



Narrow Street

Conservation Area

1. Character Appraisal

2. Management Guidelines

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

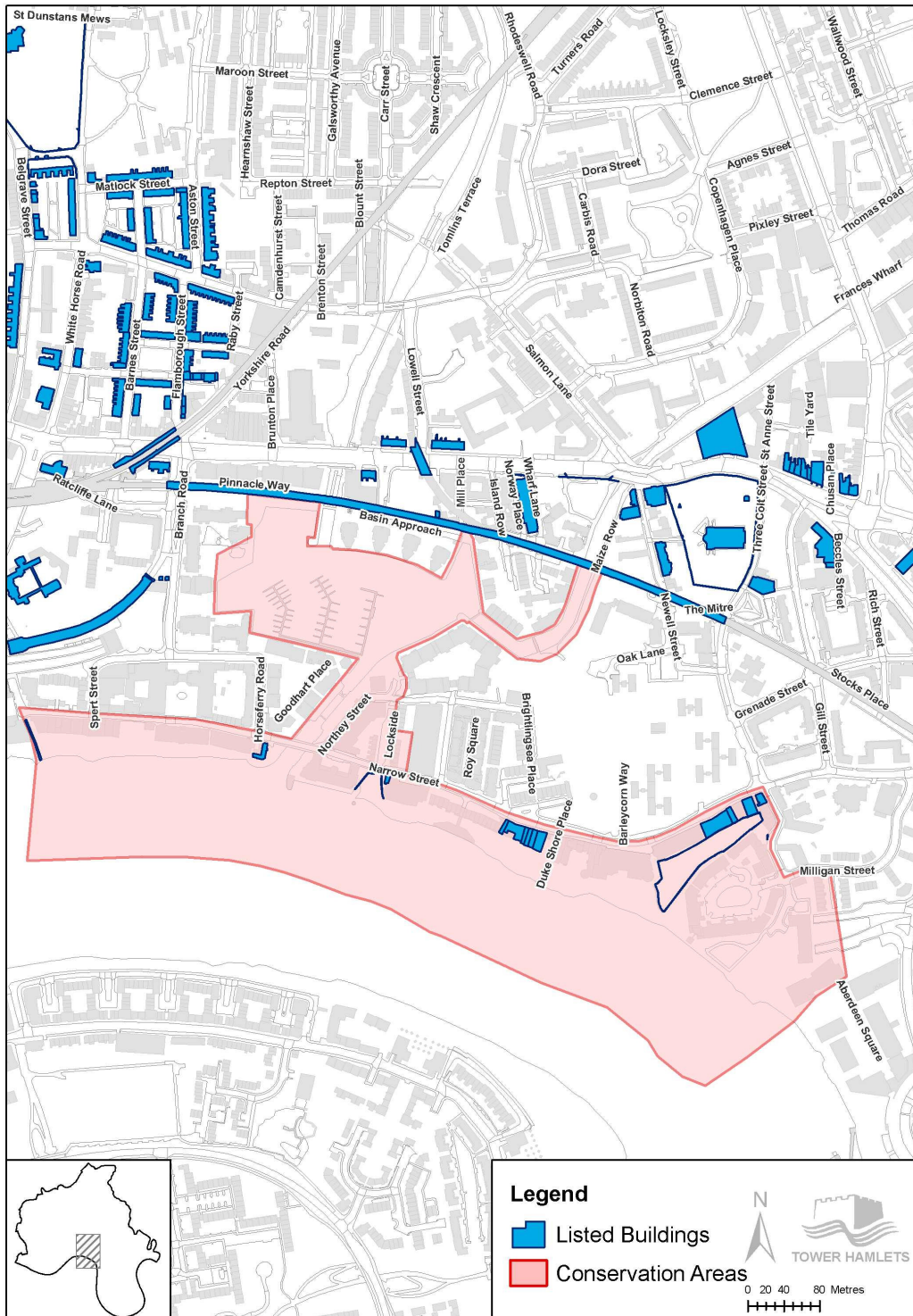
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Introduction

Conservation Areas are parts of our local environment with special architectural or historic qualities. They are created by the Council, in consultation with the local community, to preserve and enhance the specific character of these areas for everybody.

This guide has been prepared for the following purposes:

- To comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69(1) states that a conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”
- To provide a detailed appraisal of the area’s architectural and historic character.
- To provide an overview of planning policy and propose management guidelines on how this character should be preserved and enhanced in the context of appropriate ongoing change.



NARROW STREET CONSERVATION AREA

This map is indicative only and is not a planning document. For further information please contact the Council.

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1. Character Appraisal

Overview

The Narrow Street Conservation Area was designated in December 1975 and extended in October 2008. It covers the narrow Thames waterfront that once linked Limehouse to Ratcliffe. This includes the entrance to the Limehouse Cut, now filled-in, and Limekiln Dock, enclosed by historic 19th century warehouses. It also encompasses the Limehouse Basin (the Regents Canal Dock). The area is characterised by 19th and 20th century wharf-side buildings relating to the port and commercial activities which developed following the opening of Regent's Dock in the early 19th century. Three Colt Street, one of the original streets in Limehouse, forms the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area. The western edge runs alongside the lock entrance to Limehouse Basin. 'The Grapes' Public House forms the end of an important Georgian terrace which preserves the scale of earlier 18th century riverside development.

History

The area of Limehouse was named after the lime kilns located at Limekiln Dock. Established by the 14th century when chalk was brought in from Kent to serve the London building industry, lime burning was the first of the 'obnoxious industries' located downwind of the city. The historic Lime House which stood at its southern end, was demolished in 1935. Limehouse was home to a busy mercantile community, supporting industries such as shipbuilding and provisioning, with rope works located out in the fields. The small, early 19th century warehouses of Dunbar Wharf which back onto Limekiln Dock were named after the shipbuilders Duncan Dunbar & Sons, who ran a famous fleet of fast sailing ships to India, Australia and North America.

Between 1610 and 1710, the hamlet more than tripled in size, and by the early 18th century, it was absorbed by London's eastern expansion. Limehouse became part of the industrial East End, notably and principally for its Chinatown centred on the Limehouse Causeway. In 1769-70, the River Lea Navigation (falling outside this Conservation Area) were canalised, and new sections such as Hackney Cut and

Limehouse Cut built to shorten the shorten some water journeys. The Limehouse Cut was opened in 1770 to provide a short cut for grain and malt barges, from the River Lea at Bromley by Bow to the River Thames at Limehouse. The Regent's Canal Company was formed in 1812 to construct a canal to link the Grand Junction at Paddington with the Thames at Limehouse. Completed in 1820 with the construction of Regent's Canal Dock (now Limehouse Basin), the entrance to the Regent's Canal provided the gateway to the whole of England's canal system. Between 1853 and 1864, this end of the Limehouse Cut was diverted through the Regent's Canal Dock. The original river entrance was re-opened in 1865 and the old Narrow Street bridge was replaced by the present wrought-iron girder bridge. The river entrance was finally closed in 1968 and the entrance lock was infilled. Its walled sides are seen on the north side of the 1865 road bridge, lined by a row of late 19th century lock-keepers' cottages.

By 1968, river-borne trade waned and industrial activity had all but disappeared, and Regent's Canal Dock was closed and renamed Limehouse Basin. Part of the Lock is now preserved on the north side of Narrow Street. The Limehouse Basin marina, north of the Conservation Area, was privately developed in the 1980s and included the loss of modest areas of water above the Limehouse Link Tunnel for residential development.

Although the establishment of these canals, the Commercial Road and the London Blackwall Railway between London and its docklands stimulated industry in the area, the amenity of the hamlet was largely destroyed in the process, and was further threatened by the proposed construction of a 'northern relief route' in 1979. Instead, the implemented road scheme (1989-93) reduced the pressure of through traffic on Narrow Street, hiding it in a tunnel beneath the Limehouse Basin, and led to Limehouse being developed as a desirable residential address.

Character

By 1880, the riverside was lined with small warehouses and industrial buildings on narrow plots. Up to 3-storeys high and only a few bays wide, the warehouses along

Limekiln Dock still convey the atmosphere of the historic 19th century docklands industry. Their original loading doors and cast iron windows are preserved, and they are examples of the successful conversion of this building type to residential use. The late 17th and 18th terraced housing on Narrow Street also provides one of the few surviving examples of this characteristic Limehouse dwelling type, evidence of the wealth of the once vibrant, sea-faring community. The street facades remain largely intact, some with surviving historic shopfronts, although street-level use is now predominantly residential and the architectural integrity of some parts of the river frontage has been compromised. The scale of these listed houses and narrow warehouse buildings give Limehouse a more intimate and domestic character than neighbouring Wapping.

The character of the Narrow Street Conservation Area is also defined by its historic riverfront. The surviving industrial heritage contributes to the character and interest of the Thames shoreline, the organic development of the area evidenced in the different projections of buildings on the river face. The river edge, historically lined with walls that protected the inland marshes from the river's tidal flow, are now lined with a wall of warehouse buildings and residential developments. These are periodically interrupted by wharves, jetties and small-scale inlets, where steps and ramps down to the water's edge once provided access for passengers and watermen at a time when rowing boats provided river crossings and serviced ships. Duke Shore Stairs was the lowest point on the northern bank for passenger embarkation and provides a framed glimpse of the Thames from Narrow Street. Draw Docks, dry docks, entrance locks and the associated industrial archaeology all contribute to the character and historic interpretation of the area's industrial past and many have been successfully preserved.

Land Use

With the decline of river transport in the 20th century, riverside uses changed and new development was sought to stem the decay of the Thames riverfront. Post-war Government funding supplemented some costs of the residential redevelopment of the Docklands after the closure of the docks, and the Limehouse riverfront was

transformed from a run down and neglected industrial landscape to an attractive residential area. The balance between council-owned housing (once 95% of housing in the Limehouse area) and private housing dramatically shifted following the demolition of a number of local authority-owned flats for the construction of the Limehouse Link.

The Narrow Street terrace represents the earliest housing of this type to survive in the area. The early gentrification of the riverfront houses in the late 1950s was followed by the redevelopment of the other wharves at the western end of Narrow Street in the 1970s. The redevelopment of the smaller warehouses was initially delayed by the Borough's zoning policies, seeking the retention of industrial use in the area. These problems were finally eliminated when the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) took over the responsibility for facilitating the docklands redevelopment in 1981, and as a result several of the smaller riverside wharves are now in residential use and Grade II listed.

Although housing has almost entirely replaced industry in Limehouse, the few remaining commercial uses in the area are very important for the character of the streets, and for the local community.

Open space

The historic sense of enclosure once provided by buildings lining both sides of Narrow Street has significantly altered in recent years, with the opening-out of the northern street edge. Halfway along its length, Narrow Street expands into a wedge of open space laid out by the LDDC in 1994, linking the Conservation Area with Ropemakers Fields, a public park named after the ropewalks that occupied the area up to the mid 18th century. Other pedestrian open space has been created around the former entrance lock to Regent's Canal Dock, and at the mouth to Limekiln Dock, forming part of the Thames riverfront walk.

Scale

The scale varies throughout the area. In general, buildings are relatively low, and the historic terraces are between 2 and 4 storeys. The warehouses around Limekiln Dock are approximately the same height. At the west end of the area, the redeveloped Paper Mill Wharf is six storeys, and to the east, parts of the new development at Dundee Wharf rise to 11 storeys. On the eastern border of the area, the Canary Riverside development is set on a podium, rising to a total height of approximately 15 storeys. This contrasts with the rest of the area, although it is at a significant distance from the historic core of the Conservation Area.

Views

Previously lined by buildings either side, Narrow Street now opens out to the north, creating a historically uncharacteristic sense of space and providing views of riverfront buildings across open areas in Limehouse Basin and Ropemakers Fields. Views of the river are glimpsed between buildings lining the Thames over narrow steps and inlets, with open views across the river provided at the wider openings of the former dock entrance. This maintains a visual connection with historic canals and inland docks. Riverfront access brings the Thames path across the mouth of Limekiln Dock over a dramatic footbridge affording good views along the rear of the converted warehouses lining the tidal inlet.

Summary

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from the 18th century and much earlier. The character and appearance of the area, as described in this appraisal, define its special qualities. There are a few gap sites and some minor inappropriate buildings in the Conservation Area, but overall these have little impact on the qualities that led to its designation.

2. Management Guidelines

Overview

This Management Plan has been prepared in consultation with the community, to set out the Borough's commitment to high quality management of Conservation Areas and their settings. The Development Design and Conservation Team operates within the context of the Development and Renewal Directorate of the Council, alongside Major Projects, Development Control, Strategy and Building Control.

Areas are as much about history, people, activities and places as they are about buildings and spaces. Preserving and enhancing the Borough's architectural and historic built heritage over the next decades is of vital importance in understanding the past and allowing it to inform our present and future.

Conservation Areas also promote sustainability in its widest sense. The Council is committed to this in the Core Strategy of its Local Development Framework (LDF). The re-use of historic buildings and places is environmentally responsible as it protects the energy and resources embodied in them and combats global warming.

Consideration of appropriate amendments to the boundary of the Conservation Area, and recommendations for additions to the register of listed buildings, either the statutory or local list, will be considered by the Council.

Who is this document for?

This is an inclusive document which will engage with many different people and organisations. It will depend on the support of the community to achieve its objectives. It is aimed primarily at the residents, businesses, developers and others living and working in the area. The Conservation Area belongs to its residents, as well as the whole community, and their priorities will be reflected in these documents after the consultation process.

The document has also been prepared to align conservation objectives within different parts of the council, and provide a single point of reference for the management of the area. It represents our shared commitment to conserve the special architectural and historic character, and to help manage sensitive new development and refurbishment where appropriate to successfully preserve and enhance the quality and character of the area.

Outline Guidance on Applications

Before carrying out any work in this area, you will need to apply for consent even for minor work such as replacing railings. These consents include planning, listed building and Conservation Area consent, as well as others for work such as felling trees.

When planning applications in a Conservation Area are decided, the planning authority will pay special attention to whether the character of the area is preserved or enhanced. The character of Narrow Street is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In Narrow Street, as in other Conservation Areas, planning controls are more extensive than normal. Consent is required to demolish any building, and a higher standard of detail and information is required for any application. When applying for listed building consent, please note that all parts of the building, including its interior walls, ceilings and all other internal features, are protected. Some buildings are nationally (statutorily) listed, and some are locally listed by the Borough to indicate buildings that the Borough wishes to protect.

The exact information required will vary with each application, but in general applications must include:

- A clear design statement explaining the reasons behind the various architectural, masterplanning or other design decisions.
- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings

- Drawings, including construction details, produced at larger scale (eg. 1:50 or 1:20) clearly indicating the nature of the work proposed.
- Additional detail regarding materials and construction.
- Photos of the condition of existing building (including details where appropriate).

More details are available on the Tower Hamlets website. If in any doubt, the Council welcomes and encourages early requests for advice or information.

When alterations are proposed to listed buildings, complying with the building regulations can be particularly complex, and early consideration of building control issues can help identify potential problems early in the process.

Policies Relevant to the Conservation Area and how they are Implemented:

Any new development should have regard to national, regional and local planning policy.

- At the national level, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Tower Hamlets to designate Conservation Areas in “areas of special architectural or historic interest”, and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. National policy for planning and the historic environment is set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15).
- At the regional level, policy 4B.1 of the London Spatial Development Strategy (or London Plan) states that ‘The Mayor will seek to ensure that developments ... respect London’s built heritage.’
- At the local level, the new Local Development Framework (LDF) of Tower Hamlets states that ‘the Council will protect and enhance the historic environment of the borough’. The Core Strategy states as an objective that we will ‘Protect and celebrate our history and heritage by placing these at the heart of reinventing the Hamlets to enhance local distinctiveness, character and townscape.

- The riverside area is designated as an area of importance for nature conservation and archaeology, as well as being part of the Blue Ribbon network. Narrow St, the walkway in front of Paper Mill Wharf, and the access to Blythes Wharf are identified as strategic river walkways, which continue east across the swing bridge in front of Dundee Wharf.
- A strategic cycle route passes through Ropemakers Fields, across the Swing Bridge and towards Dundee Wharf.
- The Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan includes a small portion of the east of this Conservation Area, including the two large developments at the east. Canary Riverside is also included in the area designated as a 'major centre'.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Grade II

- Limehouse Cut, Entrance Walls
- The Grapes, 76 Narrow Street
- 78-86 Narrow Street
- 88 Narrow Street
- 90 Narrow Street
- 92 Narrow Street
- 94 Narrow Street
- 136-140 Narrow Street
- 142 Narrow Street
- Limehouse Wharf, 148 Narrow Street
- 80 Three Colt Street, London
- Limekiln Dock

Locally Listed Building

- 48 Narrow Street

Highways and Transportation Issues

The quality of the streetscape, the surface materials, street furniture and other features can all be integral parts of the character of Conservation Areas. Any work carried out should respect this historic character. Anyone involved in development which impacts on public spaces should refer to the Council's Street Design Guide, TfL's own Streetscape Guidance and English Heritage's 'Streets for All' document. The ongoing cost of maintenance should also be considered carefully.

Narrow St itself is the main thoroughfare through the area. The road surfacing does not match the exceptional quality of the architecture, and consideration should be given to very high quality improvement work and integrated traffic management.

Works by statutory services (gas, electricity, water etc) have the potential to damage historic ground surfaces or ancient underground structures. Early consultation with the conservation team is encouraged for any works.

Opportunities and Potential for Enhancement

The groups of buildings along Narrow St, at Nos. 76-94, and 136-150 form very high quality groups. The row of houses adjacent to 'The Grapes' public house is one of the best surviving examples of historic terraced housing in the Borough. Consideration should be given, in consultation with local residents, of introducing stricter planning controls to protect the quality and coherence of these groups. This will ensure that the general residential character is retained, whilst integrating some pub and employment use.

Consideration should also be given to restore the historic sense of enclosure along the northern street edge of Narrow Street.

The walkway in front of Paper Mill Wharf suffers from blank frontages at ground level. In any future refurbishment of the building, consideration should be given to the possibility of providing a more active frontage to the riverfront.

Although much less damaging than the earlier proposal to create the 'Northern Relief Road' through the centre of this area, the construction of the Limehouse Link and Canary Riverside left a mixed legacy at the eastern end of the Conservation Area. The riverside park makes a positive contribution to the area, but the road tunnel service building and the blank frontages to the north side of the Canary Riverside development at ground level are negative features. Options should be investigated for improving this area, while still preserving the quiet, residential character of the existing place.

Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

There are few large open spaces within the Conservation Area, except for the new riverside park at the eastern end of the development.

The Conservation Area extends to the centre of the Thames, and the long views towards the riverbank are significant. New development should not compromise the quality of these views.

All trees in Conservation Areas are protected, and some trees are also covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). Notice must be given to the authority before works are carried out to any tree in the Conservation Area, and some works require specific permission. More information can be found in the Council's Guide to Trees, and on the Tower Hamlets website. Carrying out works to trees without the necessary approval can be a criminal offence, and the Council welcomes early requests for advice.

Equalities:

Valuing diversity is one of the Council's core values, and we take pride in being one of the most culturally rich and diverse boroughs in the UK. This core value has driven the preparation of this document and will continue to inform changes to this document in the future. These values will also inform changes to buildings and places where this document provides guidance to ensure inclusivity for all sections of the community.

This Character Appraisal and Management Guidelines will support the Council's aims:

- a strong spirit of community and good race relations in Tower Hamlets.
- to get rid of prejudice, discrimination and victimisation within the communities we serve and our workforce
- to make sure that the borough's communities and our workforce are not discriminated against or bullied for any reason, including reasons associated with their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religious belief.

Please contact us if you feel that this document could do more to promote equality and further the interests of the whole community.

Publicity

The existence of the Conservation Area will be promoted locally to raise awareness of current conservation issues and to invite contributions from the community.

Consideration of Resources Needed to Conserve the Historic Environment:

The most effective way to secure the historic environment is to ensure that buildings can continue to contribute to the life of the local community, preferably funding their own maintenance and refurbishment. Commercial value can be generated directly from the building, through its use as a dwelling or office, or through its role in increasing the attractiveness of the area to tourists and visitors. However, it should be noted that economic reasons alone will not in themselves justify the demolition or alteration of a building in a Conservation Area. The Council will consider grant aid to historic buildings and places.

In order to meet today's needs without damaging the historic or architectural value of a building, a degree of flexibility, innovation and creative estate management may be required.

Ongoing Management and Monitoring Change:

To keep a record of changes within the area, dated photographic surveys of street frontages and significant buildings and views will be made every 5 years. Also, public meetings will be held every 5 years to maintain communications between all stakeholders and identify new opportunities and threats to the Conservation Area as they arise.

The Council recognises the contribution of the local community in managing Conservation Areas, and will welcome proposals to work collaboratively to monitor and manage the area.

In addition, the Borough's Annual Monitoring Report, prepared with the new Local Development Framework, will assess progress on the implementation of the whole Local Development Scheme, including policies relevant to conservation.

Enforcement Strategy:

Appropriate enforcement, with the support of the community, is essential to protect the area's character. The Council will take prompt action against those who carry out unauthorised works to listed buildings, or substantial or complete demolition of buildings within a Conservation Area. Unauthorised work to a listed building is a criminal offence and could result in a fine and/or imprisonment. Likewise, unauthorised substantial or complete demolition of a building within a Conservation Area is also illegal. It is therefore essential to obtain Conservation Area or Listed Building Consent before works begin.

If listed buildings are not maintained in good repair, then the Council can step in to ensure that relevant repairs are carried out. In some circumstances, the Council itself may undertake essential repairs and recover the cost from the owner. The Council has powers of compulsory purchase, if necessary to protect Listed Buildings.

The Council will enforce conservation law wherever necessary, and will consider the introduction of Article 4 Directions to remove Permitted Development Rights where appropriate.

Further Reading and Contacts

- The Survey of London, volume 43: Poplar, Mile End and the Isle of Dogs.
- The Buildings of England (London 5: East). Cherry, O'Brien and Pevsner.
- Docklands Heritage. LDDC 1989.

The Council encourages and welcomes discussions with the community about the historic environment and the contents of this document. Further guidance on all aspects of this document can be obtained on our website at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk or by contacting:

Tel: 020 7364 5009

Email: dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk

This document is also available in Libraries, Council Offices and Idea Stores in the Borough.

For a translation, or large print, audio or braille version of this document, please telephone 0800 376 5454. Also, if you require any further help with this document, please telephone 020 7364 5372.

Also, you may wish to contact the following organizations for further information:

English Heritage	www.english-heritage.org.uk
The Georgian Group	www.georgiangroup.org.uk
Victorian Society	www.victorian-society.org.uk
20 th Century Society	www.c20society.org.uk
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	www.spab.org.uk

Listed Buildings at Risk:

At this time we are not aware of any listed buildings at risk in the Conservation Area.

Any other threats to the Conservation Area

- Careful consideration needs to be given to the maritime character of the area when considering the design of new development.

Priorities for Action (1-5)

1. Re-introduce historic street surfaces.
2. Introduce Article 4 Directions to control inappropriate Permitted Development.
3. Improve safe access and views to the River Thames.
4. Protect the remaining commercial uses in the Conservation Area.
5. Protect and enhance existing street furniture.