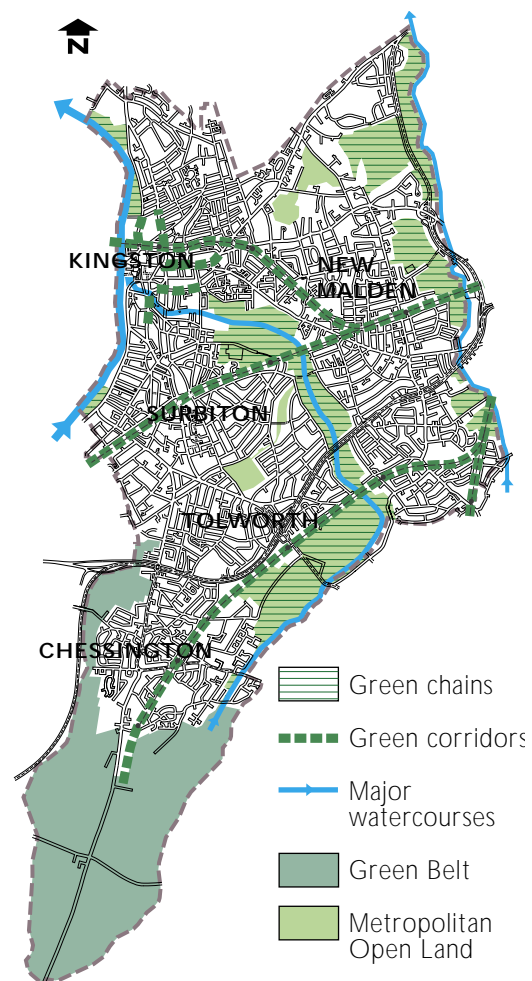


Geography of the Borough

1.1 The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (RBK) in south-west London is the smallest of the 33 London boroughs. The Borough covers an area of 37.2 square kilometres and is predominantly urban, the exception being the southern tip of the Borough below Chessington. The southern tip and about half of the eastern and western sections of the Borough border Surrey. The London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames, Merton and Sutton bound the remaining western and eastern sections respectively, with the River Thames forming both a boundary and a barrier on the west. The London Boroughs of Wandsworth and Richmond upon Thames are this Authority's northern neighbours. The map below shows the pattern of urbanisation and the extensive area of Green Belt in the south of the Borough. There are also significant stretches of Metropolitan Open Land which form green chains of high value for wildlife and as a leisure facility.

1.2 There is one dominant town centre, Kingston, located near the north-western boundary of the Borough. It is defined in London terms as a Metropolitan Centre with a catchment extending well beyond the Borough itself. The last two decades have seen Kingston evolve into a major retail, leisure, cultural, business, public administration and education destination in its own right serving a wide area of south-west London and north-east Surrey.

1.3 The Borough has three district centres, Surbiton, New Malden and Tolworth. There are a further 29 local shopping centres spread around the Borough. The location and details of the shopping frontages for all centres are available in Appendix 7 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP),



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Figure 1.1: Land use in the Borough

accessible from the Council's website www.kingston.gov.uk. The UDP also lists, in Appendix 6, local open spaces and sites with ecological designations. In summary, there are 1,260 hectares of protected open space in the Borough, 13 sites of importance for Nature Conservation at Grade 1 and 15 at Grade 2. There are also eight Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and two proposed LNRs.

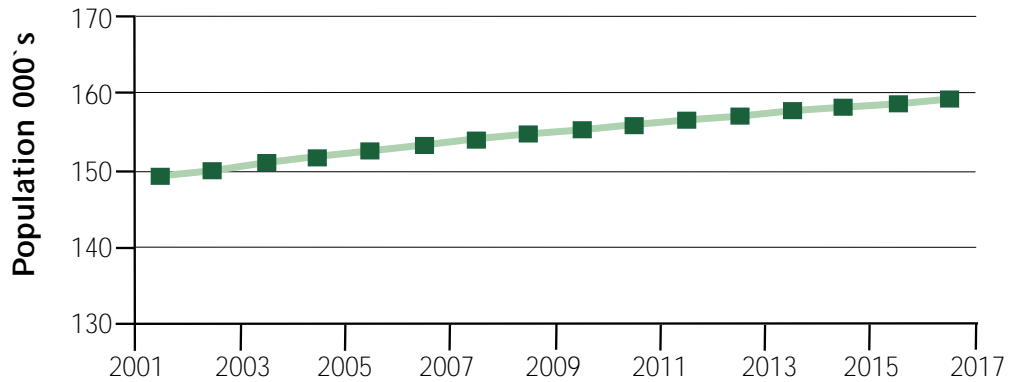
Population characteristics

- 1.4 According to the 2001 Census, the population of the Borough was approximately 147,300 in 2001, living in 61,400 households. After correcting for undercounting, the mid year estimate was 149,225. 32.1% of households are 1 person households, just above the average for Outer London. The average household size is 2.36 people and the number of households has increased by just over 10% since 1991. 55% of the population is in the 25-64 age group and Kingston has a slightly lower than average number of older people living in the Borough, with 13.4% aged 65 or over. The latest population projections predict that the number of older people will decrease between 2006 and 2011 and then gradually rise to 2016. This is due to the low birth rate in the war years followed by the baby boom of the 1950's. Housing density is 40.4 people per hectare compared to a London average of 46.4.
- 1.5 9.8% of the Borough's population are retired, the second lowest ratio in South London. Over 14 per cent of the population are from black and minority ethnic communities, up from under 10% in 1991. This is a slightly lower proportion than South London as a whole (17.4%) and notably lower than London as a whole (30%). However the Borough has the highest number of Koreans living in any London borough, estimated at around 7,500.
- 1.6 The population is rising at present and increased 8.5% between 1991 and 2001. The 2004 mid year estimate is 151,800. This growth is projected to continue steadily at around 0.5% per year to approximately 159,300 by 2016, living in 67,900 households. Figure 1.2 shows this gradual increase in future years.

Quality of life

- 1.7 The Borough has the second lowest level of deprivation in London, although there are pockets of relative deprivation in two wards. The overall

Figure 1.2: RBK Population 2001- 2016.



Source: 2003 Round of GLA Demographic Projections for the London Boroughs: Scenario 8.1

affluence of the Borough is reflected in the following statistics. Compared to London and the rest of the UK, Kingston has:

- Lower numbers than average of people with mental health problems
- The second lowest number of suicides in London
- The eighth lowest rate of teenage pregnancies (under 18's) in London
- Relatively low number of children living in families who receive income support.
- Low number of children placed on the child protection register.
- Low number of children looked after by the Local Authority.
- Low number of refugee and asylum seeker families resident in the Borough.
- Lower number than average of drug users in the Borough.
- Better health; only 6.3% of RBK residents record their health as "not good" compared to an Outer London average of 7.9%.

Economic characteristics

1.8 A brief description of the economic base and employment patterns follows:

- Employment is estimated at 71,136 in 2001 and forecast to reach 78,000 by 2016.
- There are 65.1% in full-time employment compared to the Outer London figure of 62.1%. Among full and part time employees 9.1% work mainly from home.

- The unemployment claimant count is 2.5%, compared with the outer London average of 3.8%.
- 18.3% of employment in RBK is in high value-added and high wage “knowledge based business services” compared to the London average of 13%
- 29.3% of RBK employment is in information society sectors that include Information Communication Technology (ICT), finance and advanced business services, Higher Education (HE), Research & Development (R&D) and publishing and media production. Knowledge-based sectors are projected to represent strong future growth.
- The Borough has a highly qualified population with 34.6% of residents having a qualification at degree level or higher compared to the England and Wales average of 19.8%.
- Tourism, creativity, hospitality and leisure sectors are projected to be areas of strong growth in the future.
- Kingston is 2nd in London and 12th in the country in the Experian 2004 retail rankings.
- Strategically significant industrial and business locations exist at Chessington Industrial Estate and Barwell Trading Estate in the south of the Borough
- RBK has 13% of its workforce self-employed (compared to a London average of 12.6% and national average of 10.3%). The high proportions of “knowledge workers”, many with access to capital, should also support future business start-ups.

Housing

- 1.9 As one of the most desirable Boroughs in London, property prices and rents are high and this creates a disparity between the good availability of employment and the poor availability of affordable housing. In consequence many workers have to commute to jobs in the Borough from lower cost areas in other parts of South London or further afield. At the same time large numbers of residents commute to well paid jobs in central London that enable them to afford RBK property prices and rents.
- 1.10 Of the 61,426 households in the 2001 census, 28% owned their house outright and another 43% were owned with a mortgage. Adding in some shared occupation housing, 71.5% of households are owner-occupiers compared to 68.0% in Outer London and 56.5% in the whole of Greater

London. 11% rent from the Council or a Housing Association and some 15% from private landlords.

- 1.11 A Housing Needs Survey published in September 2001 identified the need for 1,365 new affordable homes in Kingston each year for 5 years. Over the last 4 years, an average of just 80 new homes have been completed through the housing association development programme. Homelessness, especially among single people, continues to be a significant problem and providing temporary and permanent housing for the homeless is a continuing challenge for the Council and its partners. At 31 March 2005, there were 778 households in temporary accommodation

Transport characteristics

- 1.12 The Borough's transport links and the key problems and opportunities that exist are described in detail in the following chapter.

