

South Kensington Station

Architecturally, the station today reflects the major trends in London's early underground architecture. The pale-brick Italianate style of the Metropolitan Railway building of 1868 can still be seen on the District and Circle Line platforms, both westbound and eastbound. The Edwardian classical-style station architecture of the first decade of the 20th century is exemplified in the façade and columns of the north and south entrances. The Arts and Crafts-inspired wrought-iron lettering above both entrances is exceptionally fine. South Kensington was one of the first stations in the world to incorporate an arcade of shops, which is still in use today with its original fittings intact.

Moreover, its Piccadilly Line extension was one of the underground stations designed by the Underground Group's architect Leslie Green. The station's oxblood terracotta faience tiled façade contains features that are unique to South Kensington, such as the black lettering on the lower frieze, and the ornate Art Nouveau cartouches. Several of the station's architectural features have been identified by the *London Underground Design Audit* for South Kensington, dated March 1993, as being worthy of the highest level of protection. According to the *Audit*, the station is 'probably already jointly listed' with the adjoining Grade II listed building at 52 Thurloe Square.

Historically, South Kensington is important as one of the earliest Underground stations in the world, and from its inception, it was always intended to be an urban feature in keeping with its surroundings. South Kensington was a key station on the Metropolitan Railways network, and on the Circle Line of 1884, forming the link between the western and the eastern sections of the route. In 1907 it became one of the first electric 'tube' stations of the Piccadilly Line.

South Kensington Underground Station stands at the heart of one of the most popular and frequently-visited historic areas of London. It forms the gateway for rail passengers to 'Albertopolis', the late-Victorian scheme of museums and educational establishments that dominate South Kensington's skyline. It is an integral part of this important Conservation Area: indeed, the station itself and its arcade was designated a 'Conservation Area' by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in 1990. The station architecture reflects the early history of South Kensington as a place of residence and of public exhibitions. The building preserves a sense of light and space at the heart of South Kensington. Its design was always intended to be complementary to its environment, and the current structure ensures that the historically and aesthetically important vistas of Imperial College's Colcutt Tower, two of the Natural History Museum towers and Aston Webb's late-Baroque octagonal cupola above the main entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum, are all preserved, as explicitly stipulated in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Unitary Development Plan, May 2002, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's *Thurloe Estate and Smith's Charity Conservation Area Policy Statement* of 1980.

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Paragraph 4.3 – George Sherrin’s 1903 Edwardian Classical façades on south and north sides, with original Arts and Crafts-style wrought iron lettering, pilasters and columns.

Paragraph 5.2 – Arcade of shops, built in 1903, with many original features including suspended light fittings and glazed roof, plus scroll wooden handles to ticket office.

Paragraph 6.2 – Leslie Green’s original oxblood terracotta glazed tile façade on Pelham Street, complete with frieze and moulded cartouches and arches.

Paragraph 7.2 – Swan-neck light fittings and blue enamel and bronze panels on north and south entrances, dating to 1930s.

South Kensington Underground Station

1.1 The Emergence of the Underground.

London's underground rail network opened on 10th January 1863. Britain was the first country, and London the first city, to have conceived and developed an underground passenger railway, and it heralded a revolution in transportation throughout the world. The steam-powered trains were operated by the Metropolitan Railway Company (MRC). They ran along nearly four miles of track between Paddington and Farringdon Street, picking up passengers at Edgware Road, Baker Street, Great Portland Street, Euston Square and King's Cross. The underground began as a central London shuttle service for the national rail networks of the Great Western and Great Northern Railways, and it proved an instant success. *The Times* declared it 'the great engineering triumph of the day'. On the morning it opened, as many as 30,000 passengers crammed into the 45 teak coaches of the train, all wanting to be part of this first, historic journey.

In the following weeks and months, huge numbers of people continued to use the trains, and it was clear that there was money to be made from the underground. Many promoters came forward, depositing bills before Parliament for their own specific schemes. In all, some 200 miles of new underground railway track were proposed under 259 different applications.

Just one new proposal was approved, for two new tracks to be built and operated by the Metropolitan Railway Company. One was to run from Moorgate to Tower Hill in the east, and the other was to run from Paddington via Notting Hill Gate and Kensington High Street, to South Kensington in the west. South Kensington was therefore to be the terminus of one of the very earliest extensions to the underground rail network.

1.2 Why South Kensington?

South Kensington's importance was partly due to its geographical position. The planners were working on a long-term scheme to develop an inner circle of underground railway tracks which would link all the principal railway termini in London. This would eventually result in the Circle Line. From the outset, South Kensington was an important point in this circuit, forming a vital link between Paddington and Tower Hill.

Another factor was South Kensington's newly-fashionable status as the site of 'Museumland' or 'Albertopolis'. This was the great scheme of exhibition space, museums and colleges financed mainly by the £186,000 profit from the Great Exhibition of 1851. Prince Albert wanted to use this money to create a cultural and educational quarter in London where the arts and sciences could flourish, to ensure that Britain would be the leading country in the industrialised world.

Prince Albert and the Commissioners proposed the development of an area of 86 acres, stretching south from Kensington Gore towards Thurloe Square and east of Brompton, which at the time was a semi-rural, sparsely populated stretch of land. By 1856, the Commissioners had laid out the Cromwell Road, Exhibition Road and Queen's Gate, and christened the new area 'South Kensington'. By the time the first underground railway opened seven years later, South Kensington had become a popular place to live. It was also attracting thousands of visitors every month, who came to the horticultural garden, the new 1862 exhibition centre and the 'South Kensington Museum', later the Victoria and Albert Museum. The development of South Kensington's museums and institutes, which continued until the end of the century, prompted a domestic building boom. New houses were constructed from the late 1850s through to the 1890s.

At first, there was no public transport for South Kensington. The Commissioners had included a railway station in their original plans for Albertopolis, but could never agree on where it should be built. It was clear however, that if the Commissioners wanted visitor numbers to increase and land prices to rise, the opening of an underground station would be a tremendous boost to the area. And so although it was not directly part of the Albertopolis scheme, the idea of an underground station at South Kensington was conceived because of the new popularity of the area. The building itself moreover, was designed to blend in with the elegant architectural scheme already in place.

1.3 South Kensington Underground Station is Built

In 1865, the Metropolitan Railway Company began work on their western extension from Paddington to South Kensington. Although plans for the southern section of the Circle Line were already underway by now, it was clear that the MRC would not be building any more of the rail network. The land that the MRC needed to purchase, and then cut through, in order to lay down the railway tracks running east from South Kensington to Tower Hill, was some of the most valuable real estate in the world. The MRC was a small company with a modest capital base, and it was very unlikely that it would ever be able to meet the £5 million cost of such a scheme.

Many new proposals were submitted by firms and individuals wishing to fund the Circle Line. In July 1864 a new company was incorporated as the Metropolitan District Railway Company (called in this paper the District Line Company). The company had powers to build a new underground rail line from South Kensington to Tower Hill, plus two spurs, one from South Kensington through Gloucester Road and Earl's Court to West Brompton, and the other from Kensington High Street to what is now Olympia.

The Metropolitan Railway Company completed its section of line from Paddington via Bayswater, Notting Hill and Kensington High Street to South Kensington, in October 1868. They built stations at all the new stops. At South Kensington, the station was constructed on the site of what had, just ten years earlier, been the site of Harrison and Bristow's plant nursery. The South Kensington Commissioners stipulated that they should build a 'first-class ornamental passenger station' that would not be used for goods traffic. The MRC's chief engineer, Sir John Fowler, declared

that he planned 'to make a handsome elevation... so that people going down the Exhibition Road would see a good-looking building.' South Kensington was one of the second-generation Metropolitan Railway stations designed under Fowler's supervision, in a style that was later described as having 'Italian Renaissance origins'.

The stations were constructed from white Halsey perforated bricks with pale cream stone dressings and Portland cement ornamentation. They incorporated arched entrances, balustrading and a roof parapet. Inside, the platforms were covered with a high semi-elliptical iron and glass roof, pierced with outlets in order to disperse the fumes from the steam trains. The roofs were described in the *Railway Gazette* as being 'most successful in design', with 'an elegant internal contour line and satisfying lightness of effect.' *The Builder*, October 1868, described Fowler's stations, including South Kensington, as 'very light, graceful and effective structures.'

1.4 Extant Architectural Features From this Period:

Although the original Metropolitan station at South Kensington was demolished in the early years of the 20th century, it is still possible to identify salient details of this building. The original 1860s Halsey brick retaining walls can still be seen on both the eastbound and westbound platforms of the District and Circle Line, particularly on the eastbound side. Here, a long sweep of golden brick blind arcading runs eastwards along the disused platform, abutting a section of wall attached to the Grade II listed building at 52 Thurloe Square (listed in 1969). According to the *London Underground Design Audit* for South Kensington, March 1993, page 5, 'The building [ie South Kensington Underground Station] is adjacent to a Grade II listed building at 52 Thurloe Square, and is probably jointly listed.' (Italics are mine.)

Vestiges of the original westbound section of the station also survive, in the form of canopy support columns known as the Pelham Street colonnade. There are also sections of the Victorian roof and decorated supporting columns still in place. The arcade now supports a street-level equipment yard and temporary huts for engineers and station staff, but the pale brickwork and blind arcades can still clearly be seen.

2.1 The District Line

Once the District Line Company had been granted permission to lay tracks at South Kensington, they set about purchasing land at the end of Exhibition Road and Harrington Road from the Commissioners. Work began on the District Line section of the Circle Line in June 1865. South Kensington's tracks were built by the 'cut and cover' method used in all the earliest underground railways, now known as 'sub-surface' stations. This involved cutting a deep trench into the ground, and laying the tracks. An iron arch supported a roof which covered the tracks, so that the building finished flush with the original ground level. The platforms were 400 feet long.

The South Kensington-Westminster section of the District Line was ready by Christmas Eve 1868. At South Kensington, the District Line facilities, including a separate ticket office, were completed in 1870. The station became arranged around two island and two single platforms.

In 1871 the District Line chairman, James Staats Forbes, ordered 30 new houses in Pelham Street to be demolished in order to make way for a separate District Line station. This never actually happened, and a compromise was reached when the station was widened and additional platforms were constructed on the Pelham Street side in order to accommodate District Line trains. At this stage, there were three tracks and four platforms for Metropolitan trains, and three tracks and three platforms for District Line trains.

2.2 Extant Architectural Features From this Period:

The District and Circle line section of the station, which now consists of a wide central island with a platform on either side, dates from this period, although it has been altered several times. The single eastbound and the westbound platforms abutting the 1868 blind arcaded walls can still be seen opposite the central island.

3.1 The Circle Line at South Kensington

In 1877 the Metropolitan and the District Line companies approached the Metropolitan Board of Works for financial support to build the rest of the tracks that would form the Circle Line. The District Line tracks would extend east from South Kensington to Tower Hill, where they would join Metropolitan line tracks to form a complete circle. The companies were awarded £800,000, and work began in September 1881. Three years later, in 1884, the Circle Line was complete. The opening ceremony was held at South Kensington Station.

3.2 The Subway is Opened

In May 1885, the District Line Company built a 484-yard subway in order to provide a covered route to take passengers from South Kensington Station to the grounds of the new Inventions Exhibition, which had just opened. Passengers using the tunnel were charged 1d for a single journey, or 1.d return. The subway closed after the Colonial and Indian Exhibition ended on 10 November 1886, but reopened again permanently in December 1908, when it became free of charge.

3.3 Extant Architectural Features From this Period:

The subway, a broad, generous arched structure supported on heavy riveted steelwork and faced in pale glazed bricks, is still in constant use. There are entrances to the Science Museum, the Ismaili Centre, the Natural History Museum, Imperial College, the Royal College of Music and the Royal Albert Hall. Over 50 million journeys are made along the subway every year.

4.1 The Electric Revolution

The first years of the new century marked the beginning of a new era for South Kensington station. In 1901, a dynamic Quaker financier from Philadelphia named Charles Tyson Yerkes (1837-1905), formed the Underground Electric Railways Company of London Ltd (UERL), more commonly called The Underground Group. It would become the dominant force in London's transport system for much of the 20th century. Yerkes' first action was to buy a majority stakehold in South Kensington and the rest of the District Line Company. It was the initial step in a grand plan to bring American-style electrification to the whole of London's underground system. In the following years, he bought up three more railway companies which would become the Piccadilly Line, the Bakerloo Line and the Northern Line. With great energy and vision, Yerkes set about creating a single, unified London Underground.

Electric motors were installed in Circle Line trains in July 1905, and in January 1907, South Kensington became part of Yerkes' new Piccadilly Line, which ran from Hammersmith to Finsbury Park. Rather than the 'cut and cover' method of the District and Circle Lines, the Piccadilly Line was a deep-level electric tube network buried beneath the ground.

4.2 South Kensington Station is Re-designed

The electrification of the trains and the end of the steam era inspired the controllers of the District Line to refurbish their old station buildings. As a key station on the circuit, South Kensington was one of the earliest to receive a facelift. The pale, restrained brickwork of the 1868 Metropolitan station was almost completely demolished in 1903, and rebuilt by the architect George Sherrin in the same year. The glazed roof above the platforms was removed, and replaced by steel-framed low-level canopy structures on hollow cast-iron columns, designed to have rainwater ducted down them into platform-level drains. Two new street-level entrances, one to the north on Thurloe Street, the other to the south on Pelham Street, were constructed.

4.3 Extant Architectural Features From this Period:

George Sherrin's 1903 station façades still stand today at South Kensington's north and south entrances. They are built in the Edwardian classical style: stucco façades flanked by Doric pilasters, and entrances separated by two Tuscan (elsewhere, 'Trojan') columns.

One of the most striking elements of the entrances are the six panels of ornate black and white wrought iron lettering, which gives the station name and 'Metropolitan and District Railways'. The ironwork is a fine example of the Arts and Crafts style, which was fashionable in public architecture at this time. According to the *London Underground Design Audit* for South Kensington, March 1993, page 10, the wrought iron lettering above both entrances is deemed: 'Item of architectural or historical merit *that must be preserved* - except under exceptional circumstances. Permission to alter any item under this category will require specific LUL Design Manager's authority in addition to submission to

ECS [London Underground's Environmental Control Section] and possible local authority consent.' (Italics are mine.)

5.1 The Shopping Arcade

At the same time, the District Line company moved its booking office downstairs. Increasing property prices in South Kensington meant that there was money to be made by hiring out the ground floor station area to retailers. The ticket office in the rounded western end of the station was moved below ground and replaced with a shopping arcade, also designed by the architect George Sherrin in 1903. This was one of the first station shopping arcades in the world. It placed South Kensington underground station in the vanguard of architectural innovation. To passengers and shoppers of the day, South Kensington's light, airy new station would have been the very height of fashion and modernity.

The shop sites became home to a variety of small local businesses; a jeweller's, a milliner's, a florist's and various art, book and antique shops. In 1910, the first Persian Carpet shop in the UK moved into No. 6 the Arcade. The Anglo-Persian Carpet Company was the first of the many Oriental carpet galleries to open during the Edwardian era. It supplied the nearby Victoria and Albert Museum with hundreds of rugs, saddlebags and other items for their oriental collection.

The arcade also occupies a place in the history of literature. George Bernard Shaw's heroine Eliza Doolittle and her young husband Frederick opened a flower shop in what Shaw described in *Pygmalion* (1913) as 'an arcade not very far from the Victoria and Albert Museum.'

5.2 Extant Architectural Features From this Period:

The arcade of shops is still in use today, running north-south across the ground floor of the station. It retains its original iron and glass arched roof, supported on trusses encased with fibrous plaster enrichments, and its Tiffany-style suspended light fittings. 'At South Kensington,' wrote Nikolaus Pevsner, 'the underground passenger emerges into a pretty glazed shopping arcade.' The Anglo-Persian Carpet Company still occupies shop number 6.

According to the *London Underground Design Audit* for South Kensington, March 1993, p. 12, the arcade in its entirety, with its 'good 'Tiffany's suspended light fittings', is described as: 'Item of architectural or historical merit *that must be preserved* - except under exceptional circumstances. Permission to alter any item under this category will require specific LUL Design Manager's authority in addition to submission to ECS [London Underground's Environmental Control Section] and possible local authority consent.' (Italics are mine.)

From the shopping arcade, two sets of stairs with hardwood scroll handles lead down to the sub-surface booking hall. According to the *London Underground Design Audit* for South Kensington, March 1993, the hardwood handrails are deemed: 'Item of interest *that should be retained* if functional and consistent with other proposals for the station. Proposals to alter any item in this category

should be referred to London Underground's Environmental Control Section. Consent may also be required from the local authority.' (Italics are mine.)

The booking hall is top-lit from an arch-framed hipped glazed roof, supported on four cast-iron columns, with trusses encased in fibrous plaster enrichments.

6.1 The Piccadilly Line and the Architecture of Leslie Green

The effect of Yerkes' control over the London Underground would prove architectural as well as operational. Yerkes not only wanted all trains to be run on electric power, he also wanted every station on his network to be built in the same style. His in-house architect, Leslie Green, was charged with creating a new model of station architecture that could be applied to all stations within the group - from Maida Vale to South Kensington - giving all the disparate lines an instantly recognisable image. Green rose to the challenge, designing more than 40 stations in three years before dying - of exhaustion - in 1908, at the age of 33. Each of Green's station façades, which were based originally on Lewis Isaacs' Holborn Viaduct station of 1873, were designed to project a confident yet reliable image. And although each station was uniquely adapted for the individual site, every station façade Green designed had elements that identified them as part of a single entity: dark red glazed terracotta tiles and mouldings, Arts and Crafts-style ironwork, friezes and grilles, and arches carried up around the windows of the mezzanine floor.

South Kensington station therefore became part of one of the earliest schemes of corporate identity-building and brand awareness. Like all Green's stations, South Kensington's Piccadilly line façades on Pelham Street, abutting the District Line entrance of the station in the south, and Thurloe Street to the north, were faced with oxblood terracotta faience tiles. These tiles stood out sharply from the rest of the architecture in the area, reflected colour and light onto the streets and produced an assured, somewhat flamboyant effect. More practically, they were extremely easy to keep clean.

Green's booking office for the Piccadilly Line section of South Kensington station was lined with bottle green faience tiles ending in a frieze of green majolica tiles at shoulder height, moulded with an Art Nouveau pomegranate design. The booking windows were styled as miniature aedicules, made of moulded faience blocks. Next to the booking hall were teak-panelled lifts with wrought-iron grilles, which carried passengers down to the Piccadilly line platforms, clad in blue and cream tiling.

At around the same time, the company adopted a logo - the famous Underground, and its own instantly-recognisable symbol, Harry Ford's 'bulls eye' roundel of a solid red circle crossed by a blue bar, which was introduced in 1909, and is still used today. The London Underground Group was one of the first companies in Britain to utilise design so coherently in order to fix itself in the minds of its customer. South Kensington, as gateway to 'Museumland' and one of the most frequently-used of all the Underground Group's stations, played an important role in this development.

6.2 Extant Architectural Features From this Period:

On the south side at Pelham Street, Green's original façade remains fully intact, with well-preserved oxblood faience tiles and a full component of recessed bays, originally used for the display of publicity material. Of particular note on this façade is the presence of raised black lettering displaying the station's name on the lower of the two white friezes. According to David Leboff in *The Underground Stations of Leslie Green* Capital Transport Publishing, 2002, page 65: 'This appears to be an original feature and is thus a unique example of its kind. The letterform is interesting, for it is not of a standard block form, as illustrated by the presence of several serifs.'

The Art Nouveau-style moulded cartouches between the arched windows mark the station out as a typical Green design. Of note is the fact that, while most stations in Green's scheme incorporated a standard cartouche design, South Kensington's cartouches are unique, and were specifically designed for this station.

7.1 The Great War to the Present Day

During the First World War, the pedestrian subway beneath South Kensington station was used to store art treasures from the Imperial Institute, which was then occupied by civil servants working out the system of food rationing.

In the 1930s, column-mounted swan-neck light fittings, and blue-enamelled notice boards with bronze frames, were installed at the northern and southern entrances to the station.

During the Second World War, South Kensington station became a makeshift underground hospital.

In 1957, the two island platforms of the District and Circle Line were combined by closing the central reversing bay. This created an unusually wide island platform, protected above by two matching glazed canopies. In 1967, the track to the eastbound platform was taken out of service. The single westbound platform track was taken out of service in March 1969.

In 1971, Leslie Green's Piccadilly Line booking office was turned into storage space for ventilation equipment, and in 1974 the lifts down to the Piccadilly Line platforms were replaced by escalators. Direct access between the District and Circle Line platforms and those of the Piccadilly Line, was opened up in the same year. In the mid-1980s, the original blue and cream tiling scheme of the Piccadilly Line platforms was replaced by murals showing animal designs. The original blue glazed tile bands and entrance and exit portals still survive on both platforms.

7.2 Extant Architectural Features From this Period:

The swan-neck light fittings and the blue enamel and bronze panels can still be seen, attached to the north and south entrances of the station. According to the *London Underground Design Audit* for South Kensington, March 1993, these light fittings are deemed: 'Item of architectural or historical merit *that must be preserved* - except under exceptional circumstances. Permission to alter any item under this category will require specific LUL Design Manager's authority in addition to submission to ECS [London Underground's Environmental Control Section] and possible local authority consent.' (Italics are mine.)

Conclusion

- Architecturally, several of its street-level features are important for their design and decoration, such as the wrought-iron lettering above both entrances, the arcade of shops with its original glazed roofing, mouldings, frontages and light fittings, the oxblood faience tiles and raised black letters mounted on the lower frieze of the 1907 Leslie Green extension, and the unique design of the faience cartouches.
- Historically, South Kensington station preserves features of each stage of London Underground's evolution, from the 1860s to the Edwardian era.
- Its arcade of shops, as one of the first station arcades ever built, played a significant role in London's social and economic history.

London Underground declares that it: 'wishes to conserve those features which are representative of the station's history and where they are still relevant to today's usage.' London Underground's own *Design Audit* has specifically identified the iron letterwork friezes above the north and south entrances, George Sherrin's shopping arcade and the wall-mounted 1930s lights and bronze panels, as being worthy of the highest level of protection, while several other features have been identified as elements that 'should be retained.'

Moreover, according to the London Underground Design Audit, the station 'is probably jointly listed' with the Grade II building at 52 Thurloe Square. The importance of protecting South Kensington underground station as it stands today therefore lies in several key areas:

- It is of historic importance for the local area, as a key element in the rise of late-Victorian South Kensington.
- It is of architectural interest, containing as it does, many features that are either unique or of specific architectural and historical interest, as identified by London Underground's *Design Audit*.
- It is the gateway to 'Albertopolis' or 'Museumland', and the first experience for the tourist of one of the most frequently-visited cultural areas in London. All the original architectural features of the station are in keeping with the elegant scheme of late-Victorian and early Edwardian buildings along the Cromwell, Brompton and Exhibition Roads.
- Furthermore, because it was originally designed and built as an urban feature in an important cultural area of London, the station remains fully in harmony with the architectural environment of South Kensington, as it was originally conceived.

Crucially, this last point means that the station does not block any of the vistas which are such an important feature of the area. As it stands, the station preserves the view of two of the Natural History Museum towers, the Imperial

College Colcutt Tower (which was only saved from demolition after a vigorous campaign in the 1950s), and Aston Webb's Victorian-baroque octagonal cupola, that rises above the main entrance of the Victoria and Albert Museum. No fewer than five late-Victorian spires, domes or towers can be seen from a viewpoint just south of the station, above the roof.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's Unitary Development Plan, 25 May 2002, pages 57-58, highlights these vistas as being of special importance, and worthy of preservation. The plan pledges: 'to protect important views and vistas in and around the South Kensington museums area.' These vistas are identified as, among others, the view up the east side of Onslow Square towards the Natural History Museum, and from the front of Melton Court up Cromwell Place to the towers of the Natural History Museum and the Colcutt Tower. Both views depend entirely upon the design of South Kensington station as an urban feature in keeping with its environment.

The plan goes on to pledge 'to preserve and enhance the precinct character of South Kensington's museums area by safeguarding skylines and vistas to the Natural History Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Colcutt Tower and Brompton Oratory.' Once again, this pledge is entirely dependent upon the character of South Kensington station as complimentary to its surroundings. Furthermore, The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's *Thurloe Estate and Smith's Charity Conservation Area Policy Statement* of 1980 states that, 'massing of any development on this site should pay special regard to its impact on sensitive skylines. Critical here are the views of the museum towers from Onslow Square and views out of Thurloe Square.'

The protection and preservation of South Kensington station is extremely important for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and for London as a whole. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's *Thurloe Estate and Smith's Charity Conservation Area Policy Statement* of 1980 explicitly states that any development of the station 'is expected to be in scale and sympathy with the nearby residential street and squares and have regard to the fact that the east and west ends of the site exhibit different characteristics.' It goes on to say that, 'The high buildings policy of the Greater London Development Plan defines this part of the borough as being particularly sensitive to their impact; and the Town Planning Committee are generally opposed to their erection.'

The site is well-placed as a focal point of local history, and could be preserved in order to present an historic entry point to the museums area of South Kensington. There is scope to turn the subway into a permanent display of the history of Albertopolis and the development of the underground network.

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