Jesus Hospital Estate

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.
1. Character Appraisal

Overview
The Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area was designated in December 1985 extended to include additional buildings of interest, and altered to make way for the Hackney Road Conservation Area in October 2008. It is bounded by Ravenscroft Street to the west, the terraces of Shipton Street and Ion Square Gardens to the north, St Peter’s with St Thomas Church to the east and Wellington Row and gusset Street to the south. The heart of the Conservation Area encompasses the network of uniform two storey terraces surrounding the central, triangular open space of Jesus Green. The Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area features a quality urban landscape and townscape contributing to the area’s sense of place and identity.

History
Between 1822–1862, the Bethnal Green Estate was established from acres of farmland. The eastern part of Columbia Road, once known as Birdcage Walk crossed the estate, founded by James Ravenscroft in 1670.

The Jesus Hospital Estate had ominous beginnings. In 1689, Ravenscroft bestowed the land to the trustees of Jesus Hospital in Chipping Barnet. The parent charity located in Hertfordshire was located miles away from this land in Bethnal Green. It was only in the 1820s that the land, which once remained unnoticed and undeveloped, was considered for development by the charity’s trustees. The first signs of interest to develop the land coincided with the period which witnessed the demolition of homes for the building of St Katherine’s Dock. This left some 11,000 people homeless and looking for elsewhere to live. During this time, the East End also suffered 2 epidemics of cholera and typhus, prompting the introduction of the steam railway in 1836. Hence, there were three attempts to develop the charity owned land, which was under lease by farmers.

The first two attempts to develop the Estate resulted in disaster. The operations were plagued with corruption, poor workmanship, haphazard construction on-site and a lack
of supervision. It was only 40 years later that the trustees inspected the development and discovered poor rows of single-storey houses, some were dilapidated and the roadways and drains were also in an unsatisfactory condition. The trustees realised that no system was in place to complete any one street of houses under the current surveyor.

It was at this point, that the Charity trustees including the Chairman, Reverend T.H Elwin and solicitor James Quilter were joined by Joseph Baxendale of Woodside in the Parish of Finchley and Richard Durant of High Canons in the Parish of Shenley, to assist in any considerable decision making to avoid another disastrous outcome.

In 1862, Bishopsgate surveyor George Clarkson was appointed and responsible for the clearing of the site of all buildings. At his own expense, new roadways and drains from the houses were laid out. Under Clarkson’s supervision, 372 homes were built along the arcade of Crabtree Columbia and several public houses were built in the area. Whilst the roads Ravenscroft Street and Barnet Grove remained as previously named, 5 new roads were introduced, including Elwin Street, Quilter Street, Baxendale Street, Wimbolt Street and Durant Street.

The streets were fittingly named after the gentlemen responsible for the affairs of the charity and who played a significant role in the successful development of the land. The quadrant of Columbia Road, Baxendale Street, Durant Street and Wellington Row was established, and the Jesus Hospital Charity’s Bethnal Green Estate was realised.

**Character**

The character of the Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area is defined by the homogenous layout of low scale streets. Its terraces are essentially two storeys high and follow the general pattern of London Victorian terraces. To the front, there is a parapet cornice extending the length of the terrace and hiding a series of uniform London roofs. Much of the character of the terrace is gained from its overall uniformity and rhythm, its height, bay, width, arched window heads, consistent setback, matching materials and details. The terraced houses have subtle variations in their door colours.
but otherwise, the consistent yellow brick streetscape is significant as a group of buildings forming a coherent whole.

Terrace houses aligning Elwin Street, Quilter Street and Barnet Grove surround the triangular open space of Jesus Green, which provides a focus to the Conservation Area. The estate still retains its intrinsic completeness alone in an area that has otherwise been redeveloped. Along the Conservation Area's north-western edge lies Columbia Road, formerly the site of the Victorian market building and now a designated local shopping parade and the site of the popular Sunday flower market. The 19th century parade contains local shopfronts and a considerable number of light industrial workshops, largely connected with the furniture trade. Greeting the corner site of Columbia Road and Wellington Row is the locally listed building, the Birdcage Public House. These commercial and light industrial uses contribute to the animation and vitality of the Conservation Area and their loss would be detrimental. Further east is the relatively tall neo-vernacular Globe Café and the robust turn of the century Guinness Trust Buildings retained iron railings.

There are two other zones of distinct character in the Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area. To the east, between Durant Street and Warner Street ending to the north before Hackney Road, is the largely open area, containing the Ion Square Gardens. Behind the Durant Street terrace is the locally listed St Peter’s Church Hall, complementing the Ecclesiastical Grade C listed St Peter’s with St Thomas Church.

To the north-west of the Conservation Area is a close set group of warehouses, housing and other uses around the three-pronged Ezra Street. Most of the houses are of a 19th century Georgian vernacular. Shipton Street contains additional variety with a Neo-Georgian terrace and mock timber frame public house.

**Land Use**

The land use character of the Jesus Green Conservation Area is predominantly residential, with the largest part of the Conservation Area made up of the Jesus Hospital Estate itself. Other land uses include commercial and light industrial uses.
along the Columbia Road frontage. Ezra Street is a Victorian alley containing workshops and a large warehouse converted to industrial units and residential studios.

There are a number of public buildings set within the Conservation Area such as the Columbia Primary School, St Peter Church Hall and local public houses, which add to the variety of the area whilst creating a sense of place, representative of the wider community. The Church Hall, school and the Birdcage public house and the Royal Oak public house also provides visual relief from the predominantly residential streetscene.

Scale
The existing building scale in the area is generally two storeys, occasionally with slightly taller buildings at street corners. An anomaly in the otherwise uniform and repetitive Jesus Hospital Estate is Baxendale Street, which is book-ended by red-brick houses at either end. This provides visual relief to the streetscape with its gabled roof and lunette windows. The additions are unique to the Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area, however are harmonious with the existing scale and character of Baxendale Street.

The north-west corner of the Conservation Area around Ezra Street consists of residential and light industrial uses ranging between 1 and 4 storeys, with the Columbia Primary School equivalent to 5 storeys. The low rise scale of the area is threatened by the high rise nature of proposals immediately adjacent to the area which will overshadow it.

Open Spaces
The Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area contains three main areas of significant public open space, namely Jesus Green, the Ion Square Gardens and the gardens to the south-eastern pocket of the Conservation Area, terminating Wellington Row.
The centralised gardens of Jesus Green are surrounded by mature trees and are further enclosed by the terraces of Elwin Street, Barnet Grove and Quilter Street, combining the two important formal elements in the urban landscape. There are very few street trees in the area, with houses fronting directly to the back of pavement of most its streets. The Ion Square Gardens has mature street plantings on its periphery with main entry points at the northern end of Durant Street and from Hackney Road. The gardens are inconspicuous but a welcome relief to the built-up setting of the Jesus Green estate.

**Views**

Long views run through the main roads such as Columbia Road and Wellington Road highlighting the uniformity, repetition and rhythm of the continuous terrace. There is a clear definition of the streets and character of the terrace typology. Elsewhere, the Ezra Street alleys unfold a mixed use character, varying in scale and architectural styles.

**Summary**

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 this appraisal, define its special qualities. There are minor improvements that could be made to buildings in the Conservation Area, but overall this has 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 Cores 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.

The area is on the border with the London Borough of Hackney and a coordinated approach is required to conservation.

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 are reflected in this document.
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 Jesus Hospital Estate is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In Jesus Hospital Estate, 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 old 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.'
Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Grade II

- St Peter’s Church, St Peter’s Close
- Railings & Gate Piers to north, west and south sides of churchyard of St Peter’s Church, St Peter’s Close
- St Peter’s Vicarage, St Peter’s Close
- St Peter’s Close, Noel Mander Church Organ Works

Locally Listed Buildings

- Birdcage Public House, 80 Columbia Road
- 324-326 Hackney Road
- St Peter’s Church Hall, Warner Place

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.

The design and maintenance of streets in this area is challenging because of its residential density, and hence the demand for parking space. A balance must cater for the needs of all users of the street and which avoids dominance by cars. Traffic management measures have already been introduced to the area, with one way street systems and road closures in the form of bollards and metal barriers. Road closures at Elwin Street and speed humps along Quilter Street already reduce vehicular traffic around the gardens, in preservation and enhancement of Jesus Green. The effect on traffic flow in the area must be monitored through the continuous traffic management
of the Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area, to ensure that the character of the terraces are retained and respected.

In some locations cobbles remain. Restoration of the cobbles might be considered as a method of traffic calming.

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**

There is potential to improve the network of streets within the Jesus Green Conservation Area, by coordinating street signage with lighting and lamp posts. Currently some streets such as Ravenscroft Street, is dominated by parking signs and meters. Generally, any damaged Victorian style lamps need to be repaired or new ones should be installed and featured at constant intervals along the individual streetscapes.

Street surfaces vary, from the original setts and York stone paving as visible in Ezra Street, to uneven tarmac and concrete walkways seen elsewhere in the Conservation Area. A number of pavements have been resurfaced and are in reasonable condition, however there are many more streets which would benefit from resurfacing, kerbstone reinstatement and the replacement of bollards. This would help to improve the setting of the terraced streets and give the area a greater sense of quality.

There is an opportunity to improve the much revered Ion Square Gardens and Jesus Green by introducing high standard street furniture, such as lighting, park benches and information boards and to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the garden grounds and its trees.

There is very little scope for new development in the Conservation Area, as the undeveloped areas are designated as public open space or are existing, irregular light industrial sites between terraces, which are historic features of this Conservation Area.
The general principle for the Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area is for the repair, restoration or replication of original features of the terraces where possible.

**Trees, Parks and Open Spaces**

Jesus Green is the public open space at the heart of the Conservation Area and requires ongoing maintenance and management. The local importance of both Jesus Green and the Ion Square Gardens could be further enhanced by providing more park benches, sufficient lighting and by replacing damaged railings. Whilst the open spaces themselves are uncluttered with minimal park furniture, the trees and shrubbery on the periphery of the gardens require pruning and maintenance.

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

Tel: 020 7364 5009
Email: dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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

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

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

- English Heritage  www.english-heritage.org.uk
- The Georgian Group  www.georgiangroup.org.uk
- Victorian Society  www.victorian-society.org.uk
- 20th Century Society  www.c20society.org.uk
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings  www.spab.org.uk
Listed Buildings at Risk:
There are no listed buildings at risk within the Jesus Hospital Estate Conservation Area.

Any other threats to the Conservation Area
- The encroaching scale of the city which is inappropriate within this small scale residential neighbourhood.
- Anti-social behaviour.
- Increasing rents for shop units threatening the viability of independent shops and the resulting decline in choice for local shoppers.
- Ad hoc alterations to the street surfaces resulting in a clutter of styles and materials.
- Increasing traffic flow through the area and ad hoc parking.

Priorities for Action (1-5)
1. Rationalise street clutter and review improvements to upgrade street surfaces
2. Introduce Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights
3. Extend boundaries of Conservation Area to include Gosset Street
4. Support the local retail environment
5. Review the use and maintenance of open spaces with the Conservation Area