November 2026

KINGSTON URBAN ROOM EXHIBITION: What If? 2

Tall Buildings, Shared Futures

Kingston Urban Room's new exhibition explores how tall buildings might change the character of Kingston.

The exhibition's central question is: *As Kingston grows, what should we value, what should we protect, and what should we change?*

This November the Kingston Society is inviting residents to explore local tall buildings and help shape the conversation about Kingston's future:

Dates: 24th November - 4th December 2026
Venue: Penny School Gallery
Address: Kingston College, 55 Richmond Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 5BP
Opening hours:
Tuesday 24 Nov - Friday 27 Nov 10.00-18.00 pm
Saturday 28 Nov, 10.00-13.30 pm
Monday 30 Nov - Friday 4 Dec, 10.00-18.00 pm
Lunch Time Talk: Wednesday 2nd Dec, 12noon-14.00 pm
Admission: FREE - OPEN TO ALL & ACCESS FREE

Why tall buildings, why now?

Kingston is preparing for decisions that could reshape its neighbourhoods and skyline for decades. The draft Local Plan* for 2028–2043 proposes nearly 20,000 new homes over 15 years, with growth directed towards town centres, transport corridors and other areas identified for change. Once adopted, it will help determine where development takes place and how future planning applications are assessed.

The implications extend beyond housing numbers. The draft Plan includes policies on tall and mid-rise buildings, heritage and important local views, alongside allocations for sites across the borough. Together, these will help shape the scale and location of development, and, in turn, the relationship between new buildings, established neighbourhoods, and particularly Kingston Town's historic skyline. Site allocations do not themselves grant planning permission, but they establish where particular forms of development may be supported in principle, subject to the wider planning framework.

That is why **now** is the time to bring tall buildings into the conversation about Kingston's future. By bringing local high-rise into focus, it will help visitors connect a complex planning document with places they know and experiences they recognise. It asks not simply what Kingston should build, but what kind of Borough that development should create.

The Kingston Society supports the need for an up-to-date Local Plan and new homes, including genuinely affordable housing, while arguing that individual policies, densities and site allocations require scrutiny.

More than a question of height

Running at Kingston College's Penny School Gallery for two weeks, ***Tall Buildings, Shared Futures*** invites residents to explore one of the most visible aspects of the borough's changing built environment: tall buildings. While tall buildings alter a town's skyline, their impact reaches well beyond appearance. The Kingston Society's aim is to ask how these developments relate to historic surroundings, what kinds of homes they provide, how they affect neighbouring streets and whether they deliver lasting public and environmental value.

Using local developments and planning proposals, it explores where taller buildings belong, what they should contribute to their surroundings and what makes them good places to live.

The exhibition brings a questioning approach into an open public conversation: how can Kingston accommodate growth without losing what makes it distinctive? How do we improve everyday life and deliver lasting public benefit and what are the alternatives?

Rather than framing the debate as a simple choice between being "for" or "against" tall buildings, the exhibition uses local examples to open up these questions.

Continuing the What If? Conversation

Tall Buildings, Shared Futures follows the previous *What If?* installation, held at Penny School Gallery in September 2025 as part of the London Design Festival and Kingston 2025 celebrations. That programme brought residents, designers, artists, architects and innovators together to explore Kingston's past, reflect on present challenges and imagine possibilities for its future.

This latest exhibition continues that conversation through a focus on local high-rise buildings, inviting people to imagine **what if** development truly responded to community needs, respected the borough's character and contributed to a better Kingston for future generations. More information here.

At the heart of the exhibition is dialogue. Its purpose is to encourage informed discussion, make room for different perspectives and connect planning decisions with the experiences of people who live, work and spend time in Kingston.

This approach reflects the Kingston Urban Room's founding purpose: to provide a place where proposals can be discussed, ideas generated and plans developed through public participation.

Notes to editors

Exhibition title: Tall Buildings, Shared Futures
Series: What If? 3rd pop-up Kingston Urban Room.
Organised by: Kingston Urban Room
Additional partners: Kingston Society https://kts.org.uk/

Contact Details:
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About Kingston Urban Room (KUR)
Kingston Urban Room seeks to create an accessible space for public discussion about the built environment, bringing people together to explore the town's past, present and possible futures. Its activities aim to make the shaping of Kingston a more open and shared conversation.

KUR has been developed through the initiative and commitment of the Kingston Society bringing its concern for the town's buildings, public spaces and communities into an accessible setting for conversation and debate. Through the ***What If?*** series, the Society is aiming to create dialogue space for residents, communities and built-environment professionals to exchange ideas and explore Kingston's future together.

kingstonurbanroom.org.uk
instagram.com/Kingstonurbanroom
Why Kingston Urban Room?

About Kingston Society:
Founded in 1962, The Kingston upon Thames Society is a Registered Charity and volunteer-run membership group that exists to promote high standards of planning, conservation and design in the Royal Borough, including Kingston, Coombe, the Maldens, Surbiton, Tolworth and Chessington.

Affiliated to the Civic Trust, Kingston Society is Kingston's main voluntary and independent organisation concerned with planning and conservation.

To find out more, join future events, or become a member from just £15 per year, visit

Suggested further reading for editors:
Kingston New Local Plan explainer
Kingston Society Response
RBK Kingston's Local Plan (Regulation 19) consultation
RBK New Local Plan Latest