

The Old Post Office (TOPO) – proposals by the Kingston community for community use





Built in 1875, a Grade-2-listed local landmark



Kingston upon Thames

English Heritage Register of Buildings at Risk 2005

	<p>Kingston upon Thames Kingston Sorting Office Ashdown Road, Kingston upon Thames</p> <p>Priority: C (C) Designation: Listed Grade II Condition: Fair, Vacant Ownership: Company Summary: Purpose built telephone exchange. Built in 1907 and opened in 1908. Arts and Crafts style in representative plan. Refurbishment proposals expected.</p>
	<p>Contact: Tony Hall (LA) 020 8547 4652</p> <p>Kingston upon Thames Head Post Office 42 Eden Street, Kingston upon Thames</p> <p>Priority: C (C) Designation: Listed Grade II Condition: Fair, Vacant Ownership: Company Summary: Post office built in 1875. Three stories in red brick with stone dressings. Refurbishment proposals expected.</p>

Recent history

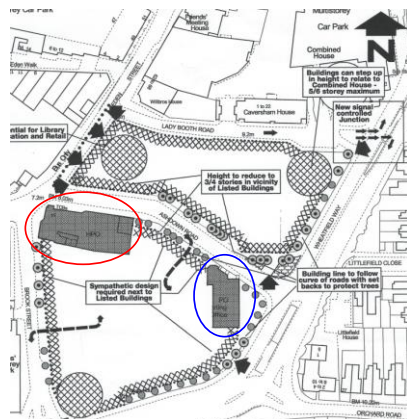
- Owned by developers Hammerson
- Empty for a decade
- Some interest from various community groups over the years
- Arts, environmental and community groups now working together on proposals to turn it into a flourishing town centre asset, "a community cultural hub"
- Recently acquired by developers St George

The site today

2 listed buildings:

The former head post office and sorting hall

+ The former sorting office



The site has an interesting history.

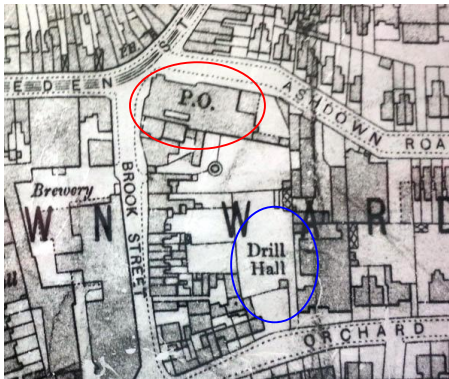


Plan of the
TOWN AND PARISH
of
KINGSTON GRIMÉ
1813

A prison on "Heathen Street", 1813



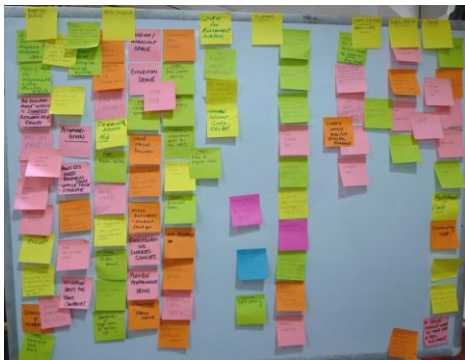
The site in 1913



What have we done so far?

- We've met with other third sector organisations that could be interested – or planning something similar.
- We've met with 2 Council leaders, and several Council officers.
- We've viewed parts of the building.
- We've created a website, a Facebook page and a Prospectus (with thanks to RBK for a small grant to enable printing)

And we consulted...



These are some of the ideas people came up with – it could be...

a community cultural hub including:

- a base for Kingston Environment Centre
- affordable workshops, studios and small offices for local artists, community groups and start-up enterprises
- rehearsal, meeting and events spaces
- a creche
- a café and meeting place
- pop-up retail, displays, exhibitions...
- a garden...



Who's interested?

- Adam Lewis (of The Lamb pub)
- Anagio Ltd Web Design
- Circus Suburbia
- Creative Youth
- Euphonix
- Fusion Arts
- From the Ground Up
- Greener Kingston
- Green Radio
- Kingston Artists Open Studios
- Kingston Eco-op
- Kingston Environment Centre
- Kingston Environment Forum
- Kingston Fairtrade Group
- Kingston Green Radio
- Moonlight Theatre Company
- Project Green Room
- Recovery Initiative Social Enterprise
- Save the World Club
- Transition Town Kingston
- WOW Vintage Art & Craft Studios

Some of the key benefits to Kingston

- A unique, creative and productive bringing together of arts, social, environmental, retail and work spaces
- Environmental sustainability visible on the "high street", and accessible to everyone – residents, visitors, local businesses...
- Social and cultural amenities unavailable on the internet
- Conservation and enlivening of a listed local landmark
- A USP, contributing to Kingston as "a destination of choice" – different from and complementary to existing enterprises
- Opportunities for local people: employment / training / work experience / work spaces...
- Diversification of the daytime and early evening scene

"The most vibrant town centres offer a wide range of locally responsive services that create a comprehensive retail, cultural and community hub. This is crucial for the future of the High Street as it is an offer that its competitors struggle to match. Future Government policy must acknowledge this, not treating retail in isolation, but empowering councils to integrate the shopping offer effectively alongside other cultural and community services."

Local Government Association response to The Portas Review (2011)

"High streets will thrive if we re-imagine them..."
Mary Portas (June 2014)

"Kingston needs to be more than just a retail destination. We need to broaden our offer..."
Cllr Kevin Davis, Leader of Kingston Council (June 2014), Kingston Futures

A lot of "known unknowns"

- Will all the interested groups and enterprises still be interested in 3 or 5 or 10 years' time?
- Will the social, cultural and economic context change radically?
- The buildings are "unsafe", so we have not seen all the space or surveyed any of it, though the buildings are probably deteriorating.



However - other places have vibrant community hubs / community arts centres / community cafés / environment centres ...

Why shouldn't Kingston?



The TOPO consortium, supporters and stakeholders

...would welcome your support, when the public consultation begins, at The Old Post Office, on:

- Thursday 10th July 12noon-8pm
- Friday 11th July 10am-4pm
- Saturday 12th July 10am-5pm

<http://e-voice.org.uk/topo>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/topokut>

