



# Coldharbour

## Conservation Area

### 1. Character Appraisal

### 2. Management Guidelines

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

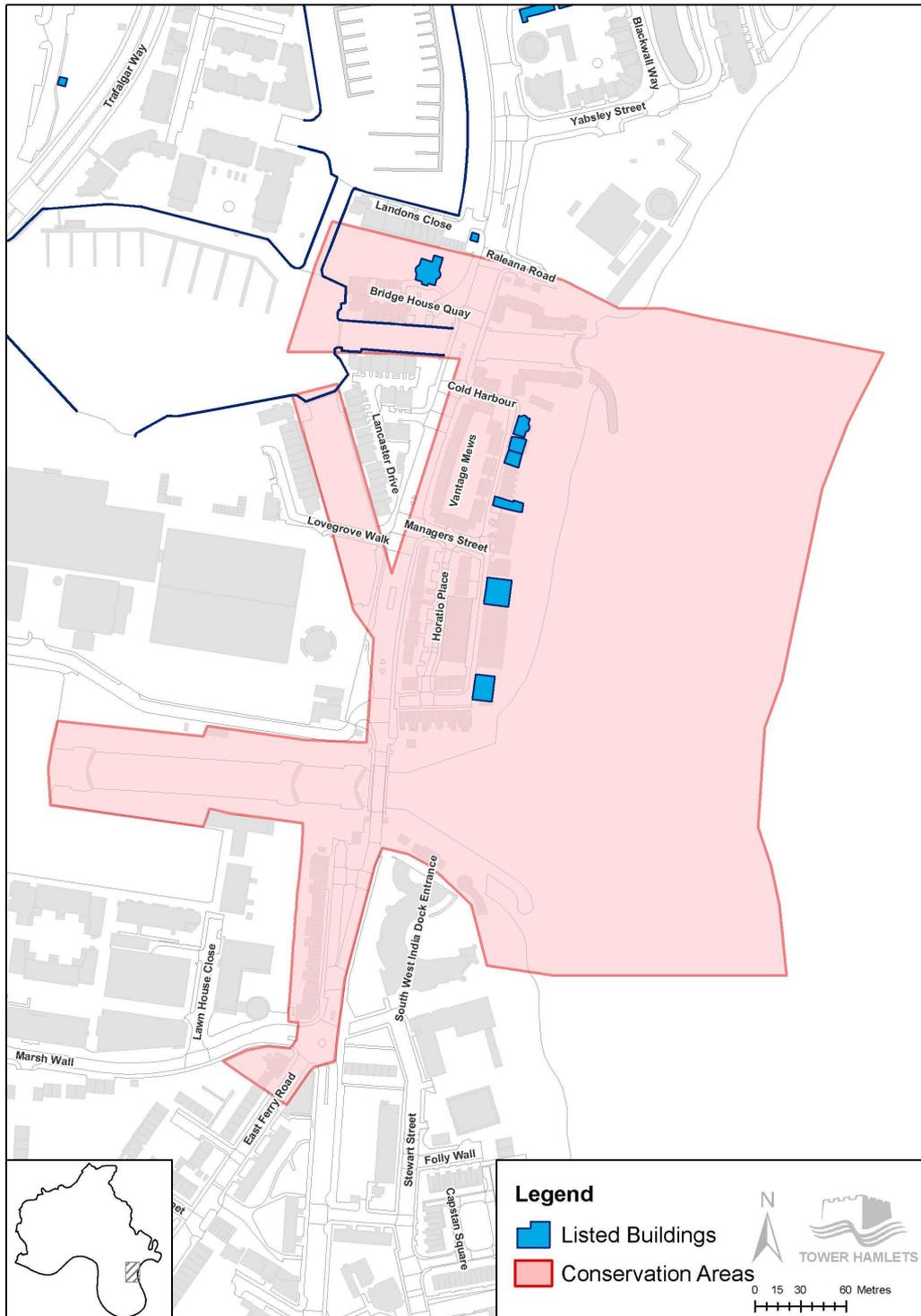
Adopted by Cabinet: 4th November 2009

## 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.



### COLDHARBOUR 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 Coldharbour Conservation Area was designated in December 1975 and amended to include Glen Terrace on Manchester Road in October 2008. It is located on the eastern side of the Isle of Dogs. It includes the two entrances into the West India Docks and survives as one of the last examples of the narrow streets which once characterised the river's perimeter. Its southern boundary includes the river entrances to the historic dry docks (now filled-in) and a number of late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century listed buildings.

The sole remaining fragment of the old hamlet of Blackwall, the Conservation Area secures the protection of the surviving historic townscape and guides the development of high quality residential buildings on adjacent sites.

## History

The principal commercial development on the Isle of Dogs occurred in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the completion of the two northern basins for the West India Dock Company in 1886, marking a new era of enclosed dock construction. The construction of the two separate dock basins (Import and Export), with independent access to the river, provided secure customs facilities for the Board of Excise at the docks and secure storage warehouses within their walls. The West India Import Dock (the largest of the period), Blackwall Basin and its entrance were opened in 1802. The Export Dock was opened in 1806, with all works associated with the West India Docks completed by 1809. The Millwall Dock Basins, located further south on the Isle of Dogs, were built between 1867-8.

The entrance lock into the grade 1 listed Blackwall Basin formed the most critical point of the original dock system, constructed to provide greater control over water levels and reduce silting. Its hasty construction, however, proved to be a constant concern for the dock company. The collapse of the outer wing wall in 1851 highlighted the dependency of dock operations on this principal entrance and provided a catalyst for

the enlargement of the South Dock east entrance in 1870. The Blackwall entrance subsequently fell into disrepair, its operation confined to level tide.

By the 1890s, the South Dock entrance was obsolete and the London and India Docks Joint Committee commissioned the reconstruction of the Blackwall entrance (1892-4) as part of a larger scheme for West India Dock System. The entrance was reopened in 1894 and included new lock gates and hydraulic machinery, installed to manage the lock water levels, much of which still survives.

Following the completion of a new South Dock east entrance and passages linking the Import, Export and South Docks in 1929, the Blackwall entrance closed between 1940-50 and reopened to service barge traffic only. Last used in 1968, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) removed the middle gate and hydraulically-operated bridge in 1987. The Blackwall Export Dock passage was filled-in when the Bellmouth passage was constructed in 1927-9. The Import passage survives.

The surviving historic buildings in the Coldharbour Conservation Area are contemporaries of the West India Dock development.

### **Character**

Most Docks were built with tidal entrance basins, replenished at high tide, which served as reservoirs to fill the entrance locks. The water-levels in the quays were held constant by communicating locks which separated the docks from the basins. These Dock waterways and their connections with the Thames provide significant defining elements of London's Docklands. The system of dock entrances, impounded water areas, canals, and associated artefacts have been preserved as evidence of the unique history of London's Docklands under the stewardship of the LDDC formed in 1980 to manage the regeneration of London's Docklands. These were returned to the stewardship of British Waterways in 1997.

The Conservation Area safeguards the two historic ship entrances, the northern entrance to the original West India Basin and associated docks, and the southern entrance to the canal which linked Blackwall Reach with Limehouse Reach forming the 'Isle of Dogs'. The two entrances are linked by the narrow 'Coldharbour', lined by a number of significant historic buildings, fronting the river to the east.

Early housing in the docklands area is now rare, and most housing that dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century is now protected by statutory listing. Overlooking the entrances to the West India Docks are the two Dock Official's houses. Bridge House (1819-20) designed by John Rennie for the 'Superintendent', or Principal Dockmaster of the West India Dock Company and Isle House (1825-6) designed by Rennie's son, are both elegant, detached residences adopting full-height bow windows which facilitates the monitoring of dock entrances.

An amalgamation of two houses by Samuel Granger (c.1820), Nelson House at No.3 Coldharbour presents a double-bowed river frontage behind a garden. No.15 Coldharbour was the home and workshop of Benjamin Granger Bluett, a joiner, mast and block maker. Constructed 1843-44 on the site of an earlier 1770 structure, the house is listed for its largely intact interior, and for its cultural interest as a rare survivor of purpose-built live/work accommodation in this area of the Docklands.

Glen Terrace, 575-615 Manchester Road dates from the 1880s. It was originally a terrace of 17 houses with four differently designed houses at the northern end (no's 609-615). The Terrace was named after the Glen Shipping Line which occupied the site for a short time prior to its development. The terrace offers a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.

The former Blackwall River Police Station (1893-4), located at No.19-19a, was designed by John Butler, Metropolitan Police Architect, and converted to residential use in the early 1980s. The successfully redeveloped Gun Public House sits at the southern end of Coldharbour, on a site historically occupied by a public house since the 1710s.

Coldharbour retains much of its original maritime character, its narrow 'corridor' preserved by appropriate new residential development to the west, and the sensitive redevelopment of surviving historic buildings.

### **Land Use**

Once defined by its 19<sup>th</sup> century port and shipbuilding activities, the Coldharbour townscape is now almost exclusively residential, with the retention and successful redevelopment of The Gun Public House as a local 'gastro-pub', attracting visitors from a wide area.

### **Open Space**

The landscaped grounds of Bridge House and Nelson House are protected by Tree Preservation Order area designations. The trees contained within these areas account for the only mature plantings in the Coldharbour area. Public access to the river front has been successfully integrated into the residential developments flanking each of the entrance locks, and around the perimeter of the Blackwall Basin and Graving Dock. Much of the character of narrow Coldharbour can be attributed to the historic landscaping materials, including cobbled street surfaces, cast iron bollards and lamp standards. The Docks are a Site of Borough importance for nature conservation.

### **Scale**

The scale of the new residential development along the western edge of Coldharbour has contributed to the historic sense of enclosure, replacing buildings of a similar scale on narrower plots. The setting of the Conservation Area, however, has been altered by the high-rise development surrounding it, making this surviving pocket all the more valuable and remarkable.

### **Views**

The Canary Wharf development forms a dramatic backdrop to the small stretch of buildings along the historic riverfront. Glimpses of the Millenium Dome on the southern

banks of the Thames are afforded between the riverfront buildings on Coldharbour, and framed by new residential development either side of the former Blackwall entrance lock.

### **Summary**

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. 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 Coldharbour is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.**

In Coldharbour, 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 area is included in the Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan of the LDF.
- The site immediately to the west at Wood Wharf is designated as a major development site.
- The riverfront is identified as a site of importance for nature conservation, and forms part of the Blue Ribbon network. Prestons Road is part of the strategic cycle network.
- The London Plan's Blue Ribbon Network policies apply to all Londons waterways

The following documents also offer advice regarding waterways:-

- TCPA Policy Advice Note for Inland Waterways – produced in conjunction with British Waterways (July 2009)
- Waterways and Development Plans (BW 2003)
- Waterways for Tomorrow (DETR 2000 presently being reviewed)
- Planning a future for the Inland Waterways (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council

## **Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area**

### **Grade 1**

- Blackwall Basin

### **Grade II**

- 24 Prestons Road
- 1 Cold Harbour
- 3 Cold Harbour
- 5 Cold Harbour
- 7 Cold Harbour
- 15 Cold Harbour
- 19 Cold Harbour
- Gun Tavern Public House, 27 Cold Harbour

## **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.

Whilst the cobblestone roads were replaced in Coldharbour, ongoing maintenance and controls must ensure that the original character is kept intact with appropriate road markings. There is potential for improvement along the length of Prestons Road on the western edge of the Conservation Area. The current road, with its expansive road markings, reservations, bollards and tall lighting posts does not convey any sense that it is passing a valuable piece of historic townscape. Enhancements could also improve the cycle network as well as the pedestrian experience.

Increasing car use threatens to overwhelm the street environment and dominate the Conservation Area. Road engineering has weakened street frontages, particularly on more recent housing developments in the area. Ways of reducing the impact of road engineering on the streetscape through more subtle alternatives to road markings, bollards, barriers and wide-radius kerbs should be investigated as part of any new development. Street furniture and the control of parking are aspects that should be improved in the area.

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 Wood Wharf Masterplan site to the west of the Conservation Area is identified for major new development. The preferred uses for the eastern part of this site are

residential, employment and public open space, and the border with the Conservation Area has been identified as sensitive.

New development proposals should have regard to the area's heritage as part of the mixed-use historic Blackwall village, with a mix of houses, the former River police station and the historic public house. While the area should remain predominantly residential, occasional small-scale workshops or studios would respect this heritage, providing that they are at a domestic scale and do not harm the residential character of the area. The Area Action Plan states that the provision of a wide variety of small and medium-sized business space, although in this Conservation Area it is likely that only small-scale business space would be appropriate.

### **Trees, Parks and Open Spaces**

There are no major parks in the Coldharbour Conservation Area, although there are many successful open spaces, particularly around the historic dock entrances.

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 LDF, 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 44: Poplar, Blackwall 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](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk) or by contacting:

Tel: 020 7364 5009

Email: [dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto: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	<a href="http://www.english-heritage.org.uk">www.english-heritage.org.uk</a>
The Georgian Group	<a href="http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk">www.georgiangroup.org.uk</a>
Victorian Society	<a href="http://www.victorian-society.org.uk">www.victorian-society.org.uk</a>
20 <sup>th</sup> Century Society	<a href="http://www.c20society.org.uk">www.c20society.org.uk</a>
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	<a href="http://www.spab.org.uk">www.spab.org.uk</a>

### **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**

- The development at Wood Wharf will have a significant impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

### **Priorities for Action (1-5)**

1. Produce Stakeholder's Guide.
2. Detailed Analysis of the setting of the Conservation Area.
3. Ongoing maintenance of historic street surfaces.
4. Introduce Article 4 directions to remove Permitted Development rights.
5. Further research into the history of the area.