



# Conservation Strategy 2017-2027

Adopted  
September 2017

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices



# Contents

---

## Foreword

## Preface

## Executive Summary

- 1 - Introduction
- 2 - Our heritage
- 3 - Caring for our heritage
- 4 - Our strategy
- 5 - Delivery

## Appendices

- A - History of Tower Hamlets
- B - Profile of Tower Hamlets Today
- C - Audit of Tower Hamlets' Heritage Assets
- D - Key Stakeholders: Roles & Responsibilities
- E - Historic England Planning Advice

## Figures

- 1 - The London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- 2 - Overview of Heritage Assets
- 3 - World Heritage Sites and Scheduled Monuments
- 4 - Archaeological Priority Areas
- 5 - Statutory Listed Buildings Grade I
- 6 - Statutory Listed Buildings Grade II\*
- 7 - Locally Listed Buildings
- 8 - Strategic and Local Views
- 9 - Conservation Areas
- 10 - Historic Landscapes, Gardens and Squares
- 11 - Modern Architecture
- 12 - Heritage Collections and Markets

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices



## Foreword

Tower Hamlets' built environment and communities are set to experience significant changes over the next 10 years, with a strong focus on regeneration and housing development supported by a significant investment in transport. Our history and heritage resource is an irreplaceable legacy, one that we are immensely proud of and that we are strongly committed to. At the same time, we are also committed to ensuring the on-going success and vitality of our borough, and recognise the important role that heritage can play in its sustainable development – by providing the foundation for the borough's distinctive character and sense of place, and by contributing to social and economic development, the climate change agenda and quality of life.

The original Conservation Strategy developed in 2010 was the first of its type in London, and the first to take an integrated view across all aspects of the heritage resource. We have updated the Conservation Strategy to continue to be proactive in managing our heritage for current and future generations. Building on our successes, it will help ensure that the borough's heritage is protected and enhanced as part of the changing environment, and also help ensure that heritage continues to actively contribute to the social and economic regeneration of the borough.

This updated Conservation Strategy has been produced to support the development of a new Local Plan to 2031. It aims to protect and enhance Tower Hamlets' heritage, and ensure that it can be appreciated and enjoyed by current and future generations. A key part of this is to ensure increased community engagement and involvement in the heritage as a critical part of ensuring its on-going sustainability. The Strategy also aims to enhance the contribution of the heritage to other strategic priorities of the borough, to ensure that heritage plays an active role in the borough's on-going regeneration and development, thereby helping to improve quality of life for all.

This Strategy is for everyone with an interest in the future conservation and enjoyment of our borough's rich heritage.

***London Borough of Tower Hamlets***

**1**

Introduction

**2**

Our heritage

**3**

Caring for  
our heritage

**4**

Our strategy

**5**

Delivery

Appendices



## Preface

Tower Hamlets council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to develop the original Conservation Strategy for the borough in 2010. The development of the original Strategy was informed by engagement with key stakeholders, including council departments, English Heritage (now Historic England) and feedback from a public consultation process that engaged with a diverse range of local community and interest groups.

The council subsequently re-commissioned CBA in August 2016 to undertake a review of the original Conservation Strategy to take account of changes to the strategic context, and to reflect the progress that has been made in delivery since 2010. The development of the updated Strategy was informed by preliminary discussions with stakeholders at a workshop in September 2016, the resulting updated strategy was then the subject of public consultation, alongside the draft Local Plan 2031, between November 2016 and January 2017. The updated strategy was adopted by Cabinet on 19 September 2017.

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**1**

Introduction

**2**

Our heritage

**3**

Caring for  
our heritage

**4**

Our strategy

**5**

Delivery

Appendices



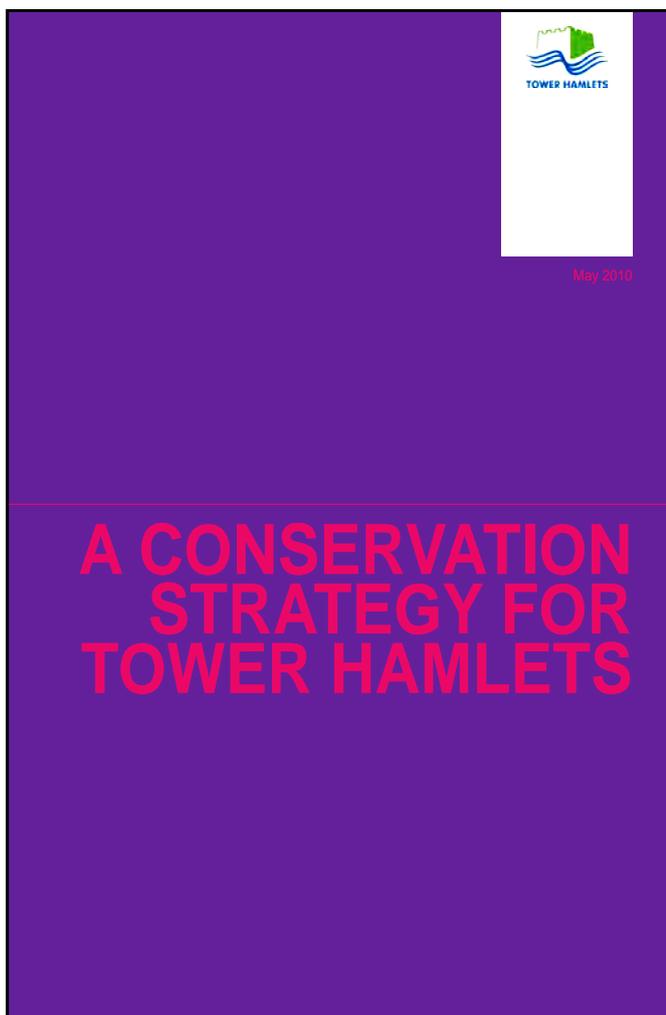
# Executive summary

## Background

Tower Hamlets is a unique inner-London borough with a long history of trade, industry and migration. It is famous for its East End heritage, its vibrancy, and its multiculturalism. Our borough's heritage is of international, national and local importance, characterised by enormous diversity and variety. This rich heritage resource includes historic buildings and archaeology; historic parks and open spaces; heritage collections and intangible heritage. This is heritage in its broadest sense, including both designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Conservation is an on-going and active process of maintenance and managing change requiring a flexible approach to get the best out of heritage assets. The first Conservation Strategy for Tower Hamlets was prepared by the council in 2010. It established a new direction for the future care of our cherished historic buildings and places. Considerable progress has been made over the last five years. This includes reducing the number of heritage assets at risk in the borough, investment in conservation-led area regeneration schemes and protection of the historic environment from inappropriate development.

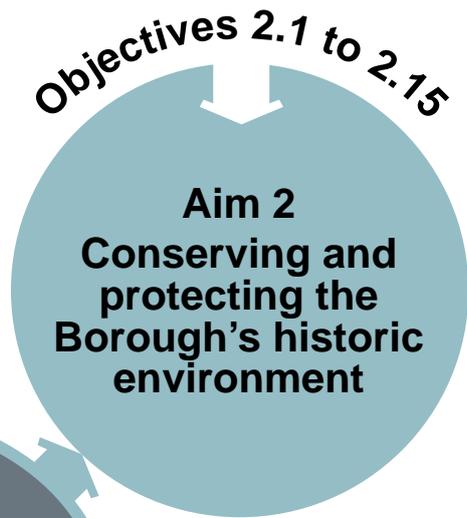
Building on the framework provided by the 2010 document, this updated strategy sets out a refreshed vision for guiding conservation and enjoyment of the borough's historic environment over the next 10 years.



The Strategy informs the Council's new Local Plan, which, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, sets out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.

It sets out a common framework for all stakeholders to use in helping ensure that the borough's historic environment continues to play an influential role in the future well-being and success of Tower Hamlets' communities and businesses.

The Conservation Strategy is a key part of the evidence base for the Council's emerging Local Plan 2031. It also actively contributes to meeting the aims of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2015.



**TOWER HAMLETS LOCAL PLAN 2031**  
**TOWER HAMLETS COMMUNITY PLAN**

# The vision for our heritage

Tower Hamlets' rich and diverse heritage is an irreplaceable legacy that is widely valued, cared for and celebrated.

The historic environment is intrinsic to the character of Tower Hamlets and makes it a unique and distinctive place.

It also makes a significant contribution to the borough as a welcoming place to live, work and visit, delivering long-term benefits for the social and economic well-being of Tower Hamlets.

This heritage resource is protected and enhanced to ensure that it continues to be appreciated and enjoyed by future generations.

The Strategy has three core aims to help people value, conserve and enjoy Tower Hamlets' historic environment, which together will help achieve our aspirational long-term vision for the borough's heritage:

- 1 - Understand and appreciate our rich heritage
- 2 - Conserve and protect the borough's historic environment
- 3 - Enjoy, celebrate and engage with our rich history



## **Aim 1 - Understanding and appreciating our rich heritage, and recognising its contribution to the borough's vibrancy and distinctiveness**

The people, stories, spaces and buildings that contribute to our heritage are an essential and intrinsic part of the borough's vibrant street scenes, multi-cultural history and unique sense of place. Our borough's historic environment is of international, national and local importance, characterised by enormous diversity and variety. It is a rich resource that includes historic buildings and archaeology, parks and open spaces, heritage collections and intangible heritage (including personal memories and traditional skills, markets and festivals).

The historic environment has a key role to play in shaping the growth and development of the borough. To manage our heritage effectively, we need to understand its significance in terms of the contribution it makes to a place's community, economy and environment, and how people relate to, enjoy and value their heritage.

The historic environment continues to adapt and change, responding to the evolving needs of the borough as part of a modern and world-class city. Understanding the ambitions of local communities, property owners and other interested stakeholders is therefore key to securing a sustainable future for our historic environment. Its stewardship must be evidence-led, with a strategic approach underpinned by a thorough understanding of its condition, value and the challenges it faces.

Outcomes:

- Increased appreciation of the diversity of our tangible and intangible heritage
- Greater recognition of the contributions the historic environment makes to the intrinsic character of our borough as a unique and distinctive place to live, work and visit
- Transparent decision-making informed by an up-to-date evidence base and accessible information about the condition, value and significance of the historic environment
- Shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for conserving and enjoying our rich heritage



## ***Aim 2 - Conserving and protecting the borough's historic environment, and capitalising on opportunities for attracting investment, conservation-led regeneration and positive place shaping***

The council is committed to conserving and protecting our historic environment for future generations to inherit, and improving heritage assets at risk, through its own plans and policies and when responding to development proposals. Proposals that are regarded as improving the borough's historic environment will be positively supported, whereas proposals which could cause permanent harm to historic assets will be opposed unless there are considerable public benefits that would outweigh the harm. The council will use its influence and local planning authority powers in partnership with local communities, property owners and other interested stakeholders to achieve this aim.

Our rich heritage can be used as a powerful catalyst for regeneration in the borough and has an important role to play in attracting investment and positive place-making. The council aims to promote opportunities for conservation-led regeneration that secure long-term environmental, social and economic benefits.

As the borough evolves, historic assets can become neglected and fall into disrepair where they no longer have a sustainable commercial or community use. Investment can both release and benefit from their untapped potential, bringing heritage back into play and revitalising buildings, areas and the borough as a whole. Small and medium businesses in particular have a crucial role to play in providing opportunities for creative and innovative uses of historic buildings, reflecting the tradition of adaptive re-use of buildings by immigrants to the borough.

Continuing to increase the contribution of heritage to regeneration and sustainable development will not only support delivery of some of the key strategic priorities for the borough and for London more broadly, but it will also help to ensure the on-going conservation of the borough's heritage.

Outcomes:

- Number of heritage assets at risk reduced through improved conservation management and maintenance
- Significance of designated heritage assets and their settings effectively protected from inappropriate development
- Locally valued heritage assets and intangible heritage recognised and taken into account in decision-making
- Up-to-date information and guidance about the historic environment that is easily accessible
- Aims and objectives of the Strategy incorporated into the Local Plan as appropriate
- Increased investment in the sustainable adaption and reuse of historic buildings
- High quality new architecture and public realm that contributes positively to historic places

### ***Aim 3 - Enjoying, celebrating and engaging with our rich history, and promoting Tower Hamlets as a distinctive and welcoming place to live, work and visit for current and future generations***

Tower Hamlets is a unique inner-London borough with a long history of trade, industry and migration. It is famous for its East End heritage, its vibrancy, and its multiculturalism. Our borough's heritage is of international, national and local importance, characterised by enormous diversity and variety. People are proud about Tower Hamlets' heritage and communities must be able to enjoy, celebrate and participate in their heritage.

Stronger connections between people and historic places in the borough need to be encouraged, raising awareness and increasing the relationship we have with our past. Opportunities to promote and make the Tower Hamlets' heritage more accessible must be developed, helping people enjoy the full breadth of the borough's cultural offer. There is opportunity to broaden this offer through promoting a diverse and innovative programme of events in historic buildings and open spaces, expanding how it is experienced by local communities and visitors, and helping invigorate undervalued areas of the borough.

Outcomes:

- Empowered communities, passionate about and able to enjoy their heritage
- A valued and cherished historic environment, celebrated by all communities
- Accessible and well-connected historic places and heritage resources
- Collaborative approach to the interpretation and sharing of information about the borough's historic environment
- A vibrant, diverse and attractive tourism and cultural heritage offer that is well integrated with how the borough promotes itself

Each of the three aims is supported by a series of objectives that will help secure a sustainable future for the borough's heritage.



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1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

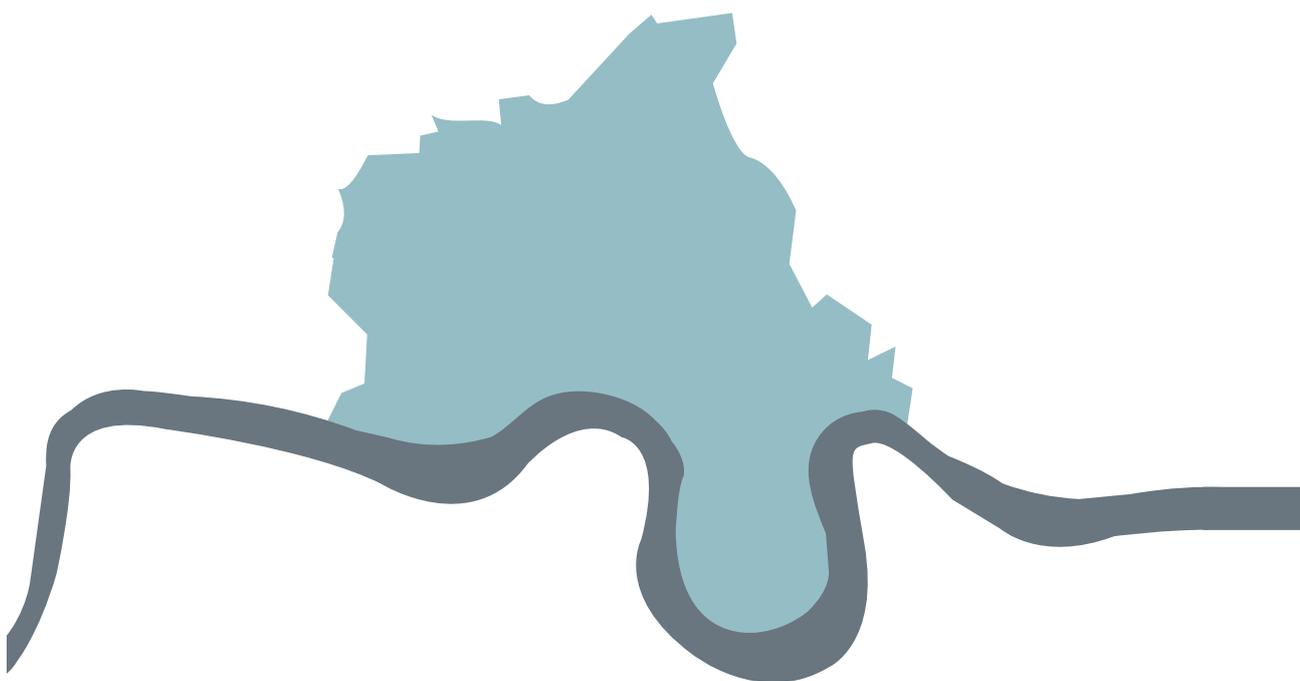
Delivery

Appendices

## Delivering the Conservation Strategy

The council will continue to take a proactive and strong leadership role in delivery of the Conservation Strategy, particularly in relation to council owned heritage assets. To be successful, the Strategy must be championed across all council departments and will also require the involvement of the community and contributions from a range of partners. It will also require prioritisation, with a particular focus on the significance of the heritage resource at risk.

In consultation with key stakeholders across the borough, annual Action Plans will be developed to guide implementation of the Conservation Strategy over the next 5 years. This will set out a list of prioritised heritage projects/actions for delivering the objectives of the strategy, identify who is responsible for delivering these and potential sources of funding and delivery mechanisms.





# Introduction



## Background

Tower Hamlets is a unique inner-London borough with a long history of trade, industry and migration. It is famous for its East End heritage, its vibrancy, and its multiculturalism. Our borough's heritage is of international, national and local importance, characterised by enormous diversity and variety. This rich heritage resource includes historic buildings and archaeology; historic parks and open spaces; heritage collections and intangible heritage. This is heritage in its broadest sense, including both designated and non-designated heritage assets.

The first Conservation Strategy for Tower Hamlets was prepared by the council in 2010. It established a new direction for the future care of our cherished historic buildings and places. Considerable progress has been made over the last five years. This includes reducing the number of heritage assets at risk in the borough, investment in conservation-led area regeneration schemes and protection of the historic environment from inappropriate development.

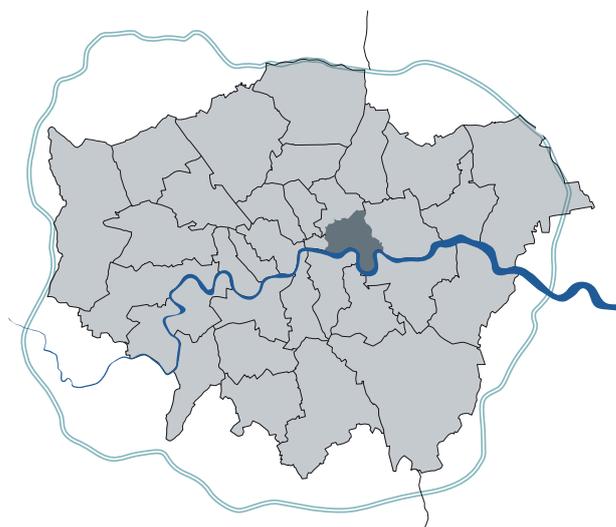
## The Conservation Strategy

The council is very proud of the borough's heritage but it cannot work alone. Conservation is a shared commitment and the borough's historic environment is a shared resource. Conserving Tower Hamlets' heritage assets therefore will require broad public support, understanding and involvement. Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change requiring a flexible approach to get the best out of heritage assets, and is an on-going process.

The council seeks to make best use of its considerable heritage assets. Through the publication of this updated Strategy, it will continue driving forward positive actions for the conservation and enjoyment of the borough's historic environment.

Building on the framework provided by the 2010 document, this updated Strategy sets out a refreshed vision and objectives for guiding conservation and enjoyment of the borough's historic environment over the next 10 years in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Conservation Strategy is a key part of the evidence base for the council's emerging Local Plan 2031.





The updated Strategy contains up-to-date evidence about the historic environment of Tower Hamlets, including information about the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment. As such, it assists the emerging Local Plan in the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in a way that is both aspirational and realistic. It also actively contributes to meeting the aims of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2015.

The Conservation Strategy aims to guide future work programmes, influence resource decisions and ensure that Tower Hamlet's historic built environment is managed in a co-ordinated, structured and corporate way. The Strategy helps to prioritise actions to ensure that available resources are directed to best effect.

It will assist in the making of bids for future resources, including partnership funding, to deliver conservation-led regeneration projects. It will be consistent with and help achieve the Council's corporate goals and commitments. Above all it will aim to provide a quality conservation service.

The Conservation Strategy will ensure that the council continues to meet its statutory duties and responsibilities, having regard in particular to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Strategy acknowledges the challenges posed by on-going restrictions on local government finances and the consequent need to explore new approaches to service delivery and prioritisation where possible.

The new Conservation Strategy was adopted by Cabinet on 19 September, following a period of public consultation. It will be reviewed again in five years' time to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.



# Our heritage



# Our heritage

## Maritime trade, migration and social change

Historical growth has significantly shaped the physical morphology of Tower Hamlets. The Hamlets grew around key movement routes and connections between the East of England, the City of London and the Thames. Each hamlet was distinctive, having its own economic function, purpose and role to play, and eventually these hamlets began to merge together to form part of the greater London metropolis.

Tower Hamlets takes its name from the historical association with the Tower of London and the surrounding **hamlets** or villages.

The connection to these distinctive places and their centres has been lost over the years since the Second World War. The function, variety and role of each place has gradually weakened, with their centres being dispersed, fragmented and loosened. This has had an impact on social cohesion and interaction and has contributed to the loss of a shared sense of place, a connection to our history, its distinctiveness and identity.

Tower Hamlets has a long history of maritime and trade activity, migration and change, and these themes have had a strong influence on the development of the borough and on its unique character today. Shipbuilding was established here by the late 14th century, and by the 19th century the docks were of international importance.

The docks around **Canary Wharf** were once part of the world's largest port. The area takes its name from the many goods imported from the Canary Islands.

Blackwall Yard, constructed in 1614, became the largest private **shipyard** in the country, and many **world famous ships**, such as the Cutty Sark and Brunel's Great Eastern, were associated with local shipyards and docks.

The early 19th century **West India Docks** were internationally important. Many of the large warehouses, such as those along Wapping High Street, give a sense of the scale of trade activity which was once prevalent in this riverside area.

Despite the loss and redevelopment of several docks over the years, there are still more **warehouses** in Tower Hamlets than any other London borough.



The 14th century also saw the first wave of immigration, with the Flemings who introduced hops into the area, leading to the development of the brewing industry. There have been a number of successive waves of immigration since then, including the Huguenots who introduced silk weaving in the 17th century, the Jewish community and, most recently, arrivals from Bangladesh in the mid-20th century.

This emphasis on trade, migration and change has also contributed to a tradition in the borough of a dynamic built environment and adaptive re-use, as new communities have found new uses for existing buildings and spaces - such as at the Old Truman Brewery site and the redevelopment of larger areas such as Fish Island. This is particularly well exemplified with the successful regeneration at Canary Wharf, and the establishment of the internationally competitive financial district.

The **Jamme Masjid Mosque on Brick Lane** was originally a church for the protestant Huguenot silk weavers in the late 17th century, subsequently a methodist chapel, then a synagogue for the Jewish community, before becoming a mosque in 1976.

The themes of maritime and trade activity, and of immigration, were critical to the character and evolution of the borough, and this heritage contributes to Tower Hamlets' unique sense of place and identity.

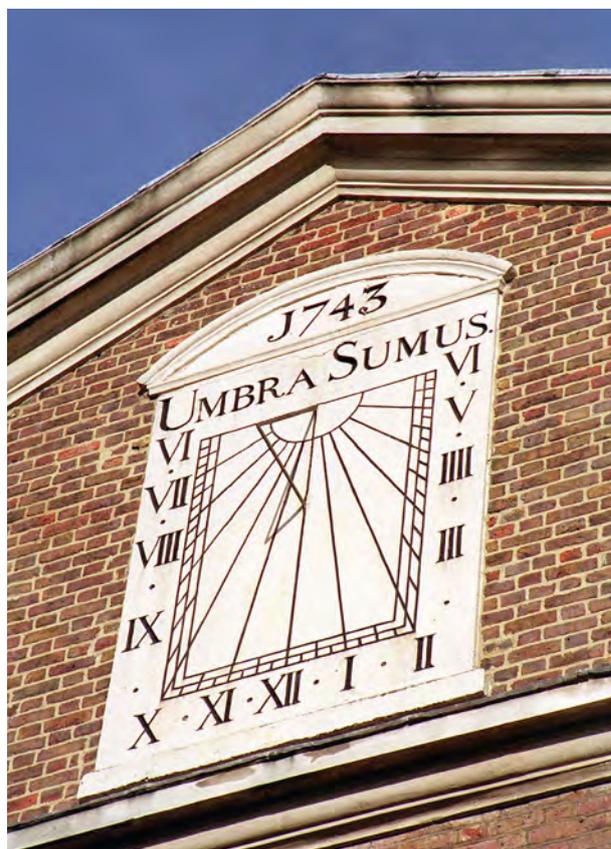
On-going regeneration and development of the borough, while being aligned with the pattern of its historical development, potentially increases pressure on the very remains of this tradition, and a balance is therefore needed to be found to accommodate both priorities. The tradition of adaptive re-use could be one solution to this, where the borough's social and economic needs are partially delivered through existing heritage stock.

Prompted by the poor conditions in the East End, William Booth formed **The Salvation Army** at a meeting held on Whitechapel Road. Today, a statue commemorates both his mission and his work in helping the poor.

Tower Hamlets has also been a place of social reform and radical politics. This was in part a response to the rapid industrialisation that has formed much of the character of the borough, which resulted in poor housing and working condition. Battles against racism are also a key part of the borough's history.

The East London Federation of Suffragettes played a major role in the campaign for the vote. They also set up the first ever children's centre, the Mother's Arms, in Bow, as a part of their work to support families during the First World War.

Further information about the history of Tower Hamlets, from prehistory to the present day, is provided in **Appendix A**.



# Tower Hamlets today: people and places

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets covers an area of 8 square miles (see **Figure 1**). It is situated on the northern bank of the River Thames, immediately adjacent to the City of London, Hackney and Newham boroughs.

The borough is one of the most ethnically diverse areas in the country, with 92 languages spoken. This diversity contributes to the borough's evolving sense of identity and to the on-going development of its rich heritage – whether through new uses for existing heritage resources or through the establishment of new heritage. For example, the Bangladeshi community has made an important contribution to the sense of place in Tower Hamlets. At the same time, the relatively recent nature of the arrival of some of these communities, and the relatively young age of the population, can also lead to a lack of connectivity with the heritage that can be found in the borough.

Today, the borough is home to a large Bangladeshi community that comprises 40% of all Bangladeshis in London, as well as to a number of other **diverse ethnic communities**.

Tower Hamlets is also a borough of stark contrasts and many social and economic challenges. It is characterised by great wealth, but it is also the 6th most deprived local authority in the country, with a number of health issues including multiple disabilities and comparatively lower life expectancy. It has the 4th highest density of jobs of all the London boroughs, but is the most employment deprived. It also has one of the highest population densities in inner London, and the population is set to increase at a faster rate than the rest of London.

In 2013, Tower Hamlets was the fastest growing area in the country over the past 10 years, with the **population** increasing by 27%. It is predicted that the borough's population will increase an additional 27% to reach over 320,000 by 2023.

Housing is one of the most significant issues in the borough, and a target has now been set of around 43,000 new homes by 2025. This will potentially increase the pressure on the borough's heritage resource, but at the same time also generates opportunities to adapt existing heritage stock.



Issues around low employment and high deprivation could also be partly addressed through greater emphasis on tourism, and the borough's rich and diverse heritage of international, national and local importance could have an important role to play in this.

Heritage could also have a role to play in addressing the health issues that the borough faces, and the challenges associated with very high population densities - through increased emphasis and access to the borough's historic landscapes, gardens, squares and waterways.

Further details about the socio-economic profile of Tower Hamlets today is provided in **Appendix B**.

1 Introduction

2 Our heritage

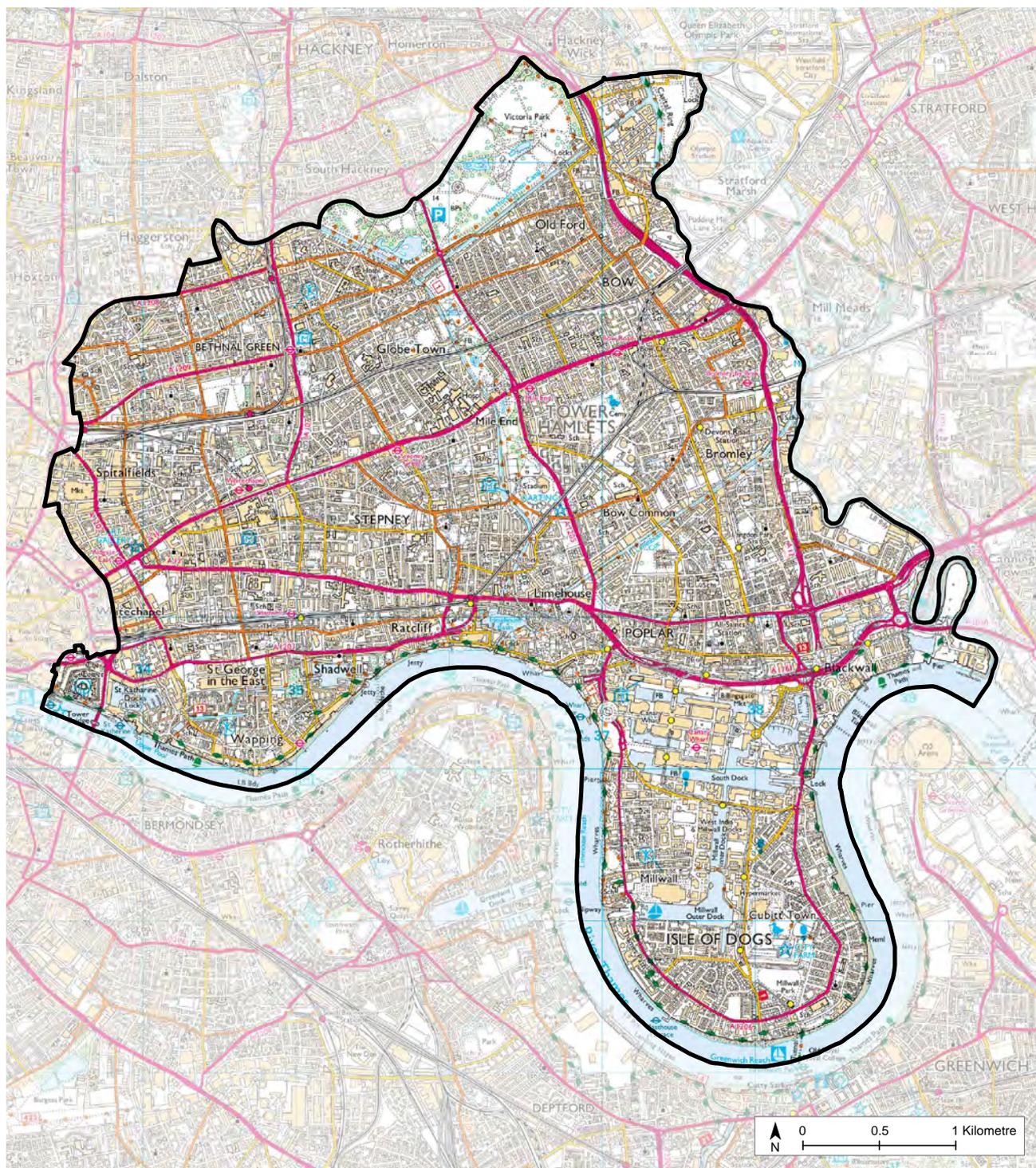
3 Caring for our heritage

4 Our strategy

5 Delivery

Appendices

Figure 1 - The London Borough of Tower Hamlets



**KEY**

 Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary

# 1

## Introduction

Tower Hamlets has a wealth of heritage, of local, national and international importance (see **Figure 2**). The borough contains all or part of 50% of the World Heritage Sites in London, and in comparison to averages across the London boroughs, it has a relatively high proportion of Scheduled Monuments, Grade II listed buildings and conservation areas.

# 2

## Our heritage

The **Tower of London World Heritage Site** is an outstanding, internationally important example of late 11th century innovative Norman military architecture and home of the Crown Jewels

This heritage is also characterised by enormous diversity and variety, covering all aspects of the historic environment (historic buildings/structures, buried archaeology and parks and open spaces), as well as heritage collections and intangible heritage.

The Grade II\* listed **Wilton's Music Hall** is the oldest music hall in London to survive in its original form.

The Grade I listed **Christ Church in Spitalfields** designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor is a masterpiece of the English Baroque period.



# 3

## Caring for our heritage

# 4

## Our strategy

# 5

## Delivery

## Appendices

The Fournier Street Conservation Area includes the most important early **Georgian quarter** in England

It also focuses around a number of uses and purposes – residential and religious; maritime, trade and industrial; public (including town halls) and educational (including schools, libraries and learning centres); and recreation and leisure (such as music halls and festivals, public houses and pie and mash shops).

The **Whitechapel Bell Foundry** was the oldest manufacturing company in Britain and a source of world famous bells such as Big Ben and the Liberty Bell.

**Brick Lane's** restaurants, neighbouring street markets and shops provide the largest range of Bengali cuisine, woodwork, carpets and clothing in Europe.

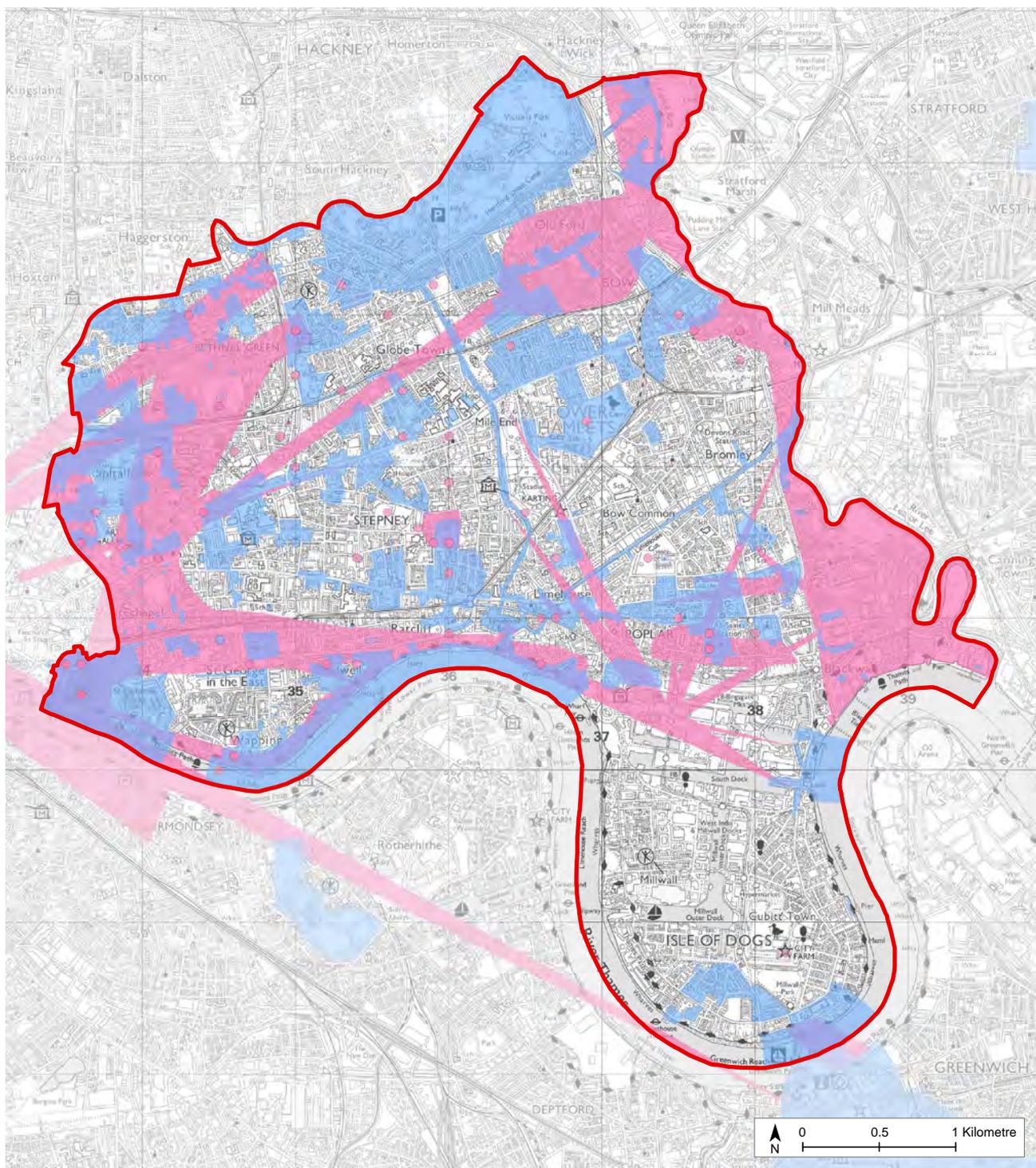
The historic **Spitalfields Market** dates back to the 17th century.



The very richness of the heritage resource at Tower Hamlets does, however, present its own challenges. It drives a need to prioritise, and to use human and financial resources as effectively as possible to maximise the protection and enhancement of that heritage.

An audit of Tower Hamlets' heritage assets in 2016 is provided in **Appendix C**.

Figure 2 - Overview of Heritage Assets



**KEY**

-  Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
-  Designated Heritage Assets
-  Undesignated Heritage Assets



# Caring for our heritage



# 3

## Caring for our heritage

### Benefits

Some of the key benefits that the heritage resource already brings to the borough and its communities are outlined below. This demonstrates why there is broad value in protecting and enhancing the heritage resource, and identifies areas where the heritage resource could bring further benefits to the borough.

*'London's built and landscape heritage provides a depth of character that has immeasurable benefit to the city's economy, culture and quality of life...It is to London's benefit that some of the best examples of architecture from the past 2000 years sit side by side to provide a rich texture that makes the city a delight to live, visit, study and do business in.'*

(Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, The London Plan 2016)

The benefits associated with Tower Hamlets' heritage resource are wide-ranging:

- The heritage resources help create a sense of place and build local pride, thereby attracting workers, residents and visitors to the borough.
- It provides volunteering, learning and recreation opportunities, and thereby contributes to improved social inclusion and cohesion.
- It provides important environmental benefits to local communities who suffer from high population densities and significant health issues.
- It has a tradition of adaptive re-use that supports the borough's sustainability agenda, and that also contributes to the on-going sustainability of local communities.
- It also contributes to tourism and economic development.

Many of these benefits are aligned with the borough's broader strategic priorities – such as those in the Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2015 and those put forward in the emerging Local Plan 2031.



## Contributing to sense of place and distinctiveness

The history and heritage of Tower Hamlets is seen as an important component of what makes the borough a distinctive and special place. It contributes to a cohesive sense of identity and community for the borough, and also helps attract workers, residents and visitors. This is brought out in key planning documents, promotional materials and in comments by key community and amenity groups.

**High Street 2012:** The council led a major regeneration project launched in 2009 in partnership with English Heritage, Transport for London, the London Development Agency and Newham Council. It has included physical regeneration along the A11 – including Whitechapel, Mile End and Bow Roads. It has also involved a Historic Buildings Programme designed to improve and restore about 100 buildings, most of which are businesses. As part of the process, a series of community workshops were organised by The Museum of London and muf architects/art to transform Altab Ali Park into a temporary open-air museum and archaeological dig.

The emerging Local Plan 2031 recognises the potential benefits of heritage in fostering a sense of place. The key spatial vision for the borough (Reinventing the Hamlets) is derived from an understanding of the historic development of the hamlets and the wider borough (as set out in the historic characterisation work), and their reinvention is seen as a key tool in protecting and enhancing the borough's unique character.

Similarly, promotional material for London Eastside (a brand name created by the business tourism team in the council to promote the wide range of venues and services in east London to the business community) emphasises the uniqueness of the area, with its blend of cutting edge design with some of the oldest parts of London.

The importance of retaining this special character of Tower Hamlets, and of protecting the East End heritage and the positive local identity and sense of place that it provides, also emerged during consultations on the Core Strategy 2010 and conservation areas during 2009.

**Boishakhi Mela:** In 2016, following the termination of the contract with the Boishakhi Mela Community Trust (BMCT), the council stepped in to ensure that the popular annual Mela went ahead. As a celebration of Bengali heritage and culture, the Mela has been an important event for both the Bangladeshi and Tower Hamlets community at large for the past 20 years.



## Contributing to culture, learning and social inclusion

The heritage resource can also play an important role for local residents, schools and communities, in terms of learning and volunteering opportunities, as a venue and resource for cultural activities, and by contributing to improved social inclusion. Much of this focuses at present around the Tower of London, the key museums in the borough, and the Local History Library and Archives.

A residents survey for Tower Hamlets that was carried out during 2006/7 revealed that almost 40% of respondents had visited a museum or gallery at least once during the prior 6 months – broadly comparable to inner London averages and a significant improvement on the almost 20% from 2003/4.

**Heritage training:** Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives ran a twelve-month traineeship in 2011 to provide training in work-based heritage skills including cataloguing, digitisation, oral history, preservation, and responding to public enquiries. Towards the end of the project, the trainee curated a programme of events across a number of library sites and a final exhibition which showcased highlights from the newly acquired archival and oral history collections.



There are also a number of leaflets and booklets that have been developed on various aspects of the heritage of the borough, including:

- East London Heritage Trails;
- Brief history of the Docklands, station by station on the Docklands Light Railway;
- Historic churches in Docklands and East London;
- A celebration of architecture in London's East End;
- Conservation and regeneration in London Docklands, with information on Docklands heritage.

Local history resources, such as books and maps, are for sale at the Local History Library and Archives, and also through the East London History Society website. The council website also has listings on festivals and events that take place at a variety of venues across the borough, and event guides such as Culture Trip and the Londonist have pages dedicated to discovering Tower Hamlets on their websites.

**Discovering local history:** The Charity 'Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park' received nearly £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a research project entitled 'Researching the names on the War Memorial in Tower Hamlets Cemetery'. The project was set up to reveal the stories behind the names of the war memorial and make the information publically available. In February 2016, members of the community dressed up as sergeants and nurses to educate people about WWI and its connections with Tower Hamlets.

## Contributing to Green Infrastructure

As well as providing cultural and learning opportunities, the historic parks and open spaces, trees and landscapes in the borough also provide important environmental benefits to the local communities in Tower Hamlets.

As a borough with one of the highest (and rising) population densities in London, green infrastructure is a particularly valuable resource. Its generally free and open access contributes to the health and wellbeing of individuals, and to community cohesion and social inclusion, by providing meeting places. It also enhances the visual appearance of the borough.



**Green Flag Awards:** In 2016, Tower Hamlets won a Green Flag Award for Meath Gardens, now bringing the number of Green Flag parks up to ten, the highest number of any borough. All parks that receive a Green Flag Award go into a nationwide online vote where people can vote for their favourite park. In 2015, Tower Hamlets' much loved Victoria Park, a registered park and garden, received thousands of votes and was crowned 'The People's Choice', an award it has received on three separate occasions in recent years.

## Contributing to sustainable development through adaptive reuse

### Historic building grant scheme:

The council continues to manage this scheme, and regularly awards grant assistance to listed buildings in community ownership, buildings 'at risk' or where there is clear public benefit arising from the works. The George Tavern, Oxford House in Bethnal Green and Limehouse Town Hall are examples of listed buildings which have benefited greatly and have all been removed from the Historic England's heritage at risk register as a direct result of the scheme.

The successive waves of development and immigration have created a tradition of adaptive re-use that supports the borough's sustainability agenda. A number of historic buildings have been adapted and re-used for a variety of purposes – whether as premises for small businesses or creative industries, for larger commercial enterprises or recreation, or for museums, places of worship and other community uses.

**Old Truman Brewery:** The regeneration of the Grade II listed building, which was once the largest brewery in London, is one of the biggest success stories for the borough's heritage. A 12 year project sensitively restored the building and transformed over 10 acres of vacant and derelict buildings into what is now the creative hub of London's East End. Today, more than 200 small, creative businesses, together with retail, leisure and unique event spaces, are housed at the site.

As well as helping to reduce the borough's carbon footprint and increase its energy efficiency (and therefore complying with the NPPF) these new purposes also contribute to the on-going sustainability of local communities.

**Poplar Baths:** The council led a scheme to restore and reopen the magnificent Grade II listed Art Deco baths which had previously appeared on the Historic England's Heritage at Risk register. This involved close cross-departmental collaboration within the council as well as liaison with English Heritage and the contractors. Prior to its completion, the Baths were home to a series of specially commissioned temporary public artworks as part of Frieze's 'Project East' in 2012. The building has now been successfully removed from the register and after lying vacant for 30 years, it was opened to the public in 2016 as a leisure centre.

### Contributing to tourism and the visitor economy

The heritage resource in Tower Hamlets already contributes to tourism and economic development in the borough, although at present most of the benefits tend to be concentrated around a small number of 'honeypot sites':

- The Tower of London is the largest heritage visitor attraction in the borough, with nearly 3 million visits/year;
- The newly extended Whitechapel Art Gallery anticipates increasing annual visitor numbers from c.250,000 to c.500,000 visits/year;
- The Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood has over 350,000 visits/year; and
- The Museum of London Docklands has over 280,000 visits/year.

### Working with Historic Royal Palaces

**the Tower of London:** The council works regularly with Historic Royal Palaces on initiatives to promote tourism in the borough. The 'Blood Swept Sands and Seas of Red' installation in 2014 of nearly 1 million ceramic poppies within the Tower's moat area proved extremely successful, attracting over 5 million visitors during the first 4 months of opening.

In addition, the range of covered and street markets (most notably Petticoat Lane, Spitalfields and Columbia Road) also attracts visitors from beyond as well as within the borough, as do major retail, restaurant and entertainment areas such as Brick Lane, and water associated heritage resources such as the St Katharine Docks complex.

Going forward, there is emphasis on encouraging visitors to explore more of the borough's assets. As part of this, a link is gradually being made between the Tower of London and Spitalfields, with new public space opened up between the two. In addition, new guides and leaflets have recently been published that promote the East End as a destination, including the Quirky Shopping Guide to London Eastside (which references the covered and street markets), and TimeOut's DIY East.

### Community access to historic buildings:

In 2015, over 40 buildings within the borough were opened over the Open House weekend. A survey conducted by Open House reported that 36% of visitors surveyed said that went to an area they hadn't been before and 97% described Open House as effective in engaging them with their local heritage. 13% of respondents also said they were more likely to comment on a local planning issue in their neighbourhood as a direct result of Open House.

## Challenges

Some of the key challenges facing Tower Hamlets' heritage are outlined below. These challenges are addressed by the Conservation Strategy.

In overview, given the borough's current social and economic issues, regeneration and housing development is a key strategic priority in the borough. However, development will potentially drive increased pressure on the heritage resource, impacting heritage character, context and significance, and heritage that is locally important.

Although there is good protection already in place for much of the borough's heritage, there are still some important gaps. There is often limited clarity on the specific characteristics that contribute to significance, and therefore on the developments that are most appropriate. There are a number of key heritage structures or types of heritage that are not well represented currently in designations – including for example industrial heritage, which remains less understood and appreciated despite its seminal role in the borough's history and identity. There are also limitations around the protection for locally important heritage.

In addition, evolving community needs are causing some buildings to cease to be fit for purpose, thereby putting their future viability at risk, and there are also issues associated with the condition of the heritage in the borough – around general upkeep and damage, and around inappropriate works that undermine character and significance.



Tower Hamlets' wealth of heritage raises a number of challenges around management of the resource – ownership is divided between a number of different types of organisations, and the council does not have the funds and resources to manage and maintain all of it. Prioritisation of resources will therefore be key, as will increased stakeholder and community engagement.

At present, engagement between the key stakeholders involved in the heritage resource is not as proactive and effective as it could be. There also appears to be a general lack of awareness among the public of the conservation and management needs of heritage, and community involvement in heritage does not fully represent the demographic profile of the borough. Although there are many values associated with the heritage resource, its contribution is not being fully realised, and communities and stakeholders are therefore not being fully engaged with it. As a result, neither the communities and stakeholders nor the heritage itself are benefiting as much as they could.

## Balancing regeneration, development and conservation

The strong focus on regeneration, and the high targets set out in the London Plan for the provision of new housing (developing 39,314 new homes) in the borough between 2015 and 2025, will potentially drive increased pressure on the heritage resource.

Fish Island, Leamouth, Cubitt Town, Blackwall and Millwall appear to potentially face the greatest challenges and opportunities from both regeneration and new housing targets. In addition, Poplar Riverside, Poplar and Bromley by Bow also appear to face real challenges and opportunities from the new regeneration areas, while Canary Wharf and Spitalfields also appear to face challenges and opportunities from new housing targets.

More detailed assessment would need to be undertaken to understand the actual potential impact of the regeneration and housing development on the heritage resource.

**Conservation advice on new developments:** The Council's conservation officers provide detailed advice on listed buildings, heritage settings and conservation areas during advice drop-ins, onsite and at meetings. For example, officers were involved in the London Dock development and helped to amend the proposed design of the tall tower to ensure that it did not cause harm to the setting of the Tower of London World Heritage Site. Conservation officers also provided advice and acted as expert witnesses on planning appeals such as that concerning the former Shoreditch Station building, where unsympathetic development proposals were dismissed at appeal.

The ambitious target for increased housing in the borough is encouraging high density development on available land. This could have significant impact on areas that are characterised by low density building (for example industrial heritage, or Crisp Street Market).

Some development within the borough has negatively impacted the setting and key views of the borough's buildings – for example at the Tower of London, and at the Church of St George's in the East. Future development initiatives also include tall buildings (for example in the Aldgate area and the rest of the city fringe), which could further affect the setting and views of heritage. In addition, a number of conservation areas have suffered from encroachment from adjacent development (such as at the St Anne's Church Conservation Area). The heritage resource has a meaningful relationship with its physical and spatial context, as defined by its setting and key views. Where these are adversely affected, the distinctive character and significance of the heritage resource is also undermined.

Development pressure is threatening buildings and areas in the borough that are not considered significant enough to be designated (and therefore give greater protection through the planning system), but that nevertheless contribute to local identity and sense of place, or that meet local community needs.



## Improving the condition of heritage at risk

Historic England's 2016 heritage at risk register for London identifies 33 heritage assets in Tower Hamlets at risk. This represents 5% of all the borough's places of worship, conservation areas, archaeology, listed buildings and structures and registered parks and gardens. Listed buildings continue to represent the biggest proportion of the borough's heritage at risk. Important public buildings and structures are over-represented on the register, particularly places of worship. 39% of the heritage features identified are in very bad condition, and a further 42% are in poor condition.

In some cases, works have been carried out by contractors with less experience of the needs and sensitivities of heritage buildings – driven in part by the difficulty of finding appropriate contractors.

Some heritage resources are damaged and in need of repair (such as St. Mary's Church in Bow), driven by a lack of maintenance or funds for maintenance. Some conservation areas suffer from graffiti and vandalism (for example the Poplar and Bow conservation areas), while the quality of others has been undermined by public realm issues, such as inappropriate materials used by statutory developers, poor signage and pavements, or street clutter (for example at Whitechapel Market or Lansbury).

Type of heritage asset at risk	2009	2016
Buildings and structures	28	21
Places of worship	6	6
Archaeology	1	1
Parks and gardens	1	0
Conservation areas	1	5
Total heritage assets	37 (4% of London average)	33 (5% of London average)

Between 2009 and 2016, 21 heritage assets have been successfully removed from the register and 19 new entries have been added. Since 2009, there has been a 5% increase in the number of buildings and structures (including places of worship) assessed as in poor condition and a 10% increase in buildings and structures assessed as being in very bad condition.

Some heritage buildings and conservation areas have suffered from inappropriate works, leading to loss of architectural features or loss of uniformity, and overall loss of character and significance. Some of these works have been unauthorised, while others are permitted but are not in keeping with the overall character of the area.

**Wilton's Music Hall:** Previously on the Heritage at Risk Register, the Grade II\* listed building has had interior and exterior restoration works with the support of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant and is now open as a thriving music venue with a year-round programme of educational and heritage activities such as workshops, tours and talks. The project, led by Tim Ronalds Architects, received the RIBA London Award 2016, the RIBA London Conservation Award and the RIBA Building of The Year Award 2016.



## Greater understanding and appreciation of heritage

**Heritage promotion in schools:** council officers worked with Education, Social Care and Wellbeing Directorate to provide formal educational activities and resources to promote understanding and enjoyment of the historic environment. One such example was the recent 'Land and Lives' school workshops run by the Local History Library and Archives which involved students and teachers in Bromley-by-Bow using old parchment property deeds, including historical photos and maps and many other unique sources to connect with the history of Bromley-by-Bow.

Despite its seminal role in Tower Hamlets' history and development, including its social history, the borough's industrial heritage remains less widely understood and appreciated. This is partially due to its more robust and functional style, which can seem less aesthetically attractive.

The industrial heritage appears to be relatively under-represented in designations (potentially in part due to destruction in the 1980s), and is as a result under greater pressure from development – particularly at Fish Island and along parts of the eastern boundary of the borough (where there are good communication links with Stratford and Canary Wharf).

**Sandy's Row Synagogue:** The Grade II listed Place of Worship received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2013 for an oral history and local community heritage project which involved collecting memories, photographs and artefacts relating to the heritage of the building and its role in the local community from 1920-80. Outcomes of the project included a short film, a public exhibition and a dedicated website.

**20th century heritage,** particularly post war housing estates, is similarly less widely understood and appreciated. As a result, there are relatively limited funds and resources invested in this area, which in turn affects the condition of the heritage.

Limited appreciation of the integral importance of the local streetscape (including trees) has led to gradual disintegration of the townscape in some areas (for example the Chapel House Conservation Area).

There are some minor inconsistencies of information between the council and Historic England, particularly in the lists of Scheduled Monuments and statutory listed buildings.

There is often a lack of awareness among the general public of the heritage nature of the building that they inhabit, and of the associated conservation and management needs of that heritage.

**People's Plaques scheme:** In 2013, the council launched an initiative to acknowledge the rich history of Tower Hamlets and honour individuals who have made significant contributions to it. Following a public vote, seven winners - including important members of the Bengali community, a nurse, teacher, writer and influential director Alfred Hitchcock – now have a plaque installed to commemorate the significant impact they have made to the cultural history of the borough.

### Maximising the benefits of heritage

Tower Hamlets is one of the most deprived local authorities in the country, with poor indicators of employment, health and education. Through its ability to contribute to social and physical well-being, engage in education, encourage access to open spaces and promote social cohesion heritage can help improve the lives of people in the borough.

However, despite the borough’s rich heritage resource, its potential to benefit the community is yet to be fully realised. Key to achieving this will be to make heritage accessible to all, increasing understanding and access through constructive conservation, education, and celebration.

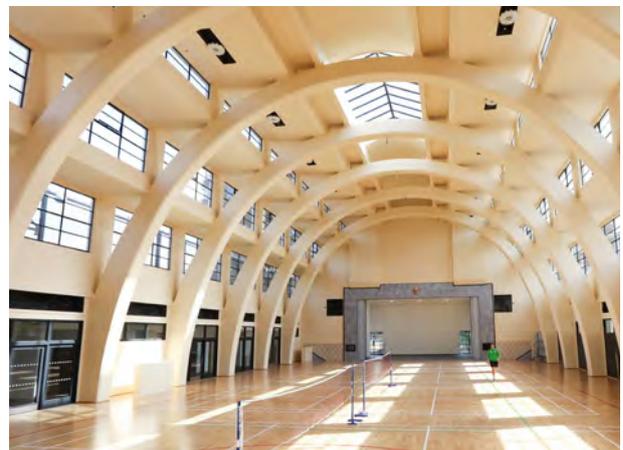
**New Town Hall in Royal London Hospital:** Tower Hamlets council has announced plans to convert this historic building (Grade II listed) into a new civic centre for the borough, as part of the Whitechapel Masterplan launched in 2014. Following a competition, the internationally renowned architectural firm AHMM have been appointed to lead the £77 million restoration project. Contributing to the area’s regeneration and securing the future of a building of heritage importance (which is currently on the Heritage at Risk Register), this project highlights the Council’s commitment to sustainable development and heritage conservation.

The potential contribution of the heritage resource to tourism in the borough is not being fully realised. There are some honeypot sites and museums in the borough that attract significant numbers of visitors (e.g. Tower of London, V&A Museum of Childhood, Brick Lane), but elsewhere in the borough visitor numbers and the economic benefits from tourism appear to be more limited.

In 2007, about 3.5% of the borough’s employment was related to tourism, compared with over 5% in Greater London as a whole. Given the comparative wealth of the heritage that can be found in Tower Hamlets, this is relatively low.

**Limited opening times and high admission prices** can discourage communities from visiting some heritage museums and sites.

There is very limited interpretation or directional signage relating to the heritage resource on-site in the borough, and it would therefore be easy for a casual visitor to remain unaware of the breadth and diversity of the heritage that can be found here. There is also limited information on the heritage resource on the Council’s website, no borough map made available to visitors or residents, and no central Tourist Office or other resource where visitors can access information about the borough’s heritage.



**Victoria Cross commemorative paving stone project:** In 2015, as part of the national project organised by the Department for Communities & Local Government, council officers liaised with relevant council departments to coordinate the installation of Commemorative Paving Stones. Each paving stone bears an inscription relating to one of the borough’s five First World War soldiers who was awarded the Victoria Cross.

At present, community engagement in decision-making on heritage does not fully represent the demographic profile of the borough.

The Conservation and Design Advisory Panel is more representative of local amenity groups than local community groups, and public consultation events involving heritage typically attract small numbers of people. This is driven in part by a sense that it is the role of the council (and not of the local community) to manage the heritage, and also by a degree of transience in the local community.

In addition, over time there has also been a reduction in contacts between planners and Residents' Associations.

**New Neighbourhood Planning Forums (NPFs):** Under the Localism Act, 2 new NPFs in Spitalfields and the Isle of Dogs were introduced in 2016 and join Limehouse and East Shoreditch. Working in partnership with ward forums, government agencies and local councillors, the new NPFs place parts of planning and development directly into the hands of local communities.

Evolving community needs are causing some buildings to cease to be fit for purpose (for example schools, public baths, wharf warehouses). Unless buildings can be adapted appropriately, or alternative uses found, their future viability is at risk.



## Ensuring effective protection and guidance for the historic environment

The planning system has a key role to play in protecting historic buildings and places (also known as heritage assets).

**Heritage assets:** *'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).'* (NPPF Annex 2: Glossary)

It is through the planning system that most changes to buildings and land in the borough are carried out. This includes the way most decisions are made about proposed changes to historic buildings and places, including those which are protected by the designation system. It is based on the principle of sustainable development, to be achieved simultaneously in three specific areas: economic, social and environmental. Heritage can play a part in all three.

The Government's overarching aim for heritage managed through the planning system is to conserve it for the enjoyment of this and future generations. The planning system comprises:

- Planning Legislation
- National Planning Policy and Guidance
- Local Plans and Decision Making

**Planning legislation** sets out how local plans should be made and how planning decisions should be taken. Historic England's Heritage Protection Guide explains in detail how planning law applies to historic buildings and places. The law requires planning permission to be obtained for most developments or changes of use of existing buildings. Special heritage consents are required for some heritage, for example Listed Building Consent. Historic England's List of Heritage Consents explains these in more detail.

The **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF) published in March 2012 sets out the Government's planning policies for following legislation (The Town and Country Planning Acts) and how they are expected to be applied. Its central theme is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, set out in 13 core land-use planning principles that underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.

Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, sets out the Government's policy approach for conserving and enhancing the historic environment within the planning process. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that *'local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats'*.



The NPPF states that in preparing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:

- *'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.'*

Heritage is recognised as having the power to act as a catalyst for successful regeneration. There is often an optimal scenario where keeping the best of the old and introducing high quality, sensitive new development can achieve the best result for both regeneration and sustainability in the historic environment.

**Planning Practice Guidance** (PPG), also written by Government, gives further information for owners, developers and local planning authorities on how national policy is to be interpreted and applied locally and underlines the support for sustainable development required by the NPPF. The PPG includes advice on conserving and enhancing the historic environment through the planning system, which recognises that conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change requiring a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of heritage assets.

Local planning authorities have to make a **Local Plan**, setting out planning policies for making planning decisions in their area, including those covering historic buildings and areas.

Local plans have to be consistent with planning law and national policy and guidance. In addition, local planning authorities in London also need to take into account the Mayor of London's policies in the London Plan (such as those relating to tall buildings and the management of strategic views) and associated supplementary planning guidance (e.g. the London View Management Framework and Guidance on Setting of World Heritage Sites).

As the local planning authority, the council is normally responsible for deciding on developments or changes to heritage assets in the borough, in conjunction with Historic England and the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (provided by Historic England).

A summary of historic environment planning advice notes and guidance currently available from Historic England is provided as **Appendix E**. GLAAS also provides archaeological planning advice based on the Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER) managed by Historic England.

Taking into account Historic England's advice on designated heritage assets where appropriate, the council is responsible for deciding whether or not to grant planning permission for new buildings or significant changes to the use of a building or land. The council is also normally responsible for making decisions on whether or not to grant listed building consent.

The Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Guidelines have **limited detail** (visual or written) on the specific architectural and townscape characteristics that contribute to significance and that are of primary importance, and of the specific views that need to be protected. They also do not always fully address the issues specific to the historic parks within the conservation areas. This lack of clarity can result in inappropriate developments, and can limit the effectiveness of the Conservation Area Appraisals as Supplementary Planning Documents. Greater specificity would also act as a valuable benchmark for future monitoring.

Some conservation areas appear to have **key structures missing**. For example, the West India Dock Conservation Area includes the quay walls, general offices and two warehouses, but not the dock basins themselves. Similarly, the Coldharbour Conservation Area includes the entrance locks to Blackwall Basin and Poplar Dock, but not the basins themselves.

The planning process for both conservation areas and listed buildings references the importance of preserving the **setting of an area or heritage building**, but the lack of clearly defined and delineated settings undermines the ability to control development that may impact these heritage resources.

Guidance on building heights and views is provided in policies DM26 and DM27 of the Managing Development DPD (2013). However, more detailed guidance for planning officers relating to the protection of key local views that contribute to the setting of conservation areas and listed buildings is needed to inform the Council's decision making process relating to local landmarks and cherished buildings.

There are currently no selection criteria for assessing heritage features for inclusion on the **Local List**, which undermines the transparency of the selection process.

There are also currently no overarching decision-making frameworks or principles to balance regeneration, development and conservation needs for locally important and distinctive, but undesignated buildings and areas. Decisions are currently made on a case by case basis.

**War Memorials added to Local List:**

Almost 50 war memorials were added to the Local List following a widespread public consultation exercise to coincide with the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The List includes memorials within churchyards, public parks, schools and other buildings. The existing Local List was also reviewed and revised to account for changes since the last review.

Prior to 2010, Tower Hamlets has had one of the highest tallies of spot listings of all the London boroughs. The existing statutory heritage protection within the borough may not be as comprehensive as in other boroughs, which have had their statutory Lists reviewed by Historic England more recently.

A significant share of the borough is already covered by conservation areas and other designations. Consultations have indicated a concern that such coverage may undermine the significance of what has been designated, or encourage an overly permissive approach to development in areas that are not designated but that are still locally important.

## Appropriate Management and Adequate Resources

Tower Hamlets has a rich heritage resource, but inevitably there are insufficient funds and resources to manage and sustain all of it – an issue that will become exacerbated as the profile of the heritage is raised.

### Supporting the English Heritage Places of Worship Support Scheme:

Since 2014, the council has liaised with English Heritage and the Inter-Faith Forum to coordinate a number of successful training sessions which have covered topics such as funding opportunities, maintenance and repair of places of worship, insurance and health and safety. The council is continuing to work with many congregations in the borough to protect and improve buildings.



**1**

Introduction

Funds for the conservation, protection and enhancement of the heritage resource come from a number of sources. The council has its own budget that it invests in these areas. This is supplemented by grant funding from Historic England, historically in the order of magnitude of £300-400k/year.

**2**

Our heritage

The former English Heritage supported High Street 2012 - a joint initiative by the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham, English Heritage, Design for London and Transport for London that delivered significant improvements to Whitechapel Road, Mile End Road, Bow Road and High Street, Stratford prior to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

**3**

Caring for our heritage

In addition, funding to support heritage conservation work is also secured through Section 106 agreements – for example, funding for conservation areas in the city fringe was secured through the Spitalfields development in Bishops Square. Between 2000 and 2010, £10.1m of Section 106 contribution was earmarked for spend on heritage, with the majority allocated to the Brick Lane and Fournier Street Conservation Area.

**4**

Our strategy

The council focuses grant-aid mainly on heritage with distinct public benefit – for example, on prominent listed buildings such as the George Tavern, on community buildings, or on structures that are included on the Buildings at Risk register. In addition, grant-aid is also given for shop fronts – for example on Roman Road.

**5**

Delivery

**Ownership of the heritage resource is divided** between a number of different types of organisations – public, private and commercial. Some of these owners do not have the resources, or sometimes even the interest in enhancing and protecting the heritage resource they are occupying. This has been seen as an issue particularly for small businesses on high streets.

**Interaction and engagement within Council**, between the different stakeholder departments related to heritage, currently tends to be reactive and on a case by case basis, rather than proactive and strategic. The Council's Local History Library and Archives team has delivered a number of actions identified in the 2010 Conservation Strategy with regards to curating heritage collections and promoting the boroughs intangible heritage. More could be done to encourage greater inter-departmental collaboration within the Council.

Heritage and its conservation/protection can be seen by some council departments as an impediment to delivering their objectives, rather than as a potential asset or enabling resource.

In response to regeneration and development pressures, there has been a greater emphasis in recent years on identifying and designating new conservation areas, than on monitoring the condition of existing conservation areas. There is no clear timeframe and accountabilities for delivering the actions identified in the Conservation Area Appraisals.



## Working together

The borough's heritage resource is owned, managed and used on a day to day basis by a variety of organisations, but the council has a key role to play in managing and sustaining the heritage at an overall level.

Within the Council, this role is carried out primarily by the Place Shaping Team (part of the Place Directorate) and through the work of the Local History Library and Archives team (part of the Resources Directorate). However, there are also a number of other key stakeholders that have an important role to play, including external stakeholders, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations. See **Appendix D** for details.

The wide variety of organisations that directly impact, or are impacted by, the heritage resource drives a need for a co-ordinated and integrated approach to heritage, to maximise its potential protection and enhancement.

Although there are a number of systems already in place to secure the protection of the borough's internationally and nationally important heritage, there are still a number of areas where protection is currently less effective – for example, in relation to locally important heritage, and to smaller works that could incrementally degrade the special character and significance of heritage assets.

The Government's NPPF encourages alignment between the Conservation Strategy and the borough's broader strategic priorities, and further underlines the importance of an integrated approach.

The council owns part of the heritage resource across the borough, and is therefore directly responsible for the maintenance of that heritage. However, a significant share of the heritage resource, particularly around the periphery of the borough, is owned by others - including public sector bodies and third sector organisations, private individuals, commercial enterprises and developers.

The Tower of London World Heritage Site, for example, is owned by the Queen 'in right of Crown' and managed by the Historic Royal Palaces, while many of the borough's waterways and associated structures are owned and managed by the Canal & River Trust (including for example the Regent's Canal, River Lee Navigation, Limehouse Cut, and Poplar and Blackwall Basins in the Isle of Dogs).

None of the museums and galleries in the borough are owned by the Council, and so these are either privately managed or managed by other public institutions or third sector organisations (such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Museum of London). These owners have an important role to play in the care and protection of the borough's heritage.





# Our strategy



# 4

## Our strategy

### The vision for our heritage

Tower Hamlets' rich and diverse heritage is an irreplaceable legacy that is widely valued, cared for and celebrated.

The historic environment is intrinsic to the character of Tower Hamlets and makes it a unique and distinctive place.

It also makes a significant contribution to the borough as a welcoming place to live, work and visit, delivering long-term benefits for the social and economic well-being of Tower Hamlets.

This heritage resource is protected and enhanced to ensure that it continues to be appreciated and enjoyed by future generations.

Conservation is an on-going and active process of maintenance and managing change requiring a flexible approach to get the best out of heritage assets. Building on the framework provided by the 2010 document, the updated strategy sets out a refreshed vision for guiding conservation and enjoyment of the borough's historic environment over the next 10 years.

The Strategy informs the Council's new Local Plan, which, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, sets out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. It sets out a common framework for all stakeholders to use in helping ensure that the borough's historic environment continues to play an influential role in the future well-being and success of Tower Hamlets' communities and businesses.

The strategy has three core aims to help people value, conserve and enjoy Tower Hamlets' historic environment. The aims are to:

1. **Understand and appreciate our rich heritage**, recognising its contribution to the borough's vibrancy and distinctiveness.
2. **Conserve and protect the borough's historic environment**, capitalising on opportunities for attracting investment, conservation-led regeneration and positive place shaping.
3. **Enjoy, celebrate and engage with our rich history**, promoting Tower Hamlets as a distinctive and welcoming place to live, work and visit for current and future generations.

Together, the three aims will help achieve our aspirational long-term vision for the borough's heritage.

Each of these aims is supported by a series of objectives that will help secure a sustainable future for the borough's heritage:

Aims	Objectives
<p><b>1. Understand and appreciate our rich heritage</b>, recognising its contribution to the borough's vibrancy and distinctiveness</p>	Objective 1.1: Aim to increase awareness of the borough's historic environment and its conservation needs
	Objective 1.2: Aim to build a better understanding of the borough's intangible heritage and local heritage
	Objective 1.3: Ensure that planning applications and decisions are based on a sound understanding of the significance of heritage asset(s) affected by proposed changes
	Objective 1.4: Continue to develop and update an easily accessible digital historic environment information system to inform conservation of the borough's heritage assets
	Objective 1.5: Consider increasing recognition of the existing and potential benefits that the historic environment contributes to regeneration of the borough
	Objective 1.6: Consider creating and maintaining a register of the boroughs public artworks
<p><b>2. Conserve and protect the borough's historic environment</b>, capitalising on opportunities for attracting investment, conservation-led regeneration and positive place shaping</p>	Objective 2.1: Reduce the number of heritage assets at risk in the borough by improving the condition of assets identified on Historic England's heritage at risk register
	Objective 2.2: Consider developing and implementing an integrated monitoring and maintenance regime for owners of historic buildings and other heritage assets
	Objective 2.3: Aim to proactively encourage owners of historic buildings and other heritage assets to use appropriate advisors, contractors and materials when undertaking maintenance works
	Objective 2.4: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the Tower of London World Heritage Site and its setting, and the setting of the Greenwich Maritime World Heritage Site
	Objective 2.5: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's listed buildings and their settings
	Objective 2.6: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's conservation areas and their settings
	Objective 2.7: Aim to review the Local List of heritage assets
	Objective 2.8: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's Historic Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces and their settings

1 Introduction
2 Our heritage
3 Caring for our heritage
4 Our strategy
5 Delivery
Appendices

Aims	Objectives
2. Cont...	Objective 2.9: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's archaeology
	Objective 2.10: Aim to ensure effective protection of the setting of heritage assets and key views from inappropriate development
	Objective 2.11: Aim to ensure effective protection of the borough's intangible heritage
	Objective 2.12: Ensure effective enforcement to protect the borough's heritage from unauthorised changes
	Objective 2.13: Aim to work with local communities and partners to secure opportunities for the sustainable adaption and reuse of historic buildings and other heritage assets as part of the borough's on-going regeneration
	Objective 2.14: Consider producing guidance to help resolve the conflict between the desire to retrofit energy efficiency improvements to historic buildings and the need to preserve the special character and appearance of buildings and areas.
	Objective 2.15: Maintain and promote high quality architecture, streets and open spaces within the historic areas of the borough.
3. <b>Enjoy, celebrate and engage with our rich history</b> , promoting Tower Hamlets as a distinctive and welcoming place to live, work and visit for current and future generations	Objective 3.1: Aim to increase community pride in and enjoyment of the borough's diverse heritage
	Objective 3.2: Aim to increase intellectual accessibility to the borough's heritage, and improve physical connectivity between different heritage resources
	Objective 3.3: Consider increasing community engagement in the active management and promotion of the borough's heritage
	Objective 3.4 : Consider increasing the contribution that the borough's heritage makes to tourism, diversifying how it is experienced by visitors

The strategy is aligned with the borough's emerging Local Plan 2031, and actively contributes to the key priorities of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2015.

It will play a key role in helping make Tower Hamlets a great place to live by managing and sustaining the heritage, and thereby reinforcing the distinctive identity and unique sense of place of the borough; and also by increasing community enjoyment of the borough's heritage. It also contributes to a prosperous community in Tower Hamlets, by supporting the further development of the Third Sector, by offering diverse learning opportunities, and through the potential to use historic buildings as premises for local businesses.

Through this, it supports the 'One Tower Hamlets' vision by helping improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the borough.

# Aim 1: Understand and appreciate our rich heritage

Understanding and appreciating our rich heritage, and recognising its contribution to the borough's vibrancy and distinctiveness is a core aim of the Conservation Strategy.

The people, stories, spaces and buildings that contribute to our heritage are an essential and intrinsic part of the borough's vibrant street scenes, multi-cultural history and unique sense of place. Our borough's historic environment is of international, national and local importance, characterised by enormous diversity and variety. It is a rich resource that includes historic buildings and archaeology, parks and open spaces, heritage collections and intangible heritage (including personal memories and traditional skills, markets and festivals).

The historic environment has a key role to play in shaping the growth and development of the borough. To manage our heritage effectively, we need to understand its significance in terms of the contribution it makes to a place's community, economy and environment, and how people relate to, enjoy and value their heritage. The historic environment continues to adapt and change, responding to the evolving needs of the borough as part of a modern and world-class city. Understanding the ambitions of local communities, property owners and other interested stakeholders is therefore key to securing a sustainable future for our historic environment. Its stewardship must be evidence-led, with a strategic approach underpinned by a thorough understanding of its condition, value and the challenges it faces.

## Objective 1.1: Aim to increase awareness of the borough's historic environment and its conservation needs

Achieving increased understanding and enjoyment of the borough's heritage also requires building increased awareness of that heritage. Increased awareness of the heritage and its needs also helps ensure that proposed works to existing heritage resources and new planned developments are aligned with and protect the heritage significance, and the attributes closely associated with that significance.

Increased awareness will happen in part through activities related to interpretation, learning and education in line with Aim 3, but will also need to be supported by an active programme of marketing and promotion (inside and outside the borough), including outreach activities and roadshows.

This could include, for example, supplements in newspapers (such as a bilingual column in the history pages of Our East End) or other community publications, or information on heritage events/activities in listings sections.

A communications campaign could be launched where heritage is put at the top of the agenda across the council media for a dedicated week or month, similar to the approach taken to the Healthy Borough and Safer Street campaigns.

Production companies could also be encouraged to film in the borough, making use of the borough's distinctive heritage.

Outreach and roadshow activities could focus in particular on those groups who own key heritage resources or who are likely to have most impact on the physical development of the borough, while marketing activities could be undertaken by heritage owners and managers as well as by Council.

## Objective 1.2: Aim to build a better understanding of the borough's intangible heritage and local heritage

Tower Hamlets is characterised by key themes of trade and industry, migration and change that continue to this day. This has resulted in a rich fabric of intangible heritage and local heritage that is experiencing an on-going process of development and evolution.

There are a number of different aspects to the intangible heritage, from historic street markets to more contemporary events and festivals, from oral histories and personal memories to different values and uses of a heritage resource, from performing arts to social practices and traditional skills.

It is as important to protect the intangible heritage as it is to protect the more tangible heritage resources. It is also important to protect local heritage as well as designated heritage resource. To do so, a better understanding will need to be built both of what intangible and local heritage exists in the borough, and also of the significance of that heritage.



## Objective 1.3: Ensure that planning applications and decisions are based on a sound understanding of the significance of heritage asset(s) affected by proposed changes

The NPPF also emphasises the importance of understanding significance of heritage assets to inform local planning decisions and consents.

Applicants should be required to consider the impact on significance in their applications – this will help ensure a greater chance of applications being accepted, and reduce the burden of time and cost on both applicants and the council. Decisions need to be based on an understanding of the nature, extent and level of significance, and applications for consent where the extent of impact on significance cannot be fully understood from the application should ideally not be accepted.

The significance of a heritage resource can be defined in terms of historic, archaeological, architectural, artistic or community interest. It articulates those aspects that have the greatest value to people, now and in the future, and that are therefore the most important to conserve.

To ensure that the significance of heritage is placed at the heart of decision-making that affects the heritage resource, it will be necessary to develop clear statements of significance for heritage resources. These statements will need to specify the particular characteristics (architectural, urban, visual and functional) that actively contribute to the significance of a particular resource, and that are priority requirements for conservation. In developing these statements, the views of community groups should also be obtained as appropriate. Once developed, these statements could also lead to a refinement of heritage boundaries.

## **Objective 1.4: Continue to develop and update an easily accessible digital historic environment information system to inform conservation of the borough's heritage assets**

Good understanding of heritage significance needs to be supported by good quality information systems. Moreover, Government advice in the NPPF (Historic Environment Para 169 and 170) states that local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area.

At present, while there are many sources of information about the heritage resources, they tend to be held in different locations within Tower Hamlets, and not all council officers are aware of what resources are available or of how best to access them.

The council currently maintains an historic environment record providing access to information relating to the local historic environment. This includes:

- Tower Hamlets Conservation Strategy
- List of listed buildings in Tower Hamlets
- List of locally listed buildings and war memorials in Tower Hamlets
- Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans
- Register of listed Buildings at Risk in Tower Hamlets
- Assessment of significance held on the Statutory Planning Register

In addition, information is also held at the Council's Local History Library and Archives and information about the collections relating to the historic environment can be found on the Council's Idea Store website.

National amenity societies and other organisations also have websites providing useful information on the protection and care of old buildings and places. These include, for example, Historic England; the Victorian Society; the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings; and the Twentieth Century Society

There would be significant benefit in developing an up-to-date and accurate centralised electronic database of heritage information that would be integrated and easily accessible. This database would include information on historic landscapes and green infrastructure (including parks, open spaces, squares, trees, statues and street furniture), as well as information on the built heritage (including listed buildings, conservation areas, locally listed buildings and other built heritage resources including public art). It should include statements of significance as well as information on location. It will need to be updated in the most timely and efficient way as changes are made to the status of heritage resources (for example as local or statutory lists are updated) or as new information emerges from planning applications and development works. It would further be beneficial to develop and maintain a centralised catalogue of all collections relating to the borough's heritage.

The database is separate from the Historic Environment Record (HER), which is maintained by GLAAS, but it will be important to ensure that information in the database is consistent with, and connected to the HER and other information held by Historic England and other key stakeholders, advisors and organisations (including adjacent boroughs). This will help ensure consistency and prevent duplication of work. The database should also be linked with the 'This Borough' website.

As resources allow, the council will seek to harness new technology to make information regarding heritage more widely accessible.

## Objective 1.5: Consider increasing recognition of the existing and potential benefits that the historic environment contributes to regeneration of the borough

Heritage plays an important role in contributing to Tower Hamlets' on-going development and regeneration, and this contribution in turn helps to protect and sustain that heritage over the long term. Increasing understanding and recognition of this contribution, and the benefits that it brings, will facilitate an increase in the scale of contribution – as partner, stakeholder and community groups become more receptive to the value of integrating heritage within their own priorities. Key here will be to undertake:

- a baseline study and on-going monitoring of the role of heritage in attracting investments, residents, businesses or tourists to the area;
- an assessment of the contribution of heritage to the public realm, quality of life and leisure; and
- an assessment of the contribution of heritage-led regeneration to the rejuvenation of town centres.

This will need to be integrated with other on-going studies around local market economics. Findings could then be actively promoted and celebrated, for example through features in general newspapers, on the council website/heritage portal, and in presentations to stakeholders.



## Objective 1.6: Consider creating and maintaining a register of the borough's public artworks

Historic England defines public art as *'fixed artworks which members of the public are able to access and appreciate. Works may be sited in the public, civic, communal or commercial domain, in semi-public or privately owned public space, or within public, civic or institutional buildings. Artworks which form part of the structure or decoration of buildings may also be categorised as public art'*.

Tower Hamlets has many public artworks in a variety of mediums, forms, styles and ages, which are spread across the borough. These artworks make an important contribution to defining a sense of place in Tower Hamlets, as well as recording, commemorating and interpreting the borough's history. Public art is often site-specific, made with a particular location in mind and sometimes reflecting or portraying activities or events that took place within a place or nearby, either at the time or in the past. Public art can provide an important reminder of the past that may prevent people, events and industries from being forgotten. Even abstract artworks, which may be disliked at first, can become accepted through familiarity, leading to a sense of communal ownership and local historical significance.

At present the council does not have a single complete record of public artworks. Creating a register of artworks would be the first step in understanding and appreciating their contribution to the heritage of the borough. Given the size of the borough, and the relatively wide definition of what may be considered a public artwork, a completely comprehensive register may be difficult to achieve. Opportunities could be explored for residents and other stakeholders to contribute to the register by identifying artworks that are of particular significance to their community or area of interest.

## Outcomes:

- Increased appreciation of the diversity of our tangible and intangible heritage
- Greater recognition of the contributions the historic environment makes to the intrinsic character of our borough as a unique and distinctive place to live, work and visit
- Transparent decision-making informed by an up-to-date evidence base and accessible information about the condition, value and significance of the historic environment
- Shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for conserving and enjoying our rich heritage



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1 Introduction

2 Our heritage

3 Caring for our heritage

4 Our strategy

5 Delivery

Appendices

## Aim 2: Conserve and protect the borough's historic environment

Conserving and protecting the borough's historic environment, and capitalising on opportunities for attracting investment, conservation-led regeneration and positive place shaping, is also a core aim of the Conservation Strategy.

The council is committed to conserving and protecting our historic environment for future generations to inherit, and improving heritage assets at risk, through its own plans and policies and when responding to development proposals. Proposals that are regarded as improving the borough's historic environment will be positively supported, whereas proposals which could cause permanent harm to historic assets will be opposed unless there are considerable public benefits that would outweigh the harm. The council will use its influence and local planning authority powers in partnership with local communities, property owners and other interested stakeholders to achieve this aim.

Our rich heritage can be used as a powerful catalyst for regeneration in the borough and has an important role to play in attracting investment and positive place-making. The council aims to promote opportunities for conservation-led regeneration that secure long-term environmental, social and economic benefits. As the borough evolves, historic assets can become neglected and fall into disrepair where they no longer have a sustainable commercial or community use. Investment can both release and benefit from their untapped potential, bringing heritage back into play and re-vitalising buildings, areas and the borough as a whole. Small and medium businesses in particular have a crucial role to play in providing opportunities for creative and innovative uses of historic buildings, reflecting the tradition of adaptive re-use of buildings by immigrants to the borough. Continuing to increase the contribution of heritage to regeneration and sustainable development will not only support delivery of some of the key strategic priorities for the borough and for London more broadly, but it will also help to ensure the on-going conservation of the borough's heritage.

In respect of protection of heritage assets (a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest), the Strategy distinguishes between the following types of heritage assets (see **Figure 2**):

- **Designated heritage assets** – World heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas and London squares designated under the relevant legislation for which greatest weight is afforded in planning decisions (Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.12, 2.15).
- **Undesignated heritage assets** – non-statutory designations and local lists identified by the council (archaeological priority areas, locally listed buildings, locally listed war memorials and local views) or the Mayor of London (strategic views and historic green spaces) and any other heritage assets that may be identified from time to time (Objectives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.12, 2.15).

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

## Objective 2.1: Reduce the number of heritage assets at risk in the borough by improving the condition of assets identified on Historic England's heritage at risk register

The Heritage at Risk register identifies those heritage resources of national significance that are most in danger of losing their value. The long-term trends have been positive for Tower Hamlets, with buildings coming off the register each year. This reflects the work done by officers, together with the public attention created by the heritage at risk programme. Continuing to address the issues associated with these resources needs to be a key priority action.

In 2016, the council created the role of Heritage at Risk Project Officer. A key purpose of the role is to develop and implement a heritage at risk strategy for those assets that are currently on the heritage at risk register that integrates conservation priorities with community needs, and meets the aspirations set out in this Conservation Strategy.

Given the nature of some of the issues facing the heritage and that many of the resources are not under council ownership or that resolving the issues may require multi-disciplinary working with partners over a number of years. Where conservation areas are at risk, efforts should, where appropriate, be linked to the Public Realm Team's service projects of graffiti removal and fly posting in conservation areas, and to the work of the Planning Enforcement Team.

As part of this, if limited progress is being made on addressing the issues, the Planning Enforcement team will need to be actively involved (and also the Public Realm and Environmental Health Enforcement Teams, as appropriate), and a range of enforcement measures considered (including, if appropriate, compulsory purchase of heritage resources).

There would also be benefit in publicising the Heritage at Risk register more broadly and prominently. This will help increase awareness of those resources that are at risk, and could also help prompt further interest and support in resolving the issues that they face.

Owners of listed buildings or buildings within conservation areas have no specific duty to keep their buildings in a good state of repair, and may be reluctant to do so when the building is perceived to be of insufficient value to justify its long term up keep. The council is however empowered to take action where a building has deteriorated to such an extent as to put its preservation at risk and/or to cause wider visual harm to the area.

The council will continue to make use of its statutory powers to address historic buildings in poor repair under sections 47, 48, 54 and 55 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Each power has particular implications, which must be taken in to account in deciding on an appropriate course of action.



Under Section 57 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the council can make discretionary Historic Building Grants towards the cost of repairs to local historic buildings. The council awards grant assistance to listed buildings in community ownership, buildings 'at risk' or where there is clear public benefit arising from the works. The annual budget is limited, and grants are awarded from April each year, until the funds are exhausted.

The council is committed to reducing the number of buildings at risk in Tower Hamlets and to ensuring adequate levels of maintenance for all historic buildings, including those in its ownership. The council will work with local amenity societies to identify potential buildings at risk.

It will also support and work with those local groups or organisations who wish to become involved in the restoration and re-use of historic buildings. Other historic buildings may simply be suffering from a lack of maintenance that is clearly harming the visual amenity of the area. In such cases the Council, will where appropriate, take action to secure their repair and redecoration.

The first priority for action will be those listed buildings that have been identified as being 'at risk' or vulnerable to risk through vacancy, neglect, decay or other threats. In these cases, the council will continue to maintain a register of listed buildings at risk in Tower Hamlets based on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. The register is a tool for helping to prioritise action, including pro-actively seeking new uses for redundant or long term vacant listed buildings. The council will act corporately to secure the repair and reuse of buildings at risk or vulnerable to risk.

The second priority for action will be other historic buildings in substantial need of maintenance. In these cases, the council will respond to concerns raised by local amenity groups and the public. In all such cases, the following criteria will be applied in judging whether use of the Council's statutory powers to require works of minor repair and redecoration to be undertaken is appropriate:

- The prominence of the building within the street or area;
- The length of time since the property was repaired or decorated; and
- The extent of decay;
- The extent to which the disrepair / neglect is an amenity issue.

The borough has a high number of historic places of worship of rich architectural diversity. Over the decades, some have been demolished but several have been adapted to new uses. Those remaining are of an age incurring ever increasing costs of maintenance. A number of these, including some listed buildings, have been formally closed for public worship. The council will continue to assist religious organisations in finding new uses for redundant historic places of worship, including with heritage assessments of the architectural or historic merits of individual buildings and their adaptability to change.

Historic Places of Worship at Risk are included on the Heritage at Risk Register. Working with Historic England, the council is committed to reducing the number of historic places of worship that are included on the register, to ensure a sustainable future for these buildings.

## Objective 2.2: Consider developing and implementing an integrated monitoring and maintenance regime for owners of historic buildings and other heritage assets

In parallel with addressing the immediate conservation priorities that are identified through the heritage at risk register, a key step in improving the condition of the heritage more generally is to establish a regular monitoring and maintenance regime. This needs to take into account the findings from the Conservation Area Appraisals, and should link to the 'Total Place' pilot project, where the council would provide 3-5 service standard commitments to residents in return for an agreement to follow set 'management guidelines'. Regular monitoring and maintenance will enable any issues related to the condition of the heritage resource to be identified and addressed early on, before they become prohibitively large scale or complex to address.



In addition, systems and processes can be established to facilitate a quick response to heritage owners (e.g. by letter) if inspections reveal that a particular heritage resource is in need of maintenance. Heritage owners can also be encouraged to build monitoring and maintenance into construction contracts, so that maintenance regimes are formally established, and also encouraged to contribute to a 'Maintain our Heritage' service. 'Maintain our Heritage' was first launched as a pilot scheme in Bath, and focused on providing an inspection service for historic buildings in return for a small fee from owners. Where appropriate, heritage owners can also be encouraged to develop a Management Plan for their heritage resources.

The council will continue to give owners of historic buildings advice on works requiring listed building consent and on appropriate ways to carry out such works of alteration or repair to their property without harm to its special interest. Wherever possible, owners will be referred to publications that set out council policy and/or technical guidance.

Some of the borough's historic buildings are houses in multiple occupation or in a use other than that for which they were originally designed. The council is aware that owners of such listed properties are faced with reconciling the sometimes conflicting demands of many statutory acts and regulations including for example the Disability Discrimination Act, the Housing Act and both the Building and Fire Regulations. The council will consider preparing guidance to provide detailed policy information on listed buildings.

### Objective 2.3: Aim to proactively encourage owners of historic buildings and other heritage assets to use appropriate advisors, contractors and materials when undertaking maintenance works

Some of the issues relating to the condition of the heritage resource are driven by inexperienced contractors carrying out inappropriate works. Works carried out on heritage resources require a good understanding of the significance of that resource, and therefore of what works would be appropriate.

Heritage owners have sometimes found it difficult to source appropriate contractors or crafts people, and there would be benefit in developing an easily accessible centralised database of appropriately qualified companies/individual practitioners, together with a database of outlets where appropriate materials and fixtures for heritage resources could be found.

In addition, the use of appropriate resources could be further encouraged by the establishment of an awards scheme that recognises high quality works and that helps to foster pride in the property's heritage, and by continuing to offer grants for works.



### Objective 2.4: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the Tower of London World Heritage Site and its setting, and the setting of the Greenwich Maritime World Heritage Site

Tower Hamlets contains the Tower of London World Heritage Site (see **Figure 3**). This complex monument retains buildings of many periods, dating back to the White Tower of 1078. It is internationally important for a number of reasons: its landmark location to both protect and control the City of London; as a symbol of Norman power; as an outstanding example of late 11th century innovative Norman military architecture; as a model example of a mediaeval fortress palace; for its association with state institutions; and for being the setting for key historical events in European history. It is also the home of the Crown Jewels.

In addition to the Tower of London, the borough also contains the buffer zone of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, although the World Heritage Site itself lies outside the borough (see **Figure 3**). The buffer zone includes the Island Gardens on the Isle of Dogs, which is considered to have unrivalled views of the Greenwich site from across the river.

In continuing to meet its duties and responsibilities for the protection, management and enhancement of the Tower of London WHS and the setting of the Greenwich Maritime WHS, the council will have regard to the following latest sources of international and national policy and guidance:

- Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO WHC, 2012)
- World Heritage Resource Manual on Managing Cultural World Heritage (ICCROM, UNESCO WHC, ICOMOS, IUCN, 2013)
- The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and related Planning Practice Guidance
- The Protection and Management of World Heritage Sites in England (Historic England, 2015)

A Management Plan has been developed for the Tower of London World Heritage Site. This Plan is a material consideration in planning policy. The council has a statutory role in protecting the setting of the Tower of London World Heritage Site, and that part of the setting of the Greenwich Maritime World Heritage Site that falls within the borough.

## **Objective 2.5: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's listed buildings and their settings**

Buildings on the statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest are protected by legislation. Listed building consent is required for 'all works, both external and internal, that would affect a building's special interest'.

There is a general presumption against the demolition of listed buildings, though there are very occasionally cases where demolition is unavoidable - mainly as a result of deterioration through neglect, fire damage, or lack of viable new use. Where information about the building is likely to be lost or affected as a result of works for which listed building consent has been granted, it will often be made a requirement of the consent that an archaeological record is made of those parts of the building to be affected.

Buildings considered to be of national importance are included on the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport on the advice of Historic England. Listed buildings are graded according to their level of historic and architectural interest:

- Grade I buildings are of exceptional, often international interest, representing only 2.5% of all listed buildings;
- Grade II\* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest; and
- Grade II listed buildings are nationally important and of special interest, representing 92% of the total.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

As illustrated on **Figures 5** and **6**, and detailed in **Appendix C**, Tower Hamlets currently has almost 900 statutory listed buildings thought to represent approximately 2,000 individual buildings or structures (including graves). These include a diverse range of building types, dates and styles, from the medieval parish church of St Dunstan, which pre-dates the Tower of London, Hawksmoor's Christ Church Spitalfields, a masterpiece of the English Baroque, through to Erno Goldfinger's 1960s Brutalist style Balfron Tower.

From time to time the council receives suggestions for buildings to be added to the statutory lists. Where this occurs, the council will advise the relevant parties that their requests should be forwarded directly to Historic England for consideration.

It is vitally important that owners are made aware if their property is listed, and that new purchasers are made aware of their consequential responsibilities, as 'guardians' of this valued heritage. The council will ensure that owners of newly listed buildings are notified promptly and details of the implications of listing, and the responsibilities of owners, will be made available on the heritage pages of the Council's website. The council will continue to publish a map of listed buildings within the borough and provide a link to Historic England's online full list of entries on the conservation pages of the Council's website.



In cases where important new or additional evidence on the significance of a listed building comes to light (e.g. as part of research submitted with an application) we will pass this information to Historic England for consideration of an amendment the list entry, and to GLAAS for inclusion in the Heritage Environment Record. Heritage Assessments and Conservation Plans for major listed buildings are very useful for assessing significance and helping to determine applications for alterations. The council will encourage owners of major listed buildings to produce a Heritage Assessment and/or Conservation Plan for the building prior to submitting applications for substantial alterations.

The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, which came into force in April 2014, introduced new optional powers for the maintenance of listed buildings known as Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreements, Local Listed Building Consent Orders and Certificates of Lawful Proposed Works. New legislation is also due to come into force to provide for National Listed Building Consent Orders. In considering use of these new powers, the council will have regard to Historic England's Advice Note 2 on Making Changes to Heritage Assets (February 2016), Advice note 5 on Setting up a Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreement (November 2015) and Advice note 6 on Drawing up a Local Listed Building Consent Order (November 2015) - see **Appendix E**.

Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreements (LBHPA) may be entered into between local planning authorities and owners of large scale listed buildings or major groups of similar listed buildings, setting out works for which listed building consent is granted (excluding demolition). Any proposed Agreements would be subject to consultation prior to its introduction, in accordance with the relevant Regulations. The council does not foresee entering into any LBHPA's at this time, but we will keep the need for them under review depending upon experience of their implementation in practice.

By applying for a Certificate of Lawful Proposed Works (CLPW), owners and developers can obtain formal confirmation from the local planning authority that the works alteration or extension works (but not demolition) they are proposing do not require listed building consent because they do not affect the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

Under both the National and Local Listed Building Consent orders, works of the type described in the national or local order would not then require an application for listed building consent. Any such national consent orders would be a matter for the Government. Local consent orders would be for local planning authorities to put in place. At this stage the council does not foresee making any Local Listed Building Consent Orders (LLBCO) for the borough, but we will monitor the impact of this legislation and will review the need for them depending upon experience of their implementation in practice.

## **Objective 2.6: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's conservation areas and their settings**

The council has a duty under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990 for designating as conservation areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Conservation areas are areas of high townscape quality and historic interest, each with its own distinctive character, which gives cohesion to buildings of intrinsic merit and creates a sense of place.

Conservation area designation is an effective tool in managing and controlling works within areas of planned development, to protect the character and appearance of an area of special architectural or historic interest. The council can apply for an Article 4 Direction Order to remove permitted development rights in Conservation Areas, such as controlling small works which would otherwise not require planning permission but which could incrementally degrade the special character of an area, including uniformity of design and detail.



As detailed in **Appendix C**, Tower Hamlets currently has 58 Conservation Areas covering c.30% of the total area of the borough. As shown on **Figure 9**, the size and character of the Conservation Areas varies enormously. Some conservation areas are very small (such as St Paul's Shadwell which comprises only the church, its grounds and a small section of the quayside to Shadwell Basin), while others are very large (such as the extensive Victoria Park). Some have a uniform character (such as Jesus Hospital Estate), while others are more varied in character (such as Brick Lane and Fournier Street, which retains the intimate proportions of the old 17th century network of streets but also includes the most important early Georgian quarter in England). More than 30% of the Conservation Areas have been designated for their essentially 19th century residential townscape character. Details of all existing Conservation Areas, including boundaries and dates of designation, are published on the conservation pages of the Council's website.

The council also has a duty to identify the special character and appearance of the area which the designation seeks to protect or enhance. This duty is discharged through the preparation of Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans.

Character Appraisals describe the architectural and historic character and significance of each area, and the Management Plans provide guidance to residents, businesses and other stakeholders about how this special character can be preserved and enhanced. Whilst there is no statutory requirement to prepare Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans, local authorities are encouraged by the NPPF to identify and assess the significance of all heritage assets.

Character Appraisals and Management Plans carry considerable weight when planning appeals or appeals against enforcement action are considered by the Planning Inspectorate, and can also offer constructive guidance for owners when preparing their own development proposals. They help to remove uncertainty because informed decisions can be made more efficiently. Character Appraisals and Management Plans are also a prerequisite to any action to address the reasons why a conservation areas is at risk. Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans have been completed for all of the borough's 58 conservation areas and these are published on the conservation pages of the Council's website.

The council also has a duty under the Act to review its conservation areas from time to time and to consider whether there is merit in amending their boundaries or in designating additional conservation areas. The boundaries may be extended where evidence and evaluation demonstrate that the additional streets or land possess similar special interest as the existing area. Streets or land may, on the other hand, be removed where their special interest has been irreparably lost or eroded, for example as a result of inappropriate permitted development or neglect.



Future reviews may allow for partnership working with local amenity societies, particularly in respect of historic research and survey work. Priority would be given to the review of any conservation areas where it is considered that:

- there has been substantial physical change to an area's character or appearance since the current Character Appraisal and Management Plan was produced; or
- there is substantial pressure for change within or to the setting of a conservation area, such that it is at risk as a result.

Such reviews will involve local residents, businesses, ward councillors and amenity societies

The NPPF states that *'when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest'*. Designating any part of the borough as a conservation area also carries significant resource implications for the Council.

Over the past five years, a major extension to the Fish Island Conservation Area was designated in 2014 and the Limehouse Cut Conservation Area was designated in 2011.

Further designations, or extensions to existing conservation areas, will therefore be made only if the council is satisfied it can meet its consequential duties and responsibilities, which include producing Character Appraisals and Management Plans.

The following criteria, which were agreed by Cabinet in 2008, will be used for the selection of new conservation areas, including extensions to existing conservation areas:

- Be an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which should be preserved.
- Be part of the cherished and familiar local scene.
- Be of interest as an area for its buildings group value.
- Be of interest not only for the buildings, but for the townscape in a wider sense, the spaces between the buildings, mix of uses, materials, details etc.

In addition, the area may either make a positive contribution to the setting of a listed building or existing conservation area; or have made a significant contribution to the social or historic development of the borough; and there must be a local community commitment to its preservation.

In considering new designations, or extensions or modifications to existing areas, the council will have regard to Historic England's Advice Note 1 on Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (February 2016) - see **Appendix E**.

An initial review of the range of heritage resources that have been designated to date suggests that there may be some areas of historic and architectural interest that are currently under-represented by existing conservation area designations (including for example the dock basins in the West India Dock Conservation Area, and the basins in the Coldharbour Conservation Area).

Subject to resources, the council will consider undertaking a thematic study to identify whether there are any key gaps that should be addressed by additional designations, and to determine whether existing conservation areas include within their boundaries all buildings and land that contribute to their significance. This study would take into account the LBTH Urban Structure and Characterisation Study undertaken in 2009. Themes that this study could focus on include, for example, industrial heritage and factories, modern heritage, urban townscapes and street signs, art deco heritage, pubs and pie and mash shops, and historic schools, libraries and learning centres.

One of the key challenges facing the borough's heritage resource is inappropriate works. Continued inappropriate works can have a damaging impact on the heritage resource, and can significantly undermine its significance and values. Increasing clarity around what works are appropriate and permitted (for example by developing more detailed Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Guidelines), could help to address this issue, as would engaging more proactively with developers. This will help to reduce the burden on both the applicant and the council by increasing the likelihood of planning submissions proposing appropriate works, and by reducing the need for enforcement against inappropriate works.

## Objective 2.7: Aim to review the Local List of heritage assets

Although internationally and nationally important heritage resources in the borough are clearly recognised for protection in the planning system, it is also important to ensure that locally important heritage assets are also fully recognised and protected. Locally important heritage is defined as either heritage that contributes to understanding and appreciation of the history and development of the borough, or heritage that is important to local community groups. It is therefore an important part of supporting the 'One Tower Hamlets' Vision that is set out in the Community Plan 2015. This is the type of heritage that is often most at risk when significant development takes place in an area, and there are significant changes to the built environment.

Historic England's Advice Note 7 on Local Heritage Listing (May 2016) encourages local authorities to draw up Local Lists in their area as a way of ensuring protection of locally important heritage assets (see **Appendix E**). Historic England's Advice Note makes it clear that Local Lists can cover other heritage assets in addition to buildings. The council has currently drawn up separate Local Lists for Tower Hamlets covering buildings (see **Figure 7**) and war memorials. Inclusion in the Local Lists does not give any additional protection against loss or alteration of heritage assets that are valued locally. However, it is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications that directly affect them or their setting.



The retention, good repair and continued use of assets on the Local List will be strongly encouraged by the council through Local Plan policies. The Local Lists are available on the conservation pages of the Council's website. The Local List was updated in 2014 to include war memorials and changes to those buildings on the existing list.

The council will keep the Local List under review, including the desirability of extending the Local List to cover historic parks and open spaces of local interest (see below). The review will be subject to engagement with local community groups and public consultation. As part of the consultation process relating to the draft Local Plan (which included this draft Conservation Strategy) the council has also consulted on draft Local List Selection Criteria and a draft nomination process for additions to the Local List. These criteria, and the associated selection process, were adopted by Cabinet on 19 September 2017.

## **Objective 2.8: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's Historic Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces and their settings**

The statutory Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England is maintained by Historic England. These are designed landscapes that are considered to be of national importance. They do not enjoy any additional legal protection but are designated heritage assets as set out in the NPPF. Consequently, the effect of any proposed development on the significance of a registered park or garden or its setting is a material consideration in the determination of a planning application. Local planning authorities are required to consult Historic England where any planning decision affects a Grade I or II\* registered site, and the Garden History Society on all applications affecting registered sites, regardless of the grade of the site.



As detailed in **Appendix C**, five parks within the borough are included on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest (see **Figure 10**): Victoria Park (Grade II\*); The Novo Cemetery (Grade II); Island Gardens (Grade II); Boundary Gardens (Grade II); and Museum Gardens (Grade II).

The Council's conservation officers will work corporately with other council departments and teams to provide specialist advice to ensure that the special interest of these parks and gardens is taken into account in any proposed improvement schemes or other changes. The production of Conservation Management Plans for all registered parks and gardens will be encouraged and supported by the council.

Where the council receives suggestions for parks or gardens to be added to the statutory register, we will advise the relevant parties that their request should be forwarded directly to Historic England for consideration.



The London Squares Preservation Act 1931 asserts that a protected square may not be used for any purposes other than as an ornamental garden, pleasure ground or ground for play, rest or recreation, and that no building or structure should be created or placed on or over any protected square, unless necessary or convenient for the use or maintenance of the square for an authorised purpose. As detailed in **Appendix C**, the borough also contains 16 squares that have been designated under the London Squares Preservation Act of 1931 (see **Figure 10**). The London Inventory of Historic Green Spaces also lists 77 open spaces of historic interest in the borough (see **Figure 10**).

In addition to the resources identified above, Tower Hamlets also contains some important parks, gardens and open spaces that are not designated but are of local heritage interest. For example, the borough has two historic playgrounds – the Henry Moore Play sculpture in Dora Street and the playground at the foot of Balfron Towers (potentially designed by Goldfinger) – and a number of city farms. It also contains an important cemetery – the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, which was opened in 1841, and which is one of London's Magnificent Seven Cemeteries.

Street trees were an important component of planned developments, such as the Chapel House Estate at the south end of the Isle of Dogs. Tower Hamlets also contains numerous historic statues, street furniture (including street signs and street ironwork) and war memorials that form an important part of the urban landscape. In addition, the borough also has an important network of historic canals and waterways.

## Objective 2.9: Ensure the effective protection and conservation of the borough's archaeology

Ancient monuments and archaeological areas are protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Archaeological sites considered to be of national importance are sometimes included on a schedule of monuments maintained by Historic England. Any works affecting scheduled monuments require Scheduled Monument Consent in addition to planning or any other consents. Historic England is responsible for enforcing statutory protection of scheduled monuments and determining Scheduled Monument Consent applications.

As part of the National Heritage Protection Plan, the condition of archaeological sites and threats to them will need to be monitored and action taken to prevent or mitigate damage in association with Historic England. The council as local planning authority is responsible for enforcement action where damage may be being caused to archaeological assets and in respect of compliance with relevant conditions placed on planning permissions. The council will consider designating Article 4 Directions controlling permitted development on important archaeological sites to protect them where appropriate.



All known archaeological sites and find-spots in the borough are entered on the Greater London Historic Environment Record, which is maintained by the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service based in Historic England's London Regional Office. In the Archaeological Priority Areas (APAs) that have been identified in the borough, developers are required to submit an archaeological assessment of the potential impact of their proposed development works, as part of their planning application. Developers are also required to submit desk-based assessment when development outside an APA has the potential to affect archaeological remains.

Where development is likely to affect significant archaeology, field evaluation is required to establish if archaeological remains are present, and to determine the impact of development on those remains. If archaeological safeguards do prove necessary, these would normally comprise either design measures to preserve remains in situ, archaeological excavation prior to development, or a combination of the two. The need for archaeological mitigation is often made a condition of planning permission. The Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, in consultation with the council, is currently undertaking a full review of APAs within the borough.

As detailed in **Appendix C**, Tower Hamlets is rich in prehistoric and roman archaeology and 7 of the 151 Scheduled Monuments in London are found in the borough (see **Figure 3**). A number of APAs, comprising either known or potential archaeological areas, have been identified in the borough (see **Figure 4**). These include potential Roman burial grounds, Roman roads and the historic cores of Old Ford, Whitechapel, Stepney and Poplar. Significant archaeological remains can also be found outside of APAs.

## Objective 2.10: Aim to ensure effective protection of the setting of heritage assets and key views from inappropriate development

Views and visual relationships (within, into and out of Tower Hamlets) are an important part of both the heritage and the modern experience of the borough. They enhance the experience of understanding the history of Tower Hamlets, and can also help orientation around the borough. In addition to challenges surrounding protection of locally important heritage, Tower Hamlets also faces issues around the setting of the heritage resources and key views, with developments already encroaching and impacting on the physical and visual context (for example at the Tower of London, and at St Anne's Church Conservation Area).

The new Local Plan will identify locally designated views, strategic views and protected vistas (see **Figure 8**). These all contribute to the identity and distinctiveness of places in Tower Hamlets and within London. The Local Plan will require development to preserve or enhance the settings of heritage assets. The council will consider preparing additional guidance to help inform development proposals and the council's decision-making process relating to the protection and enhancement of local views.

Historic England's Good Practice Advice 3 on The Setting of Heritage Assets (March 2015) provides useful guidance in assessing and managing change within the settings of heritage assets (see **Appendix E**). Historic England's Advice Note 4 on Tall Buildings (December 2015) also provides relevant guidance.



## Objective 2.11: Aim to ensure effective protection of the borough's intangible heritage

In accordance with UNESCO'S Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), it is important to ensure that the borough's intangible heritage is protected through the planning process in addition to protecting physical or tangible heritage assets.

This means avoiding, where possible, changes that would undermine the existence or viability of the various markets (see **Figure 12**), contemporary events and festivals, performing arts, social practices, traditional crafts and other aspects of intangible heritage.

There would therefore be benefit in establishing policies as part of the new Local Plan for the protection and enhancement of markets, festivals and other components of the intangible heritage.



## Objective 2.12: Ensure effective enforcement to protect the borough's heritage from unauthorised changes

Strengthening protection through the planning system and through planning policies is an important part of protecting the heritage resource. At the same time, however, it is also important to ensure that those planning policies are well enforced by the council using powers available under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

At present, anecdotal evidence suggests that inappropriate and unauthorised works continue to take place to heritage resources. A new and more regular monitoring system will help to deter owners from undertaking unauthorised works, but it will also be important to publicise enforcement actions more strongly, for example on the council website/heritage portal and in letters to owners of heritage resources, and to ensure that enforcement actions, including removal of unauthorised works, are prominently carried out as appropriate.

In addition, for larger scale works, or works to particularly sensitive heritage resources, the council should consider making planning permission subject to the use of appropriately skilled contractors.



**Objective 2.13: Aim to work with local communities and partners to secure opportunities for the sustainable adaption and reuse of historic buildings and other heritage assets as part of the borough’s on-going regeneration**

Heritage resources are often most effectively managed and sustained over the long term if they are being actively used, and if that use is at least economically self-sustaining.

For those heritage buildings that are currently empty and whose future sustainability is at risk because of lack of occupancy (such as schools for example), it will be important to identify opportunities for sensitive adaptation and re-use that are economically viable, in keeping with the significance and value of the building, and aligned with community needs.

As well as effectively protecting the heritage, successful re-use of historic buildings also actively contributes to regeneration priorities by, for example, helping address issues around housing shortages or by providing premises for local businesses.

The issue of economic viability is also relevant to the borough’s street markets. As well as being an important part of the borough’s history, these markets also play an important role in meeting community needs and contributing to the visitor economy. For those that are not currently performing well, it will be important to identify opportunities to increase their use, vibrancy and on-going sustainability in line with the Council’s Street Markets Strategy.

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**Objective 2.14: Consider producing guidance to help resolve the conflict between the desire to retrofit energy efficiency improvements to historic buildings and the need to preserve the special character and appearance of buildings and areas.**

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Sustainability and the climate change agenda has increased in prominence over the last few years, and now forms a key part of national, regional and local policy.

The historic environment already makes a contribution to the sustainability agenda in a variety of ways. The focus on adaptation and reuse of heritage resources, which has long been a characteristic of Tower Hamlets, reduces the consumption of building materials and energy, and reduces waste. Conservation of historic buildings with appropriate materials and labour from local sources also reduces emissions, the costs of transport and its harmful impact on the environment.

However, there is a need and opportunity to increase this contribution further by helping owners and occupiers to understand the ways in which their historic buildings may be able to improve their energy efficiency, whilst maintaining their special character and appearance. These principles could be showcased through a pilot project where, for example, a historic building or conservation area is renovated to improve its eco-performance without compromising its historic interest. This approach was successfully piloted in the London Borough of Camden's Eco-House Project and in the London Borough of Lambeth's Sustainable Conservation Area Initiative.

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**Objective 2.15: Maintain and promote high quality architecture, streets and open spaces within the historic areas of the borough**

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Significant new development is a reality of Tower Hamlets' regeneration over the next few years. Development that is sensitive to, and that celebrates the borough's heritage will not only protect that heritage, it will also support the unique sense of place and identity that the heritage provides. As part of this, developers, Registered Social Landlords, and community and regeneration organisations could be encouraged to bring forward high quality and imaginative schemes that deliver wider objectives for the local area, but that also have identifiable benefits for the borough's heritage and significance, and that respect and harmonise with the setting of the heritage.

In addition, a prioritised list of public realm improvements (including removing street clutter from conservation areas, or introducing public art) could also be identified that would provide the most integrated benefits to the borough in terms of conservation and enhancement of the heritage, and improved quality of life for communities and visitors to the borough. This would be in alignment with the Council's Public Art Policy for Tower Hamlets and its planned Public Realm Strategy.



1

Introduction

These initiatives could be further supported by the establishment of heritage and design awards to recognise best practice in this area. Aberdeenshire Council, for example, run the Aberdeenshire Design Awards, which aim to stimulate and develop a deeper and broader interest in traditional architectural surroundings.

2

Our heritage

The NPPF makes clear that new development in conservation areas, and within the setting of heritage assets, should take the opportunity to enhance the significance of those areas or settings or better reveal their significance, wherever possible.

3

Caring for our heritage

The council is committed to preserving the best from the past, yet it also seeks to meet the borough's new development needs by good quality contemporary architecture, which will be admired in years to come. This requires design skill, a proper understanding of the historic environment and sensitivity to its quality, urban grain, scale and use of authentic historic materials. Some of the borough's conservation areas would often be best enhanced through careful infill buildings that authentically reflect historic precedents. Other areas are more diverse in appearance and are very capable of accepting bold and innovative contemporary designs as long as, for example, rhythm, proportion and choice of materials all respect the prevailing historic context. Examples of notable modern architecture in the borough that has made a positive contribution to the historic environment are highlighted on **Figure 11**.

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

The council will base its design assessment of the appropriateness of any building design on the particular quality of the building itself, its contribution to the wider street scene and its impact on strategic and other key views. For prominent or otherwise visually sensitive development in historic areas or settings, the council will encourage pre-application discussions with owners/developers and their architects. For major schemes, the council will support the approach of selecting architects and/or designs by competitive means, and will encourage public involvement, whether directly or through the use of consultative groups, including local community representation.

The council receives valued advice from its Conservation and Design Advisory Panel. The Panel draws on the experience of a wide range of local volunteers who give independent specialist advice on conservation and design matters related to proposals for new buildings and places in the borough.

Membership is made up of those with knowledge of the creation of new buildings and places, including architecture, heritage, landscape, urban design, sustainability, regeneration and town planning. Design experts in disciplines from access, public realm and the arts are also represented on the panel.



The National Planning Policy Framework sets out in Section 62 that the Council, as a local planning authority, should have local design review arrangements in place to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design in new development. Tower Hamlets' Conservation and Design Advisory Panel has been running for over 30 years and works with the Council's planning officers and applicants seeking to develop in Tower Hamlets to give independent advice on the planning of a wide range of new developments in the borough. A wide ranging publicity exercise in 2014 and 2016 resulted in a strengthened Panel of 16 members drawn from professionals in the local community.

The council will continue to support and work with conservation and amenity groups, individually and collectively, under the mantle of the Conservation and Design Advisory Panel, to ensure that new development in conservation areas and the settings of listed buildings is of the highest quality and conserves the special character and appearance of those areas and settings.

To provide guidance for those parts of the borough beyond the conservation areas, in 2016 the council published an updated Urban Structure and Characterisation Study, which provides a comprehensive understanding of the diversity and quality of the borough's urban character and the development trends and pressures that affect this character. The Local Plan will require all new development to positively contribute to the character of the borough's places, in particular retaining and respecting the features that contribute to each place's heritage, character and local distinctiveness.

The council will, through its Local Plan, identify appropriate locations for tall building clusters. It will also establish criteria that proposals for tall buildings in these areas must meet. To ensure that the potential impact of tall buildings on the historic environment is fully understood, the council will require proposals to be supported by appropriate assessment information, such as Accurate Visual Representations.

#### Outcomes:

- Number of heritage assets at risk reduced through improved conservation management and maintenance
- Significance of designated heritage assets and their settings effectively protected from inappropriate development
- Locally valued heritage assets and intangible heritage recognised and taken into account in decision-making
- Up-to-date information and guidance about the historic environment that is easily accessible
- Aims and objectives of the Strategy incorporated into the Local Plan as appropriate
- Increased investment in the sustainable adaption and reuse of historic buildings
- High quality new architecture and public realm that contributes positively to historic places

## Aim 3: Enjoy, celebrate and engage with our rich history

Enjoying, celebrating and engaging with our rich history, and promoting Tower Hamlets as a distinctive and welcoming place to live, work and visit for current and future generations, is also a core aim of the Conservation Strategy.

Tower Hamlets is a unique inner-London borough with a long history of trade, industry and migration. It is famous for its East End heritage, its vibrancy, and its multiculturalism. Our borough's heritage is of international, national and local importance, characterised by enormous diversity and variety. People are proud about Tower Hamlets' heritage and communities must be able to enjoy, celebrate and participate in their heritage.

Stronger connections between people and historic places in the borough need to be encouraged, raising awareness and increasing the relationship we have with our past. Opportunities to promote and make the Tower Hamlets' heritage more accessible must be developed, helping people enjoy the full breadth of the borough's cultural offer. There is opportunity to broaden this offer through promoting a diverse and innovative programme of events in historic buildings and open spaces, expanding how it is experienced by local communities and visitors, and helping invigorate undervalued areas of the borough.

### Objective 3.1: Aim to increase community pride in and enjoyment of the borough's diverse heritage

Increasing community understanding, pride and enjoyment of the borough's heritage is a key first step in building engagement and involvement. Achieving this requires increasing the information that is made available about that heritage – but doing so in a fun and informative way that appeals to and has meaning for all sections of the community, including those that have historically been harder to reach (such as young people, diverse ethnic groups, the less affluent and people with disabilities). This will require tailoring the messages that are conveyed, and the media tools that are used to convey those messages.

This could include, for example:

- Interpretation panels and heritage inspired public art, orientation and signage;
- Fun informal learning opportunities – including heritage trails for adults or children (such as the Millennium Pathway at the Archbishop's Park in Lambeth), learning DVDs and exhibits in libraries and museums, and festival activities that relate to the heritage of the borough, potentially connected to the Festival of British Archaeology;
- Formal educational activities and resources specifically tailored to the National Curriculum for school pupils and teachers;
- Outreach activities with schools and community groups, including lectures and 'show and tell' sessions;
- A green or brown plaque scheme commemorating interesting and notable past local residents, as has proved very popular in the London Borough of Southwark;



- Activation of the waterspace within the Docklands, through moorings and other water-based activities;
- A heritage portal/micro-site where information and downloadable resources relating to the borough's heritage are consolidated in one easy to find location, and are freely available to the community. This should also be a tool for two-way communication and consultation, including online forums and discussion groups, as well as being a source of information. It should also contain links to other relevant websites, including for example the East London History Society website, the Tower Hamlets Grid for Learning, the This Borough website, and social network sites.

Increasing community enjoyment of the borough's heritage in this way can help further build local pride in the heritage, which in turn can lead to greater sense of local ownership and greater care and protection. Initiatives here should build on the resources already in place and the successes already achieved, for example through the work of the Local History Library and Archives and other heritage collections (see **Figure 12**), and through the Beauchamp floating classroom that already navigates the waterways of East London.



### Objective 3.2: Aim to increase intellectual accessibility to the borough's heritage, and improve physical connectivity between different heritage resources

A key part of increasing understanding and enjoyment of the heritage is increasing access to it. Opening hours and admission prices should be reviewed to optimise access and the cost of providing access, and physical accessibility reviewed to ensure reasonable alignment with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

In addition, to encourage both local communities and visitors to the borough to explore more than the traditional 'honeypot' sites (such as the Tower of London or Brick Lane), it will also be important to improve the connectivity between different heritage resources – for example by emphasising historic links in interpretation and learning materials, or by improving physical links through pedestrian and cycling routes. Routes should ideally be developed in accordance with Legible London principles.

The council will work to secure opportunities for people to better access and enjoy the borough's historic parks, gardens and open spaces through the Tower Hamlets Green Grid Strategy. The Green Grid Strategy aims to deliver improvements to routes and open spaces to encourage people to walk, cycle and enjoy the local environment and to assist in tackling climate change, enhance biodiversity as well as promoting regeneration and healthy living.

### Objective 3.3: Consider increasing community engagement in the active management and promotion of the borough's heritage

The more involved that communities become in heritage and its on-going promotion and management, the greater the sense of engagement and ultimately ownership of that heritage - and the increased likelihood of its long term sustainability. This is particularly important given that the council neither owns all of the heritage, nor has the management time and financial resources to safeguard it all for current and future generations.

Increased community involvement could take a variety of forms – from financially supporting heritage conservation, to identifying appropriate re-uses for obsolescent buildings; from nominating locally important buildings and areas for designation, to leading on their restoration, renovation and maintenance; from providing a venue for presentations and activities to supporting promotion through publicity material and grass-root activities; from designing heritage trails to organising programmes of activities and events to celebrate the borough's heritage; from contributing to local history records, oral history projects or interpretation material to setting up and managing heritage websites and online discussion forums.



This could also involve participation in the Council's 'You Decide' event, where residents could be invited to vote for a possible heritage related improvement project. In Newcastle upon Tyne, for example, members of the local community worked with the council to restore the Grade II listed Jesmond Library and ensure that it remained open to the public. After closing temporarily in 2013, the library reopened to the public as a limited company and registered charity and now acts as a community hub which hosts community events, arts and craft activities, language classes, lectures, concerts and fairs.

This involvement would build on the community consultation that already takes place today around heritage, and that will continue in the future - such as consultation on designation, character appraisals and management guidelines of conservation areas, and consultation on the Conservation Strategy itself. A variety of community groups could be involved in these initiatives, such as local schools, youth groups or the youth forum, third sector organisations including local history groups, residents' associations or diverse ethnic community groups, or volunteers. In the London Borough of Lambeth, for example, local residents of a conservation area artisans dwelling estate contributed to a comprehensive residents' design guide and history of the estate which was delivered to all of the community.

In addition, heritage owners could be encouraged to place more emphasis on regular monitoring and maintenance, and to ensure they use appropriate experts and resources when undertaking works to their properties in line with Aim 2. In support of increased community involvement, it will be important to ensure timely council response to community communications and initiatives.

There are many advantages to supporting community skills development around heritage – by providing tangible benefits, it encourages local communities to engage more and take a more active role with the heritage; it also helps to build the necessary capabilities to support the sustainability of the heritage on an on-going basis.

Opportunities here could include supplementing any heritage grant with advice and skills training around on-going maintenance, establishing a heritage or conservation apprentice scheme for local young people (potentially as part of a Future Jobs Fund application), and incorporating heritage skills as part of intensive training programmes that already exist, such as Skillsmatch. A range of heritage related skills (both traditional and new) could be promoted through these schemes, including research, interpretation, conservation, carpentry and crafts. If sufficient demand were established, a heritage skills training or community education centre could be established, potentially in a converted historic building.

In order to increase involvement in heritage and its on-going management, there is a need to strengthen the resources that community and external stakeholder groups can contribute – both in terms of time and also skills. For existing large organisations (such as Canary Wharf or Tower Hamlets Schools), this could take the form of nominating a consistent point of contact for heritage (such as a Heritage Advisor) that the council could build a productive, collaborative relationship with. For other bodies (such as the Canal & River Trust or heritage societies), this could involve forming a partnership to leverage in-depth knowledge and contribute to the development of site specific assessments and plans – such as Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Guidelines.

Partnerships could also be developed with neighbouring Councils to jointly address heritage on council boundaries including, for example, joint initiatives or pilot projects with Hackney to apply for funding and address buildings at risk in areas adjacent to the City (such as Shoreditch).



Opportunities could also be identified to strengthen the voluntary sector for heritage – whether through existing organisations extending their remit, the establishment of new organisations, or by further promoting the Conservation and Design Advisory Panel (CADAP).

In addition, the council may consider reactivating the role of Heritage Champion and provide further support to this position – for example in the form of a Young Heritage Champion and/or Community Heritage Champion. These champions would play an important role in helping to create a bridge between local communities, the Council, and heritage conservation and management. Support for this can be found in Historic England’s recently published Heritage Champions Handbook (2016), which outlines the role, details what a Champion can do and provides information on sources of support.



### **Objective 3.4: Consider increasing the contribution that the borough’s heritage makes to tourism, diversifying how it is experienced by visitors**

Tower Hamlets has a wealth of internationally, nationally and locally important heritage resources which are broadly distributed across the borough. Despite this, tourism activity and focus is currently concentrated on a small number of ‘honeypot’ sites (for example the Tower of London and Brick Lane).

There would be benefit in dispersing tourism activity more broadly across the borough - this would help spread the benefits from tourism (both economic development and heritage conservation benefits) more evenly, and also relieve the pressure and impact on the ‘honeypot’ sites themselves.

A key opportunity here is the development of a tourism/destination marketing strategy that would identify a number of additional heritage tourism clusters across the borough, and that would identify opportunities to connect those clusters and encourage visitor movement between them. This could involve the development of a centralised Tourist Office where locals and visitors could access information about the borough and its heritage.

## Outcomes:

- Empowered communities, passionate about and able to enjoy their heritage
- A valued and cherished historic environment, celebrated by all communities
- Accessible and well-connected historic places and heritage resources
- Collaborative approach to the interpretation and sharing of information about the borough's historic environment
- A vibrant, diverse and attractive tourism and cultural heritage offer that is well integrated with how the borough promotes itself



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1  
Introduction

2  
Our heritage

3  
Caring for  
our heritage

4  
Our strategy

5  
Delivery

Appendices



# Delivery



The Strategy sets out a common framework for the future management of the borough's historic environment by all stakeholders. The scope of the Conservation Strategy extends beyond the remit and resources of the Councils' Place Shaping Team. Delivery of the Strategy will therefore require other departments within council to take accountability for some of the actions, and will also require on-going collaboration between council departments.

The Place Shaping Team, will continue to take a proactive and strong leadership role in delivery of the Conservation Strategy. However, protecting and enhancing the borough's heritage will also require the active involvement and contribution of other council departments and a range of community, stakeholder and partner groups. Delivery of the Conservation Strategy will also require prioritisation, with a particular focus on the significance of the heritage resource at risk. This will need effective governance and adequate resourcing to motivate, enable and monitor the delivery of the strategy.

## Heritage Champion

There would be benefit in reviewing, reactivating and potentially enhancing the role of the Council's Heritage Champion, in line with increased focus on more integrated and proactive working within the Council, and on closer partnership with external stakeholders and other voluntary organisations.

## Resourcing the strategy

Some of the potential funding sources that could support delivery of the Conservation Strategy include both public funding sources and grant schemes, and also the potential for other funding sources, including Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Examples of potential funding sources include:

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Historic England
- Transport for London's Local Implementation Plan
- O2 It's Your Community Award Scheme
- Traditional Building Skills Bursary Scheme
- Find Your Talent
- The Pilgrim Trust
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Further details about potential sources of funding can be found using the search tool on the Heritage Alliance website. This provides a thorough and up-to-date directory of potential sources of financial support.



## Prioritising action

The sheer volume and breadth of heritage that can be found in the borough is too great to be proactively managed in its entirety, and will therefore require prioritisation. This prioritisation will need to focus around the following aspects:

- Resources that have been designated as being of international, national and local importance;
- The particular significance and values that give heritage resources their importance, and the specific characteristics (architectural, visual, other) that contribute to that significance;
- The heritage collections and intangible heritage of the borough, to ensure there is sufficient recognition of the diverse and changing character of the borough, and the strong history of immigration and trade;
- Areas where regeneration and housing development initiatives are most concentrated, and where the heritage is most at risk; and
- Initiatives that also help to deliver the Council's broader strategic priorities.

The Conservation Strategy contains a number of initiatives that are new to the borough. To test their suitability and maximise their effectiveness, there would be significant benefit in first trialing them out through pilot schemes. Findings from these pilots could then be taken on board before initiatives are rolled out across the borough.

## Measuring success

Monitoring and evaluation is a key part of delivering the Conservation Strategy. Without the information that on-going monitoring provides, it is not possible to determine how effectively the Strategy is being implemented, whether management and financial resources are being deployed most productively, and whether the aims and objectives of the Strategy are being realised.

Understanding the positive impact that the council has on the historic environment through the development management process is of particular importance to measuring the success of the Conservation Strategy.

The Conservation Strategy will be reviewed again after 5 years to take account of changes to the strategic and local context.





# Appendices



# Appendix A

## History of Tower Hamlets

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### Introduction

An overview of the history of Tower Hamlets, from prehistory to the present day, is provided below. It identifies the key themes that have had a strong influence on the development of the borough, and on the heritage that remains today. They provide the foundation of Tower Hamlets' distinctive character, and make a significant contribution to the borough's unique sense of place and identity. These themes inform the priorities for what needs to be protected and enhanced through the Conservation Strategy. They also identify opportunities for alignment with the broader strategic priorities of the borough.

### Prehistory, Roman and medieval times

Tower Hamlets is rich in prehistory. The earliest known Londoner was buried in Blackwall approximately 5,000 years ago, and later prehistoric activity took place at several sites in the borough, including at Old Ford, Wapping and the Isle of Dogs.

In Roman times, Tower Hamlets lay largely to the east of the Roman city of Londinium. Two main roads ran through the borough from the city and, as was typical of the period, burial of the dead took place outside the city walls, with cemeteries at Spitalfields and to the south of Aldgate High Street. At that time the majority of the area would have been farmland or marshland grazing to provide food for the city's large population.

Following his victory at the Battle of Hastings (1066), William the Conqueror constructed 'The White Tower' as a firm base from which to secure and maintain the city of London. He chose the site for his castle within the ready-made defences of the existing Roman walls at the south-eastern corner of the city. In 1110, another major route east from the city was developed, and pottery and bell-founding industries were established.

In general, however, settlement in the Tower Hamlets area was very light before 1300, although early settlements are known in the vicinity of St Dunstan's, Stepney and also at Bethnal Green. Flooding continued to be a problem across much of the borough, although embanking and drainage had created much arable land by the early 13th century. The medieval economy across the majority of the borough was essentially rural, with a settlement pattern of isolated farms with the beginning of ribbon development along the main routes.

### Industry, immigration and development

The pressure of population growth in the city, and the increasing restrictions on industry and immigrants within the city walls led to the development of the area immediately outside the walls for industry and crafts. The area saw its first wave of immigrants with the Flemings, who introduced hops in the 14th century, leading to the development of the brewing industry here.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

There was already a thriving suburb at Whitechapel in the 14th century, and hamlets with an industrial/commercial character developed, such as Ratcliff with its shipbuilding, and Limehouse, named after the lime kilns which processed chalk. By the mid-14th century there were small settlements at Mile End, Old Ford, Marsh (Isle of Dogs) and Poplar, though the majority of the population lived adjacent to either the city, the River Thames or the River Lea.

There was further rapid expansion in the south-west of the borough from the 16th century, but despite this, the majority of the borough was noted in the 16th century as a place of fresh air and rural peace, and was favoured as a location for the country houses of the wealthy. Improved drainage initiatives in the 16th century, using the skills of the immigrant Dutch engineers, allowed larger areas to become useable pasture.

## Maritime trade and waterfront development

Although shipbuilding had been established at Ratcliff by the late 14th century, it was not until the mid-15th century that the waterfront to the east of the city really developed. The wharves and slipways continued to develop along the riverside, until by the 16th century the river frontage was completely filled. The increasing numbers of workers employed in the river trade led to the development of large areas of tenement housing in the hinterland of the wharves, accessed by a network of lanes, alleys and courtyards (such as at Wapping High Street). The East India Company constructed the Blackwall Yard in 1614, which became the largest private shipyard in the country, and attracted a number of associated industries and services in the hinterland to the north. This hinterland gradually became developed, with large villages supporting the maritime trade.

## The spread of people and industry

The spread of industry from the city increased following the break up of monastic property after the Dissolution, and was fuelled by London's rapidly rising population, which nearly trebled in the 17th century. This period also saw the arrival of the Huguenots, who established themselves in the Spitalfields area, where they introduced the silk-weaving that was to become an important industry. This period also saw the beginning of Brick Lane's important brewing industry.

The increasing affluence of the city brought people from Essex and Suffolk, and by the end of the 17th century 22% of London's population lived to the east of the city. Despite this, however, large areas of the borough remained rural, and continued to be used as a retreat by the wealthy.

Beyond the city fringes, development continued in the form of the enlargement of the hamlets, ribbon development along the main routes, and increasing development behind this. In 1720, a total of 21 hamlets were recorded within what is now the modern borough. New churches were constructed to serve the rising population, including 3 by the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor.

## Radical changes to the borough's character

It was during the later 18th and 19th centuries, however, that the increasing pace of development radically changed the character of the borough. The general trend was one of the spread of urbanisation eastwards, and the displacement of the wealthy to the rural peace of the outer suburbs.

# 1

## Introduction

The first major development of the 19th century, which was to have a momentous impact on the borough as a whole, was the construction of the new enclosed dock basins with large associated warehouses (including for example the internationally important West India Docks and the St Katharine Docks), to prevent delays in loading and unloading of cargoes and the associated risk of theft. These necessitated the clearance of considerable areas of pre-existing building and the displacement of significant numbers of people, which led to severe overcrowding in neighbouring areas and the development of unsanitary housing conditions.

# 2

## Our heritage

The construction in 1812 of the Regent's Canal and its associated dock (now Limehouse Basin) gave access to the entire country's canal network, and trade through the docks soared. The riverside wharves saw a huge boom in their level of trade and activity in the later 19th century, which led to the construction of huge warehouses along the waterfront, especially at Wapping. This redevelopment of the riverside largely swept away the earlier, tighter urban grain of narrow wharves and alleys. Massive warehouses were also built along the main arterial roads, and adjacent to the railways.

# 3

## Caring for our heritage

Employment in the docks and associated trades also increased significantly, putting pressure on available housing, and leading to the construction of more houses. Furthermore, these houses needed to be located close to the docks given the lack of mass transport. The population was experiencing significant overcrowding and squalor in the urban areas and the docks, and the decline in the weaving industry led to significant poverty issues in the established urban areas.

The London County Council and the three metropolitan boroughs of the area took responsibility for social housing in the borough, and a programme of wholesale slum clearance began. The establishment of these new local authorities also led to a phase of civic buildings including town halls (such as Bethnal Green in 1909), municipal baths (such as Poplar Baths), and libraries.

# 4

## Our strategy

Elsewhere, other developments were taking place which would also have an impact on the built environment. Several new large suburban cemeteries and noxious industries (including brewing, soap works and potash works) were built in the east of the borough. The eastern half of the borough, including the Isle of Dogs, had remained largely undeveloped by the mid-19th century other than along the main arterial routes, where

planned estates had recently been built. However, this was set to change rapidly. The mid-century development of passenger railways into Fenchurch Street provided mass transport for workers in the city, and allowed them to live further out than was previously possible. This provided a massive stimulus to housing development, and by the end of the century the urbanisation of the borough was largely complete.

Rapid industrialisation formed much of the character of the borough, and led to overcrowding and poor housing conditions. Many social reformers spent time in Tower Hamlets, including Burdett –Coutts, Barnado, and Booth.

Local people organised their own response, including industrial action. The borough saw the creation of New Unionism, with the match women's strike at Bryant and May in Bow in 1888, followed by the Dockers strike in 1889, recognised as the beginning of mass trade unionism, which led in part to the creation of the Labour Party.

# 5

## Delivery

## Appendices

East London was a place of radical politics, and the East London Federation of Suffragettes played a major role in the campaign for the vote. They also set up the first ever children's centre, the Mother's Arms, in Bow, as a part of their work to support families during the First World War.

The population hit a peak at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, with trade through the docks at a high, industry along the river Lea continuing to develop, and a large portion of the population of Bethnal Green, in particular the large Jewish community, still employed in the clothing and footwear trades. As the increasingly middle class Jewish community moved out in the mid-20th century, they were replaced by the next major wave of immigration - from Bangladesh.

Immigration and migration have formed the borough's character. Battles against racism are a key part of the borough's history, from the Battle of Cable Street in 1936, the election of BNP councillor Derek Beacon in 1993 and the English Defence League seeking to march through the borough, and attacking mosques, in recent years.

## Decline and regeneration

However, the borough's fortunes started to change significantly, such that by 1930 it was the capital's poorest borough. Bombing during World War Two aimed at the destruction of the docks had a catastrophic impact, and led to the need for an accelerated housing programme, with the borough on the receiving end of every development on post-war social housing. Almost half of the houses in the borough were destroyed or damaged, leading to a mass exodus from the borough. By the 1960s the population of the borough had dropped significantly from that at the turn of the century.

The decline of the docks began with the development of part of the East India Docks as Brunswick power station in 1946. The increasing mechanisation of cargo-handling and the lack of need for large warehouses meant that these early 19th century facilities were largely obsolete. While others were modernised and continued to operate for a while, they were eventually overtaken by the container revolution, with Felixstowe, Harwich and Tilbury taking their trade. As a result, the 1960s saw the closure of East India, St Katharine and London Docks. The riverside warehouses of Wapping and Limehouse became redundant, and the associated industries which had located here also folded, leaving a vast area of deserted or demolished buildings.

The London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was created in 1981 to address the problems of regenerating these vast redundant areas. Early redevelopment was generally focused around small scale industrial and business estates, but this changed in the later 1980s with the successful development of Canary Wharf and its large post-modern commercial architecture – today an internationally competitive financial district.

There has been an incredible surge in population in the borough since the 1960s, and current projections suggest that the population could increase to as much as 300,000 by 2025. Regeneration is on-going in the borough, involving the development of 43,000 new houses by 2025, with significant investment in transport that will improve accessibility to the central and eastern parts of the borough, to the City fringe and Isle of Dogs. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was the single largest regeneration project in Europe and the UK.

# Appendix B

## Profile of Tower Hamlets Today

### Introduction

An overview of the socio-economic profile of Tower Hamlets today is provided below, looking at population and age, ethnicity and religion, social deprivation and health, housing and employment. It identifies the nature of the local communities that the Conservation Strategy is seeking to engage, and also builds an understanding of some of the key social and economic challenges that have contributed to the regeneration priorities for the borough going forward. The Conservation Strategy seeks to support the borough's regeneration priorities, and these social and economic challenges have therefore informed the development of the Conservation Strategy's Goals and Objectives.

### Population and age

Tower Hamlets has one of the highest population densities in inner London. The population is set to increase at a faster rate than the rest of London, growing from 296,300 in 2016 to 374,000 in 2026, driven by natural population growth and a number of regeneration initiatives. Tower Hamlets has a notably youthful population, with people under the age of 19 comprising 24% of those living in the borough<sup>1</sup>.

### Ethnicity and religion

The population of Tower Hamlets is one of the most ethnically diverse in the country, with 69% belonging to ethnic groups other than white British. The largest of these ethnic groups is the Bangladeshi community, which represents almost one third (32%) of the borough's population and 37% of all Bangladeshis in London.<sup>2</sup> There are also significant Chinese, Caribbean and African groups in the borough. Overall, approximately 92 languages are spoken in the borough, and 66% of the population use English as their second language. This diversity is reflected in the religious demographic, with 30% of the population being Christian and 38% Muslim<sup>3</sup>.

### Social deprivation

Tower Hamlets is a borough of stark contrasts. As well as containing the internationally competitive Canary Wharf, the borough remains one of the most deprived in London, with two thirds of the boroughs' wards (12 out of 20) in the most deprived 10% of wards in England. In terms of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, it is the 6th most deprived local authority in the country, and has the highest percentage of both children (39%) and older people (50%) living in income deprived households in England<sup>4</sup>.

- 1 Population Projections for Tower Hamlets: Analysis of the 2014 round GLA population projections. Research Briefing (Tower Hamlets Council, January 2016)
- 2 Ethnic Profile: White Other population in Tower Hamlets. 2011 Census factsheet (Tower Hamlets Council, July 2015)
- 3 Language in Tower Hamlets: Analysis of 2011 Census data. Research Briefing (Tower Hamlets Council, April 2013)
- 4 Deprivation in Tower Hamlets: Analysis of the 2015 Indices of Deprivation data. Report (Tower Hamlets Council Corporate Research Unit, 2015)



## Health and disability

Tower Hamlets suffers from a number of health issues. There are high levels of obesity, alcohol consumption and smoking, which contribute to comparatively lower life expectancy for the population. The population also has relatively high levels of infant mortality, relatively high take up of incapacity benefits among the working age population, and a relatively high number of children and young people with multiple disabilities.

## Housing

Housing need, in terms of quality, quantity and affordability, is one of the most significant issues in the borough. In 2004, c.25% of households lived in unsuitable housing, and the needs of c.7,000 could not be met within current conditions. Around 30% of households are registered as overcrowded and demand for housing significantly exceeds supply, but housing affordability is relatively low and there is a lack of larger sized properties to meet the needs of the population. Housing is therefore one of the key drivers for change and regeneration in the borough, and a target has been set of 43, 265 new homes by 2025.

## Employment

Tower Hamlets now has the largest financial services district outside the City of London (located at Canary Wharf), and the 4th highest density of jobs of all the London boroughs. Despite this, 13.8% of the population are employment deprived and Tower Hamlets is the most employment deprived borough in London. One quarter of Tower Hamlets' population lives in income deprivation - the highest in London and the 6th highest of in England<sup>5</sup>. Improving employment and improving accessibility of borough residents to borough job opportunities is therefore a key focus for regeneration in the borough.

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<sup>5</sup> Deprivation in Tower Hamlets: Analysis of the 2015 Indices of Deprivation data. Report (Tower Hamlets Council Corporate Research Unit, 2015)

# Appendix C

## Audit of Tower Hamlets' Heritage Assets

### Overview

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is a densely built-up urban area on the northern bank of the River Thames in East London (see **Figure 1**). As illustrated on **Figure 2**, the rich and varied heritage of the borough is reflected in the wide range of heritage assets found within Tower Hamlets:

- **Designated heritage assets** – World heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas or London squares designated under the relevant legislation.
- **Undesignated heritage assets** – non-statutory designations and local lists identified by the council (Archaeological priority areas, locally listed buildings, locally listed war memorials and local views) or the Mayor of London (strategic views and historic green spaces) and any other heritage assets that may be identified from time to time.

### World heritage sites

Tower Hamlets contains the Tower of London World Heritage Site (see **Figure 3**). This complex monument retains buildings of many periods, dating back to the White Tower of 1078. It is internationally important for a number of reasons: its landmark location to both protect and control the City of London; as a symbol of Norman power; as an outstanding example of late 11th century innovative Norman military architecture; as a model example of a mediaeval fortress palace; for its association with state institutions; and for being the setting for key historical events in European history. It is also the home of the Crown Jewels.

In addition to the Tower of London, the borough also contains the buffer zone of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site, although the world heritage site itself lies outside the boundary of the borough. The buffer zone includes the Island Gardens on the Isle of Dogs, which is considered to have unrivalled views of the Greenwich site from across the river.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

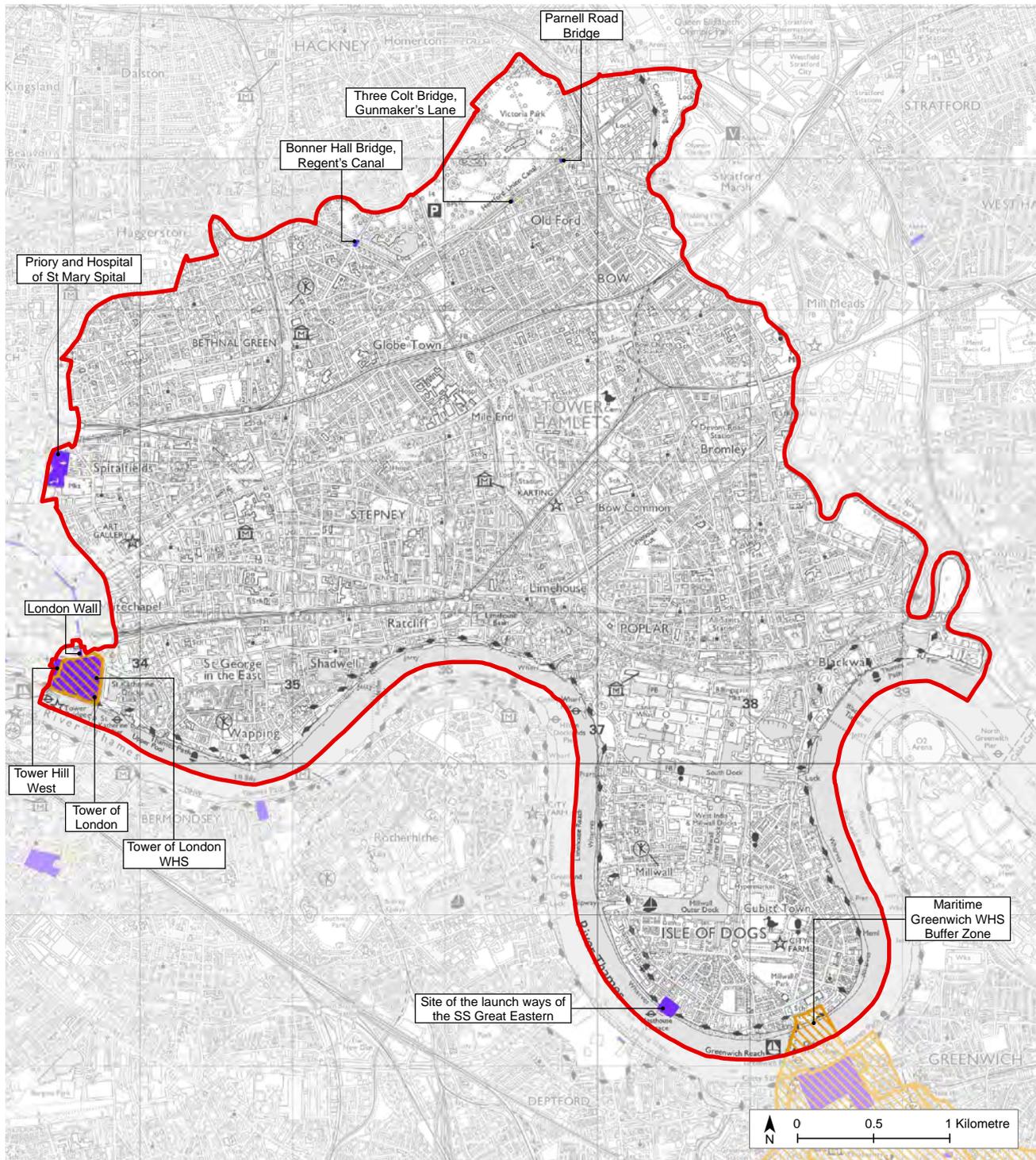
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

**Figure 3 - World Heritage Sites and Scheduled Monuments**



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- World Heritage Site
- Scheduled Monument

# Scheduled monuments and archaeology

## Archaeological remains

Tower Hamlets is rich in prehistoric archaeology. The earliest known Londoner was buried in Blackwall approximately 5,000 years ago, and other evidence for later prehistoric activity has been found on several sites in the borough, including at Old Ford, Wapping and on the Isle of Dogs, where a noteworthy Bronze Age timber structure was found. There are also important palaeoenvironmental remains in the deep alluvial deposits associated with the River Thames and Lea floodplain, which can reveal evidence for changing environmental conditions from prehistory through to the recent past.

The most impressive Roman remains found to-date in East London are the large baths recently excavated at Shadwell, together with a possible mausoleum and cemetery. A section of the Roman city wall at Tower Hill, and a section of 4th century riverside wall within the precinct of the Tower of London are the only extant Roman features of the borough today.

Undesignated archaeology from the Saxon, early mediaeval and mediaeval periods can also be found in the borough. There was a Saxon forerunner of St Dunstons church at Stepney, and documentary sources and excavations reveal a number of buildings pre-dating the 12th century, including: St Katharine-by-the-Tower, swept away by the construction of St Katharine Docks; the Royal Mint to the east of the Tower, on the site of which the 14th century Cistercian abbey of St Mary Graces was built; and the Augustinian hospital of St Mary Spital to the east of Bishopsgate. Further establishments lay along the road to Colchester, including St Leonard's nunnery to the south of Bow Road, close to the crossing over the River Lea.

Other important archaeological remains include the survival of structures associated with the canals, railways, docks and other hydraulic power features - such as the Regent's Canal Dock Hydraulic Accumulator Tower.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

## Scheduled monuments

There are 151 scheduled monuments in London, of which 7 can be found in Tower Hamlets (see **Figure 3**):

- Tower of London;
- Tower Hill West – adjoining the Tower of London;
- London Wall – a section of the Roman city wall at Tower Hill;
- Priory and Hospital of St Mary Spital - a hospital of St Mary attached to a house of Augustinian canons that was founded in 1197, and refounded in 1235 on a larger scale;
- Three Colts Bridge – 1830 cast iron bridge over Hertford Union Canal;
- Parnell Road Bridge - 1830 cast iron girder and plate deck bridge over Hertford Union Canal;
- Bonner Hall Bridge – early Victorian bridge over the Regent’s Canal, in red brick with stone voussoirs, cast iron panels and granite setts.

## Archaeological priority areas

A number of Archaeological Priority Areas (APAs), comprising either known or potential archaeological areas, have been identified in the borough (see **Figure 4**). These include potential Roman burial grounds, Roman roads and the historic cores of Old Ford, Whitechapel, Stepney and Poplar. Significant archaeological remains can also be found outside of APAs.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

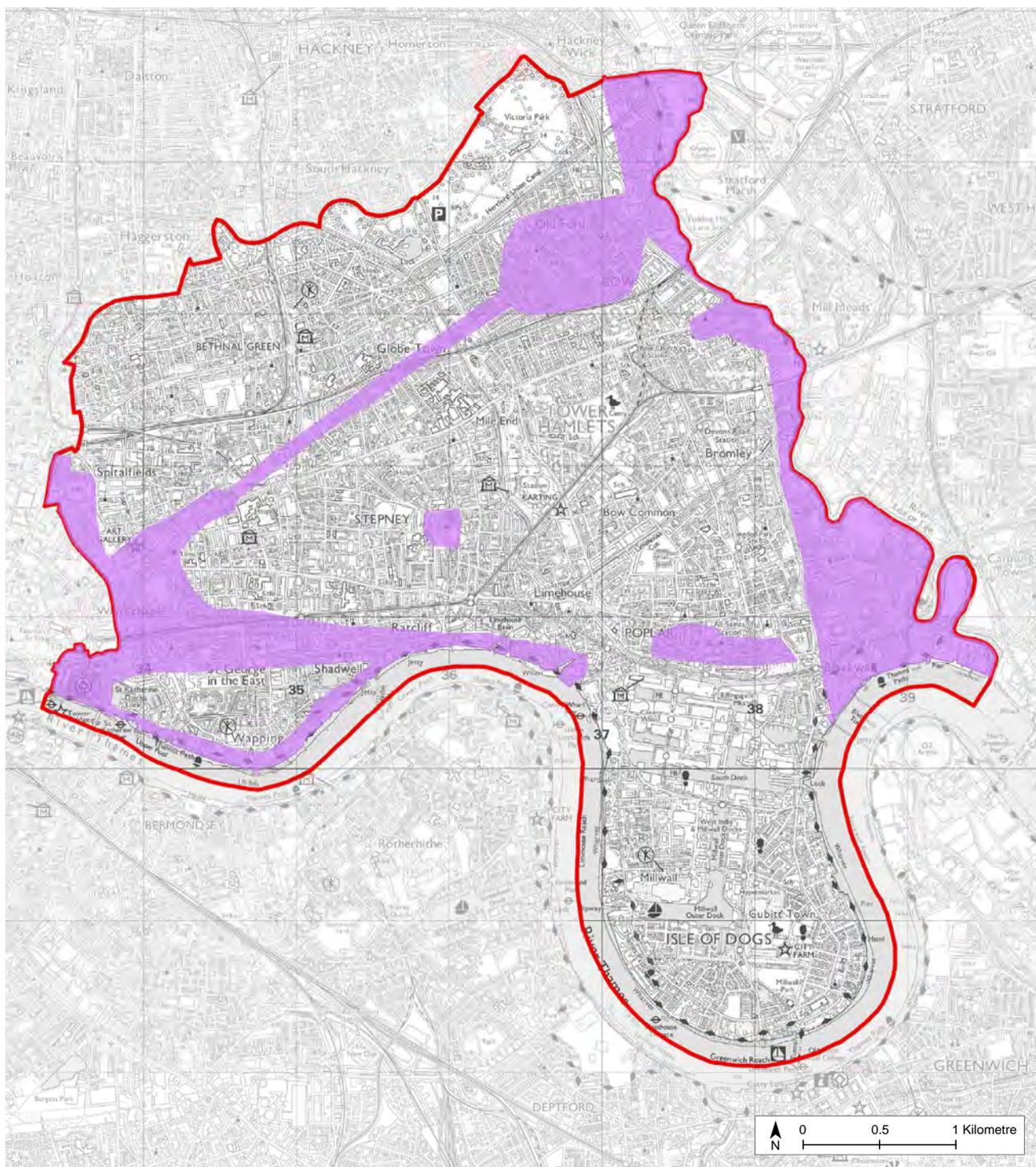
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

**Figure 4 - Archaeological Priority Areas**



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- Archaeological Priority Areas

# Listed buildings

## Statutory listed buildings

Buildings considered to be of national importance are included on the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest compiled by the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, and are graded according to their level of interest:

- Grade I buildings are of exceptional, often international interest, representing only 2.5% of all listed buildings;
- Grade II\* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest; and
- Grade II listed buildings are nationally important and of special interest, representing 92% of the total.

Tower Hamlets has almost 900 statutory listed buildings (see **Figure 5** and **Figure 6**), thought to represent approximately 2,000 individual buildings or structures (including graves). These include a diverse range of building types, dates and styles, from the medieval parish church of St Dunstan, which pre-dates the Tower of London, Hawksmoor's Christ Church Spitalfields, a masterpiece of the English Baroque, through to Ernő Goldfinger's 1960s Brutalist style Balfron Tower.

21 listed buildings are classified Grade I (and Ecclesiastical Grade A). These include (see **Figure 5**):

- 6 churches - 3 early 18th century churches by Nicholas Hawksmoor (St Anne's Limehouse Parish Church, the Church of St George in the East and Christ Church Spitalfields – a masterpiece of the English Baroque), a 19th century church by Sir John Soane (Church of St John on Bethnal Green), the Saxon foundation of St Dunstan & All Saints, and the late 19th century Anglican church of St Peter in Wapping;
- 5 buildings and structures comprising parts of the Tower of London (the White Tower, the Middle Tower, outer curtain wall, the new armouries and the chapel of St Peter ad Vincula);
- 5 buildings associated with maritime and trade - warehouses, dock walls and the Blackwall Basin from the West India Docks, the Skin Floor from the former New Tobacco Warehouse and Trinity House;
- 3 structures associated with industrial heritage – Tower Bridge, Tower Bridge approach and a portion of the old London Wall; and
- Buildings and structures designed for commercial purposes (56 Artillery Lane) or public benefit (Trinity Green Almshouses and Chapel).

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

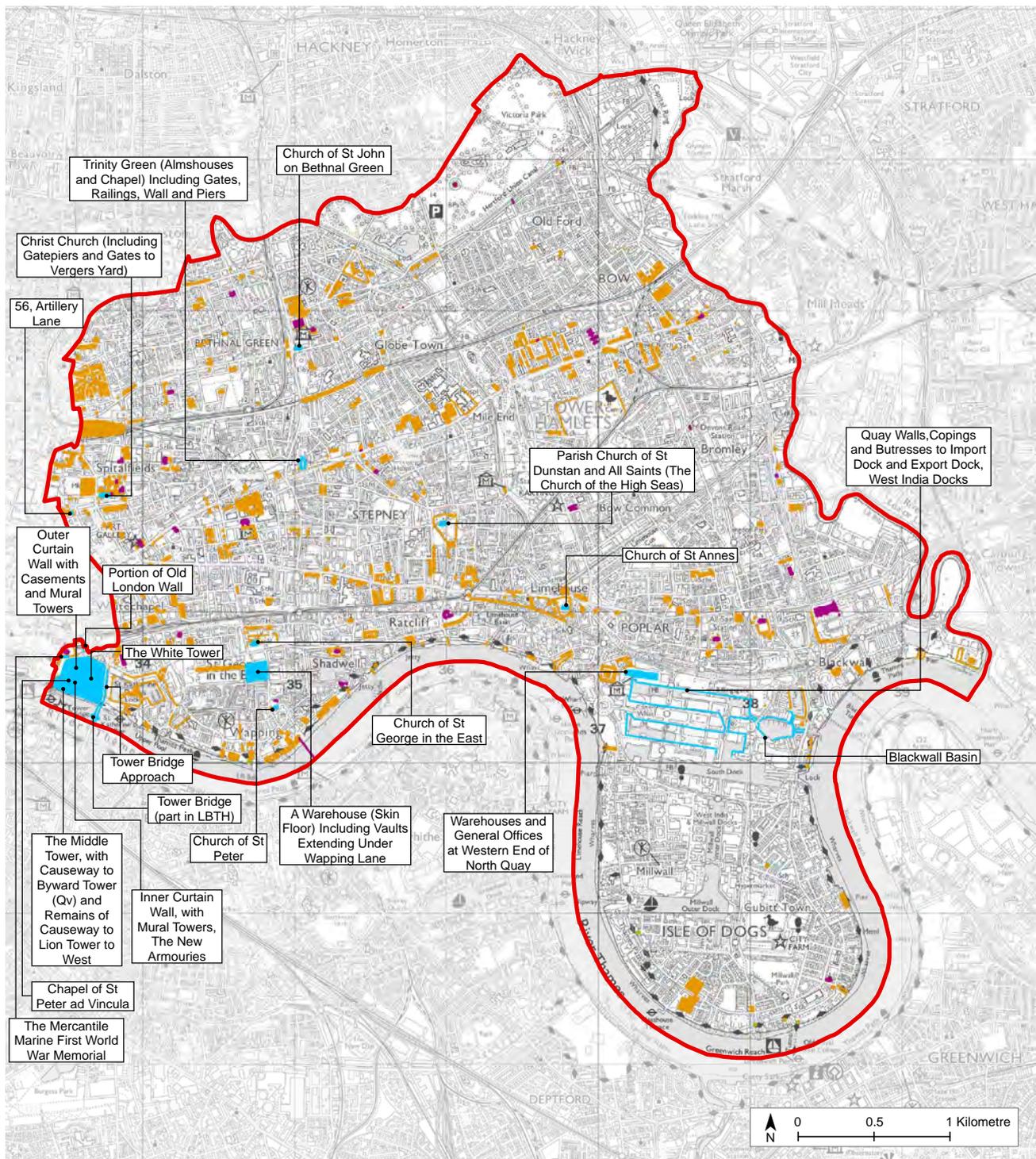
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

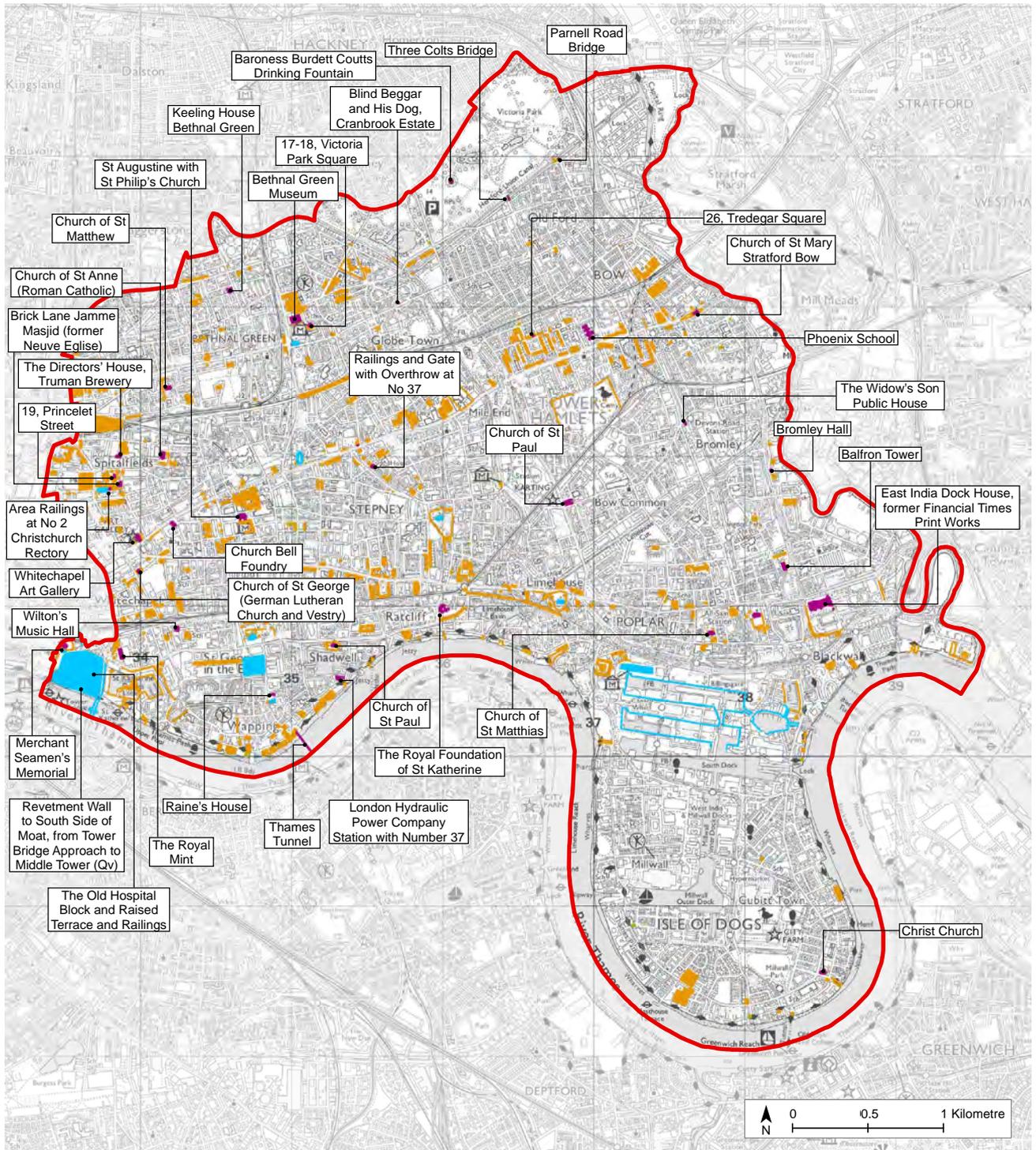
**Figure 5 - Statutory Listed Buildings Grade I**



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II\* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building

Figure 6 - Statutory Listed Buildings Grade II\*



KEY

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II\* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building

1 Introduction

2 Our heritage

3 Caring for our heritage

4 Our strategy

5 Delivery

Appendices

**There are 39 Grade II\* (and Ecclesiastical Grade B) listed buildings** in the borough (see **Figure 6**). These include the following:

- 12 religious buildings, one of which was originally built as a French Huguenot Church, converted to a methodist chapel, adapted to become the Spitalfields Great Synagogue, and is now the Jamme Masjid Mosque;
- 6 residential buildings, ranging from the early 16th century Bromley Hall to Sir Denys Lasdun's late 1950s 'cluster block' of Keeling House in Bethnal Green;
- 4 recreational buildings, including Wilton's Music Hall (the oldest music hall in London to survive in its original form), the Widow's Son Public House in Bow, the Whitechapel Art Gallery (an internationally acclaimed gallery) and the Bethnal Green Museum (re-launched as the Museum of Childhood in 1974);
- 4 industrial structures, including the 2 scheduled monument canal bridges, the Wapping Hydraulic Pumping Station and the Thames Tunnel at Wapping High Street;
- 3 buildings or structures of public benefit, including the Merchant Seamen's Memorial, Baroness Burdett Coutts' Drinking Fountain and the Blind Beggar and his Dog bronze heraldic sculpture; and
- Buildings and structures associated with the Tower of London, with maritime and trade (including the headquarters of the Port of London Authority at 10 Trinity Square), with commerce (including the Royal Mint at Tower Hill and the Director's House in Trumans Brewery) and education.

**There are 828 Grade II listed** (including those formally listed as Ecclesiastical Grade C) entries in Tower Hamlets. In contrast to the higher grades of designation, over half of the Grade II entries relate to residential properties. Public buildings and features are the second highest category of type, with approximately 150 examples (including bollards, telephone boxes and statues). The list comprises approximately 50 each of religious buildings/components, recreational buildings and educational buildings (including Toynbee Hall, one of the first university settlements in the world, where similar activities are still taking place in the original buildings to this day). There are less than 70 examples of building types associated with maritime, trade and industry, despite the considerable significance of these activities to the borough and its development.

1

Introduction

## Locally listed buildings

The council keeps a list of buildings considered to be of local historic or architectural interest. These designations generally recognise buildings which are considered to make a positive contribution to the townscape character of the area within which they are situated. There are approximately 184 locally listed buildings in Tower Hamlets (see **Figure 7**), including Wapping Sports Centre and the Royal Cricketers Public House (now flats). These are broadly spread across the borough, with the exception of the Isle of Dogs.

There are also approximately 50 locally listed war memorials in Tower Hamlets, which includes memorials within churchyards, public parks, schools and other buildings.

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

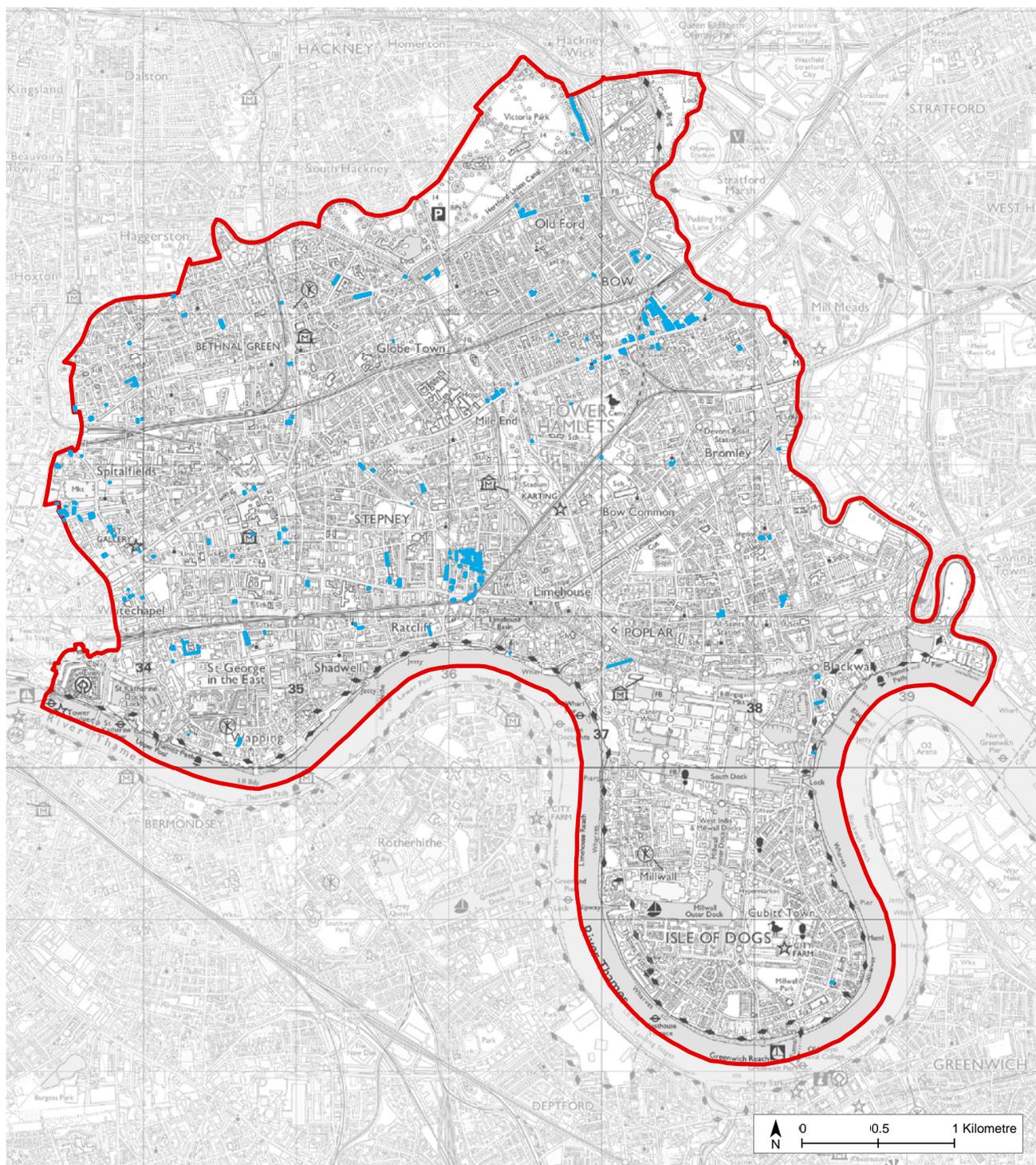
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

**Figure 7 - Locally Listed Buildings**



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- Locally Listed Buildings

# Views

## Strategic Views

Policy 7.11 of the London Plan (March 2016) sets out the strategic views identified as part of the London view management framework. The list of strategic views designated by the Mayor relevant to Tower Hamlets includes (i) a river prospect view from Tower Bridge, (ii) a townscape view along The Queen’s Walk to the Tower of London and (iii) a townscape view from Island Gardens on the Isle of Dogs across the River Thames to the Royal Naval College (see **Figure 8**). The London view management framework also identifies a number of protected vistas that partly fall within Tower Hamlets (see **Figure 8**).

The London View Management Framework Supplementary Planning Guidance (March 2012) provides guidance on the management of these designated views. The supporting text to Policy 7.11 states *‘A number of views make a significant contribution to the image and character of London at the strategic level. This could be because of their composition, their contribution to legibility, or because they provide an opportunity to see key landmarks as part of a broader townscape, panorama or river prospect. The Mayor will seek to protect the composition and character of these views, particularly if they are subject to significant pressure from development. New development will often make a positive contribution to the views and can be encouraged. However, in others, development is likely to compromise the setting or visibility of a key landmark and should be resisted.’*

With regards to implementing the London view management framework, Policy 7.11 states that *‘Boroughs should reflect the principles of this policy and include all designated views, including the protected vistas, into their LDFs. Boroughs may also wish to use the principles of this policy for the designation and management of local views.’*

## Local views

The council has identified local views that contribute to the identity and distinctiveness of places in Tower Hamlets. These will be designated in the new Local Plan as shown on **Figure 8**.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

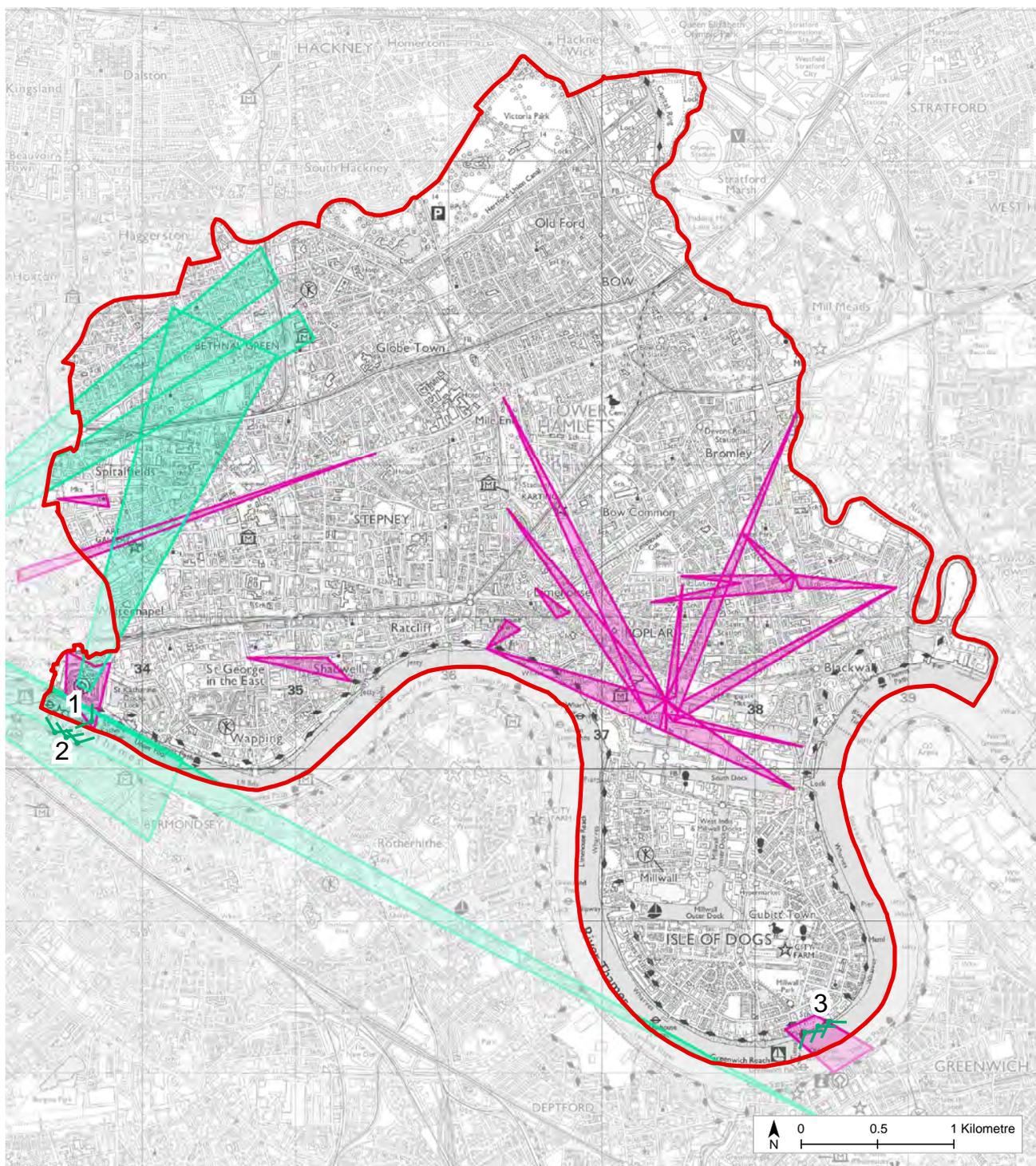
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

**Figure 8 - Strategic and Local Views**



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
  - Strategic Views
  - Local Views
  - Protected Vistas
- 1 River Prospect View of Tower Bridge
  - 2 Townscape View along The Queen's Walk to the Tower of London
  - 3 Townscape View from Island Gardens on the Isle of Dogs across the River Thames to the Royal Naval College

## Conservation areas

Tower Hamlets has 58 conservation areas covering c.30% of the total area of the borough (see **Figure 9**). The size and character of the conservation areas varies enormously. Some conservation areas are very small (such as St Paul's Shadwell which comprises only the church, its grounds and a small section of the quayside to Shadwell Basin), while others are very large (such as the extensive Victoria Park). Some have a uniform character (such as Jesus Hospital Estate), while others are more varied in character (such as Brick Lane and Fournier Street, which retains the intimate proportions of the old 17th century network of streets but also includes the most important early Georgian quarter in England). More than 30% of conservation areas are designated for their 19th century residential townscape character.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

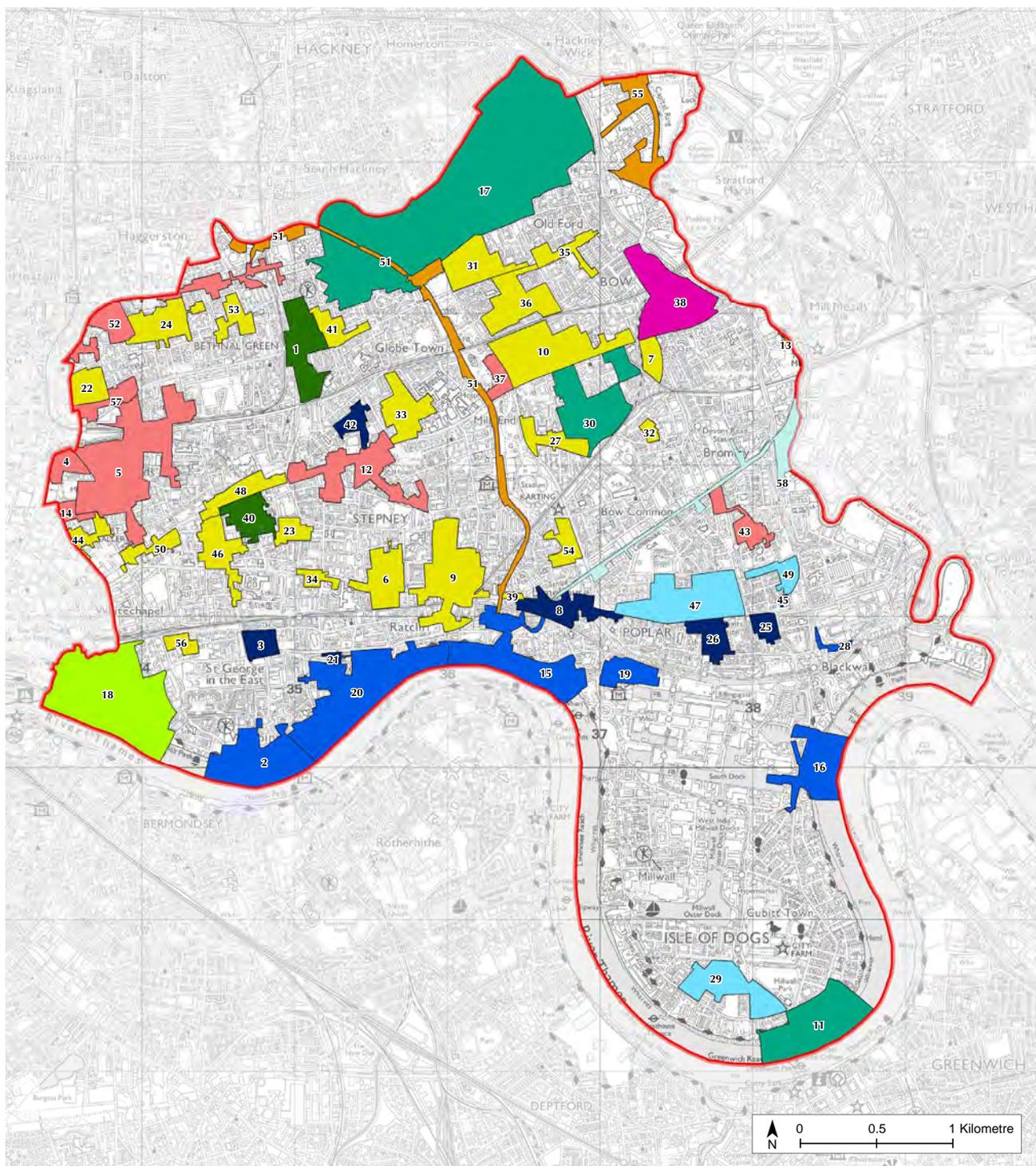
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

**Figure 9 - Conservation Areas**



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- Pre-19th Century Townscape
- 19th Century Townscape
- 20th Century Townscape
- Religious
- Tower
- Maritime and Trade
- Industrial
- Public Buildings
- Open Spaces
- Other

**Conservation Areas:**

1. Bethnal Green Gardens
2. Wapping Pierhead
3. St George in the East
4. Elder Street
5. Fournier Street
6. Albert Gardens
7. Tomlins Grove
8. St Annes Church
9. York Square
10. Tredegar Square
11. Island Gardens
12. Stepney Green
13. Three Mills (part in Newham)
14. Artillery Passage
15. Narrow Street
16. Coldharbour
17. Victoria Park
18. The Tower
19. West India Dock
20. Wapping Wall
21. St Paul's Church
22. Boundary Estate
23. Ford Square
24. Jesus Hospital Estate
25. All Saints Church Pop.
26. St Mathias Church, Poplar
27. Ropery Street
28. Naval Row
29. Chapel House
30. Tower Hamlets Cemetery
31. Driffield Road
32. Swaton Road
33. Carlton Square
34. Commercial Road
35. Roman Road Market
36. Medway
37. Clinton Road
38. Fairfield Road
39. Lowell Street
40. London Hospital
41. Globe Road
42. St Peter's
43. Langdon Park
44. Wentworth Street
45. St Frideswide's
46. Myrdle Street
47. Lansbury
48. Whitechapel Market
49. Balfron Tower
50. Whitechapel High Street
51. Regents Canal
52. Hackney Road
53. Old Bethnal Green Road
54. Brickfield Gardens
55. Fish Island
56. Wiltons Music Hall
57. Redchurch Street
58. Limehouse Cut

# Historic landscapes, gardens, squares and waterways

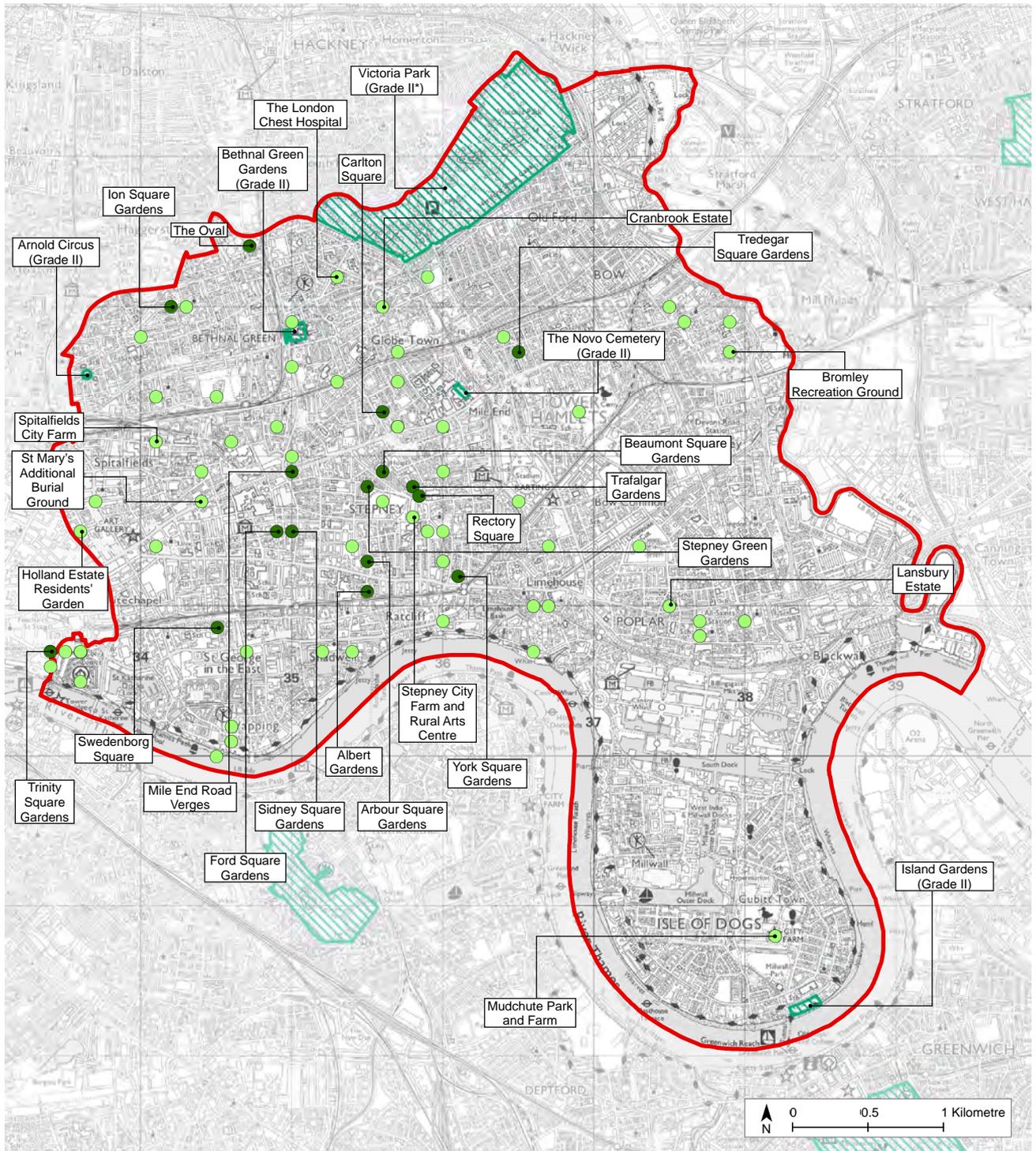
Five parks within the borough are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest in England, and are therefore of national importance (see **Figure 10**):

- Victoria Park (Grade II\*) – this was created by an Act of Parliament in 1841, following a 30,000 signature petition to Queen Victoria. The petition called for green space for healthful recreation within the overcrowded and unhealthy East End. The council, in partnership with others, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, has successfully carried out improvements to the park under the Parks for People scheme;
- The Novo Cemetery (Grade II) – Added in 2014, this is a Sephardi Jewish cemetery opened in 1733 and is the surviving portion of an extension in 1855. It is situated entirely within the grounds of the Queen Mary University of London.
- Island Gardens (Grade II) - a strip of river frontage originally used for manufacturing and ship repair, this was saved by the Admiralty from redevelopment as part of the 1842 Cubitt Town, to preserve views across the river to what is now the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site;
- Boundary Gardens (Grade II) – this was laid out by LCC as the centrepiece of the Boundary Estate in the early 1900s; and
- Museum Gardens (Grade II) - part of Bethnal Green ‘Poor’s Land’ Trust, this comprises a remnant of a former medieval green, and was opened to the public by the government in 1875. It was then joined with open space to the south that was acquired by LCC in 1895, and the combined space was called Bethnal Green Gardens.

The London Inventory of Historic Green Spaces lists 77 open spaces of historic interest in the borough (see **Figure 10**). Some comprise the remnants of medieval greens, such as Stepney Green Gardens and Mile End Waste, while other areas result from slum clearance or bomb damage, such as Weaver’s Fields. A number of others, such as Poplar Recreation Ground and St James’ Gardens, represent former burial grounds which were opened as public gardens in the 19th century. More formal urban squares, such as Carlton Square Gardens and Tredegar Square Gardens, were laid out in the 19th century in association with planned developments. Only a limited number of parks in the borough were designed and created as such, but those that do exist include important examples such as Victoria Park and Island Gardens. The borough also contains 16 squares that have been designated according to the London Squares Preservation Act of 1931 (see **Figure 10**).

In addition to the resources identified above, Tower Hamlets also contains some important parks, gardens and open spaces that are not designated. For example, the borough has two historic playgrounds – the Henry Moore play sculpture in Dora Street and the playground at the foot of Balfron Towers (possibly designed by Goldfinger) – and a number of city farms. It also contains an important cemetery – the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, which was opened in 1841, and which is one of London’s Magnificent Seven Cemeteries.

Figure 10 - Historic Landscapes, Gardens and Squares



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- World Heritage Site
- London Squares
- Historic Green Spaces

In addition to specific locations, it is also important to consider the broader historic landscapes that can be found in the borough. Green infrastructure is a key component of the urban grain of the historic environment of the borough. Street trees, for example, were an important component of planned developments, such as the Chapel House Estate at the south end of the Isle of Dogs. Tower Hamlets also contains numerous historic statues, street furniture (including street signs and street ironwork) and war memorials that form an important part of the urban landscape.

In addition to its green infrastructure, the borough also has an important network of Blue Infrastructure in its canals and waterways. Some of these have already been designated including, for example, the Regent's Canal and Limehouse Cut, which are both conservation areas.

1  
Introduction

2  
Our heritage

3  
Caring for  
our heritage

4  
Our strategy

5  
Delivery

Appendices

## Modern architecture

Parts of the borough have also attracted some significant new buildings by important architects (see **Figure 11**). Many of these are not currently designated or afforded official recognition or protection, but they are an important part of the built environment and the distinctiveness of the borough. The modern buildings at Canary Wharf, including Cesar Pelli’s iconic tower at One Canada Square, are an important group, and form a very significant component of the urban townscape – they are visible from many miles away in several directions, as well as from many places within the borough. Another group of high quality modern buildings are those on the Queen Mary University Campus at Mile End. These buildings, together with the Mile End Ecology Park and Pavilions and CZGW’s ‘Green Bridge’ (which connects two areas of a green corridor over the busy Mile End Road), form an important focus of significant built heritage value. In addition, the ‘Idea Store’ at Whitechapel, the new buildings and the new Jubilee Line station at Canary Wharf are all high quality components of the borough’s modern heritage.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

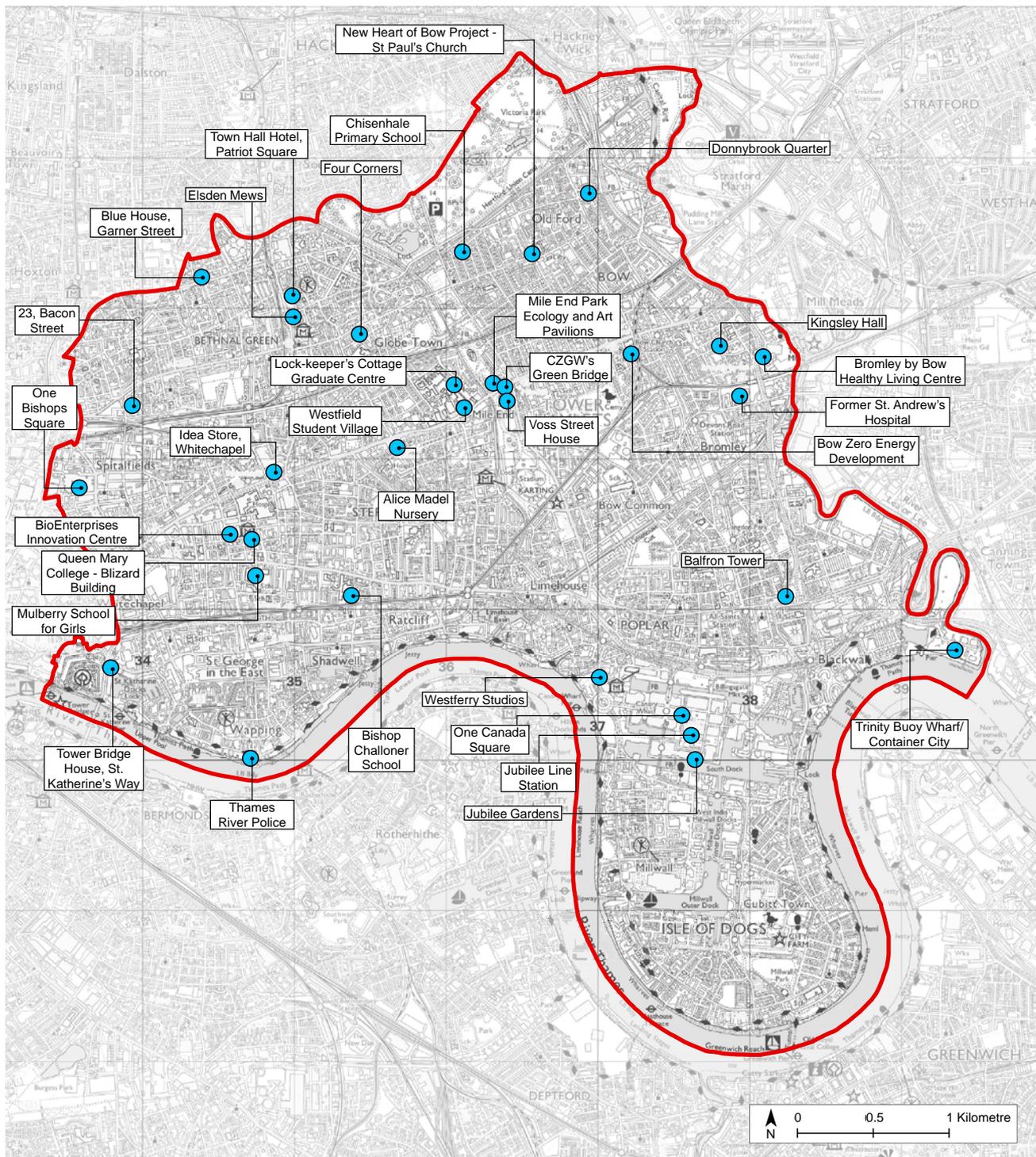
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

**Figure 11 - Modern Architecture**



**KEY**

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- Notable 20th Century Buildings (not exhaustive list)

# Intangible heritage

UNESCO's 2003 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention' defines intangible heritage as: *'includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts'*.

The significance of many places lies not in their bricks and mortar, but in the activities that took place within and around them, and in the lives of the people who dwelt or worked in them. The value and interest of buildings can be far greater if their use, and the histories and different perspectives of the people who used them, both historically and today, are understood and recorded for posterity. The names of buildings and areas is also an important part of this. Programmes of Oral History recording, such as that carried out by the Eastside Community Programme or recordings published in part in the Mile End Old Town Residents' Association Changing Places book in 2001, can add considerable value to the heritage resource of an area. In addition, the borough's intangible heritage also includes the range of key contemporary events and festivals taking place in the borough today (such as the Baishakhi Mela in Banglatown in Brick Lane), and other performing arts, social practices and traditional skills (such as carpentry).

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

## Markets

Tower Hamlets has a range of covered and street markets, which make an interesting and dynamic contribution to the borough's townscape and to its local communities (see **Figure 12**). They are considered to be an important force in the promotion of social cohesion and local economies, and in the provision of affordable goods. Covered markets include the historic Spitalfields Market, dating back to the 17th century, and the more recently established market occupying part of the Old Truman Brewery site. Street markets give considerable vibrancy to the street scene of parts of the borough and some, such as Petticoat Lane, have considerable longevity. Others, such as Crisp Street, Roman Road and Whitechapel Market (a large vibrant market popular with the Bangladeshi community), provide an important local resource, while Brick Lane and the Columbia Road Flower Market attract large numbers of visitors from outside the area.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

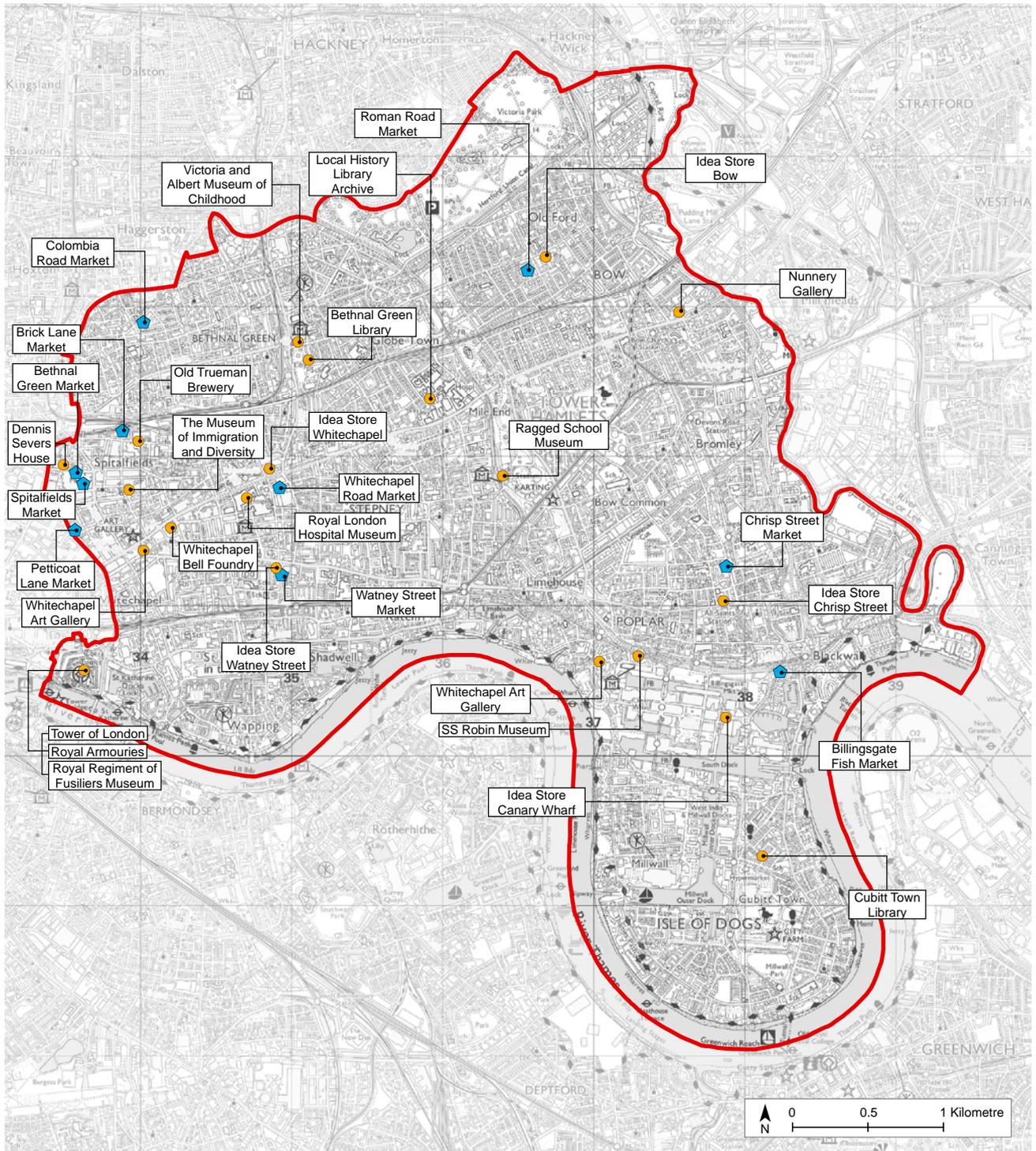
Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

Figure 12 - Heritage Collections and Markets



KEY

- Tower Hamlets Borough Boundary
- Key Museums and Libraries
- ◆ Markets

1 Introduction

2 Our heritage

3 Caring for our heritage

4 Our strategy

5 Delivery

Appendices

# Heritage collections

## Museum objects

The heritage of the borough, together with information on its history, is preserved and celebrated through the objects and activities of a number of museums (see **Figure 12**):

- Museum of London Docklands – tells the history of the River Thames and Docklands, and occupies part of a Grade I listed ‘low’ warehouse at West India Docks;
- Ragged School Museum – tells the story of East London from the Victorian to present times, and includes a recreation of one of Dr Barnardo’s original classrooms;
- Royal London Hospital Museum - covers the history of health care in the East End since the 18th century;
- Dennis Severs House – a living museum which re-creates life in a former Huguenot silk weaver’s house;
- Museum of Immigration and Diversity (19 Princelet Street) – a museum celebrating the waves of immigration in the borough, located in a Grade II\* listed building which was formerly the house of a Huguenot silk weaver merchant and then a synagogue; and
- SS Robin – a historic steamship, the last remaining steamcoaster in the world, and a Grade I/Core Collection ship. SS Robin has recently undergone a substantial restoration and refit at drydock, and may return to the borough.

Other significant museums with more universally-themed collections include:

- Tower of London – as well as being a World Heritage Site, the Tower of London also contains important collections, including the Crown Jewels (part of the Royal Collection);
- Royal Armouries – part of the Royal Armouries’ collection is located in the Tower of London’s White Tower, including two permanent public displays on the Line of Kings and the Spanish Armoury, the personal armoury of Henry VIII and displays on more modern weapons and armours;
- Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (London) Museum – which covers the history of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) from 1685 to 1968 and of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers from 1968 onwards;
- Whitechapel Art Gallery – an internationally acclaimed venue founded in a purpose-built, Grade II\* listed Arts and Crafts building in 1901 to bring great art to the people of East London; and
- Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood - formerly the Bethnal Green Museum, housed in an iron and glass building relocated from South Kensington, with a new entrance foyer.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

## Reference libraries and archive

The borough also contains a number of archives that hold information on Tower Hamlets' history and heritage – most notably the Local History Library and Archives at Bancroft Road. The Library holds records from the oldest Saxon settlement in Tower Hamlets to the present day, and part of the Library is also the oldest surviving local government building in the borough. The Library plays an important role in collecting, preserving and making publicly accessible the histories of the borough. Over the past five years it has been redeveloped into a heritage centre for the borough - a hub for the preservation of, and access to the Council's archive collections, and for promoting learning and participation in local heritage, including intangible heritage.

In addition to the Local History Library and Archives, there are also a number of other archives in the borough, including for example archives associated with the Women's Library and the Royal London Hospital Trust, and community archives such as those held by Eastside Community Heritage and the Swadhinata Trust.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

# Appendix D

## Key Stakeholders: Roles & Responsibilities

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### Tower Hamlets council

The council takes the lead role in securing the conservation of the heritage of the borough. It handles applications for planning permission and Listed Building consent. It has the power to ensure that listed Buildings are kept in satisfactory repair, and it can take action if unauthorised demolition or alterations take place. It designates conservation areas and maintains a list of buildings of local interest, and has an important role to play in planning enforcement.

Within the Council, this role is carried out primarily through the Place Shaping Team. The team is part of the Place Directorate, which is responsible for a number of key services including planning, housing, transport, regeneration and development and building control. The Place Shaping Team's principal functions include:

- Heritage and conservation, including heritage improvement projects and their delivery;
- Preparation of conservation and urban design strategies;
- Providing planning application and pre-application advice;
- Development briefs, frameworks and implementation;
- Design and conservation input into corporate initiatives;
- Enabling and partnership working.

The Place Shaping Team have focused on reducing, and dealing more efficiently with, the volume of conservation traffic that typically comes through on a day to day basis (such as requests around grants, listed buildings, and enforcement). For example, a pre-application plan process has been established that encourages people to send emails, photos and any relevant information in advance of a meeting. This has played an important role in improving the quality of interactions with Council, and in improving the quality of the applications. In addition, a set of Frequently Asked Questions have also been put on the website.

The Place Shaping Team is supported by a number of council Members. These include a Heritage Champion, whose key role is to ensure that the historic environment plays a central role in the development of all the Council's policies, plans, targets and strategies.

In addition to the Place Shaping Team, there are also a number of other key stakeholders and functions within council that have an important role to play in heritage – whether because they are accountable for managing specific aspects of the borough’s heritage, because their activities have an impact on heritage, or because heritage impacts their activities. In particular, the Local History Library and Archives play an important role in the borough’s heritage and in the delivery of this strategy. This team is part of the Resources Directorate, which is responsible for delivering services that have a significant impact on social cohesion and quality of life for residents and those who work in the borough.

## Historic England

In April 2015, English Heritage split into two organisations; English Heritage – a new charity which looks after the National Heritage Collection of more than 400 state-owned historic sites and monuments across England; and Historic England, which continues the statutory role of providing expert, constructive advice to local authorities and the public as well as championing the wider historic environment.

Historic England works in partnership with central government departments, local authorities, voluntary bodies and the private sector to conserve and enhance the historic environment, broaden public access to the heritage and increase people’s understanding of the past. It meets its responsibilities by:

- Acting as a national and international champion for the heritage;
- Giving grants for the conservation of historic buildings, monuments and landscapes;
- Maintaining registers of England’s most significant historic buildings, monuments and landscapes;
- Advising on the preservation of the historic environment;
- Encouraging broader public involvement with the heritage;
- Promoting education and research;
- Maintaining the National Monuments Record as the public archive of the heritage.

Central to Historic England’s role is the advice it gives to local planning authorities and Central Government on development proposals. This focuses on proposals with potential for major change or for damage to significant, nationally important heritage resources (such as listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas).

In London, Historic England’s role also includes the provision of archaeological advice (through the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service) and hosting the Greater London Historic Environment Record.

## Voluntary organisations

Tower Hamlets has 2,500 third sector organisations and residents' associations. A number of these voluntary groups, trusts and societies are focused on activities related to the understanding, conservation and enjoyment of the borough's heritage. These include for example (not an exhaustive list):

- **The 20th Century Society** – focusing on education, conservation and lobbying for architecture and design in Britain from 1914 onwards;
- **The Bishopsgate Institute** - a cultural institute that runs courses for adults and cultural events, such as music concerts and illustrated talks, debates and poetry;
- **East of London Family History Society** - helps people who share a common interest in furthering family history and genealogical research in the historic East End of the city of London;
- **The East London History Society** – this exists to further interest in the history of East London, and is responsible for maintaining the Tower Hamlets History Online website, as well as organising a programme of talks and outings, and publishing newsletters;
- **Eastside Community Heritage** – seek to promote civic pride, greater harmony between people and to provide independent historical research;
- **Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields** – fund and manage the restoration of Nicholas Hawksmoor's Grade I listed Christ Church;
- **Friends of St George's German Lutheran Church** - arrange a programme of talks;
- **Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park** – a registered charity who manage the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park on behalf of the council;
- **The Georgian Group** – a national charity and statutory amenity society dedicated to preserving Georgian buildings and gardens, who are consulted on planning applications affecting listed Georgian heritage;
- **Historic Chapels Trust** – established to take into ownership redundant chapels and other places of worship in England which are of outstanding architectural importance and historic interest, to secure their preservation, repair and maintenance for public benefit;
- **History of Wapping Trust** – this society promotes the history of Wapping, Ratcliff, Shadwell and St George's, through books and a programme of talks;
- **Island History Trust** - this is a community history project dedicated to recording and preserving the history of the Isle of Dogs and the people who live there;
- **Jewish East End Celebration Society** – identifies, documents and preserves Jewish East End heritage for future generations both of Jews and immigrant communities in the area;

# 1

## Introduction

- **Mile End Old Town Residents' Association** - helps residents with local history, local tradesman and planning applications;
- **Ocean Estate Tenants and Leaseholders Association** – social club offering a venue for various gatherings and social events in the local area;
- **Save Britain's Heritage** – campaigns for historic buildings;
- **Shadwell Local History Society** – established to support the study of local history in the area;

# 2

## Our heritage

- **Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings** – the largest, oldest and most technically expert national pressure group, with a statutory role as advisor to local planning authorities;
- **The Spitalfields Trust** – a charity dedicated to restoring Georgian houses;
- **Stepney Historical Trust** – provides learning opportunities around the history and surroundings in Stepney by holding lectures, exhibitions and historical excursions;

# 3

## Caring for our heritage

- **Swadhinata Trust** - a non-partisan secular Bengali group that offers seminars and workshops, expeditions and educational literature to young Bengali people;
- **Tower Hamlets Local History Society** - aims to build interest in the history of the East End of London, namely the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It publishes newsletters, organises a program of talks, and also arranges coach outings;

# 4

## Our strategy

- **The Victorian Society** – the 'champion' for Victorian and Edwardian buildings in England and Wales, with a formal role in the planning system, and with a focus around conservation, public involvement and education; and
- **The Whitechapel Society** - promotes the study of Whitechapel murders and the impact these murders had on the East End of London.

A number of these groups are represented on the Council's Conservation and Design Advisory Panel.

# 5

## Delivery

## Appendices

# Appendix E

## Historic England Planning Advice

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### Introduction

Historic England provides written planning advice to support owners, developers and local planning authorities when they are considering proposed changes to historic buildings and places, which need to be given consent through the planning system in accordance with historic environment policy in the NPPF and the related PPG. These are summarised below.

#### Historic Environment Good Practice Advice (GPA):

- **GPA 1 - The Historic Environment in Local Plans** (March 2015) - The purpose of this Advice Note is to provide information to help local planning authorities make well informed and effective local plans. The advice in this document, in accordance with the NPPF, emphasises that all information requirements and assessment work in support of plan-making and heritage protection needs to be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets affected and the impact on the significance of those heritage assets. At the same time, those taking decisions need sufficient information to understand the issues and formulate balanced policies.
- **GPA 2 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment** (March 2015) - The purpose of this Advice Note is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in assessing the significance of heritage assets, using appropriate expertise, historic environment records, recording and furthering understanding, neglect and unauthorised works, marketing and design and distinctiveness.
- **GPA 3 - The Setting of Heritage Assets** (March 2015) - The purpose of this Advice Note is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in assessing and managing change within the settings of heritage assets, including archaeological remains and historic buildings, sites, areas, and landscapes.
- **GPA 4 - Enabling Development** (forthcoming)

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

## Historic England Advice Notes:

- **Advice Note 1 - Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management** (February 2016) - This advice note sets out ways to manage change in a way that conserves and enhances historic areas through conservation area designation, appraisal and management. It is intended to offer advice to all those involved in managing conservation areas so that the potential of historic areas worthy of protection is fully realised, the need for community and owner consultation examined, and the benefits of management plans to manage change, and achieve regeneration and enhancement, fully exploited. Advice on appraisal of conservation areas is also given, as is assistance in demonstrating special interest and articulating character, guiding investment and in developing a management plan.
- **Advice Note 2 - Making Changes to Heritage Assets** (February 2016) - This advice note illustrates the application of the policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for planning permission and listed building consent, as well as other non-planning heritage consents, including scheduled monument consent. It provides general advice according to different categories of intervention in heritage assets, including repair, restoration, addition and alteration, as well as on works for research alone, based on the following types of heritage asset: buildings and other structures; standing remains including earthworks; buried remains and marine sites; and larger heritage assets including conservation areas, landscapes, including parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites. It will be useful to owners, developers, local planning authorities and others in considering works to heritage assets.
- **Advice Note 3 - The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans** (October 2015) - The identification of potential sites for development within a Local Plan is an important step in establishing where change and growth will happen across local authority areas, as well as the type of development and when it should occur. This document is intended to offer advice to all those involved in the process, to help ensure that the historic environment plays a positive role in allocating sites for development. It offers advice on evidence gathering and site allocation policies, as well as setting out in detail a number of steps to make sure that heritage considerations are fully integrated in any site selection methodology.
- **Advice Note 4 - Tall Buildings** (December 2015) - This Advice Note seeks to guide developers, designers, local authorities and other interested parties involved in planning for and designing tall buildings so that they may be delivered in a sustainable and successful way through the development plan and development management process.

1

Introduction

2

Our heritage

3

Caring for  
our heritage

4

Our strategy

5

Delivery

Appendices

- Advice Note 5 - Setting up a Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreement** (November 2015) - The purpose of this Advice Note is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing Listed Building Heritage Partnership Agreements. LBHPAs were introduced by section 60 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. They allow the owner of a listed building or buildings and their local planning authority to agree which necessary works to the building are routine and regular and, if done correctly, will not harm its special interest. The agreement grants listed building consent (LBC) for these works, for an extended period of time, and they can go ahead whenever convenient. This supports a partnership approach between the owner and the local planning authority and will help them to reach an agreed vision for the medium-long term management and maintenance of the listed building(s) covered. It will support dialogue and increase mutual certainty over the aspirations and requirements of all parties to the agreement. LBHPAs also have the potential to save time and resources for the partners as they will be able to spend less time dealing with minor applications, freeing them up to concentrate on any major or contentious issues affecting the building. Other bodies besides the owner and local planning authority may be party to the agreement, including the Secretary of State and Historic England.
- Advice Note 6 - Drawing up a Local Listed Building Consent Order** (November 2015) - The purpose of this Advice Note is to provide information to assist local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing Local Listed Building Consent Orders. LLBCOs were introduced by section 60 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. These allow a local planning authority to grant listed building consent for an extended period for works of any description for the alteration or extension of groups of listed buildings in all or part of their area, or buildings of a particular description in their area. This is a pro-active and blanket grant of consent, which means that owners of those listed buildings will not have to make individual applications, but will be able to proceed with the works, subject to any conditions that may be attached to the Order. LLBCOs allow works which would otherwise require a series of applications for listed building consent to be dealt with by a single consent mechanism, potentially covering a much longer period. They have the potential to act as a focus for development of consensus between multiple owners and local planning authorities, to establish well-understood approaches to common issues of maintenance, repair or minor alteration, to increase certainty over the aspirations and requirements of all parties, and to save time and resource for owners and local planning authorities alike. They will allow the local planning authority to spend less time on minor and well-understood works to well-understood listed buildings in their area, and will make it easier for owners to get on with minor and un-contentious changes.

- **Advice Note 7 - Local Heritage Listing** (May 2016) - Local lists play an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment, as part of the wider range of designation. They enable the significance of any building or site on the list (in its own right and as a contributor to the local planning authority's wider strategic planning objectives), to be better taken into account in planning applications affecting the building or site or its setting. The advice supports local authorities and communities to introduce a local list in their area or make changes to an existing list, through the preparation of selection criteria, thereby encouraging a more consistent approach to the identification and management of local heritage assets across England. A local list can celebrate the breadth of the historic environment of a local area by encompassing the full range of heritage assets that make up the historic environment and ensure the proper validation and recording of local heritage assets. They also provide a consistent and accountable way of identifying local heritage assets, to the benefit of owners and developers who need to understand local development opportunities and constraints.

#### Other current sources of Historic England advice:

- **Seeing the History in the View** (May 2011) - This document presents a method for understanding and assessing heritage significance within views that may be selected by a developer or planning authority (in consultation with Historic England) as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment of a specific development proposal.
- **Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets: some guiding principles for decision-makers** (June 2003) - The guidance promotes and encourages appropriate standards in the management of heritage assets and high quality design in new work related to them, including public spaces.
- **The Protection and Management of World Heritage Sites in England** (Historic England, 2015) - With the introduction of the NPPF and the subsequent Planning Practice Guidance, this document was cancelled and has no formal status in the planning process. However, it still contains some general information about the protection and management of World Heritage sites, especially in regard to management plans, that remains relevant and useful. This guidance note supports and amplifies the Planning Circular for England on the Protection of World Heritage Sites and highlights the importance of sustainable community strategies in protecting and sustaining World Heritage Sites.

**1**  
Introduction

**2**  
Our heritage

**3**  
Caring for  
our heritage

**4**  
Our strategy

**5**  
Delivery

Appendices

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