

Medway Conservation Area

# Character appraisal and management plan

June 2025

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## INTRODUCTION

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

The Medway Conservation Area was designated in September 1989 to protect the overall character of the Victorian terraces, which are of collective townscape merit.

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 help those who have an interest in the area to understand the quality of the built environment and how they can protect, contribute to, and enhance it.
- 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.

The character appraisal in section two defines the qualities and features that make the conservation area special. This includes an understanding of the historical development of the place and its buildings, as well as an analysis of its current appearance and character — including description of the architectural characteristics, details and materials. It also records qualities such as important open spaces and views into and within the conservation area. Any damage or pressures to the conservation area is also recorded.

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) places a duty on local planning authorities to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their districts. Therefore, the management guidelines in section three set out ways to conserve the special architectural and historic character of the conservation area, as well as help to manage sensitive new development and refurbishment. It takes into account planning policy context and responds to the problems and pressures identified in section two.

This document replaces earlier character appraisal and management guidelines adopted for the Medway Conservation Area in June 2017.

## **2.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

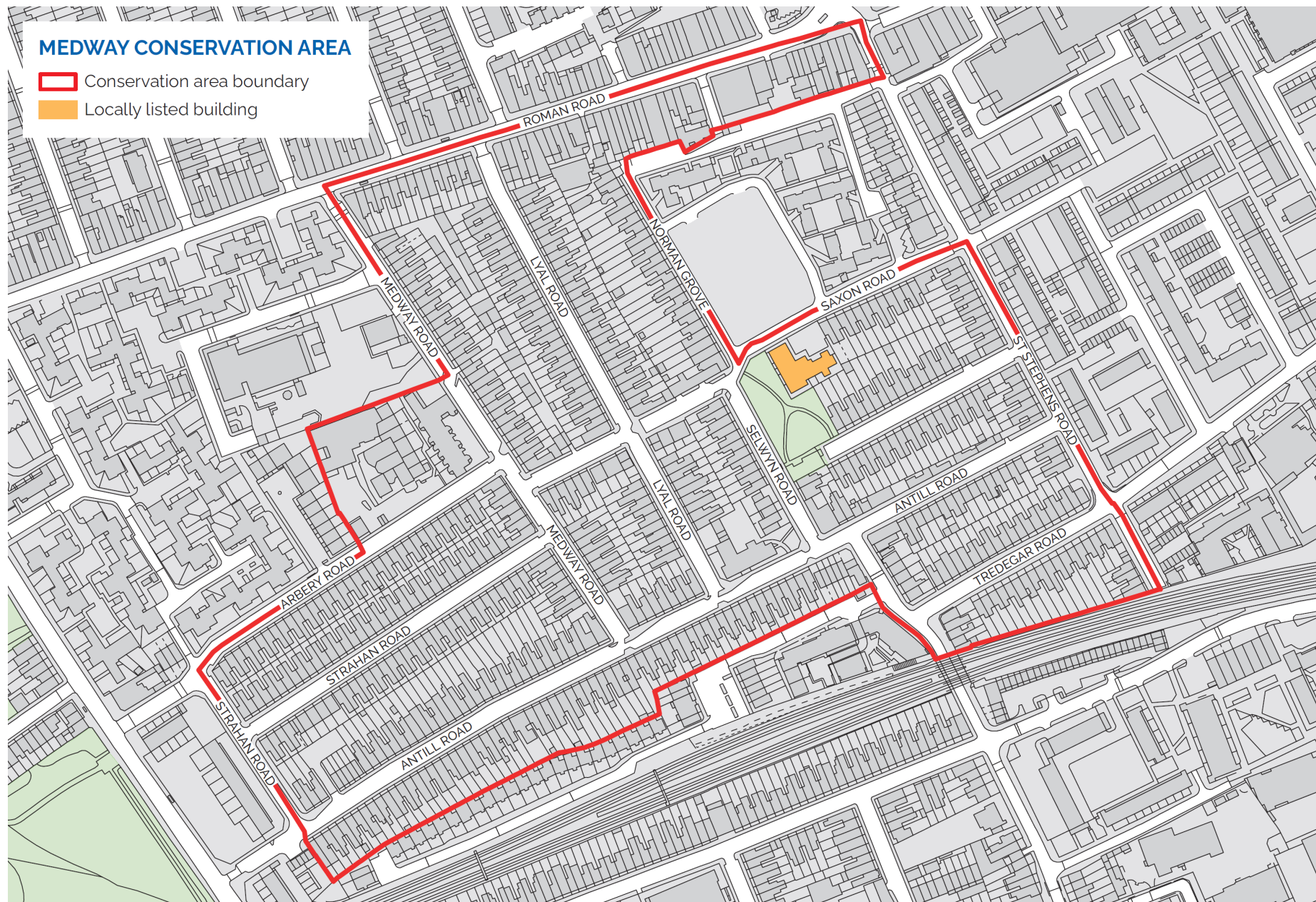
### **2.1 Location and setting**

The conservation area is bounded by Cherrywood Close and the railway line to the south, Strahan and Medway Roads to the west, Roman Road to the north and St Stephen's Road to the east.

The conservation area is centred around Medway and Lyal Roads, which run parallel to one another stretching between Roman Road and Antill Road. Antill Road and Roman Road are longest roads running in a west-east orientation through the conservation area. Roman Road provides a lively northern boundary to the conservation area with its streetscape of small retail units. Antill Road, on the other hand, provides a quieter residential southern boundary to the area.

There are two other conservation areas in the immediate vicinity. Tredegar Square Conservation Area lies on the south side of the railway line, and Driffield Road Conservation Area lies on the north side of Roman Road.

## MEDWAY CONSERVATION AREA



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## 2.2 Historical development

Medway Conservation area lies within what was at one time known as Mile End Old Town. Evidence of this remains today, in the boundary plaques, such as the one situated on the upper floor of number 422 Roman Road.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, most of Bow was primarily rural, except for late Georgian ribbon development on the main roads out of town, like that on Mile End Road.

Historic maps reveal that the area once consisted of fields, lying east of Grove Road and south of Roman Road [shown on the maps as Drift Way footpath], which was a meandering trackway for much of its length. Cross's New Plan of London of 1847/1850 shows that the area around Tredegar Square [part of land owned by one of the largest landowners in the area, the Morgan family of Tredegar, in Monmouthshire] were starting to be laid out, during a previous but less explosive building boom. Victoria Park to the north opened in 1845. However, the space that makes up the conservation area was still undeveloped. This all changed when the city expanded in size around the 1860s.

Leases were purchased by local builders, and the lands north of the Eastern Counties Railway Line were rapidly developed from the 1860s onwards, to coincide with the Great Eastern Railway station opening at Coborn Road [closed 1948]. One such developer was Thomas Antill Palmer, of Trinity Terrace on Tredegar Road, and his partner William John Wade, of 33 Lichfield Road. In 1865, they bought various leases and went on to develop Antill Road. From the 1860s onwards, the area was rapidly developed for artisans and shopkeepers, for whom the norm was to work from home. This area of traditional housing survived.

Although principally residential, the area historically included a number of small businesses operating either from home or within small industrial buildings, such as those between Medway and Lyal Roads. The area also supported a number of local shops along Medway Road.

The area was fully developed by the twentieth century. In addition to terraced houses, a school was opened in 1874 between Olga Street and Arbery Street. After WWII it was briefly renamed John Bartlett Primary School but returned to Olga Primary School in the 1950s. The school has since been relocated to a modern building next to its original site and the original school building has been converted to houses.

Selwyn Green was created on the site of WWII bomb-damaged terraced houses facing onto Selwyn Road, between the 1950s and 60s. At that time Victorian terraces were

perceived as old fashioned, and unhealthy with few modern facilities, and the area was considered to be slums. Subsequently, large clearance programmes begun, and new estates were built, consisting of flats with modern amenities and plenty of open space, such as Lanfranc Estate immediately adjacent to the conservation area.

## 2.3 Spatial analysis

The Medway Conservation Area is characterised by the regular layout of small-scale streets, containing rows of terraces, with a horizontal emphasis because of their relatively low height and unbroken length. The conservation area features a number of long streets [Antill Road, Medway Road and Lyal Road] as well as smaller streets that have a more intimate feel [Athelstane Grove and Norman Grove].

In contrast, the northern boundary of the conservation area is defined by the lively Roman Road, which extends further to the east and west. The former Olga School building and surrounding buildings on the corner of Arbery and Medway Roads provide a break in the homogenous street layout of the Conservation Area. These properties are for the most part walled off from the road.

### 2.3.1 Land use

The land use character of the Medway Conservation Area is predominantly residential, with the largest part of the conservation area made up of terraced houses from the 1870s. The former public house on the corner of Antill and Selwyn Roads closed in 2002. Along the dynamic Roman Road other land uses include small retail premises on the ground floor with street frontage, with residential flats above. The ground floor shopfronts provide a colourful backdrop to the vibrant market scene along Roman Road, and contrasting the domestic street scale behind.

### 2.3.2 Scale

Roman Road is flanked by buildings generally of two storeys, with a taller three storey scale at corner sites. Throughout the rest of the conservation area, the existing building scale is predominantly low, with terraced housing along the residential streets at two–three storeys in scale.

### 2.3.3 Green spaces

The Medway Conservation Area contains the small pocket of public green space in Selwyn Green which was built as part of the post-war reconstruction and provides an attractive, spacious setting to the terrace houses around it.

All the terraced houses in this conservation area feature private gardens (of varying size) which provide a verdant backdrop to views into and within the conservation area. This verdant backdrop to the area is reinforced by street trees.

Furthermore, the conservation area is surrounded by the substantial open space of Mile End Park to its west, across Grove Road.

## 2.4 Views

The clear definition of the streets and the character of the nineteenth-century terrace create many high-quality views:

- Long views exist along streets, including views south from Roman Road. The clear definition of streets and the character of the nineteenth century terraces create many high-quality views. Within the residential streets of Strahan, Antill, Medway and Lyal Roads, each terrace contributes to the repetitive and rhythmic character of the streetscape. The long views of uniform terraces are a distinctive characteristic of the conservation area.
- Views through Stanfield Road reveal a short row of ground floor shopfronts on this section of Medway Road. These shopfronts have slate finished roofs and their upper level residential floors are setback from the building frontage.
- The intersection at Stanfield Road, Viking Close and Lyal Road, in addition to the open space of Selwyn Green provide opportunities for shorter oblique views of the rear of houses.

## 2.5 Architectural characteristics

The overriding impression of this conservation area is the consistency of the architectural form. There is a consistent rhythm and scale to the terraces with a fairly uniform parapet line to the front elevation, concealing a series of uniform London Roofs. The late-nineteenth century houses are primarily two storeys high with the typical embellishments of the period, including bay windows and plenty of painted stucco decoration. However, the terraces do vary in their ornamental detail; the types of doors, windows, decorative plasterwork and front boundary treatments differ, which give each street a slightly different quality. For example, the houses along Arbery and Strahan Roads are more ornately decorated than elsewhere. They were built slightly later.

On five roads in this conservation area — Antill, Lyal, Medway, Saxon and St Stephen's Roads— the line of the front elevation of these houses steps back on alternate bays. This is a discreet architectural design feature that adds a subtle rhythm to the street as a whole.



When built, the houses were considered of a good size, as housing in the area was for the artisan class and are a change from the plain brick, flat fronted terraces of 20 years earlier. Most of the houses within the Conservation Area were built with long rear extensions [sometimes referred to as 'back additions', 'outriggers' or 'closet wings'] as part of the original building.

As the Victorian era progressed the need for plentiful cheap housing saw a move away from the provision of a costly basement and the services originally housed here were increasingly accommodated within the back extension at ground level, as is the case in this conservation area. The form of the Victorian terrace house had its origins in the grander houses of an earlier era. Space was ordered according to a structural hierarchy, with the more public spaces such as the parlour located at the front of the house, whilst the more private spaces were located to the rear of the house and in the back extension.

Economy continued to play a role in the evolution of the back extension with the early single storey single unit extensions with three independent walls housing a scullery being replaced by paired extensions under one roof. Over time, what had been the very small single-storey scullery extension increased in size to include a kitchen with a bedroom above, and the scullery was pushed into a smaller lean-to section beyond this. Paired two-storey extensions can be seen in the following photograph.

There are some variations to the consistent character. One is Saxon Hall: this building is locally listed and situated adjacent to Selwyn Green, with its frontage to Saxon Road. It is nineteenth century 'Tudorbethan' in style and is constructed from a range of red brick. It is characterised by contrasting stone dressed and mullioned windows. The two halls are supplemented by an attached house. The entrance hall and rear storeroom/office were built of a piece, around 1894. The site is bounded by iron railings, not dissimilar from those used further along Saxon Road.

The institutional buildings of the former Olga School [a London Board School] offers a further variance to the quiet, residential character of this conservation area.

There are two roads where the scale and character of the houses differs. The first is Norman Grove, which lies to the north of Saxon Hall. Properties along this short road are slightly older than elsewhere in the conservation area; they are a mixture of mid-nineteenth century cottages with hipped roofs and London roofs behind parapets.

Meanwhile, the houses on the south side of Tredegar Road are taller than those in the rest of the conservation area. The houses have steps up to the front door and have double pitched roofs and gabled dormer windows.

### 2.5.1

#### Roofs

The significance of the historic roof-scape within the conservation area is derived from a number of factors including its shape or form, structure, covering materials, and associated features.

The vast majority of the terraces within the conservation area feature London (or butterfly) roofs; these are an inverted 'V' in form with a central valley and ridges on the party walls between the individual houses of the terrace. These roofs are of low pitch and are concealed from the street [at the front] behind parapets producing a hard, straight edged appearance to the house, with a strong silhouette. This lack of visible roof is an important architectural characteristic. The continuity of the parapet line and moulded cornice line is another significant feature in the conservation area streetscene and ties groups of terraces together. At the rear of these terraces with London roofs, the row of gently pitched gables with the valleys and party walls between is clearly evident. Chimney stacks are located along the party walls between houses [often in pairs]; they are often the only feature visible above the cornice line, forming part of the silhouette of the roofscape. They also form part of the special character of the area.

There are several small groups of simple pitched roofs within the area. Two terraces between Anthill and Tredegar Roads have simple mono-pitch main roofs. They are the result of a partial rebuilding around forty years ago.

Roof top features such as chimney stacks, chimney pots and raised party walls are important conservation area characteristics. The design and detail of features such as chimney stacks varies and was the subject of changing architectural styles and differing builders.

Some roofs have existing mansard roof extensions; mainly these are along Roman Road and Norman Grove. Along Roman Road the existing roofs vary in form some being flat, some modern flat-topped Mansards and some more traditional in character.

### 2.5.2

#### Rear extensions

Mid-nineteenth century terraces, such those within the conservation area, were often built with returns, which had their origins in the grander houses of an earlier era. Most of the houses within the conservation area were built with rear returns [sometimes referred to as 'back additions', 'outriggers' or 'closet wings'] as part of the original building. Space was

ordered according to a structural hierarchy, with the more public spaces such as the parlour located at the front of the house, whilst the more private spaces were located to the rear of the house in the back extension.

As the Victorian era progressed the need for cheap housing saw a move away from the provision of a costly basement and the services originally housed here were increasingly accommodated within the back extension at ground level.

Economy continued to play a role in the evolution of the back return with the early single-storey single-unit returns with three independent walls housing a scullery being replaced by paired returns under one roof. Returns varied in width, height and length according to the builder but tended to increase in scale as the century progressed. A second storey was increasingly added to accommodate a third bedroom, and it is this form of return which predominates within the Medway Conservation Area. In some cases, the kitchen was not big enough and a small lean-to scullery was added to the rear of the return.

### 2.5.3 Details and materials

The houses in this conservation area are variants on the basic terrace house design brought about by different builders [and subsequent changes] and the presence or absence of architectural features. Architectural features that positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and deserve retention are:

- Canted bay windows with decorative cornice and console;
- Tripartite round-headed first floor window openings;
- Round-headed paired window openings with stucco surrounds and foliate embellishment;
- Wooden sash windows;
- Vermiculated or reticulated stucco and cornice and consoles to front door openings; and
- Stucco cornices to the parapet on the front elevations.

There is a limited range of materials used throughout the conservation area, reinforcing its consistent appearance. Principally the materials are stock brick and stucco on the elevations with timber sash windows and slate roofs. Reinstatement of missing features, if carefully added to match the original, may enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Front boundary walls are not as consistent as other features. These include the traditional iron railings or low brick or concrete walls or timber fences. The metal railings are historically significant boundary treatments and add to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Most of the original railings were removed during the war. Where

original railings have been lost, their careful reinstatement [to match the traditional railings] may enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area.

## 2.6 Landscaping features

Pavements in the conservation areas are typically surfaced with large format concrete slabs, bounded by granite kerbs. Carriageways are typically covered with asphalt. The streets in the conservation area feature Victorian style streetlamps, these are taller along Roman Road compared to the minor residential streets. Many of the streets have trees planted along the pavement, which provide an important softening of what would otherwise be a rather hard urban environment. The trees make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Between 2022 and 2023 the council used financial contributions collected from planning applications for mansard roof extensions to plant additional street trees in the conservation area, further improving its character and appearance.

Selwyn Green is a predominantly grassed open space with some tree planting and shrubs.

## 2.7 Problems and pressures

Although the character and appearance of the conservation area is appreciably consistent, changes have been made to some properties which chip away at this consistency. Further uncontrolled change could erode the special character of the conservation area.

### 2.7.1 Façade treatment

Terraces such as these are designed to be uniform and regular in appearance, relying on the repetition of simple elements and a consistency of materials and details for the overall effect. Much of the terracing remains little altered, but those of which that have been unsympathetically altered, are embellished with the application of pebble dash and stone cladding. The complete pebble-dashing of a façade, for example, completely destroys the careful balance and consistency across the terrace as a whole. The result has created discord and fragmentation to the entire elevation of the terrace, to the detriment of the character of the conservation area.

The painting of the front elevation creates greater colour divergence throughout the conservation area which can detract from its consistent character and appearance.

The original pointing and mortar would have been lime putty based without cement. Modern cementitious mortars are not appropriate because this mortar is actually harder than the brickwork, whereas mortar should be softer than the brickwork.

#### 2.7.2 Boundary treatments

The properties in this conservation area have lost their original iron railings, and many have been replaced with unsympathetically designed walls or fencing. This can detract from the overall design and consistency of the terrace, especially apparent in long views.

#### 2.7.3 Gap sites

There are gaps in the rows of terraced housing, particularly at the eastern half of the Medway Conservation Area, they can expose unsympathetic rear extensions that would otherwise not be seen. The houses within the conservation area are characteristically small and two storeys in scale, which traditionally may have had single storey, one room extensions.

#### 2.7.4 Sensitivity of end of terrace plots

The design of end of terrace houses has more potential to impact the appearance of the conservation area than mid-terrace houses. Similarly, as with gap site, where houses have suffered badly from inappropriate design, large, over-scaled, or even multiple extensions, these are highly visible at end of terrace plots.

#### 2.7.5 Existing roof extensions

Modest Victorian properties were two storey houses with butterfly roofs hidden behind the parapet. Currently, there are isolated existing Mansard roof extensions on Selwyn Road and Lyal Road, and a more consistent run along Roman Road and Norman Grove.

#### 2.7.6 Rear extensions

Rear elevations can suffer badly from inappropriate design and large rear extensions. Where visible, these inappropriately designed extensions harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. Over-development of rear extensions has occurred particularly in the deep plots along Roman Road.

### 2.8 Summary of special interest

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its history and significant architecture dating from the nineteenth century, in summary the specific features of special interest are:

- surviving nineteenth-century artisan and shopkeepers' houses;
- high level of consistency across the streets and their terraces;

- uniformity both of form and materials; and
- high rate of survival of architectural features and enrichments which make positive contributions to the character and appearance of the conservation area, these include:
  - chimney pots;
  - continuous line of parapet wall to conceal London roof behind;
  - party walls with brick-on-edge detailing and stepped lead flashings;
  - stucco cornices to the parapet on the front elevation;
  - decorative mouldings or brick borders to first-floor windows;
  - tripartite round-headed windows at first-floor level;
  - canted bay windows with decorative cornice and console;
  - round-headed paired windows with stucco surrounds and foliate embellishments;
  - timber sash windows with delicate glazing bars;
  - embellished architrave, often featuring vermiculated or reticulated stucco, to
  - recessed front doors; and
  - iron railings to front boundary (even where not original,

All of the above elements make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Whilst there are no listed buildings within the area, the conservation area was designated to protect the overall character of the Victorian terraces, which are of collective townscape merit. And it is the cohesive character of the area rather than individual buildings which the conservation area status seeks to preserve and enhance.

### 3.0

## MANAGEMENT PLAN

### 3.1

## Introduction

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 areas 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 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, 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 global warming. Demolition and rebuilding of buildings can have a significant impact on the environment and can result in a large amount of waste and associated air pollution.

### 3.2 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 National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF].
- the London Plan
- the Tower Hamlets Local Plan
- the Tower Hamlets Conservation Strategy
- Historic England guidance and
- this character appraisal and management plan

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

### 3.3 Opportunities for enhancement

It is the character of the area, rather than individual buildings, which the conservation area designation seeks to preserve and enhance. However, there are minor improvements that could be made to the existing terraces within the residential part of this conservation

area. While the structures themselves are intact, the terraces require some attention and renovation. The council supports the retention and reinstatement of architectural features of the area.

This section provides guidance on opportunities for enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area which residents may consider.

### 3.3.1 Façade brickwork

Measures should be taken to ensure that further damage to the façade brickwork is avoided and to ensure that further application of the pebble-dash is not allowed. Although cladding and rendering may seem quick solutions to maintenance and structural problems, they can create new problems, disguising what could later emerge to be major building defects. These are all irreversible steps. By hiding original details, such as window arches and string courses, a house can be completely altered, losing its traditional appearance.

The original pointing and mortar would have been lime putty based without cement. Modern cementitious mortars are not appropriate because this mortar is actually harder than the brickwork, whereas mortar should be softer than the brickwork. Projecting 'weather struck' pointing would not be original and should be avoided; the pointing should be flush with or slightly indented from the brickwork. It is important to use mortar to match the original and not any later replacements.

### 3.3.2 Railings

During the war metal was in short supply and railings were removed. Some properties have had railings reinstated but they do not all follow the traditional details. Reinstatement of traditional railings is encouraged by the Council. Railings should be of cast iron, painted black and leaded into a stone plinth. Low railings are appropriate: higher than 2m would detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area. In saying this, some houses appear never to have had railings and in these cases, it may not be appropriate to introduce them.

### 3.3.3 Cornices

Where parapet level cornices are damaged or have had to be removed, efforts should be made to restore them. This would improve the rhythm and character of the terrace and therefore be considered a positive intervention to the conservation area.

### 3.3.4 Street and opens spaces

There are opportunities to improve quality of the street environment in the conservation area and its setting. The existing street trees make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and there may be scope for further planting of trees or the improvement of existing tree pits. There may also be opportunities for other types of greening to support and improve the character of the streetscene, as well as providing linkages and wayfinding to the Green Grid, which runs through and adjacent to the conservation area. Other opportunities for enhancement exist in the rationalisation of the street clutter, the improvement of pavement surfaces and street lighting, and the improvement of Selwyn Green. Care to ensure the appropriate maintenance will need to be considered.

### 3.4 Potential development

The council recognises that residents may wish to extend their houses to provide more accommodation; this section provides guidance on how best to manage the potential change. It is important that any development is carried out with due regard for preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Historic England in their guidance regarding alterations to the London terraced house 1660– 1860 note the need to retain the structure, character and appearance of a building, and that proposals should not impair or destroy the overall shape and proportion of a house or detract from its historic character.

#### 3.4.1 Roof extensions

Historic England's advice summarised above relates to a number of features but is particularly relevant when considering alterations to the roof form.

When assessing an application for a roof extension the following matters are taken into account:

- visibility and impact on the public realm;
- historic integrity (degree of change);
- the historic and architectural interest of the buildings concerned;
- the completeness of the group or terrace of houses concerned;
- the consistency and uniformity of the existing roofscape and its contribution to the character of the conservation area; and
- significance in terms of the conservation area.

[Mansard roofs](#) are recognised as a traditional way of extending Georgian and Victorian houses. They can be used to replace existing London roofs with a new roof structure

comprised of a steep pitched roof, with a shallower secondary pitch above, creating an additional storey of accommodation.

The council has prepared [design guidance document](#) to assist residents apply for planning permission for mansard roof extensions. The guidance only applies to certain properties in the conservation area. As noted in the character appraisal above, much of the conservation area has a consistency of architectural form, with a consistent rhythm and scale to the terraces. The uniform parapet line to the front elevation, concealing a series of uniform London roofs, creates a strong silhouette and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The introduction of mansard roof extensions can disrupt and cause harm to this element of the areas special interest. To help mitigate this potential harm to the conservation area, the guidance requires proposals for mansard roof extensions to be accompanied by façade enhancement works. The document sets out the types of enhancement work that are appropriate for the Medway Conservation Area.

### 3.4.2 Rear extensions

The scope for rear extensions to be altered is often greater than for roof extensions. There are large parts of the conservation area where rear elevations have less impact to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Where new extensions are not visible from the public realm their impact on the overall character and appearance of the conservation area is reduced.

However, the variety of rear extensions means that there is no standard solution and when putting an application together it will be important to consider the consistency and rhythm of neighbouring properties, the existing rear building line and the particular character of the house.

When assessing an application for a rear extension the following matters are taken into account:

- visibility from street and impact on the public realm;
- historic integrity (degree of change);
- the historic and architectural interest of the buildings concerned;
- the consistency and uniformity of the existing group or terrace of houses concerned;
- significance in terms of the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The impact of the proposals upon the amenity of neighbouring properties, the design, scale and materials are always important considerations when assessing proposals for a rear extension. An extension should always be subordinate to the main building.

Generally, an extension to infill the side return will be acceptable. Ideally this should be a lighter weight structure, its features should respect the scale of those features on the existing building and ideally it will be set back from the rear wall of the existing extension so that the prominence of the historic building envelope is preserved.

A common form of extension requested is a wraparound extension. This might also be acceptable, where the garden is of a suitable size, and where it is not visible from the public realm.

It is very important to note that all general planning policies apply as elsewhere in the borough.

### 3.4.3 Shopfronts

Roman Road is lined with shop fronts; this street is a lively component of the conservation area and there exists the opportunity to refurbish and upgrade the shopfronts along this thoroughfare. Insensitively designed shopfronts can harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. Whereas a well-designed shopfront has the potential to increase the attractiveness of the building to which it is attached and the area as a whole, and potentially increase the commercial success of the shop and the area by increasing the appeal to shoppers. Alterations to original shopfronts should respect the design, detailing, material and architectural features of the existing, and also the building itself.

## 3.5 Highways and public realm

The quality of the highway and public realm, including surface materials, street furniture and other features, makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Any work carried out should respect this historic character, and this will include retaining and restoring any historic surfaces or features. Any new surfaces should be sympathetic to the historic character of the area. It will also include the removal of any superfluous or redundant street furniture, and ensuring a co-ordinated approach to the introduction of new features using equipment that is simple, elegant and appropriate to context.

## 3.6 Trees

All trees in conservation areas are protected by the provisions of section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These provisions require people to notify the council

before carrying out certain works to trees. This is known as a 'section 211 notice', and it must be made six weeks before the work. The work may go ahead before the end of the six-week period if council gives consent. The notice period gives the council the opportunity to consider whether to make a Tree Preservation Order [TPO].

Details of how to make a section 211 notice can be found on the council's website. People are not required to submit a section 211 notice to the local planning authority for:

- the cutting down, topping or lopping or uprooting of a tree whose diameter does not exceed 75 millimetres; or
- the cutting down or uprooting of a tree, whose diameter does not exceed 100 millimetres, for the sole purpose of improving the growth of other trees (eg thinning as part of forestry operations).
- In either case, the diameter of the tree is to be measured over the bark of the tree at 1.5 metres above ground level. These exemptions do not apply in circumstances where a tree has more than one stem at a point 1.5 metres above the natural ground level if any stem when measured over its bark at that point exceeds the relevant minimum.
- Further details can be found on the council's website: [tree management and preservation orders \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/tree-management-and-preservation-orders).

## 3.7 Energy efficiency improvements

### 3.7.1 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 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, for example 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.

### 3.7.2 Cladding, rendering, or painting of external walls.

Original façade treatments of buildings which contribute positively to the special character or appearance of the conservation area should be retained or reinstated. 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.

## 3.8 Making a planning application

In Medway 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 planning permission even for minor work such as replacing railings. Consent is required to demolish any building larger than 115m<sup>2</sup>, and a higher standard of detail and information is required for any application.

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. To

assist with this, more detailed information is often required to support a planning application. 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 design decisions.
- A heritage statement that sets out the significance of relevant heritage assets and what the impact of the development will be on them,
- 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 proposed work.
- Where mansard roof extensions are proposed, detailed drawings showing accompanying façade enhancement works.
- Additional detail regarding materials and construction.
- Photos of the condition of existing building [including details where appropriate].
- Where relevant, existing and proposed townscape views.

More information about making a planning application can be found on the councils website: [making a planning application \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/making-a-planning-application). Applicants are encouraged to make use of the council's pre-application advice service to help improve the quality of planning applications and their likelihood of success.

Planning applications that do not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area will normally be recommended for refusal.

### 3.9

#### **Enforcement strategy**

The council has power to act where there has been a breach of planning regulations. This includes carrying out development without consent, or not in accordance with conditions attached to a consent. It also includes displaying a sign or an advert without, advertisement consent, making a material and unlawful change to the use of a property, carrying out works to a listed building without consent, demolishing a building within a conservation area without consent, felling or carrying out works to a tree in a conservation area or a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order [TPO].

If we find that there is a breach of planning regulations, we may request that a retrospective application be made for the works. If a retrospective application is not submitted, or if permission is refused, we may ask for the structure to be changed or removed or for the use to cease. In some cases, we may issue a planning enforcement notice to ensure compliance.

An enforcement notice is served on all freeholders, lessees, mortgagees and other persons having a material interest in the property. Failure to comply with an enforcement notice is an offence that may result in an unlimited fine if convicted. Continued non-compliance can result in further prosecutions for further offences, incurring additional fines. An enforcement notice is also entered on the local land charges records which could make the future sale or financing of the property more difficult.

Further details about planning enforcement can be found on the council's website:

[breaches of planning regulations \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/breaches-of-planning-regulations)

## 4.0

### CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

#### **Tower Hamlets Planning & Building Control Service**

Tower Hamlets Town Hall  
160 Whitechapel Road  
London  
E1 1BJ

Tel: 020 7364 5009

[planning@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:planning@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

[www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/planning\\_and\\_building\\_control/](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/planning_and_building_control/)

#### **Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives**

277 Bancroft Road  
London  
E1 4DQ

Tel: 020 7364 1290

[localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:localhistory@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

[www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history](https://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history)

#### **Historic England**

A public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's historic environment.

[www.historicengland.org.uk/](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/)

#### **Georgian Group**

A national charity for the preservation and promotion of Georgian architecture and planning.

[www.georgiangroup.org.uk](https://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)

### **Victorian Society**

A national charity championing Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

[www.victoriansociety.org.uk](http://www.victoriansociety.org.uk)

### **Twentieth Century Society**

A national charity helping to protect and celebrate outstanding buildings from the 20th and 21st centuries.

[www.c20society.org.uk](http://www.c20society.org.uk)

### **Planning Portal**

A website that helps people to apply for planning permission and building control in the UK.

[www.planningportal.co.uk](http://www.planningportal.co.uk)