

Ropery Street 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 Roper Street Conservation Area was designated in May 1987.

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 the character appraisal and management guidelines adopted for the Roper Street Conservation Area in March 2007.

2.0 CHARACTER APPRAISAL

2.1 Location and setting

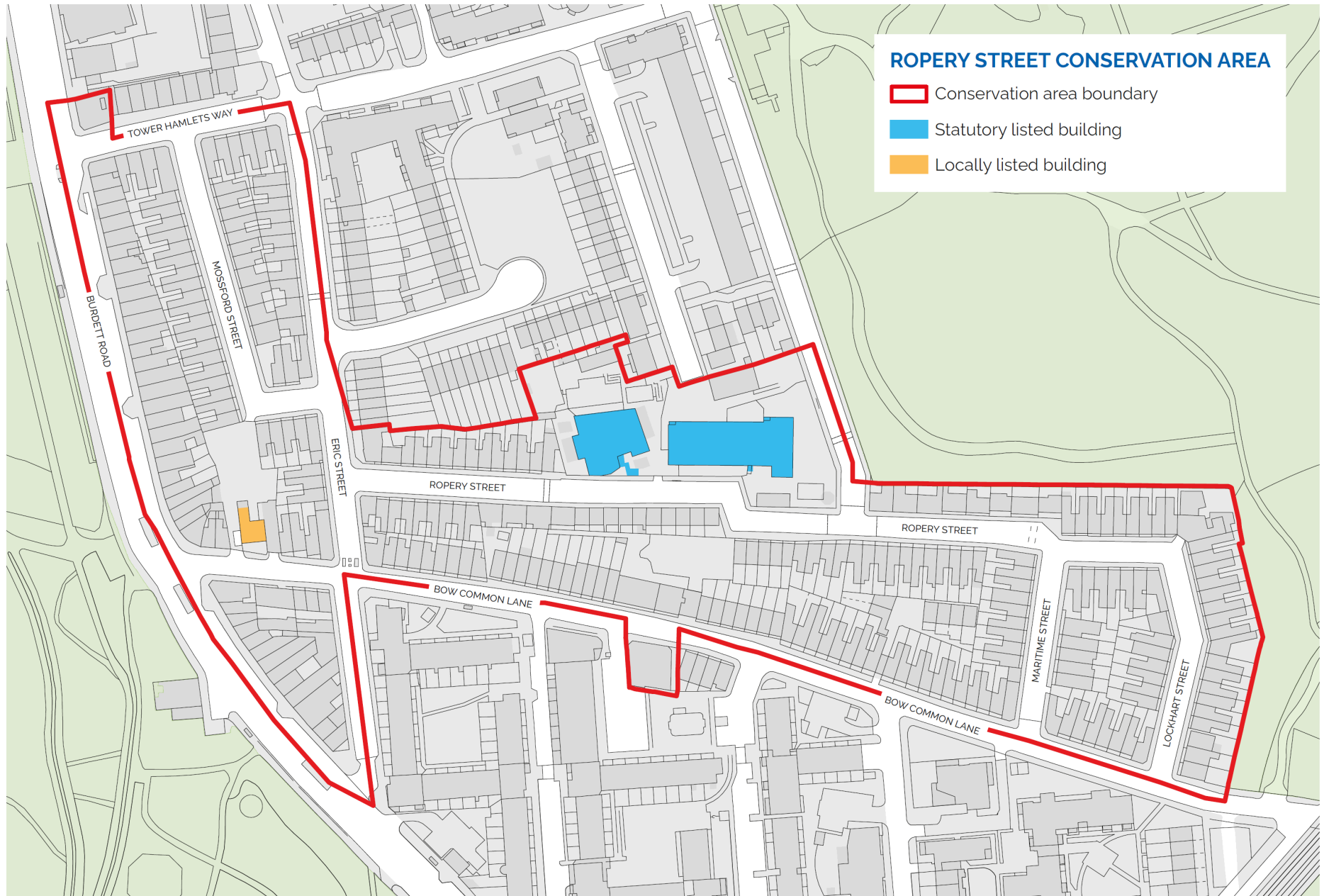
The Ropery Street Conservation Area is in the centre of Mile End (one of twenty-four distinct 'places' identified within the Local Plan), in the northeast of the central sub-area which sits in the heart of the borough.

The T-shaped conservation area is made up of two perpendicular blocks of late 19th century housing located between two areas of parkland; Mile End Park to the west of the conservation area lies parallel to Burdett Road and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park borders the conservation area to the north and east. Its boundary is further defined by the post-war housing on the Eric and Treby estate to the north and the Bede Housing estate south of Bow Common Lane.

The setting of the Ropery Street Conservation Area is defined by the surrounding townscape and physical features that contribute to its overall character and significance. It is an area of historical and architectural interest, characterized by its terraced houses and the former London Board School buildings. The historic townscape of the area is well-preserved with the groups of terraces being of particular merit.

The area's setting is also defined by the open green space of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and Mile End Park which provides a peaceful and picturesque contrast to the surrounding urban environment. Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park was designated a conservation area in November 1987 and is centred around the Victorian cemetery, it was declared a Local Nature Reserve in May 2000. The setting of the Ropery Street Conservation Area is a significant factor in its character and historical importance, contributing to the area's overall sense of place and value.

ROPERY STREET CONSERVATION AREA



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2.2 Historical development

Until the early nineteenth century the Ropery Street Conservation Area was open farmland, a few small buildings can be seen on historical maps indicating a small hamlet developing around the intersection of what is now Burdett Road and the road leading to Bow Common, now known as Bow Common Lane, and by 1820 maps indicate a pair of Maritime Almshouses situated at Maritime Street.

The wider area was developed in the early nineteenth century as part of the expansion of London. At the time, the East End was an industrial hub and centre of trade, and Greenwoods Map of London 1828 reveals that a scatter of ropeworks and associated industry were now also present along Bow Common Lane. By the mid-nineteenth century as more people came to live and die in the area, the city's church burial grounds were full and private cemetery companies responded to a commercial opportunity by opening a number of cemeteries on the fringes of Victorian London, Tower Hamlets Cemetery opened in 1841.

Rope merchant Samuel Soanes (who died in 1845), owner of part of the land on which the cemetery was built, was a partner in one such company and likely to have been related to or in partnership with John Soanes Son & Co. Rope, Line and Twine Manufacturers.

The first directory entries in 1811 list John Soanes as a rope and twine maker at 218 Bow Common Lane in the parish of Stepney, also listed in Post Office London directories for 1843, 1873 and 1875 at 18 Broad Street, Ratcliff and 218 Bow Common Lane. By the 1881 census, the household was occupied by Susan Soanes, who was described as a rope manufacturer. The firm is absent from the 1889 Directory.

The former location of the roperies can be identified on historic maps by their long straight, narrow profile, this was known as the 'ropewalk' a long alley or covered pathway where strands of material, such as hemp fibre, were laid before being twisted into rope.

As the land north of Bow Common Lane began to fill with the utilities that were a common characteristic of the Victorian city fringes, such as the Tower Hamlets Cemetery [1841] and gasworks [1850], Ropery Street was built as housing for rope and twine employees of the remaining ropeworks. Nearby the workhouses and infirmary of the City Union [St Clements Hospital] were constructed in 1849 whilst the remaining land was filled with streets of Victorian terrace housing, characteristic of the 1880s. In 1858 when Burdett Road was constructed it initially bore the name Victoria Park Approach Road as it provided access from the docks to Victoria Park. On 19 December 1862, it underwent a name change to Burdett Road in honour of philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts.

In 1883 Andrew Mearns, a clergyman whose focus was upon the physical and moral condition of London's and its consequences, observed 'Out of 2,290 persons living in consecutive houses at Bow Common, only 88 adults and 47 children ever attend [a place of worship]', a situation he blamed on the conditions in which they lived. In the wake of this panic about the London poor, philanthropist, scientific social researcher and reformer, Charles Booth initiated his famous socio-economic study and indicated on his 1898-99 map that the housing on Roper Street was 'Fairly comfortable, good ordinary earnings'. However, accommodation on Burdett Road and Bow Common Lane was described as 'Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor.' At the same time George Arkell was mapping the proportion of the Jewish population to other residents of East London and indicated that Roper Street had less than 5% Jewish population whereas Burdett Road, Mossford Street and Eric Street boasted between 5% and 25% Jewish residents. Perhaps clergyman Mearns wasn't including the Jewish population in his church attending figures, but these studies all help build a picture of the evolution of the East End of London, the Roper Street Conservation Area and its inhabitants at that period of time.

Historic maps dated the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century also reveal the maritime almshouses were replaced with more Victorian terrace housing on Maritime Street and the London General Omnibus Company [LGOC] had stables and later a bus depot on land between Bow Common Lane and Roper Street which is now terraced housing known as Sacrum Terrace and Twine Terrace.

During WW2 bombs destroyed the east side of Eric Street and Carter Street [now known as Treby Street], since then there has been replacement of buildings damaged in the Blitz with post-war housing blocks which surround much of the conservation area.

Currently within the conservation area, there is one Grade II listed building, Bonner Primary School established in 1874 with a second school block built in 1904, they gained listed status as a group in 2009. There is one locally listed building, known as 'The Roper' at 218 Bow Common Lane, which is one of the earliest buildings in the area, dating back to the early 19th century.

2.3 Spatial analysis

The Roper Street Conservation Area is characterised by its uniform group of terraces, dating back to the mid-late 19th century. Much of the character of the terraces is gained from their overall uniformity and rhythm, proportions, height, bay width, consistent setback, matching materials and details. The streetscapes are considered significant as a group of buildings, as opposed to separate terraces having individual architectural merit.

2.3.1 Land use

The land use character of the Roper Street Conservation Area is predominantly residential with mixed used commercial and residential along its peripheral streetscapes, such as Hamlets Way and Burdett Road. This mix of uses is essential to the overall character of this part of Mile End, particularly that of the Burdett Road shopping parade. Similarly, the dense residential use of the inner streets is essential to its character. The Bonner Primary School is the only civic or institutional building in the conservation area.

2.3.2 Scale

The area is predominantly low scale, with the terrace housing along its streetscapes a uniform two to three storeys in height. However, the area densely built, in terms of building footprints, with most terraces having been extended to the rear. The Bonner Primary School building is the one exception, rising to three storeys and standing at approximately 20 metres tall.

2.3.3 Green spaces

The Roper Street Conservation Area does not contain any green open spaces, although it is adjacent to Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and Mile End Park. The trees within these parks are visible from within the conservation area and provide a verdant backdrop to the streets.

The public space within the conservation is clearly defined and enclosed by the lines of terraced houses. Other than a handful on Bow Common Lane, there are no street trees in the conservation area.

2.4 Views

The flat topography within the Roper Street Conservation Area allows for long views along Burdett Road, Hamlets Way and Bow Common Lane, with views into Mile End Park a notable and unique feature. Long views run along street axes, highlighting the repetition and rhythm of the continuous terrace housing, in particular along Roper Street and Bow Common Lane. Views along Southern Grove on the edge of Tower Hamlets Cemetery and of the treetops from Roper Street and Lockhart Street are also a unique characteristic of the area.

The most important visual landmark in the area is the grade II listed Bonner Street Primary School set amongst the similarly aged Victorian housing, it is visible from few viewpoints within the Roper Street Conservation Area but extensively from Roper Street itself. In long views from Mossford Street, facing south, the skyscrapers of Landmark Pinnacle and

Newfoundland at Canary Wharf are clearly visible, and from Ropery Street Lewey House is visible above the terraces from several positions.

2.5 Architectural characteristics

The Ropery Street Conservation Area contains several architectural styles which reflect historic growth and change in the area.

The most common building type in the conservation area is the two storey terraced houses, as found on Mossford Street, Eric Street, Ropery Street, Lockhart Street, Maritime Street and Bow Common Lane. There are also three storey terraced properties with ground floor commercial premises and living accommodation on the upper floors, on the Burdett Road. Both types of building are typically Victorian, consistent in size and scale and originally would have had identical features, with very minor variations. There remains an 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.

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.

In keeping with the residential typology above a group of modern 2-storey terraces at number 28 Roper Street are built in a reproduction style; a similar row of terraces with mansard roofs backs onto these at number 190 Bow Common Lane.

The only institutional building in the conservation area is the Grade II listed Bonner Primary School (1874 and 1904), unusually, the first school was not demolished when the second was completed and therefore is fairly rare. The early (1874) school by ER Robson was built in the period when no two London schools were the same. The main school building (1904) is an expression of TJ Bailey's later style, and as the Queen Anne style was emerging as the London School Board's signature idiom, it epitomises the 'sweetness and light' character of board schools architecture. The schools form a unique group and typology, telling the history of London board school architecture at a glance.

218 Bow Common Lane, a detached Regency style villa, one of the earliest buildings in the area, is locally listed to ensure that its historical interest and character is recognised in regard to any future proposals.

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 terraces making up many of the streets in 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.

The twentieth century houses on Bow Common Lane also feature mansards roofs, although it is likely that these were part of the original construction and not later additions.

Elsewhere in the conservation area there are instances of pitched and hipped roofs.

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 Ropery Street 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 area is characterised by high-quality materials and richly detailed buildings. There is a prevailing use of yellow stock brick and stucco on the elevations, timber sash windows and slate roofs on the residential properties, although stucco exteriors can also be found on the terraces. The church, presbytery and school are notably faced in red brick.

On Mossford Street, Eric Street, Ropery Street, Lockhart Street, Maritime Street and Bow Common Lane, the character of the terraces is enhanced by the original mouldings, and these vary between terraces. The variation in architectural detail is characteristic where terraces are built up of grouped buildings by different builders, but the consistency of approach in each terrace or group of houses provides coherence. The following features are positive attributes of the conservation area:

- Continuous line of parapet wall to conceal London roofs.
- Cornice [decorative moulding on parapet].
- Curved stucco arches over first floor windows.
- Timber sash windows with delicate glazing bars.

- Embellished door surrounds with recessed front doors.
- Decorative mouldings or bay window to ground floor.
- Cast iron railings on stone plinth.
- The London stock brickwork, chimneys and roof forms are characteristic of the conservation area.

On some houses the mouldings have been removed, especially the projecting cornices, and in some cases the render band has also been removed or re-built with a plain brick parapet. These changes detract from the character and integrity of the conservation area. 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.

On Burdett Road, Hamlets Way and some of the corner properties in the residential streets, the ground floor shop units also have a consistency which provides coherence and enhances the architectural integrity of the area. The following features are positive attributes of the conservation area:

- Continuous line of parapet wall to conceal London roofs,
- Cornice (decorative moulding on parapet),
- Plain or curved stucco decoration over upper floor windows,
- Timber sash windows with delicate glazing bars,
- Timber fascia with cornice and console brackets,
- Glazed ground floor windows with recessed front doors,
- Additional front door for access to living accommodation,
- The London stock brickwork, chimneys and roof forms are characteristic 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.

Many of the streets in the conservation area feature Victorian style streetlamps, whereas along Burdett Road and Bow Common Lane there are taller contemporary tubular and

stepped steel lighting columns. The conservation area features very few street trees, which contributes to a rather hard urban character.

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

The terraced residential streets that make up the conservation area 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 painted or embellished with the application of pebble dash. The complete pebble-dashing of a façade, for example, seriously harms 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 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 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. Rear and roof extensions tend to be highly visible on end of terrace properties, resulting in harm if they are over-scaled or otherwise inappropriately designed.

2.7.4 Roof extensions

Many of the buildings are modest Victorian two storey houses with butterfly roofs hidden behind the parapet.

2.7.5 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 to the rear of commercial properties along Burdett Road Road.

2.8 Summary of special interest

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

- surviving terraces of nineteenth century houses;
- high level of consistency across the 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; and
 - embellished architrave, often featuring vermiculated or reticulated stucco, to recessed front doors.

All the above elements make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Overall, the terraces are collectively regarded as having significant townscape merit and are worthy of designation as a conservation area.

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 [see section 2.3.5]. 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 two metres 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 Public realm

There are opportunities to improve the quality of the streets and opens spaces in the conservation area and its setting. Many of the streets have a rather hard urban character and would benefit from tree planting to soften their appearance. There may 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, and the improvement of pavement surfaces and street lighting. 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 relevant properties in the Roper Street 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 Roper Street 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

Burdett 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

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 \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](http://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 Ropery Street 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 115m², 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: [braches of planning regulations \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/braches-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

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

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/

Georgian Group

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

www.georgiangroup.org.uk

Victorian Society

A national charity championing Victorian and Edwardian buildings.

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

Planning Portal

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

www.planningportal.co.uk