



West India Dock

Conservation Area

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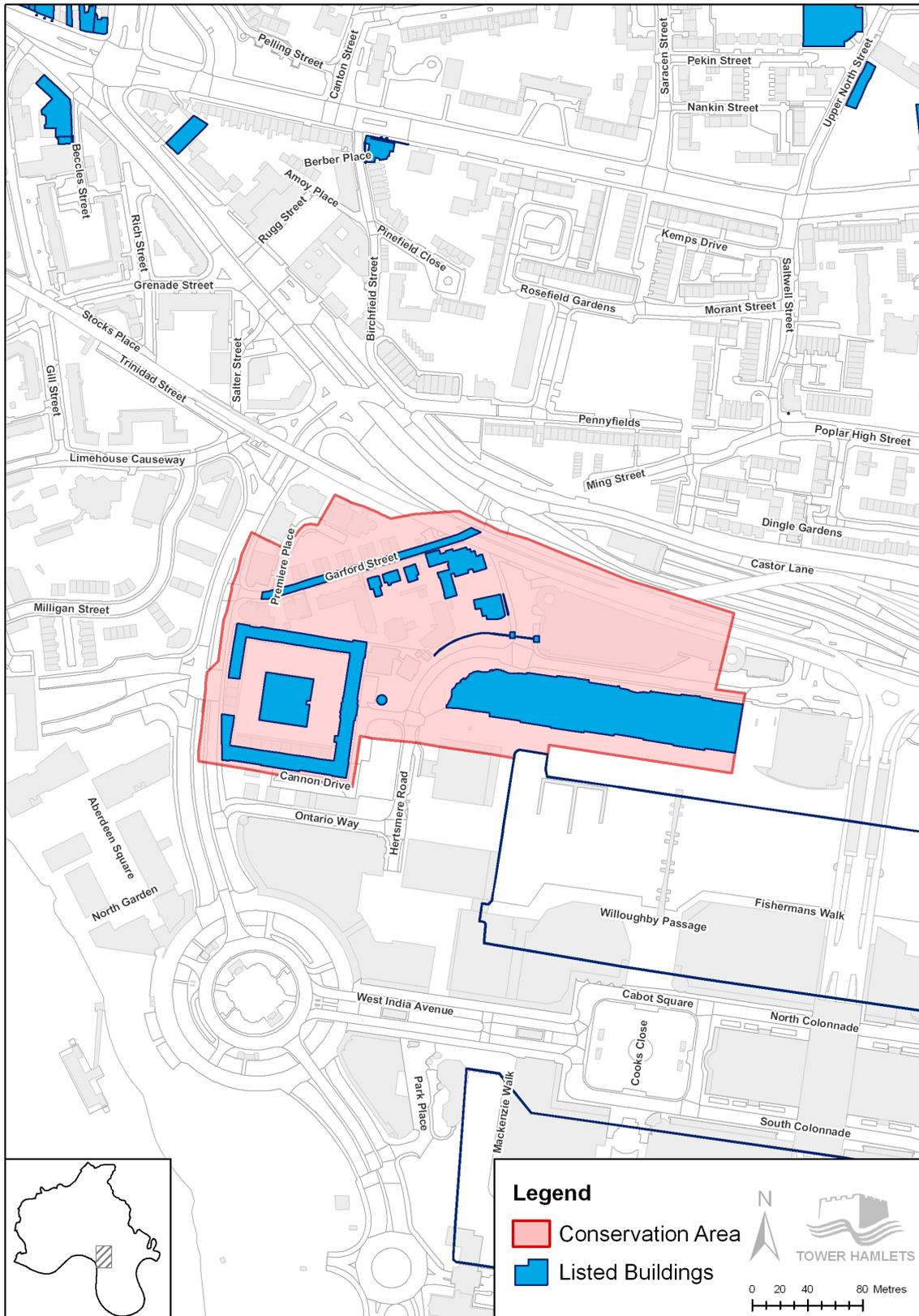
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Adopted by Cabinet: 7th March 2007

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.



WEST INDIA DOCK 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 West India Dock Conservation Area was designated in November 1982 around the north-west corner of the former West India Docks, historically one of London's finest secure dock systems. The remaining North Quay warehouses and the historic buildings located around the main dock entrance are the focus of this area. These are the only significant concentration of West India Dock buildings to have survived the Blitz.

History

The small medieval hamlets to the east of the Tower of London, once dependent on milling, agriculture and fishing, grew into maritime villages during the 16th century.

The business needs of London's merchants were historically serviced from the banks of the Thames. From the early 15th century, small slipways and wharves lined the river for the building, repair and servicing of ships trading with the Port of London. These operations expanded during the 16th and 17th centuries with the growth of shipbuilding. The associated increase in trade coupled with inadequate riverside facilities led to delays in unloading of ships and the theft of unsecured cargoes piled on quays. Towards the end of the 18th century, the West India merchants began a push for the construction of secure, enclosed docks, devoted to the valuable cargoes of the West India Trade.

The project began with the purchase of land on the Isle of Dogs. Here, the marshy soil meant that drainage & flood prevention would be expensive, and the land was therefore cheaper to acquire, and had been one of the last areas in the Borough to be developed. The West India Docks were the first cargo docks to be built in the Port of London.

The West India Dock Act (1799) initiated the construction of the two large rectangular docks for the West India Company in 1802. The Act also required all rum, coffee and

sugar to be unloaded in the West India Dock for 21 years following its construction, and this monopoly over charges would allow the cost of the docks to be recouped.

The West India Docks were the largest of their kind in London at the time, and marked a new era in dock construction. They were lined by operationally efficient, 6-storey warehouses and enclosed within high perimeter walls for security. Constructed between 1800-3, these nine warehouses (of which only two remain) once formed a continuous line for over half a mile along the north quay of the Import Dock, forming an impressive composition.

At the West India Docks, the warehouses were designed by Gwilt & Sons – architects for the West India Dock Company. The scheme was originally drawn up by George Dance, Clerk of City Works, for the Isle of Dogs redevelopment (1797) based on a scheme devised for Wapping by Ralph Walker. Walker, a former captain in the West India trade, had developed the idea of a continuous wall of quay-side warehouses.

The warehouses on the north quay of the Import Dock housed sugar and rum, while the south quay was devoted to rum and mahogany. In order to manage customs clearance at the dock, the Board of Excise had insisted on the construction of two separate dock basins, with independent access from each dock to the river. The Import Dock was opened in 1802, and the Export Dock in 1807, with all associated works completed by 1809. Designed by William Jessop, the elegant quay walls of the West India Docks formed the model for others to follow. The Millwall Basins, further south on the Isle of Dogs, were built between 1867-8 to service the bulkier commodities of grain and timber.

Changes in port practices began with the arrival of the railway in 1851 and the introduction of hydraulic machinery in 1854-5. The opening of the Royal Victoria Dock in 1855, and the Royal Albert Dock in 1880, brought with them increasing competition, forcing the West India Company to build additional docks further east in Tilbury (1886) and to join forces with the London and St Katherine Dock Co. in 1888.

The West India Docks reached their last incarnation in the 1920s, having been heavily re-modelled to accommodate larger ships following the first world war. They continued to flourish, along with the Millwall Docks, until the Second World War bombings destroyed significant areas.

A post-war recovery saw London's five docks handling a third of Britain's seaborne trade, however changes in cargo-handing practices finally rendered the East End's docks uneconomical. Port facilities were relocated to container ports in Tilbury, marking the progressive closure of the whole of the London dock system. The closure of the docks resulted in significant job losses for the local community and left many acres of derelict land. This landscape provided the catalyst for the creation of a Strategic Plan by the Greater London Council (GLC), designed to encourage job creation and housing choice.

The regeneration of London's Docklands was entrusted to the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in 1981, and responsibility was handed back to Tower Hamlets by the LDDC in 1998.

Character

The West India Dock & Millwall Basins survive as reminders of the most dominant elements of London's great enclosed docks, defining the landscape of the Isle of Dogs. Despite being dwarfed by the recent commercial development at Canary Wharf, the Import Dock provides an impressive forecourt to the surviving Grade I listed Gwilt Warehouses, which represent the last of the multi-storey dock warehouses of the late Georgian period in London. The Dock buildings themselves are the most significant in the Conservation Area, and are characterized by their use of stock brick and stone dressings in a restrained, austere classical style.

Commercial Road, north of the Conservation Area, was constructed in 1806 to link the West India Docks with the City, and two of the original gate piers to the former Commercial Road Dock entrance survive as remnants of the original dock enclosure. The listed Excise Office, (1807-9) now known as the Dockmaster's House, was once

mirrored by a twin building. The two originally framed the entrance to the docks, but the twin building was demolished for the construction of the London and Blackwall railway.

The northern edge of the dock area was originally bounded by a ditch, a low-railed wall and a high brick wall partly formed by the northern façade of the North Quay warehouses. The garden boundary to the Dockmaster's House is a restored section of the outer dock wall, otherwise dismantled in 1928-9, and the slope down to the rear garden represents the historic ditch which once surrounded the perimeter wall.

Garford Street was created in 1807 following the opening of the docks. The southern side was lined by a row of constable's cottages (1802) designed by John Rennie as two pairs and a stand-alone cottage for the sergeant. They lived in the docks, as did the Dockmasters, to ensure constant supervision of the premises. The houses were simple, robust, small-scale residential buildings, which were emulated by more recent residential development on the other side of the road. The rear gardens of the Garford Street constable's offices and the Dockmaster's House are essential to the setting of the buildings and are protected by the curtilage of the listing.

Riverside House (1887-8) was originally built as the Scandinavian Seaman's Temperance Home. The later, Queen-Anne styled 'Grieg House' (1902-3), was constructed for the officers and is now Grade II listed.

To the west of the dock entrance were the Cannon Workshops – a large quadrangle of historic workshops with the Cooperage at the centre. These buildings are characterized by their simplicity, proportions and low-rise scale, as well as quality of detailing. The carriage arch in the centre of the east elevation is an important feature, built from yellow stock brick with Portland stone dressings. They were some of the first buildings in docklands to be regenerated in 1980-3.

Recent development in the area has not always been sympathetic to the historic importance of the area. The multi-storey car park and cinema presents a bleak elevation to Hertsmere Road, in stark contrast to the quality of the Grade I listed

warehouses opposite. Also, the office development at Hertsmere House does not make a positive contribution to the area. The bulky eaves, flush windows and shrub planting at the front are uncharacteristic of the area. Some recent development has been better, for example the striking design of the new floating footbridge, whose lightness and colour make it a successful accessory to the heavier buildings.

Land Use

Until the 1960s, the docks and their associated management, security, transport and workshop functions had been the dominant land use in the area.

The redevelopment of other historic buildings in the Conservation Area has left an interesting mix of commercial, community, residential, office and leisure use. The row of leisure uses along the waterfront has been successful. The high-quality redevelopment of historic buildings included the sensitive conversion of 'The Gwilts' West India Dock Warehouses in 1997, providing a home for the Museum of Docklands.

Open Spaces

The principal public open space in the Conservation Area lies between the North Quay warehouses and the Import Dock. This area has been successful as a south-facing, outdoor seating area for the bars and other leisure uses in the ground floor of the warehouses.

The courtyard within the old Cannon workshops is a valuable open space. Although the uses have changed, its scale and proportions are reminders of the historic townscape.

Scale

Although compromised in recent years by encroaching development of an inappropriate scale, both within and adjacent to the Conservation Area, the dock area is still characterised by the surviving 6-storey historic buildings. The residential

buildings are generally no more than 2-3 storeys, although some are higher in the north-west corner of the site.

The former Cannon workshops are single-storey. The historic character of the courtyard depends on this low rise scale.

The northern boundary of the Conservation Area is defined by the viaduct constructed for the London-Blackwall Railway and contributes to the sense of enclosure and separation from the surrounding development.

Views

Views across the West India Dock towards the warehouse buildings at the north-west of the dock are some of the most important in the area, as they preserve the sense of scale of the historic dock development. Views in and out of the former Cannon Workshops are important as its architecture and proportions retain much of the original character of the area.

Views across the rear garden of the Dockmaster's House towards Grieg House, otherwise hidden from view at ground level by surrounding buildings, offer some respite from the intensely developed urban landscape of the docklands area.

Summary

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from the 18th century. 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 Policy CP3 of 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 West India Dock is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In West India Dock, 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’. This is described in detail in policy CP49 of the Core Strategy of the LDF. In addition, applicants should note policy CP46 to ensure that access issues are properly addressed in work carried out in a Conservation Area.

- The whole Conservation Area is within the Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan, and the area to the south and east of Hertsmere Road lies within the area designated as a major centre.
- The Limehouse Link tunnel, designated as a strategic route, runs underneath the north-west corner of the area.
- The frontage of the main range of historic warehouses is designated as a 'secondary frontage' within the major centre. Hertsmere House, just outside the Conservation Area, is identified as a development site.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Grade I

- Warehouse and General Offices at Western end of North Quay (including no.4, the corner building)
- West India Dock wall

Grade II

- Railings to West of main gate at West India Dock and the gate itself (two stone piers)
- Dockmasters House, 1 Hertsmere Road and the wall in front
- 10-12 Garford Street
- 14 Garford Street
- 16-18 Garford Street
- Salvation Army Hostel, 20 Garford Street
- Monument in front of the East gate to Cannon workshops
- 23-61 Cannon Workshops, 3 Cannon Drive
- 63-71 Cannon Workshops, 3 Cannon Drive
- 102-104 Cannon Workshops, 3 Cannon Drive
- 109-128 Cannon Workshops, 3 Cannon Drive
- 135-167 Cannon Workshops, 3 Cannon Drive
- 150 Cannon Workshops, 3 Cannon Drive

- 182 Cannon Workshops, 3 Cannon Drive

Locally Listed

- The road surface of Garford 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.

There are a wide variety of streets in this area. On the west side, Westferry Road is a major route carrying traffic in and out of the Isle of Dogs and Canary Wharf. Within the area, Hertsmere Road is an important access route to the main buildings in the area. Garford St and Premiere Place are two quieter residential streets.

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

Any new development or refurbishment should not harm the character of the area, as described in the Appraisal. In the north-west corner, developments should respect the low-rise, generally residential character of the area, although mixed-use is identified in the area action plan. In particular, views from inside the courtyard of the historic Cannon works should not be harmed by tall buildings.

The adjacent development site on Hertsmere House has been identified as a development site. Any new proposals for this site should respect the historic and

architectural significance of the dock warehouses, and include detailed proposals for a high quality public realm at ground level.

The car park building on Hertsmere Road presents a fairly dead frontage to Hertsmere Road. Options for improving the quality of this frontage should be investigated.

The frontage to Westferry Road on the west side of the area is poor quality. Options should be investigated for improving this frontage.

Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

There are no significant parks in this Conservation Area, although urban trees form an important part of the setting of many listed buildings. The most important open space is the wide promenade along the northern edge of the dock itself.

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 Survey of London, volume 43: Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs.
- 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:

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

- This area has benefited from the introduction of numerous bar, café and restaurant uses, which have produced a vibrant atmosphere. However, the

introduction of some visual street clutter has come with this, which needs to be addressed.

Priorities for Action (1-5)

1. Produce Stakeholder's Guide.
2. Encourage reinstatement of historic street surfaces, particularly on Hertsmere Rd.
3. Prepare and implement a strategy for greening the environment.
4. Ensure that future developments in the area respect the Grade I listed buildings.
5. Remove street clutter.