



What If? An installation exploring place and possibilities

This September the Kingston Society is starting a conversation and asking *What If?* - A weeklong public installation designed to spark ideas about how each of us can shape the place we live in.

Set in Kingston College's Penny School Gallery, *What If?* reimagines the space as a **temporary Kingston Urban Room**. A civic environment inviting everyone to engage with the borough's challenges, reflect on its past and present, and contribute to what comes next.

Too often, the future is decided without the people who live in it. For most residents, the planning system is invisible - a notice on a lamppost, a consultation no one heard about, a decision already made. There is nowhere to explore proposed designs, share concerns, or dream up alternatives. **The Urban Room model changes that.**

Whether you're a regular London Design Festival visitor, a local resident, student, planner or just curious about your surroundings, *What If?* invites you to ask:

- *What if* we could shape Kingston together?
- *What if* Kingston claimed its place on London's design map?
- *What if* there was a permanent neutral space to help us do all of the above?

Kingston itself is a town with a story to tell. This year marks the 1100th anniversary of King Athelstan's coronation. Identified as an Opportunity Area in the Mayor's London Plan, Kingston's history is a living resource, and now the perfect moment to reflect on legacy, identity, and change.

Kingston is also home to around 6,500 creative professionals - one of the highest concentrations in south London - and hosts Kingston University's School of Art: an internationally-respected hub of creativity and innovation.

Despite its rich history and character, Kingston has long sat on the edges of the capital's cultural dialogue. And too often its residents have felt powerless to co-create the future of Kingston.

What If? is more than an exhibition. It's a possibility. A place for people to meet, learn and question. A series of exploratory talks and walks. And a chance to help the borough find its design voice.

Join us in September and be part of the conversation.

Penny School Gallery: Kingston College, 55 Richmond Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 5BP

13th – 21st September 2025

Further info and Gallery opening hours: <https://kingstonurbanroom.org.uk>

Follow us on @kingstonurbanroom



The Kingston upon Thames Society exists to promote high standards of planning, conservation and design in the Royal Borough.

For over 60 years, Kingston Society has spoken up for good design and pushed for proposals that maximise the borough's character.

As part of its ongoing Kingston Urban Room campaign, the *What If* installation invites those most affected by change to join in the conversation and feel empowered to shape where they live and work.

From questioning the role of public art to exploring heritage-enhancing design, Kingston Urban Room explores ways to better reflect local voices and identity when building for the future.

"Every town and city without an architecture and built environment centre should have an "urban room" where the past, present and future of that place can be inspected. [...]. These "Place Spaces" should have a physical or virtual model, produced in collaboration with local technical colleges or universities, and they should be funded jointly by the public and private sector, not owned exclusively by one or the other." [Farrell Review of architecture and the built environment, 2014]

<https://kts.org.uk>

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