks on the Cromer Street Estate; Regent Square Gardens; Euston Road; Sidmouth Mews on Harrington Street and Victorian mansion blocks.

KX1 - Tavistock Place Mansions



Typology: VICTORIAN MANSION BLOCKS

Building type / age	Victorian mansion blocks
Scale and massing	Substantial 5 storey blocks with additional set back storey
Street character / building interface	Blocks front directly onto the surrounding streets creating an urban context
Interface with surrounding area	Well connected with wider street network
Public realm character	Metal railing defines the back of footway and public realm is limited to paved footways
Opportunity for improvements	LOW: May be potential for street tree planting

KX2 - Hastings Street Mansions



Typology: VICTORIAN MANSION BLOCKS

Building type / age	Victorian mansion blocks
Scale and massing	Substantial 5 storey blocks with additional set back storey
Street character / building interface	Blocks front directly onto the surrounding streets creating an urban context
Interface with surrounding area	Well connected with wider street network
Public realm character	Metal railing defines the back of footway and footways are generally narrow. Character of the area is enhanced through street trees
Opportunity for improvements	LOW: Street trees important to character of streets and should be retained



KX3 - Euston Road Corridor



Typology: HIGH STREETS

Building type / age	Large office, hotel and institutional buildings
Scale and massing	Typically 8-10 storey large footprint buildings
Street character / building interface	Active ground floors fronting the main street with buildings directly at back of footway
Interface with surrounding area	Well connected with wider street network
Public realm character	Streetscape is dominated by the busy highway and trees in the wide footways are important in calming the oppressiveness of the heavy traffic flows
Opportunity for improvements	ALREADY HAPPENING: A number of plots in this area are being refurbished or redeveloped

KX4 - Cromer Street Buildings



Typology: EARLY 20TH CENTURY APARTMENT BLOCKS

Building type / age	Early 20th Century flatted residential blocks. Local shops and businesses on some ground floors on Cromer Street
Scale and massing	4-5 storey blocks with additional upper floor set-back
Street character / building interface	Blocks aligned north-south and provide active frontage to Cromer Street and frontage to narrow side streets
Interface with surrounding area	Well connected with wider street network
Public realm character	Parts of this area benefit from a high quality public realm enhancement using a mix of natural stone flags and setts. Mature tree enhance the setting
Opportunity for improvements	LOW: Public realm enhancements could be extended to cover a wider area



KX5 - Cromer Street Estate

Typology: POST-WAR ESTATES - MEDIUM/HIGH RISE

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Building type / age	Post-war residential flatted estate with blocks composed of pre-fabricated concrete elements
Scale and massing	Typically 6 storey blocks aligned north south
Street character / building interface	Blocks are aligned north-south and front onto landscaped courtyards. Gable ends are presented to the street
Interface with surrounding area	Street network is discontinuous and the quality of the urban form is notably poorer than in the wider area
Public realm character	Investment in the public realm enhances the setting of the blocks and includes boundary railings and landscaping. Mature trees enhance the setting
Opportunity for improvements	MEDIUM: There may be potential to address urban design weaknesses

KX6 - Harrison Street Estates

Typology: POST-WAR ESTATES - MEDIUM/HIGH RISE



Building type / age	Post-war residential flatted estates, some constructed in brick others of pre-fabricated concrete elements
Scale and massing	4-6 storey blocks
Street character / building interface	Blocks generally front onto the street and overlook Regent Square Garden but area is fragmented
Interface with surrounding area	Street network is discontinuous and the quality of the urban form is notably poorer than in the wider area
Public realm character	Generally boundary of blocks defined by railings but landscape varies from unusable grass strips to well maintained hedges. Regent Square Gardens is an asset for the area and includes many mature London Plane trees
Opportunity for improvements	MEDIUM: There may be potential to address urban design weaknesses

