



FORD SQUARE SIDNEY SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA

Character appraisal and management plan

Adopted October 2021



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PREFACE

What is a conservation area?

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 ensure that change preserves or enhances the specific character of these areas for everybody.

The special character of these areas does not come only from the quality of their individual buildings, but from the value of these buildings as a group and from their setting. Elements such as the historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries and characteristic building and paving materials all contribute to the familiar and cherished local scene.

What is the purpose of this document?

This document has been prepared to comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 69(1) which 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”. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan provides a detailed description of the area’s architectural and historic character and management guidelines on how this character should be preserved or enhanced in the context of appropriate ongoing change.

This document has also been prepared to support relevant strategic objectives contained within the council’s Conservation Strategy 2017 –2027 including objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 2.6.

Who is this document for?

This is an inclusive document which is intended to engage with many different people and organisations. It will depend on the support of the community to achieve its objectives.

The character appraisal and management plan is aimed primarily at the residents, businesses, developers and others living and working in the area. The document has also been prepared to align conservation objectives within different parts of the council, to help to meet the objectives of the Conservation Strategy and to 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 change constructively.

What is the status of this document?

This character appraisal and management plan has the status of planning guidance. It replaces the previous character appraisal and management guidelines adopted in 2007. It should be read in conjunction with Tower Hamlet's Local Plan and the London Plan. All planning applications for sites within the Ford Square / Sidney Square Conservation Area should be informed by this document. It is a material consideration when planning applications affecting the conservation area are assessed.

Equality and diversity

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 informed 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 and as such this document provides guidance to ensure inclusivity for all members of the community.

This character appraisal and management plan document will support the council's aims set out below:

- Creation of a strong spirit of community and good race relations in Tower Hamlets.
- The removal of prejudice, discrimination and victimisation within the communities we serve and our workforce.
- To ensure 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.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area was designated in December 1985. The boundary was amended in 2021, with two areas removed and two areas added.

The Ford Square / Sidney Square Conservation Area sits centrally between Whitechapel Road/Mile End Road to the north and Commercial Road to the south between Whitechapel and Stepney. This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from the 19th century.

The character and appearance of the area, as described in the appraisal in the first part of the document, define its special qualities. The second part of the document, the Management Plan, contains relevant policy and guidance as well as development guidelines intended to ensure that future change is sensitive to the areas special character.

1.1. Location and setting

The Ford Square / Sidney Square Conservation Area is located centrally within Whitechapel (one of twenty-four distinct 'places' identified within the Local Plan), in the west of the borough between Whitechapel Road/Mile End Road and Commercial Road. The two open squares (Ford Square and Sidney Square) provide public open space and welcome breathing space within the densely built-up area, between the two key roads.

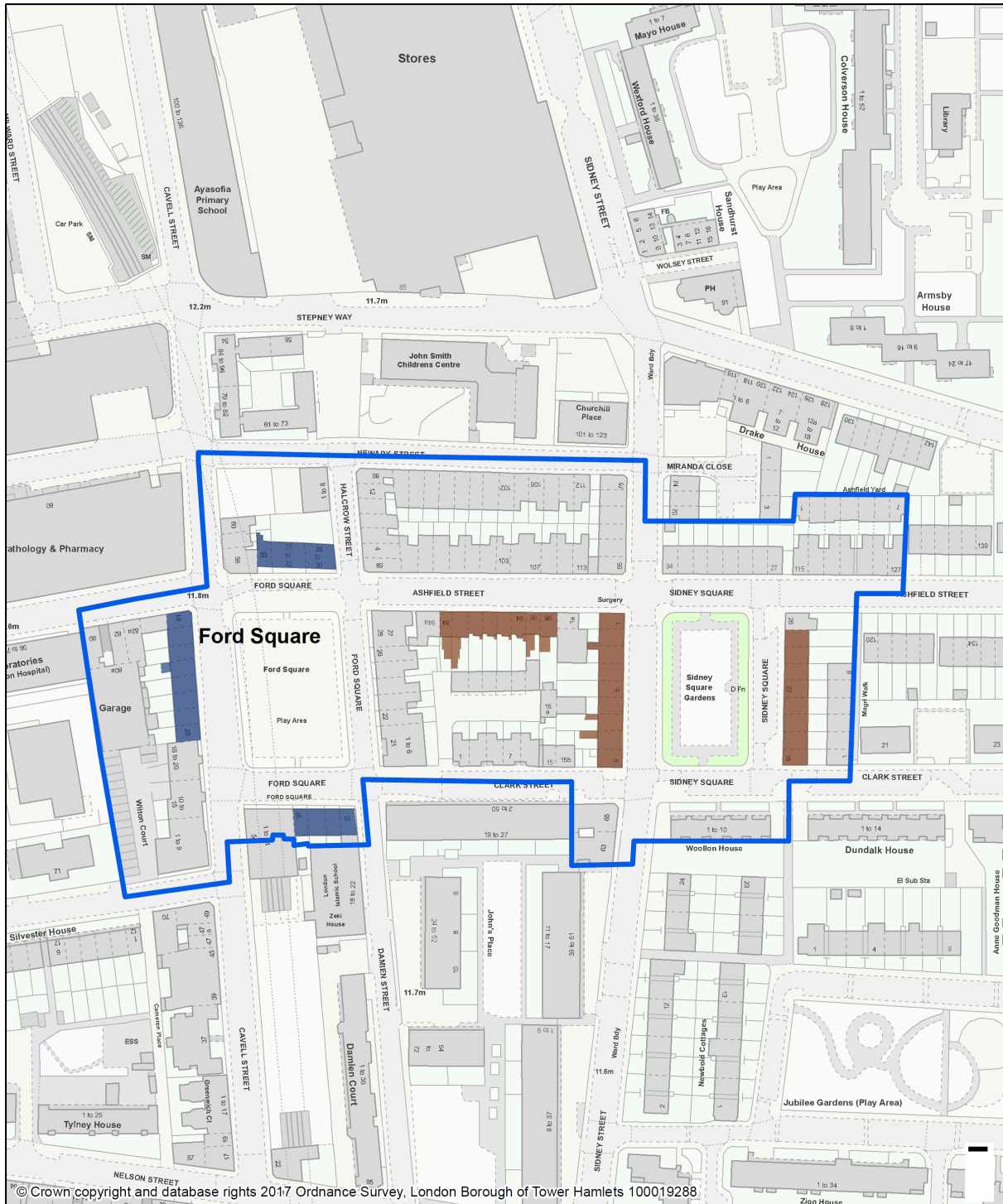
The area to the north is generally characterised by industrial buildings or residential buildings with much longer building frontages and larger plots. To the east and south, the area is largely characterised by large blocks of flats and housing estates, often

positioned within larger sites and surrounded by open space. To the west is the Royal London Hospital site which is characterised with large hospital and institutional buildings of a much greater scale than those within the conservation area.

The boundaries of the conservation area are largely defined by the positioning of the two squares, extending north up to Newark Street and slightly to the east to encompass the Victorian terraced houses on Ashfield Street. Most buildings in the conservation area are terraced houses set on long, narrow plots, presenting a narrow street frontage in relation to their depth. The area is densely built-up in terms of building footprints, with some terraces having buildings to the rear such as Nos. 86-96 Ashfield Street, Nos. 115-127 (odd) Ashfield Street and Nos. 18-23 (cons.) Sidney Square. The consistent frontages allow very few gaps thus restricting views through to the rear. The exception to this is to the rear of Nos. 1-9 and 18-26 Sidney Square, where the lack of extensions to the rear allows views of rear gardens and through to the rear elevations of the terraces.

The variety in the size of plots and the varied positioning of buildings on plots within the area surrounding the conservation area provides a strong contrast to the more regular plan form of the historic development within the conservation area. Outside the conservation area, to the south and east, residential blocks with long consistent, frontages and irregular positioning on sites are common, with some stand-alone blocks of five storeys or more. This continues to the north where there are also some industrial buildings. To the west the Royal London Hospital buildings are of a much larger scale, with large, dominant bulk and mass.

FORD SQUARE SIDNEY SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA



FORD SQUARE SIDNEY SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA

- Conservation Area
- Statutory Listed Buildings
- Locally Listed Buildings

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

2.1. Evolution of the area

When the Royal London Hospital was opened in the mid-C18 a variety of small developments began around it, but until the early C19, there were large areas of open land to the north and south of Whitechapel Road. A west-east footpath running through the fields to the south of the hospital and along what is now Stepney Way, provided part of a route from Whitechapel Church to Stepney Church. The individual character of the area changed from the early C19 as developments spread north from Commercial Road. In the 1820s, the estate of John Sidney Hawkins was built on the narrow strip of land to the east of the London Hospital, running from Whitechapel Road down to Ford Square (previously Bedford Square). Both Ford Square and Sidney Square were developed on former fields in the 1820s as private gardens for the residents of the terraces surrounding each square.

Others, including the estate of Henry Colet, Lord Mayor of London and the Mercers' Company Surveyor George Smith, began developing land around Stepney Way from the 1830s. This development took the form of two-storey terraced houses. Smaller areas of development continued at Mile End. The surviving terraces to the east and west sides of Sidney square are part of this 1820's development.

The two storey terrace to the southern side of Ashfield Street (Nos. 84-98 (even)) between the two squares dates from the early C19, with that to the northern side of the street and the rest of that block ((Nos. 89-113 Ashfield Street (odd), 4-12 Halcrow Street (even), 86-112 Newark Street (even) and 65-75 Sidney Street (odd)) , as well as that to the north east of Sidney Square (Nos. 115- 127 Ashfield Street (odd) built slightly later. By 1839 the area in and around what was to become the conservation area was densely built-up with terraced housing. Some houses had a retail or commercial use at ground floor and some corner buildings were public houses.

During World War II a number of bombs were dropped in the area (in 1940/41), causing significant damage to the townscape. Two bombs were dropped on Cavell Street, one leaving the vacant site at the corner of Cavell Street and Newark Street (partly built on land fronting Halcrow Street) and the other causing damage to the 1820s terrace to the western side of Ford Square. The damage caused by the bomb

dropped in 1940 is still visible to this terrace; with the end of the terrace (on the corner of Ashfield Street) partially rebuilt, with sections of rebuilding/ newer brickwork to the rest of the terrace, particularly the northern end. Another bomb was dropped on Sidney Square, with patches of brickwork showing signs of rebuilding to the upper levels of the western side of the square. The terrace to the north of Sidney Square and historic development to the north of this were also lost as a result of bomb damage.

The only side of Ford square that retains part of the 1820s development is the terrace to the west. Later stuccoed terraces exist to the north and south of the square dating from the mid-late nineteenth century, with 1990s housing to the eastern side. To Sidney Square it is only the east and west sides that survive, with 1990s imitations to the north and Woollon House, part of the 1960s estate to the south of the conservation area, to the south. The private gardens within each square were purchased by the London County Council and Stepney Borough Council in the early C20 and were opened to the public at this time.

2.1. Historic and architectural significance of buildings

The majority of buildings within the conservation area contribute positively to the special character of the conservation area.

There are a number of listed buildings within the conservation area. Relevant Historic England list descriptions are available at:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

Grade II Listed Buildings

Nos. 84-98 Ashfield Street

Nos. 84-98 Ashfield Street is a terrace built c.1826-7 with an impressive composition that is unusual in lower-class housing of the early nineteenth century. Buildings comprise of two storeys to central bays, flanked by a three storey building at either end of the terrace. The remaining buildings beyond No.84 are two storeys in height. Buildings are two rooms deep.

The central buildings are London Stock brick laid in Flemish bond with slate roofs and brick chimney stacks. Buildings at either end of the terrace are stucco.

Nos. 88-96 have semi-circular arches over blocked doorways and windows, flat gauged brick arches over first floor windows, some with 12-paned (six over six) timber sashes, all set in semi-circular arched reveals. An historic boot scraper survives to No. 86.

Nos. 84 and 98 are each of two bays and have stucco fronts with rusticated ground floors, arched doorways, flat arches over framed 12-paned (six over six) sashes, moulded cornices beneath parapets and canted bays to the rear with sash windows under gauged brick heads.

Nos. 1-9 Sidney Square

This three storey terrace with basements forms the western of the two sides of Sidney Square that survive. Built in the 1820s, these stock brick buildings have slate roofs behind coped parapets. All (except No. 5 where it has been lost) have entrances with fluted pilasters, within which are panelled doors with arched fanlights. Ground floor windows and doors are round headed. Above the ground floor a stone string course sits below timber sash windows with decorative iron balconettes. Windows are predominantly 4-paned (two over two) timber sashes.

Nos. 18-25 Sidney Square

This three storey terrace with basements on the eastern side of Sidney Square is one of the two original sides of the square to survive. Built in the 1820s, this stock brick terrace has slate roofs behind coped parapets. Front doors with fluted pilasters; arched fanlights. Ground floor windows and doors are round headed. Above the ground floor a stone string course sits below timber sash windows with decorative iron balconettes. Windows are predominantly 4-paned (two over two) timber sashes.

Locally Listed Buildings

Nos. 67 – 81 Cavell Street are three storey early nineteenth century terraced houses. The ground floor has arched windows and doorways with quarter fluted columns. The first floor has windows set within an arched recess..

Nos. 16-19 Ford Square

Nos. 16-19 Ford Square are three storey Victorian townhouses with part sunken basements. These modestly designed townhouses form the southern of two groups of surviving terraced houses located to the north and south of Ford Square. These stucco buildings have rusticated ground floors and basements with plain upper floors, semi-recessed entrance doors set within plain columns with fanlights over. The roofline comprises a consistent parapet, concealing butterfly roofs. Windows are predominantly 4-paned (two over two) timber sashes at ground floor and 12-paned (six over six) to upper floors.

Nos. 29-33 Ford Square

Nos. 29-33 Ford Square are three storey Victorian townhouses with part sunken basements. These modestly designed townhouses form the northern of two groups of surviving terraces located to the north and south of Ford Square. These stucco buildings have rusticated ground floors and basements with plain upper floors, semi-recessed entrance doors set within plain columns with fanlights over. The roofline comprises a consistent parapet, concealing butterfly roofs. Windows are predominantly 4-paned (two over two) timber sashes.

2.2. Archaeological significance

Much of the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area is included within a Tier 2 Archaeological Priority Area (APA) as identified in Historic England's update to APAs, completed for Tower Hamlets in October 2017. APAs highlight where important archaeological interest might be located based on the history of the area and previous archaeological investigations. APAs in Tier 2 are those that the Greater London Historic Environment Record holds specific evidence indicating the presence or likely presence of heritage assets of archaeological interest.

The Mile End APA focusses on the medieval and post medieval historic Mile End settlement as well as a stretch of London's Civil War defences due to the discovery of a large contemporary ditch just to the south. It runs from the eastern boundary of Whitechapel, one mile east of Aldgate and ends at the Mile End Road's junction with Cambridge Heath Road. Planning decisions are expected to make a balanced judgement for non-designated assets considered of less than national importance considering the scale of any harm and the significance of the asset.

For more information please see the Archaeological Priority Guidelines published in July 2016 available on the Historic England website. The website also provides a link to the Tower Hamlets Archaeological Priority Areas Appraisal produced by Historic England (2017), where there are further descriptions and maps of the APAs.

3.0 TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1. General historic character and plan form

The piecemeal development of London's East End contrasts with the planning that occurred in the west of the city. The area which forms the conservation area, however, was developed in a relatively coherent way, with two main styles of houses of a consistent scale, dating from the C19 as identified in the following section (4.0 Architectural Character). The mid-late C20 houses in place of those that were demolished are generally sympathetic in terms of scale, proportions and materials. This is particularly true of that to the northern side of Sidney Square, built in the 1990s.

The area is characterised by narrow roads, generally straight and in a formal grid formation, surrounding the two squares, which provide large areas of open space. The street frontages are generally consistent, with the arrangement of terraces allowing some limited views through to rear gardens and rear elevations. The terraces provide a largely consistent plot width, which contributes significantly to the coherent character and appearance of the conservation area.

3.2. Layout and plan form

Buildings are laid out around two garden squares, which form the main focus of the conservation area. The historic urban fabric of the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area is still present and is demonstrated by the tight perimeter block structure, historic rear yards and gardens and fine grain of narrow plots. Plots are typically rectangular in shape and building footprints generally cover between a quarter and a half of the plot. Although there are some instances where later unsympathetic additions and extensions almost completely fill plots, this type of plot coverage is atypical and should not be used to guide future development.

In locations such as Ashfield Street, Sidney Square and Clark Street, the internal areas within the larger blocks contain ancillary structures. These internal areas can be accessed directly from the street, via alleyways or through (now gated) passageways through the terrace.

Streets have strongly defined edges created by continuous building lines built at the back of the pavement. In this conservation area buildings typically have narrow frontage widths of around 5m wide.

Corner plots on Halcrow Street, Sidney Street, Newark Street and Ashfield Street have strongly defined chamfered corners which hint at the original ground floor commercial use and shopfronts. Although these corner units are now in residential use, evidence of historic features such as their timber fascia panels and cornicing can still be seen. Very few commercial units survive within the conservation area and only one original shopfront to No. 58 Cavell Street. Most original shopfronts have been infilled or replaced by inappropriate modern design.

3.3. Density and land uses

The conservation area measures 31,773m² in area with a total of 188 buildings. This represents approximately 10 units per 1,690m². The squares cover a large area of the conservation area, with Ford Square measuring just over 1,700m² and Sidney Square measuring just over 1,300m².

The land use character of the area is predominantly residential in nature. This land use plays an essential role in reinforcing the character of the open spaces within this

area. In addition to the residential uses, a few small scale commercial units can be found on Cavell Street, and on the corner of Halcrow and Ashfield Street.

Despite development pressure from large scale, low density development to the south and large scale, high density development to the north, the conservation area retains its historic small scale, high density form characteristic of nineteenth century residential developments.

3.4. Building heights and massing

Despite development pressure for more tall buildings and an existing group of taller buildings to the northwest of Ford Square, the conservation area still maintains its consistent historic scale, height and massing, which comprises of low-rise two, three and four storeys plus basement terraced housing. A number of houses in the conservation area have historic basements, these include the 1820s terraces to Sidney Square, the two storey listed terrace to Ashfield Street and the terraces to the north and south of Ford Square.

The majority of buildings in the conservation area are three storey townhouses. The townhouses to the north and south of Ford Square are also three storeys high, however these have full basements that are setback from the edge of the plot behind an upstand with railings. In the block between Ford Square and Sidney Square, on the southern side of Ashfield Street, a small group of two storey terraces interspersed between a few three storey townhouses can also be found.

There are also a number of red brick terraced houses of three storeys with a dominant attic storey. These are located on the northern side of Ashfield Street, the southern side of Newark Street and along the eastern side of Halcrow Street. On Sidney Street these red brick terraces also have semi-basements, with windows directly onto the pavement and small lightwells below grilles at pavement level. In addition to these, a modern four storey flatted development with mansard roof is also located on the northern side of Halcrow Street.

3.5. Topography and important views

The flat topography within the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area restricts opportunities for long range views to areas outside of the conservation area. The exception to this is the north side of Ford Square near the junction with Halcrow Street, where the gentle curve of the street allows for unrestricted long range unfolding views of the City as you progress westward toward Cavell Street. At the junction of Cavell Street and Ashfield Street views west are terminated by the Gherkin and the Leadenhall Building within the City.

Most streets offer mid-range views to areas within the conservation area and local areas just outside it. Views within the conservation area are restricted by the form of the townscape. Mid-range townscape views along Newark Street, Ashfield Street and Clark Street highlight the repetition and rhythm of continuous terraces. Views looking west along Newark Street are terminated by the visual bulk and mass of the Royal London Hospital complex. From Ashfield Street serial views of some of the more modestly sized hospital buildings are progressively revealed.

At the eastern end of Clark Street a gap between buildings provides an opportunity for glimpses of the ancillary buildings in the centre of the block. From this location attractive layered views of stock brick London roofs belonging to the Grade II listed terrace on Ashfield Street are juxtaposed with the simple glazed lightweight form of the rear of Elektra House. Beyond the listed terraces, views of the red brick terraces, also on Ashfield Street, with their prominent dormers, chimneys and clay pots combine to form a visually rich and interesting roofscape. In this conservation area views of the historic roofscape are hard to find and are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

3.6. Landscape character

The framed views formed by the very large mature tree canopies are a key element of the conservation area's landscape character. Inside the conservation area, trees act as focal points directing views toward Ford Square and Sidney Square, and the groups of listed terraces.

Outside of the conservation area, slight changes in the alignment and orientation of the streets limit views from adjacent streets into the conservation area. From Stepney

Way the combination of the low rise buildings and the generous spaces between buildings allows for views of the façade including the roof storey of the red brick terrace along Newark Street. Generally in this location, the narrowness of the streets and the height of the buildings limit opportunities to view the whole façade. Varden Street's straight linear layout, orientation and the gaps between buildings allow for unfolding serial views of the mature tree canopy within Ford Square.

4.0 ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Almost all buildings within the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area make a positive contribution to the special character of the conservation area. These buildings are identified as positive contributors due to their siting, building envelope and massing, appearance and materials. All buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area should be preserved and where alterations are proposed these should enhance their contribution to the conservation area. Demolition of any positive contributors will not be supported. Equally, any alteration that is not sympathetic to the special character of the conservation area will not be supported.

4.1 Building typology and form

The conservation area contains a range of architectural styles which reflect the growth of the area. Buildings along the main streets within the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area consist of groups of terraced houses. Generally, buildings have a consistent scale, with some minor variation in building heights and frontage widths. The relatively narrow plot widths and variation in architectural detailing give buildings within the terraces subtle vertical emphasis. In locations such as Ashfield Street, Newark Street, Sidney Street and Halcrow Street the red brick terraced houses and their visually prominent attic storey, with pitched roofs and dormers, create a strongly defined sense of verticality and rhythm.

The residential terraces surrounding both Ford Square and Sidney Square define the original early C19 three storey scale, generally with arched doorways and arched windows at ground floor level. The terraces within the conservation area are generally modest in their scale and detailing, adapted for the workers of the east end. Grade II listed terraces line the east and west sides of Sidney Square and also along the street

to the west at Nos. 84-98 Ashfield Street. Built in 1826-7, these predominantly stock brick, with some stucco, two bayed houses link the formal layouts of Sidney Square with Ford Square. This terrace forms an impressive composition that is unusual in early C19 lower-class housing. The Grade II listed terraces flanking the western and eastern edges of Sidney Square at Nos.1-9 and 18-25 Sidney Square are early C19 housing of stock brick with coped parapets.

Locally listed terraces surround Ford Square to the north, south and west. Nos.16-19 Ford Square and Nos. 29-33 Ford Square are late C18 and Georgian in style, with rendered masonry walls and valley roofs. The Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area also includes Regency terraces at Nos. 67–81 Cavell Street to the west of the conservation area.

4.2 Key architectural features and building materials

The area is characterised by the use of high quality materials and finely detailed buildings. There is a prevailing use of red and yellow stock brick; however stucco exteriors can also be found on the terraces to the north and south of Ford Square.

Key architectural features include slate or clay roof tiles (some buildings have scallop edged roof tiles), parapet walls which hide London roofs, stone door hood moulds, string courses above ground floor, decorative ironwork balconettes at first floor, contrasting brick lintels, relieving arches, segmental arches, recessed entrances, quarter- fluted or plain columns, brick quoins, stucco and rusticated flank walls, keystones, stone cills, and prominent dormers. Windows (including tripartite windows at ground floor level to the red brick terraced houses on Ashfield Street, Newark Street, Sidney Street and Halcrow Street) are predominantly timber sash in a variety of glazing patterns. Prominent chimneys including stacks with clay pots, and terracotta ventilation hoods prevail at roof level.

5.0 PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE

5.1. Streets, roads and yards

The streets, roads and yards within this conservation area are focused around Ford Square, Sidney Square and the blocks which surround them. The conservation area retains its historic street pattern consisting of a network of roads running from north to south and east to west.

Typically, the widest streets (Cavell Street and Sidney Street) have a north to south orientation and range between 11 metres and 13 metres in width. The widths of these streets denote their importance as links to Whitechapel Road to the north and Commercial Road to the south, both of which are important historic thoroughfares to the docks and the City of London. With a width of from 9 metres to just over 12 metres, streets such as Ashfield Street, Clark Street and Newark Street with an east west orientation have slightly narrower widths.

Indications of the narrow alleyways and yards within the centre of the blocks that lead to historic yards at the centre of blocks are evident at Ashfield Yard behind Nos. 115 - 127 Ashfield Street and to the rear of Nos. 1-9 Clark Street and Nos. 84-98 Ashfield Street.

5.2. Street surfaces

The main streets within the conservation area generally have large format concrete paving slabs on footways bounded by granite kerbs. Footways along Sidney Square have Yorkstone slabs with granite kerbs. Carriageways typically consist of asphalt and entry treatments at junctions are marked with the use of block pavements. At Halcrow Street evidence of historic granite cobbles with low granite kerbs has been preserved. In other areas cobbles can be seen below damaged areas of tarmac.

5.3. Street furniture

The conservation area has a mix of contemporary and replica historic street furniture of varying designs. The street scene is generally free from clutter however there is a proliferation of cannon and fluted Doric style bollards (including bell bollards) and posts for signage in areas surrounding junctions around Ford Square and Sidney Square.

Standard lamp columns and lanterns can be seen in areas such as Cavell Street, Newark Street, Stepney Way, Stepney Street and Clark Street, whilst in areas around Ford Square and Sidney Square Victorian style decorative columns and lanterns have been installed.

5.4. Ford Square and Sidney Square

This conservation area is defined by two open spaces - Ford Square and Sidney Square. Each square is surrounded by rows of townhouses that provide a sense of enclosure. These are considered as two important formal elements in the urban landscape and this is reflected in their protection against development above ground by the London Squares Preservation Act of 1931. The Act protected over 400 squares, gardens and enclosures, restricting their use to 'ornamental pleasure grounds or grounds for play, rest and recreation'. The Act prevents the construction of any building or structure on these open spaces that is not directly related to the use or maintenance of the open space.

The central gardens within Ford Square and Sidney Square were purchased by the London County Council and opened to the public in 1904. The total cost was £13,321, less a contribution of £3,000 from the vendor, with the LCC contributing £8,731 and Stepney Borough Council £1,500. The cost of adapting the two gardens was £685. Ford Square and Sidney Square have features in common such as simple metal post and rail fences, behind which a soft landscaped border around the perimeter is planted with mature London Plane and Lime trees. Despite the similarities and utilitarian railings, each square has a distinctive character. Ford square, the slightly larger of the two squares, has an informal character which is reinforced by its predominantly hard landscaped centre. Ford Square has a less intimate feel, which is reinforced by the wide streets that surround it. With the exception of the terraces along Cavell Street, which face directly onto the street, buildings on the north, east and south of the square are setback from the edge of plots and separated from the street by a simple upstand topped with a post and rail.

By contrast Sidney Square has a grassed soft landscaped interior that is intersected by formally laid out paths and neatly kept hedges that give the square a sense of formality. Buildings around the square open directly onto the street. This relationship

creates a strong link between the buildings and the open space. The juxtaposition between the built environment and the open space reinforces the sense of enclosure and gives the space a serene quality which makes an important, positive contribution to the character

5.5. Open space and greenery

In addition to the two squares, there are small areas of green space to either end of Woollon House at the southern end of Sidney Square. The public footpath that runs between Woollon House and Dundalk House (not within the conservation area) leads through areas of private communal green space and gardens down to Jubilee Gardens; a post-war square surrounded on three sides by housing, making reference to Sidney and Ford Squares. There is one other notable area of public open space outside the boundary to the south west - Cavell Street Gardens on Cavell Street. This is a small green space with large mature trees and shrubs, providing an oasis within the densely built-up context in a similar way that Ford Square and Sidney Square do.

5.6. Street trees

Street trees are a characteristic feature of this conservation area. Trees are predominantly London Planes, some of which are mature with extensive canopy spread, whilst others are more modest in size. Regardless of size, each of these trees plays an important role in greening and softening the townscape.

In addition to street trees, areas with the highest concentration and most mature trees can be found in Ford Square and Sidney Square. Ford Square's green character is reinforced by the large and statuesque London Planes which surround its perimeter. The green character of Sidney Square is also created by the extensive shrub and tree planting within the square and around its perimeter. Here the combination of mature London Planes and Lime trees also provide a sense of enclosure and create a quiet and tranquil setting.

Although both squares can only be seen from a short distance away, the mature tree canopy creates a blanket of green which can be seen from a considerable distance along Clark Street, Cavell Street, Ashfield Street, Sidney Street, Damien Street and Newark Street.

6.0 HERITAGE AUDIT

Although the conservation area is generally in a good state of repair, there are areas where opportunities exist for the enhancement of the conservation area. In these areas a lack of investment, development within the setting, inappropriate alterations and the loss of historic features cumulatively threaten the special character and appearance of the conservation area. It is these same threats which, if addressed, offer the opportunity for significant enhancement.

The condition of the building fabric within the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area is generally good, with some areas where redecoration and repointing is required. The building material is largely consistent, predominantly using brick with some areas of stucco to Ford Square. Timber windows prevail, with many historic timber sashes surviving. Most buildings immediately abut the pavement edge, but some with small front garden or lightwells are bounded with a variety of railing designs. The largely consistent material palette within the conservation area contributes significantly to its architectural and historic significance.

6.1 Lack of investment and inappropriate alterations

Often a lack of investment can result in a gradual deterioration of the built fabric as maintenance is reduced and the cost of repairs minimised. The exteriors of historic buildings within the area feature rich materials and details which are a major part of its historic and architectural character, but which are vulnerable to neglect and poorly considered change. The opportunity exists to reverse this change with carefully considered investment, which retains the surviving historic fabric and builds upon it.

Some buildings were built with render or stucco applied to the exterior. In several cases the render is in poor condition due to the lack of maintenance or poorly carried out repairs.

In several cases, original brick facades have been painted, particularly at ground floor, to the detriment of the appearance of the building.

Some areas of the public realm are in a poor state of repair or have been covered over using unsympathetic materials, such as asphalt.

6.2. Loss of historic features

Window frames are key historic features. The installation of inappropriate windows has detracted from the appearance of several buildings within the conservation area.

The appearance of some buildings has suffered from the removal of historic architectural features, namely historic shop or pub fronts and in some cases windows and railings. This has harmed the character and appearance of the conservation area. In some instances historic photographs or surviving historic features or precedents offer the opportunity for appropriate reinstatement.

6.3. Shopfronts, fascia signs and associated features

The buildings are predominantly in residential use, but there are currently several retail units in use within the conservation area. These are Nos. 63 and 65 Sidney Street, No. 89 Ashfield Street (on the corner of Halcrow Street and Ford Square), No. 49 Cavell Street and No. 60 Cavell Street. There is also a shopfront surviving to no. 58 Cavell Street, but this does not appear to be in use as a shop and may be linked to the residential use above.

The active retail units generally feature poorly designed replacement shopfronts and fascia signs which take no account of the architectural character of the host building and thus detract from the host building and the area generally. The shop at No. 89 Ashfield Street retains the cornice over the shopfront, but otherwise very few original features survive to the shopfronts within the conservation area.

6.4. Development outside the conservation area boundary affecting its setting

The Ford Square Conservation Area displays aesthetic, historical and communal value, with the significance of the existing setting contributing greatly to the area's overall heritage value. This is derived from the ability of the viewer to comprehend and appreciate significant elements of a planned urban ensemble, without the imposition of large scale modern development.

Larger scale development on the edges of the conservation area does not contribute positively to its character. The increase in scale of the developments close to the boundary of the conservation area threatens to cause significant harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area. This is particularly the case to the north-west, where the large scale buildings associated with the Royal London Hospital border the conservation area boundary and cause harm to the setting of the conservation area.

The overall scale of the conservation area continues beyond the boundary in most directions but the Royal London Hospital block introduces a much larger scale in some views. In most directions, the setting has a neutral impact on significance of the conservation area, but the Royal London Hospital block is harmful to the aesthetic and historical significance of parts of the conservation area. This is demonstrated by its visual impact in some views. The Royal London Hospital block well illustrates the degree of harm which could result from future proposals within the setting of the conservation area.

6.5. Public realm and open space

Both Ford Square and Sidney Square are integral features of the area and are well used. Ford Square, in particular, would benefit from some soft landscaping improvements, enhancing the green edges, while still providing for all users.

Public realm in the area is generally in a good state of repair; however the stone setts on Halcrow Street are the only remaining exposed to view within the conservation area. This surface needs repair work and improvements in order to improve its appearance and quality. Where possible setts or cobbles should be reinstated or uncovered to improve the appearance of the public realm within the conservation area. If setts or cobbles are covered over, they should be retained below any new surfacing. There are also areas where the variety of bollard designs and variation in signage, seating and surfacing adds to visual street clutter within the conservation area.

7.0 INTRODUCTION TO MANAGEMENT PLAN

7.1. Background

This Management Plan sets out the Borough's commitment to high quality management of conservation areas and their settings. The Management Plan provides guidance to residents, businesses and other stakeholders about the special elements of the area's character and how these can be preserved or enhanced. The Management Plan also sets out the considerations that should be taken into account at the earliest possible stages of the design process and addressed as part of any planning application.

Conservation areas are as much about history, people, activities and places as they are about buildings and spaces. Preserving or enhancing the borough's architectural and historic built heritage 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, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. The re-use of historic buildings and places is environmentally responsible, as it protects the energy and resources embodied in them and combats climate change. Demolition and rebuilding of buildings can have a big impact on the environment and can result in a large amount of waste and associated air pollution.

Recommendations for additions to the statutory list are considered by Historic England.

7.2. Policy and legislation

In conservation areas, planning controls are more extensive. Permitted development rights are more limited, and demolition and works to trees are controlled. 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. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation

Areas) Act 1990 which relates to planning functions within conservation areas, includes that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. You are strongly advised to contact the council to check if works you are proposing need permission.

Any new development should have regard to relevant national, regional and local planning policy including the following:

- the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- the NPPF;
- the London Plan alongside the City Fringe Opportunity Area Planning Framework;
- the Tower Hamlets Local Plan;
- the Tower Hamlets Conservation Strategy;
- Historic England Guidance; and
- this character and appraisal and management plan.

Further information can be found on the council's website , on the government website and on the GLA website.

Both Ford Square and Sidney Square are designated as London Squares by the London Squares Preservation Act of 1931. This identifies them as areas that are protected and may not be used for any purpose other than as an ornamental garden, pleasure ground, or ground for play, rest or recreation. No building or structure should be created or placed on or over any London square, unless necessary or convenient for the use or maintenance of the square.

Statutorily listed buildings

There are a large number of listed buildings within the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area. If a building is statutorily listed, any alterations to the property, either internally or externally, will require listed building consent from the council. Listed building consent is required for any works of demolition, alteration or extension to the building, which would affect its special architectural and historic interest. Works

within the grounds or curtilage of a listed building can also require consent. Repairs to listed buildings may also require consent. It is always advisable to inform the council of any plans you might have to carry out repairs. Replacement of any historic fabric usually constitutes an alteration and therefore requires listed building consent.

The council has a duty of care to ensure owners and prospective owners of listed buildings are aware of the need for maintenance and repair of such buildings. Regular maintenance can prevent serious and expensive problems at a later date. 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 in such circumstances.

Locally listed buildings

Local listing is a protection offered by the local authority to buildings it believes are of local significance. A heritage asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest, locally listed buildings are included within this designation. The effect of an application on a non-designated heritage asset is a material consideration when deciding planning applications, and local listing strengthens the case for retention of a historic building. There are three locally listed buildings within the conservation area. Although locally listed buildings do not benefit from the statutory protection outlined previously, they have been recognised as being of local townscape importance. The council expects to see their retention and evidence that any proposed alterations enhance the building's character or appearance. Full justification for any redevelopment proposals will be sought, including convincing evidence that the building could not be retained. Economic reasons alone will not always justify redevelopment.

Article 4 Directions

Where evidence suggests that the exercise of permitted development would harm the special character of the conservation area, the council can serve an Article 4 Direction to withdraw specific classes of permitted development that would otherwise apply. It is important to note that an Article 4 Direction does not necessarily prevent the type of

development to which it applies, but requires planning permission to be obtained for the specified types of development. There is no fee for planning applications required due to an Article 4 Direction.

For specific information on Article 4 Directions please see the General Permitted Development Order (1995) and 2010 amendment and accompanying Government Circular (available from the DCLG website), as well as the guidance provided in Historic England's Advice Note 1 (Second Edition) 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' which was published in February 2019 (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/heag-268-conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management/>)

Archaeological investigations

Any new development that lies within the Archaeological Priority Area will be required to include an Archaeological Evaluation Report and will require any nationally important remains to be preserved permanently at the site, subject to consultation with Historic England.

Trees in conservation areas

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is an order made by the council to protect specific trees or groups of trees in the interests of amenity. A TPO prohibits the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting or wilful damage of a protected tree without permission and is a designation which is applied selectively.

Whilst some trees in a conservation area may be protected by a TPO all trees in a conservation area are protected by the provisions of section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, These provisions require owners to notify the council if works to trees are proposed. To do this a works to trees application form should be completed. The application must describe the works proposed and include sufficient particulars to identify the tree or trees which are the subject of works. Only one section 211 notice is need to carry out a number of different operations. Notification should be made at least six weeks before the works commence to allow the council sufficient time to assess whether the works are acceptable or not. If the works are not supported

and modified proposals cannot be agreed then the trees must be protected by the council serving a TPO.

Carrying out works to trees without the necessary approval can be a criminal offence, and the council welcomes early requests for advice.

7.3. Outline guidance for applications

When planning applications in a conservation area are decided, the council as the local planning authority will pay special attention to whether the character of the area is preserved or enhanced by the proposal. The special character of the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area, as in other conservation areas, planning controls are more extensive than normal. Before carrying out any work in this area, you may need to apply for consent even for minor work such as replacing railings. These consents include planning and listed building consent, as well as others for work such as felling trees. Planning permission is required to demolish any building bigger than 115m³, 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. Locally listed buildings are those of townscape value which the borough wishes to protect.

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

- A clear Design and Access Statement explaining the reasons behind the various architectural, masterplanning or other design decisions.
- A Heritage Statement where the impacts of the application on the significance of heritage assets or the impacts of demolition within the conservation area are set out.

- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings (at a scale of 1:50 or 1:100).
- Drawings of proposed works, including construction details, produced at larger scale (e.g. 1:20 or 1:10) clearly indicating the nature of the work proposed.
- Existing and proposed townscape views where relevant.
- 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 where a validation list can be found. If in any doubt, the council welcomes and encourages early requests for advice or information. More information is available on pre-application advice on the council's website. 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.

7.4. 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, but grant funding, even for cases that meet the defined criteria is extremely limited.

8.0 DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

8.1. General approach

Development in the conservation area should enhance the unique characteristics of the Ford Square / Sidney Square Conservation Area, reinforcing its distinctive identity and contributing to its historic sense of place. New buildings should be of a high design standard, reflecting the scale and variation typical of the historic townscape. Individual buildings should display their own identity within the historically-set parameters (scale, grain, building line). These parameters are responsible for the creation of a coherent streetscape and locally distinctive character derived from an otherwise diverse collection of different designs, styles and materials. Retention and restoration of existing buildings which contribute to the character of the area provides the foundation for the area's development. The council encourages the sympathetic re-use of existing buildings in conservation areas. Where development has harmed the conservation area it is possible, under certain circumstances, that further development may help to mitigate this harm.

8.2. Demolition

Demolition of buildings within the conservation area

The Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area has a well-established and distinguished character distinctive from its surroundings in terms of its grain and scale. The council will resist unjustified demolition where this is considered to be harmful to the special character or appearance of the conservation area. Any applications including demolition will be assessed in line with national, regional and local policy and guidance including the National Planning Policy Framework.

Planning permission is required for demolition or substantial demolition of all buildings or structures larger than 115m³ in conservation areas. What constitutes substantial demolition is considered on a case-by-case basis by the Local Planning Authority. Where a building is statutorily listed, listed building consent would be required.

Where corner buildings are threatened with demolition this can cause a wider threat to the terrace as a whole, this will be resisted. The demolition and replacement of a

central building forming part of a small terrace will also be resisted as this can result in further proposals and cumulative impacts.

If demolition work occurs without the necessary consent the council is likely to pursue planning enforcement action that may result in prosecution and a substantial fine. The demolished structure may be required to be rebuilt. It should be noted that the council will not normally grant planning permission for demolition without relevant permissions having been obtained for an acceptable scheme for the redevelopment of the site.

With regard to vacant sites, or those in poor condition, it should not be assumed that any development is automatically better than the current situation.

Partial demolition

In most cases, the council would expect to see buildings retained but in some exceptional cases it may only be possible to retain a building in part; either by retaining elements of a building or through façade retention. Partial demolition will only be considered acceptable when it can be demonstrated that the proposed demolition can be carried out without unacceptable risk to the parts of the building to be retained and that any new development integrates with and respects the remaining historic fabric. This should be outlined as part of a Heritage Statement. A report of any structural implications will also need to be submitted. In many cases it may be possible to salvage and re-use elements of the historic fabric for example bricks, slates or window frames or external features. Any partial rebuilding will require materials to match and will be controlled by condition. It may be necessary to record the existing building prior to alteration.

Demolition of buildings adjacent to the conservation area

Demolition of unlisted buildings outside a conservation area does not always require planning permission. However, proposals to demolish and re-develop sites adjacent to a conservation area boundary should preserve, and where possible enhance, the setting of the conservation area to ensure that the significance of the Conservation Area is not harmed.

8.3. New development

New developments should respect the fine grain character and straightforward legibility of the historic street pattern. Any replacement buildings should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and ensure that its significance is not harmed. Any new development on potential infill sites (as highlighted in the section 6.0 of the Appraisal) should sit comfortably with the existing character or appearance of the conservation area.

Where existing buildings have a negative impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area, it may be possible to alter the exterior of the building so that it enhances the character or appearance of the area. The council would only encourage replacement of these buildings if the replacement is of high quality and has a positive impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area.

All new developments should be sympathetic to the character or appearance of the conservation area in terms of scale, materials and design.

The overall conservation area is characterised by a prevailing building height of two to four storeys. Most streets have a consistent cornice/eaves height, with some slight variation on Ashfield Street. New development should aim to fit into and complement this context.

The design of new buildings should be fully informed by the positive aspects of adjacent buildings and how they contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. A degree of architectural variety is an important attribute of much of the conservation area, however there is consistency in the scale and proportions of buildings as well as their positioning.

The overall quality of architectural detailing will be key to producing a successful scheme which builds on the qualities already present within the area. In order to ensure necessary architectural quality, detailed design should be explored and agreed early in the planning process.

The quality of external materials will also be key to producing a successful scheme. The conservation area features a wide range of high quality, natural and naturally derived materials including stone, bricks, slate and terracotta. It is expected that the choice of new materials will be informed by the local context and build on this richness.

There are very few shopfronts within the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area. Where these do exist, inappropriate alterations have caused harm to the overall proportions of the buildings and unsympathetic materials cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Any alterations to existing shopfronts should enhance their current appearance and should preserve or enhance the overall character or appearance of the conservation area.

The design of shopfronts and fascia signs should not be considered in isolation and, along with security measures, should be considered at an early stage in any proposal. It is essential that the scale and proportions of all elements of any new shopfronts and fascia signs relate to the overall proportions of the host building and to neighbouring properties where appropriate. Older shopfronts were characterised by high quality, long lasting materials as can be seen to the surviving historic shopfront at No. 58 Cavell Street. Standard aluminium shopfronts are unlikely to be considered appropriate within the conservation area. It might be necessary to adopt a flexible approach to corporate logos, if these are considered to be harmful to the character of the conservation area.

8.4. Property conversion

The residential character of the conservation area forms a key part of its significance. The permitted development rights for this area of the borough have been removed in relation to the conversion of offices (Use Class B1(a)) to residential (Use Class C3). Where property conversion or change of use is permissible, external changes are likely to require planning permission. Any external changes should relate well to the public realm, should respect the character of the host building, and should be in keeping with the character or appearance of the conservation area.

8.5. Extensions and alterations

Roof extensions

The consistency of building heights, with very limited variation, forms an integral part of the character of the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area. Roof additions which will be visible from the street or which will interrupt a consistent roofline are likely to be resisted. In many cases the importance of the historic roof structure and relationship to other building within the conservation area will either preclude roof extensions or make it very difficult to achieve an acceptable design. Consistent rooflines and parapets characterise the Ford Square Sidney Square Conservation Area and, as such no roof additions will be supported where these exist. Where roof extensions are accepted, the design must relate well to the design and proportions of the host building and must use high quality materials that respect the character or appearance of the conservation area. The impact of any roof extensions on the public realm and views from within the conservation area should be carefully considered in order to ensure the character or appearance of the conservation area is preserved and enhanced.

Rear extensions

Where the opportunity exists, extensions should remain subservient to the host building both in terms of scale and proportions. Only high quality materials, such as brick, stone or, in some cases, reconstituted stone, that respect the character or appearance of the conservation area will be accepted. The visibility of proposed rear extensions from the public realm must also be carefully considered to ensure that, not only the impact on the host building, but also on the wider conservation area, is acceptable and preserves and enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Side extensions

There are very few opportunities for side extensions within the conservation area. Where gaps exist between properties, in most cases these gaps should be retained as they form an importance part of the character and appearance of the conservation area; allowing views through to rear elevations and rear gardens and providing visual relief from the consistent frontages. The visibility of proposed side extensions from the public realm must also be carefully considered to ensure that, not only the impact on

the host building, but also on the wider conservation area, is acceptable and preserves and enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area.

External alterations

Where external alterations are proposed to existing buildings, these must seek to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Piecemeal alterations can be harmful to the special architectural and historic character of a building. Any alterations to historic fabric should be on a like-for-like basis in terms of materials and design. Where inappropriate or unsympathetic alterations have occurred in the past, these should be rectified in accordance with the historic materials and appearance. In cases where the alterations are to a building which is not historic, the design and materials used should be in keeping with the character of the conservation area. Any external alterations to individual buildings will have an impact on the wider conservation area and so must be considered within the wider context.

Alterations such as loft conversions or new rooflights will only be supported where they are not visible from the public realm and do not impact on a consistent roofline or roof form.

The conservation area is generally characterised by buildings that directly front the pavement. However, in areas where consistent boundary treatments exist, these should be maintained.

8.6. Energy efficiency improvements

Window replacement and alteration

Window replacement and alterations to existing windows are often successful ways of improving the energy efficiency of a building. A careful study of the existing building should be carried out in order to identify the original window design and materials. This should form a good template for the kind of windows that will be acceptable in terms of materials, design, glazing bar details, window opening patterns and type of glass. In most cases historic or original windows should be retained and repaired, draught proofing added and if necessary internal secondary glazing installed. Where it is acceptable to replace the existing windows with double glazing care must be taken to

ensure that the double glazing is of an appropriate design, that it is possible to replicate the dimensions and opening arrangements of the existing historic windows, that the double glazing is of a slim profile and that spacer bars are white and are unperforated, rather than perforated metal. Top-hung or outward opening windows will not be supported on historic buildings, unless this reflects the original glazing pattern.

It may be necessary to apply for planning permission to fit new windows (such as double-glazing) in a flat or maisonette. Planning permission will not be required to add internal secondary glazing. It is also unlikely to be necessary where you are fitting windows which are identical to those which are being removed i.e. like-for-like replacements. However, if the new windows differ in appearance or size to those you are replacing (for instance, different glazing patterns or opening methods) you may need to apply for planning permission. The detailed design, materials, dimensions, glazing bar pattern, glazing thickness and opening methods are all important considerations when new or replacement windows are proposed.

The replacement of historic windows to listed buildings will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that they are beyond reasonable repair. If this can be demonstrated, then any replacement of windows should be on a like-for-like basis, matching the original design exactly. This will require listed building consent and, if any changes are proposed in terms of design, materials or thickness, planning permission may also be required. Energy efficiency can be improved through draught proofing windows or through the installation of internal secondary glazing. These works will not require listed building consent, unless they obscure important historic features or cause harm to the historic fabric.

Cladding, rendering or painting of external walls

The Council will seek the retention or reinstatement of original façade treatments which contribute positively to the character or appearance the conservation area. Unless it can be demonstrated that existing exposed brickwork had originally been rendered or painted, the rendering or painting over of brickwork will not be supported.

External insulation through rendering or other methods will not be supported. Any additional insulation should be installed internally where appropriate so as not to

inappropriately alter the external appearance of the building. In a listed building, internal insulation would need listed building consent. In most cases it is unlikely to be acceptable.

8.7. Other external changes

Alterations which change the appearance of buildings within the conservation area should be carefully considered. The council will not support the addition of satellite dishes, banners or antennae or other fixtures on elevations that front the street. The addition of grilles and louvres to the front of buildings is also unlikely to be supported. These should be placed on rear or side elevations if required and carefully designed so that they are incorporated into the overall building design. The council welcomes the removal of unwanted and unnecessary clutter from the exterior of buildings within the conservation area.. Development proposals that involve the re-use and/or conversion of existing buildings will be expected to address this issue where appropriate.

8.8. Public realm improvements

Surface finishes and street furniture

Where there are historic surface finishes such as cobblestones, setts or paving, the Council will seek their retention, as these form an important part of the character of the conservation area. Any major investment in buildings should also include public realm improvements where appropriate. New schemes should aim to retain historic surfaces and any new surfaces should be sympathetic to the conservation area. Junctions between different surface treatments should also be carefully considered.

The quality of the streetscape, the surface materials, street furniture and other features can all form an integral part of the character or appearance of the conservation area. Any work carried out should respect this historic character, using natural materials and colours that are in keeping with the character or appearance of the conservation area. On narrow side streets setts should be reinstated where possible and, historic kerb stones retained. Any paving works should be sympathetic to the historic character of the conservation area. Larger rectangular paving slabs ideally in natural stone or high

quality composite stone, are more sympathetic to the character of the conservation area than smaller modular paving.

In addition to the TFL guidance, for developments which impact on public spaces, the council's Street Design Guide and Historic England's Streets for All: London document should be referred to. An important aim should be to reduce street clutter, such as obsolete signage and modern phone boxes and to seek consistency in bollard designs, seating and surfacing.

Refuse storage and collection

There is little scope for bin storage to properties within the conservation area and as such refuse collection must be carefully managed in order to avoid refuse sacks on the narrow pavements. This causes visual clutter and obstructions, detracts from the character or appearance of the conservation area and could lead to issues with vermin.

Open space and trees

Both Ford Square and Sidney Square form a vital part of the character and historic development of the area. Ongoing management of these public open spaces should be sensitive to their significance as London Squares. The ongoing maintenance of both squares and potential improvement, particularly to Ford Square, is imperative. Ford Square is largely hard landscaped and would benefit from additional soft landscaping to reinforce the character and appearance of the Square. This should, however, retain the current leisure uses in the square.

All trees in conservation areas are protected, and some trees are also covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Additional information on trees can be found in the Policy and Legislation section of this document and on the council website.

8.9 Shopfronts and signage

The richness in the variety of details to shopfronts and buildings is integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Existing timber fascias, pilasters and corbels should be retained or restored where they have been lost. In cases where shopfront corbels do not survive, careful study should be made of adjacent shops to

see if any appropriate examples remain – these should form the template for re-instatement.

It should be noted that a standard corporate approach to signage may not be considered appropriate due to size, colour or illumination. As such, proposed designs and/or materials may have to be amended to suit the historic context. Any hanging or projecting signs should be well designed, bespoke timber hanging signs of an appropriate size for the shopfront or building. Traditional materials should be used and plastic signage will not be supported. No upper level signage, projecting signs or banners will be supported.

Hand painted timber fascia signs or fascias with individually applied lettering are encouraged throughout the conservation area. Internally illuminated plastic fascia signs are not appropriate and will not be supported.

8.10. Vacant sites and hoardings

Vacant sites must be carefully managed to ensure that they cause minimal harm to the conservation area. These sites must be maintained and should not be allowed to fall into disrepair. Where hoardings are used around vacant sites or on sites that are currently undergoing building works, these must be consistent in terms of height, materials and appearance. Hoardings should be maintained in a good state of repair so as to not detract from the character or appearance of the conservation area. Where possible, hoardings should be used positively to inform the public of the history of the site or wider area.

8.11. Development affecting the setting of the conservation area

The overall scale of the conservation area continues beyond the boundary in most directions but the Royal London Hospital block introduces a much larger scale in some views. The predominant setting of the conservation area should be preserved, with any new development within its setting considered carefully to ensure that it does not exacerbate the harm caused by the hospital buildings to the north-west.

Views from outside the conservation area are limited due to the alignments and orientation of the streets. However, several important views exist, such as the view

from Stepney Way, where the combination of the low rise buildings and the generous spaces between buildings allows for views of the façade (including the roof storey) of the mansion blocks along Newark Street and also views between buildings on Varden Street allow for unfolding serial views of the mature tree canopy within Ford Square. Development which interferes with the viewers' ability to fully appreciate the significance of the heritage assets and green areas concerned will be resisted.

The increase in scale of the developments outside but close to the boundary of the conservation area threatens to cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. This is particularly the case to the north-west, as identified in section 6.0 of the Appraisal. The large scale buildings associated with the Royal London Hospital border the conservation area boundary and cause harm to the setting of the conservation area, having a significant impact on the views from within the conservation area looking north-west and also on views into the conservation area from surrounding areas.

It is important that development proposals on the edge of the conservation area and in surrounding areas include a fully detailed assessment of any impact on the historic significance of the conservation area.

To enable the council to assess relevant applications, the Council will expect applicants:

- i. to identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected by a proposal;
- ii. assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- iii. assess the effects of the proposed development whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance of the heritage assets;
- iv. demonstrate that they have explored ways to maximise enhancement or minimise harm.

9.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

9.1. Ongoing management and monitoring change

The council recognises the contribution of the local community in managing conservation areas and will welcome proposals to work collaboratively to monitor and manage change in the area. Public meetings will be held to maintain communications between all stakeholders and identify new opportunities and threats to the conservation area as they arise.

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

9.2. 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 illegal. It is therefore essential to obtain planning permission and/or listed building consent before works begin.

An enforcement notice, served by the council may require works to rectify unauthorised alterations. This notice is entered on the Local Land Charges records which could make the future sale or financing of the property more difficult.

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.

10.0 USEFUL CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

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: planning@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 organisations for further information:

- Historic England <https://www.historicengland.org.uk>
- The Georgian Group www.georgiangroup.org.uk
- Victorian Society www.victorian-society.org.uk
- 20th Century Society www.c20society.org.uk
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings www.spab.org.uk
- East London Postcards www.eastlondonpostcard.co.uk