



Wapping Pierhead

Conservation Area

- 1. Character Appraisal**
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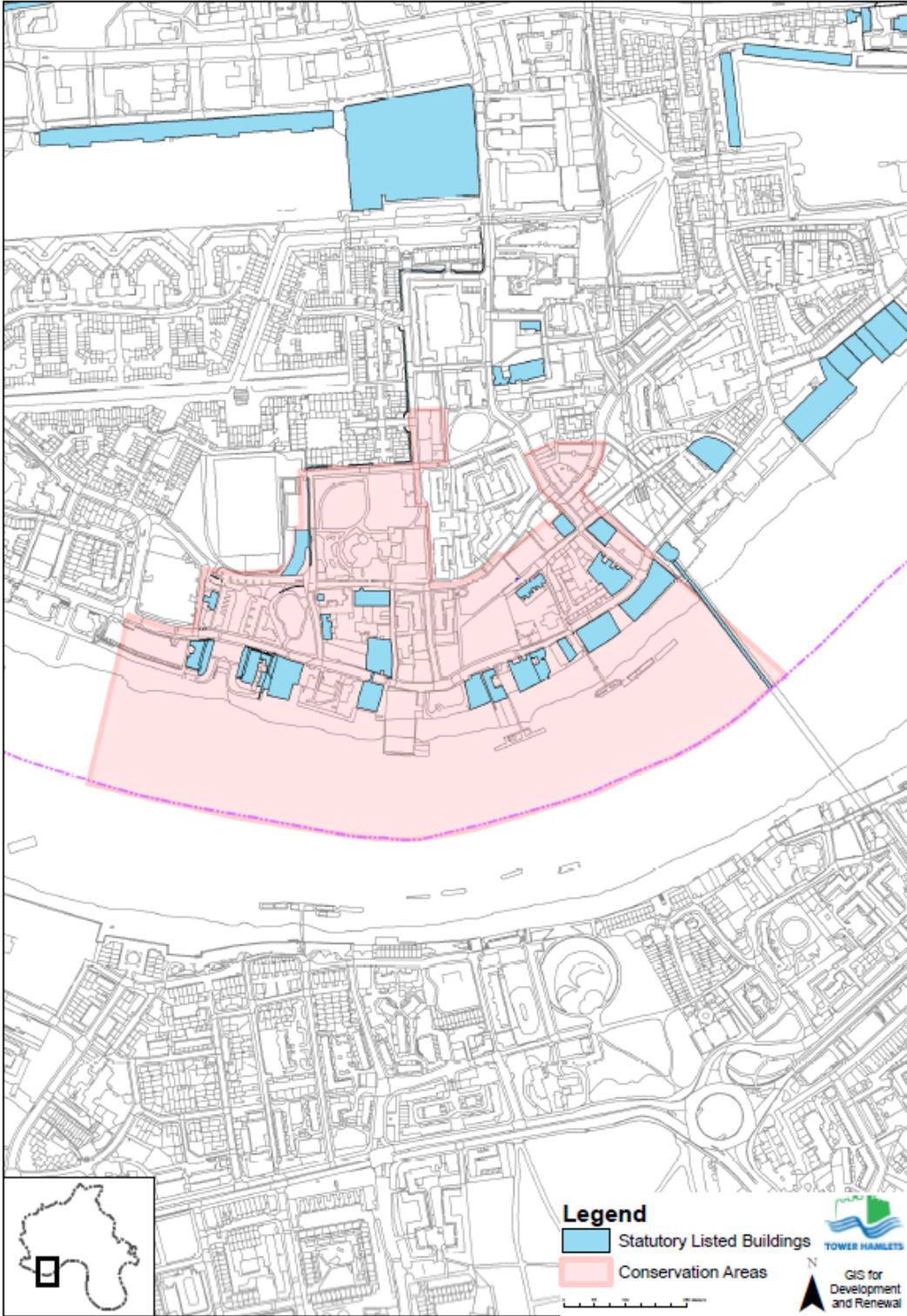
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Adopted by Cabinet: 4th November 2009

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 help those who have an interest in the area to understand the quality of the built environment and how they can protect, contribute to and enhance it.
- To provide an overview of planning policy and propose management guidelines on how this character should be preserved and enhanced in the context of appropriate ongoing change.



WAPPING PIERHEAD 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 Wapping Pierhead Conservation Area was designated in July 1969 and extended to the north in October 2008. It includes the former entrance to the London Docks. Together with St. Katharine's Dock, the West India and Millwall Docks on the Isle of Dogs and East India Docks, the Royal Docks (Albert, Victoria and George V Docks) and the Surrey Docks, this forms part of London's historic docklands.

The Conservation Area was originally designated around the historic pierhead, which is now in-filled to form private gardens. Georgian terraces were originally developed on either side of the dock entrance, but now look in to the community gardens. The Conservation Area was later extended in 1975 to include the 19th century warehouse buildings to the east, which inform the predominant character of the redeveloped Docklands area. Stretching between Wapping Pierhead to the west, through to the Wapping Underground Station, the Conservation Area includes a number of 18th century buildings, many of which are now statutorily listed.

In the 1980s, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) recognised that the conservation of the docklands heritage formed an essential part of its successful regeneration, a legacy now secured by Tower Hamlets. Designation has allowed a level of control over the area's redevelopment. This ensures the sensitive recycling of existing warehouse structures and their appropriate integration into new high-quality development, retaining much of the area's historic riverside character.

History

The London Docklands area lies predominantly within the flood plain of the lower Thames and its tributaries. Prior to the massive engineering projects of the 19th century, the area largely comprised riverside marshland and rough grazing and Wapping Lane was once called Old Gravel Lane and was a causeway that crossed what was Wapping Marsh. Historically, the Thames banks to the east of London provided ideal conditions for riverside wharves. By the 16th century, both sides of the

river were lined with wharf buildings, serving the business needs of the merchants. Towards the end of the 18th century, pressure to re-organise the port grew when the existing wharves were unable to support its demand.

Overcrowding, long delays and a lack of warehouse space led the West India merchants to push for improvements to its wharf facilities. The construction of the West India Docks brought with it a monopoly of trade, prompting competing merchants to form the London Dock Company. This secured an agreement whereby rice, wine, tobacco and brandy imports were to be unloaded at the new London Docks in Wapping for its first 21 years to cover its establishment costs. In the 1820s, many dock companies lost their import monopolies, resulting in an increased number of ships unloading their cargo into riverside wharves and warehouses. They took advantage of the 'free-water clause' (included in early Dock Acts), allowing barges to enter the dock without paying dock charges.

The western-most entrance to the London Docks in Wapping was located at Hermitage Loch. The Wapping Docks were ideally located to accommodate the needs of London's import/export trade. In 1865, the London Docks were linked to the East Smithfield goods depot of the great Eastern Railway Company.

The streets of East London and its docks suffered widespread destruction during the Second World War. The London County Council (LCC) developed plans for post-war redevelopment and by 1959, a remarkable post-war recovery had taken place. At this point, London's five dock groups handled a third of all of Britain's sea-borne trade. This economic reformation eventually entered a terminal decline of spiralling wages and the introduction of containers, ending in the relocation of the port operations to Tilbury, and the progressive closure of the entire London Dock system. The East India Docks was the first to close. In the mid 1970s, the Greater London Council produced a Strategic Plan for the Docklands, identifying residential redevelopment areas.

Established in 1980 to manage the regeneration of the East End, the LDDC recognised the value of using conservation as a vehicle for change. Having achieved the majority of its targets in preserving the unique history and character of the

Docklands, in 1998, the LDDC handed back responsibility for London's Docklands to the local authorities.

Character

The Dock waterways and their connections with the river Thames provide the most significant unifying theme for the Docklands today. The river walls, dock entrances, jetties, piles and timber whalings survive as evidence of the unique history of London's dockland industry, leaving the Borough with a distinctive architectural waterside legacy to protect.

Located in an area which encompasses several historic settlements, most of the buildings and physical features existing today relate to the 19th century development of the London Docks and St Katherine's Docks. These were built on former marshland drained behind an artificial wall of earth or dyke alongside the river. By the end of the 16th century, there were wharves and a road along the wall. The area is of considerable historic and townscape importance and its proximity to the Thames presents additional challenges. These include pedestrian access to the riverfront, and the establishment of linkages from St Katherine's Dock to east of the Borough.

Constructed from the beginning of the 19th century, the docks were equipped with large bonded warehouses, built following the Customs Consolidation Act of 1853. The original features and historic character of these warehouses make the riverside area attractive and distinct.

Many of the Grade II listed warehouses have been successfully redeveloped as residential apartments, retaining their original, significant features. Oliver's Wharf, unusual for its Victorian Gothic Revival style, was the first warehouse to be redeveloped in Wapping. The converted warehouses at Oliver's Wharf, St John's Wharf, Old Aberdeen Wharf and Gun Wharves serve as distinctive reminders of the commercial activity which characterised this part of the Victorian riverside. Of particular interest are the two lattice girder gangways from the former St John's Wharf

to its former landside warehouses, which have been converted to residential use and renamed Dundee Court.

Most of the early housing in the docklands dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries has been listed. One of the finest surviving residential developments falls within the Conservation Area. The two terraces either side of the former entrance to the London Dock at Wapping Pierhead were designed by Daniel Alexander in 1811. They combine the traditional domestic Georgian style with the more austere warehouse aesthetic.

Scandrett Street, formerly known as Church Street, separates St. John of Wapping Church from its burial grounds and contains some of the oldest surviving buildings in the area. The tower of St John's Church, the adjacent 1760 school buildings and St Patrick's Church to the rear, built in 1879 from the 'penny a week contributions' of its largely Irish congregation, are now listed buildings.

The Wapping Pierhead Conservation Area was designated in order to protect the unique visual and townscape qualities of an area of considerable historical interest. The variety of statutorily listed residential, ecclesiastical, commercial and industrial premises connected with the redundant London Docks, give an insight into the history of the development of East London. During the rapid change in the 1970s, the control of demolition and subsequent protection of the street pattern has allowed a degree of historical continuity to be preserved.

Land Use

The construction of the enclosed London Docks displaced a large section of the parish of St John's, leaving the remaining houses overcrowded, eventually deteriorating into slums. An area between the London Docks and Wapping High Street was cleared in 1926 for LCC flats, including some modest but handsome 18th and 19th century houses. The area fell largely into industrial use with the progressive closure of the Docks in the 1960s. The main land area is now residential, with small commercial interests in the area. This provides valuable street-level activity in a dramatically

transformed area. The Town of Ramsgate and the Captain Kidd public houses provide a reminder of the former activity which characterised Wapping High Street. This was once the location of 36 pubs, catering for the sailors and dockers of the shipping industry.

The river remains a dynamic environment within the borough and is well used in terms of recreational use and more particularly operational moorings for commercial vessels and some houseboats.

Open Spaces

Wapping Pierhead gardens were developed in the 1960s following the filling-in of the Pierhead. Later declared a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) Area, many of the mature plantings are subject to TPOs. Intersected by Wapping High Street, the riverside gardens provide visual relief from the enclosed corridor of warehouse buildings to the east.

Wapping Gardens, formerly known as Wapping Recreation Ground, was formed on the site of slum clearances in 1886, and was one of the first applications under provisions of the Artisan's and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act 1875. Laid out by the Metropolitan Board of Works, the park was opened to the public in June 1891.

St. John's Churchyard has had many of its gravestones conserved and relocated to the yard's perimeter walls. The open character provides a 'village green' appearance to this section of the Conservation Area, enclosed by part of the London Dock Wall. A further small open space is found along Prusom Street, behind buildings to the east side of Wapping Lane. It provides a village scale character behind the vernacular character of, no 89-93 Wapping Lane and contains mature trees.

Historic landscaping materials and details contribute to the character of the Conservation Area and should be maintained and enhanced. A number of stone bollards, lamp standards, river steps and cobbled street surfaces are considered

significant for their contribution to the character and ambience of one London's finest 19th century riverside townscapes.

Scale

The scale of townscape along Wapping High Street is defined by the 4-5 storey warehouse buildings, juxtaposed against the smaller historic pubs and residential terraces, often with narrow steps through to the river. The piece-meal redevelopment of the area has resulted in a range of building heights, adding to the architectural texture and interest of the area.

Views

There is a short riverside walk which runs along the front of Capital Wharf, providing good views of Tower Bridge and across to Shad Thames. This leads onto Wapping High Street, forming the remainder of the Thames Walk in Wapping. Glimpses of the river are afforded through gaps between the warehouse buildings which line the river's edge. The stairs historically leading to the river banks remain integral to the character and history of the area.

Constructed in 1756, the distinctive tower of St John's Church was designed by Joel Johnson, intended to be seen from the river. The tower stands as a significant historic landmark in the Conservation Area, as it is the only element of the 18th century church building to have survived the Blitz. Existing views from the river's south bank towards the tower should be maintained.

The views down Wapping High Street from outside Wapping Pierhead or from Gun Wharf are historically important.

Summary

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history, ancient monument and significant architecture, dating from the 18th 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 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.

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 Wapping Pierhead is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In Wapping Pierhead, 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 wider scale, the western fringe of the area next to the river falls within the strategic view from Greenwich Park to St Pauls Cathedral. This is within the strategic views consultation area.
- At the local level, the new Local Development Framework (LDF) of Tower Hamlets states that ‘the Council will protect and enhance the historic environment of the borough’. The Core Strategy states as an objective that we

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

- Wapping Pierhead is an identified sub-area in the City Fringe Area Action Plan. This allocates the area south of Green Bank for mixed-use development and provides design principles for development in the area. These principles include creating development with active street frontages and encouraging the protection of fine-grained street patterns that promote connectivity.
- The riverfront itself is part of the Blue Ribbon network, and also a site of importance for nature conservation and archaeology.
- A triangular site at Knighton St, just outside the Conservation Area, has been identified as a residential development site.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Grade II

- Tower Buildings, Brewhouse Lane
- 2 Scandrett Street
- 4 Scandrett Street
- 6 Scandrett Street
- 8 Scandrett Street
- St Johns Court, 12 Scandrett Street
- 1-4 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 5 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 6 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 7 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 8 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 9 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 10 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 11 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 12 Pierhead, Wapping High Street

- 13 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 14 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 45 Pierhead, Wapping High Street
- 4 Bollards (1 outside No 4 Wapping Pier Head, 3 on opposite side of Wapping High Street flanking the entrance to Hermitage Wall)
- Wapping Old Stairs (Stairs and flagged passage from Wapping High Street)
- 62 Wapping High Street
- Olivers Wharf, 64 Wapping High Street
- Stone Bollards outside No 10 Wapping Pier Head
- St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Green Bank (south side)
- Dundee Court, 73 Wapping High Street
- St Thomas Wharf, 78 Wapping High Street
- Execution Dock House, 80 Wapping High Street
- Old Dock Wall
- Aberdeen Wharf, 94 Wapping High Street
- Wapping Police Station, 98-102 Wapping High Street
- St Johns Wharf, 104-106 Wapping High Street
- 108 Wapping High Street
- 110 Wapping High Street
- 112 Wapping High Street
- 118-120 Wapping High Street
- 78-80 Wapping Lane
- Gun Place, 86 Wapping Lane
- 105 Wapping Lane
- Gun Wharf, 124-130 Wapping High Street

Locally Listed Building

- Wapping Sports Centre, 20 Tench Street

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.

Wapping High Street dates from the 16th century, and used to service the trading industry along the river. New development should respect this island character and enhance it where possible.

The maritime character of this Conservation Area is particularly important. The use of the river for operational moorings for commercial vessels is a long-standing activity which contributes positively to the overall character of the Conservation Area.

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 continuing demand for residential accommodation, and the improved accessibility that will follow the extension to the East London Line, present ongoing opportunities for maintaining historic buildings in economic use.

A large number of historic buildings have already been successfully converted into residential accommodation. However, the unused buildings on Reardon Path have potential for sensitive redevelopment.

Some railings around trees and benches are in need of maintenance and repair. Also, improvements could be made to the street furniture – in particular lighting and

signage. Consideration should be given to fixing lighting to buildings where appropriate to avoid unnecessary posts in the street.

The listed terraces and buildings of the Pierhead itself form an exceptional group - arguably the finest example of historic residential terraced housing in the Borough – and any works to these buildings should respect their architectural and historic importance.

Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

The open spaces in the Conservation Area add to the community and character of the area – particularly the children’s play area in Wapping Gardens and the riverside view in Waterside gardens.

New gardens were created by the infill of the Pierhead itself. Although these are private gardens, they are part of an exceptional piece of townscape which everyone benefits from when walking past.

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.

The Conservation Area boundary extends to the centre of the Thames, and development should have regard to the quality and composition of long views of the area from the river.

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 Buildings of England (London 5: East). Cherry, O'Brien and Pevsner.
- Docklands Heritage. LDDC 1989.

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:

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| English Heritage | www.english-heritage.org.uk |
| The Georgian Group | www.georgiangroup.org.uk |
| Victorian Society | www.victorian-society.org.uk |
| 20 th Century Society | www.c20society.org.uk |
| Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings | www.spab.org.uk |

Listed Buildings at Risk:

At this time we are not aware of any listed buildings at risk in the Conservation Area.

Any other threats to the Conservation Area

- The Conservation Area is predominantly made up of low-medium rise brick buildings, which are an important element of its character. The introduction of taller, curtain-walled buildings would harm its special quality.

Priorities for Action (1-5)

1. Public access to the River Thames should be improved and made safe.
2. Improve the general visitor environment and promote tourism.
3. Prepare Stakeholder's Guide with detailed design guidance.
4. Complete audit of surviving historic dock equipment and fixtures.
5. Prepare audit and implement general improvements to street environment.