Victoria Park

Conservation Area

1. Character Appraisal

2. Management Guidelines

London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Adopted by Cabinet: 4th November 2009
Introduction

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

This guide has been prepared for the following purposes:

- To comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69(1) states that a conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”
- To provide a detailed appraisal of the area’s architectural and historic character.
- To provide an overview of planning policy and propose management guidelines on how this character should be preserved and enhanced in the context of appropriate ongoing change.
VICTORIA PARK CONSERVATION AREA

This map is indicative only and is not a planning document. For further information please contact the Council.

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1. Character Appraisal

Overview
The Victoria Park Conservation Area was designated in March 1977, altered October 2008 to make way for the Regent’s Canal Conservation Area and to expand Driffield Road Conservation Area. The Conservation Area includes the listed park, the formal axial road pattern to the south west and the Victorian terraces, many of which are listed.

Most of the south-eastern park boundary is clearly defined by the Hertford Union Canal and includes a narrow built up strip on the south side of the canal. The northern boundaries of the Conservation Area follow the boundary of the park itself. The south-western boundary encloses an area of Victorian domestic townscape on the south-western side of the Regent’s Canal, which extends along Approach Road and south of Old Ford Road. The Regent’s Canal is bridged by a Victorian cast-iron bridge, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The Grade II* listed Victoria Park remains one of the East End’s greatest civic assets.

History
Historically, the area to the north of the Borough was occupied by a few scattered dwellings in open fields. Of these, Bishop’s Hall (also known as Bonner’s Hall) was significant as the Manor House for the Manor of Stepney, which belonged to successive Bishops of London until 1550.

During the 18th century, the open pasture land increasingly gave way to market gardens, which supplied the City of London with fresh produce, and brick kilns supplying the construction needs of an expanding city. By the 19th century, the population of London had doubled and the fields, orchards and market gardens were rapidly urbanised as the city expanded eastwards. Overcrowding was accompanied by the poverty and squalour associated with the industrial revolution.
In 1840, a petition signed by 30,000 residents was presented to Queen Victoria, requesting that a green space be made available for the ‘healthful recreation’ of the East End. In 1841, the Government sold York House in Westminster to raise money for the acquisition of 77 hectares of land, for the purposes of laying out a park to meet these needs.

Sir James Pennethorne, a protégé of John Nash and architect of Battersea Park, prepared plans for Victoria Park and it was finally laid out in the early 1840s. By 1845, the remaining fruit trees had been removed and replaced by 5000 ornamental trees and shrubs. The park was not formally opened, but was taken over by the people in 1845. About 24 acres were added to the park in 1872, more or less bringing it to its present 217 acres.

At the time, it was hoped that the area would become fashionable with the middle classes and eventually lead to a reduction of social problems caused by poverty. This did not prove to be the case. The depression and general antipathy towards the area meant that properties were not as marketable as expected. The envisaged extension of Approach Road, through Bethnal Green Gardens to Cambridge Heath Road was never realised.

In 1845, Bonner Hall was demolished. Cross’s New Plan of London (1847) indicates that substantial development of the area had been completed by that time. Property around the park began to develop rapidly throughout Queen Victoria’s reign, establishing an attractive and coherent residential area.

**Character**

The character of the area is principally defined by Victoria Park – a fine example of the English landscape park tradition, set out with sweeping lawns, informal tree plantings and irregular lakes. The formal axial road pattern adopted on the park’s western periphery drew inspiration from the more formal terraces fringing the royal parks of West London. Roads in the area are broad and tree-lined, or fringed with the landscaped front gardens, all reflecting and contributing to the park setting.
The 19th century residential terraces have largely retained their traditional joinery details, slate roofs and stock brickwork. A uniform cornice line and surviving historic decoration, typical of the Victorian architectural style, contribute to a coherent and distinctive character in the area.

Landmark institutional buildings generally sit within their own landscaped grounds, in keeping with the open character and setting of Victoria Park. The London Chest Hospital, opened in 1855, is the most significant of these buildings, in terms of its presence in the urban environment. Other important institutional buildings include the Raines Foundation School.

The Regent’s Canal and the Hertford Union Canal run through the Victoria Park Conservation Area and many of the historic industrial buildings associated with these waterways make a significant contribution to the townscape. The hard built edge fronting the canal creates a clear sense of definition. This was acknowledged by the separate designation of the Regent’s Canal Conservation Area.

Pockets of post-war development exist where terraces have been lost and redevelopment has occurred. The largest of which is Park View Estate, constructed in the late 1950s to early 1960s. Set in its own park-like grounds, the mature plantings and overall uniformity of the estate is sensitive to the Conservation Area. The special character of the Victoria Park Conservation Area has however been compromised by past unsympathetic development.

**Land Use**

The open parkland of Victoria Park covers most of the Conservation Area. The character of the developed part of the Conservation Area is mainly residential, with some commercial, industrial and institutional uses. Small-scale local shops and public houses continue to support the residential community, generating street-level activity. This was a characteristic of the Victorian street scene.
Open Space

Victoria Park is designated as metropolitan open space and is the most significant piece of parkland in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, retaining much that is characteristic of Victorian parks and gardens.

Mature plantings and landscaping in both the public and private gardens create the high-quality open character of much of the area. Many individual trees are protected within the Victoria Park Tree Preservation Order Area.

Part of the area also falls within the Lea Valley Park, this is a linear section along the Hertford Union Canal. The Regional Park was established in 1966 by an Act of Parliament to provide specifically for the recreational and leisure needs of Londoners and people living in Essex and Hertfordshire.

Scale

The scale and density of development varies across the area. The prevailing height is 3-4 storeys for Victorian terraced housing. Generally, the development of tall buildings would be considered inappropriate, as its dominance in the residential area would impact on the quality of views within the park.

Views

The landscaping of the park creates several vistas along the axes of the park, as well as more general panoramic views across open grass. Many streets and buildings in the area are oriented towards the park, creating local views of the parklands. Elsewhere, terraces frame long views towards local landmarks.

Summary

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from the 19th century and earlier. The
character and appearance of the area, as described in this appraisal, define its special qualities. There are a few gap sites and some minor inappropriate buildings in the Conservation Area, but overall these have little impact on the qualities that led to its designation.
2. Management Guidelines

Overview

This Management Plan has been prepared in consultation with the community, to set out the Borough’s commitment to high quality management of Conservation Areas and their settings. The Development Design and Conservation Team operates within the context of the Development and Renewal Directorate of the Council, alongside Major Projects, Development Control, Strategy and Building Control.

Areas are as much about history, people, activities and places as they are about buildings and spaces. Preserving and enhancing the Borough’s architectural and historic built heritage over the next decades is of vital importance in understanding the past and allowing it to inform our present and future.

Conservation Areas also promote sustainability in its widest sense. The Council is committed to this in the Core Strategy of its Local Development Framework (LDF). The re-use of historic buildings and places is environmentally responsible as it protects the energy and resources embodied in them and combats global warming.

Consideration of appropriate amendments to the boundary of the Conservation Area, and recommendations for additions to the register of listed buildings, either the statutory or local list, will be considered by the Council.

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

Who is this document for?

This is an inclusive document which will engage with many different people and organisations. It will depend on the support of the community to achieve its objectives. It is aimed primarily at the residents, businesses, developers and others living and working in the area. The Conservation Area belongs to its residents, as well as the
whole community, and their priorities will be reflected in these documents after the consultation process.

The document has also been prepared to align conservation objectives within different parts of the council, and provide a single point of reference for the management of the area. It represents our shared commitment to conserve the special architectural and historic character, and to help manage sensitive new development and refurbishment where appropriate to successfully preserve and enhance the quality and character of the area.

Outline Guidance on Applications

Before carrying out any work in this area, you will need to apply for consent even for minor work such as replacing railings. These consents include planning, listed building and Conservation Area consent, as well as others for work such as felling trees.

When planning applications in a Conservation Area are decided, the planning authority will pay special attention to whether the character of the area is preserved or enhanced. The character of Victoria Park is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In Victoria Park, as in other Conservation Areas, planning controls are more extensive than normal. Consent is required to demolish any building, and a higher standard of detail and information is required for any application. When applying for listed building consent, please note that all parts of the building, including its interior walls, ceilings and all other internal features, are protected. Some buildings are nationally (statutorily) listed, and some are locally listed by the Borough to indicate buildings that the Borough wishes to protect.

The exact information required will vary with each application, but in general applications must include:
A clear design statement explaining the reasons behind the various architectural, masterplanning or other design decisions.

- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings
- Drawings, including construction details, produced at larger scale (eg. 1:50 or 1:20) clearly indicating the nature of the work proposed.
- Additional detail regarding materials and construction.
- Photos of the condition of existing building (including details where appropriate).

More details are available on the Tower Hamlets website. If in any doubt, the Council welcomes and encourages early requests for advice or information.

When alterations are proposed to listed buildings, complying with the building regulations can be particularly complex, and early consideration of building control issues can help identify potential problems early in the process.

**Policies Relevant to the Conservation Area and how they are Implemented:**

Any new development should have regard to national, regional and local planning policy.

- At the national level, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Tower Hamlets to designate Conservation Areas in “areas of special architectural or historic interest”, and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. National policy for planning and the historic environment is set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15).

- At the regional level, policy 4B.1 of the London Spatial Development Strategy (or London Plan) states that ‘The Mayor will seek to ensure that developments … respect London’s built heritage.’

- At the local level, the new Local Development Framework (LDF) of Tower Hamlets states that ‘the Council will protect and enhance the historic environment of the borough’. The Core Strategy states as an objective that we
Victoria Park

will ‘Protect and celebrate our history and heritage by placing these at the heart of reinventing the Hamlets to enhance local distinctiveness, character and townscape.

- Victoria Park is listed as a Historic Park, and as Metropolitan Open Land.
- Victoria Park is designated as an area of importance for nature conservation.
- The Blue Ribbon and Green Chain network run along the canals in the area.
- Routes on the Strategic Cycle Network, and the London Cycle Network Plus run through the Conservation Area from west to east.
- The triangular site between Bishop’s Road, Bonner Way and St. James’s Avenue is identified as an area which can accommodate some new development.

With particular reference to the Canal network the following policy documents should also be considered:

- The London Plan’s Blue Ribbon Network policies apply to all Londons waterways
- TCPA Policy Advice Note for Inland Waterways – produced in conjunction with British Waterways (July 2009)
- Waterways and Development Plans (BW 2003)
- Waterways for Tomorrow (DETR 2000 presently being reviewed)
- Planning a future for the Inland Waterways (Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council

Canals in London are also recognised as “Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation”.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- Bonner Hall Bridge, Regent’s Canal

Grade II*

- Baroness Burdett Coutts Drinking Fountain, Victoria Park
- Three Colts Bridge, Hertford Union Canal
- Parnell Road Bridge, Hertford Union Canal
Grade II

- 40-80 Cyprus Street (even, south side)
- 47-73 Cyprus Street (odd, north side)
- 92-124 Old Ford Road (even, south side)
- 2-24 Approach Road (even, east side)
- Parmiters School, Approach Road (east side)
- Railed Wall and Gate Piers at Parmiters School, Approach Road (east side)
- 27-45 Approach Road (odd, west side)
- Gate Piers at Bonner Hall, between park and Sewardstone Road
- St James Vicarage, St James Avenue
- Railings, Gate and Gate Piers, St James Vicarage
- 236-256 Old Ford Road (even)
- 274-302 Old Ford Road (even)
- 223 Grove Road
- Llanover Lodge, Victoria Park, Old Ford Road
- No 3 Lock Cottages, Top Lock, Hertford Union Canal
- Top Lock, Hertford Union Canal
- Stone Alcove, Victoria Park
- Stone Alcove, on east side of southern drive and south-west of Cadogan Gate

Ecclesiastical Grade C (equivalent to Grade II)

- St James The Less Church, St James's Avenue

Locally Listed Building

- 126-168 Old Ford Road (even, south side)
- 49-71 Approach Road
- Royal Cricketers Public House, 211 Old Ford Road
- Gate House, 9 Gunmakers Lane, London
- Albany Works, Gunmakers Lane
- Connaught Works, 23 Gunmakers Lane
- Morpeth Lodge, St Marks Gate
- 106-128 Cadogan Terrace (even)
- 70-102 Cadogan Terrace
Highways and Transportation Issues

The quality of the streetscape, the surface materials, street furniture and other features can all be integral parts of the character of Conservation Areas. Any work carried out should respect this historic character. Anyone involved in development which impacts on public spaces should refer to the Council’s Street Design Guide, TfL’s own Streetscape Guidance and English Heritage’s ‘Streets for All’ document. The ongoing cost of maintenance should also be considered carefully.

The Conservation Area is very large, and contains a wide variety of streetscapes. Some streetscapes are one-sided, fronting onto the park, and others are clearly defined by continuous building lines on both sides.

Works by statutory services (gas, electricity, water etc) have the potential to damage historic ground surfaces or ancient underground structures. Early consultation with the conservation team is encouraged for any works.

Opportunities and Potential for Enhancement

The park and its surroundings are worthy of the highest standards of preservation and enhancement. Original features on residential buildings such as these should be preserved where they exist and reinstated where there is evidence to suggest they have been removed.

In the south-western quarter around the Approach, expansion or intensification of non-residential uses is discouraged as this would be likely to harm the residential character of the Conservation Area.

Most houses in the area were built for single family occupation. Where buildings have been subdivided, the restoration of residential buildings to their original form as large houses would enhance the character of the area.
Within all development sites identified in the Local Development Framework, designs and masterplans should respect the character of the immediate context and the Conservation Area as a whole, as described in the Appraisal.

**Trees, Parks and Open Spaces**

The Victoria Park Restoration, Development and Management Plan was commissioned by Tower Hamlets in 1989, responding to a general decline in the condition and use of the park, and has since informed a series of improvement works implemented by Council that have dramatically transformed the area. We will aim to achieve Green Heritage Site status for these gardens.

The Conservation Area is not an inhibition to improving community facilities in the park, nor to appropriate development around Olympic sporting events. The continued maintenance and improvement of the park is important, with emphasis on renovating sports facilities and amenities.

All trees in Conservation Areas are protected, and some trees are also covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO’s). Notice must be given to the authority before works are carried out to any tree in the Conservation Area, and some works require specific permission. More information can be found in the Council’s Guide to Trees, and on the Tower Hamlets website. Carrying out works to trees without the necessary approval can be a criminal offence, and the Council welcomes early requests for advice.

**Equalities:**

Valuing diversity is one of the Council’s core values, and we take pride in being one of the most culturally rich and diverse boroughs in the UK. This core value has driven the preparation of this document and will continue to inform changes to this document in the future. These values will also inform changes to buildings and places where this document provides guidance to ensure inclusivity for all sections of the community.

This Character Appraisal and Management Guidelines will support the Council’s aims:
- A strong spirit of community and good race relations in Tower Hamlets.
- To get rid of prejudice, discrimination and victimisation within the communities we serve and our workforce
- To make sure that the borough’s communities and our workforce are not discriminated against or bullied for any reason, including reasons associated with their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religious belief.

Please contact us if you feel that this document could do more to promote equality and further the interests of the whole community.

**Publicity**

The existence of the Conservation Area will be promoted locally to raise awareness of current conservation issues and to invite contributions from the community.

**Consideration of Resources Needed to Conserve the Historic Environment:**

The most effective way to secure the historic environment is to ensure that buildings can continue to contribute to the life of the local community, preferably funding their own maintenance and refurbishment. Commercial value can be generated directly from the building, through its use as a dwelling or office, or through its role in increasing the attractiveness of the area to tourists and visitors. However, it should be noted that economic reasons alone will not in themselves justify the demolition or alteration of a building in a Conservation Area. The Council will consider grant aid to historic buildings and places.

In order to meet today’s needs without damaging the historic or architectural value of a building, a degree of flexibility, innovation and creative estate management may be required.
Ongoing Management and Monitoring Change:

To keep a record of changes within the area, dated photographic surveys of street frontages and significant buildings and views will be made every 5 years. Also, public meetings will be held every 5 years to maintain communications between all stakeholders and identify new opportunities and threats to the Conservation Area as they arise.

The Council recognises the contribution of the local community in managing Conservation Areas, and will welcome proposals to work collaboratively to monitor and manage the area.

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

Enforcement Strategy:

Appropriate enforcement, with the support of the community, is essential to protect the area’s character. The Council will take prompt action against those who carry out unauthorised works to listed buildings, or substantial or complete demolition of buildings within a Conservation Area. Unauthorised work to a listed building is a criminal offence and could result in a fine and/or imprisonment. Likewise, unauthorised substantial or complete demolition of a building within a Conservation Area is also illegal. It is therefore essential to obtain Conservation Area or Listed Building Consent before works begin.

If listed buildings are not maintained in good repair, then the Council can step in to ensure that relevant repairs are carried out. In some circumstances, the Council itself may undertake essential repairs and recover the cost from the owner. The Council has powers of compulsory purchase, if necessary to protect Listed Buildings.
The Council will enforce conservation law wherever necessary, and will consider the introduction of Article 4 Directions to remove Permitted Development Rights where appropriate.

**Further Reading and Contacts**


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

Tel: 020 7364 5009

Email: dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk

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

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

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

- English Heritage [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)
- The Georgian Group [www.georgiangroup.org.uk](http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk)
- Victorian Society [www.victorian-society.org.uk](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)
- 20th Century Society [www.c20society.org.uk](http://www.c20society.org.uk)
Listed Buildings at Risk:

Bonner Hall Bridge, Regent’s Canal

Priority – A (New Entry)
Designation – Scheduled Ancient Monument
Condition - Poor.
Ownership - Local Authority

Summary
Early Victorian bridge (1842-1845) over Regent's Canal. Arched bridge in red brick with stone voussoirs. The balustrade on the west side has collapsed taking the cast iron panels and granite setts into the canal.

Action Proposed to Secure:
- A programme of repairs to Bonner Hall Bridge is being formulated.

Any other threats to the Conservation Area
- The ‘green’ processing plant to the south-east of the Conservation Area should be developed in a way that carefully considers its setting, and should be screened if necessary.

Priorities for Action (1-5)
1. Repair of Bonner Hall Bridge.
2. Condition Survey and General improvements to historic structures in the park.
3. Introduce Article 4 Directions to remove permitted development rights.
5. General improvement to street surfaces, lighting and furniture in the area.