



# York Square

## Conservation Area

### 1. Character Appraisal

### 2. Management Guidelines

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Adopted by Cabinet: 4th November 2009

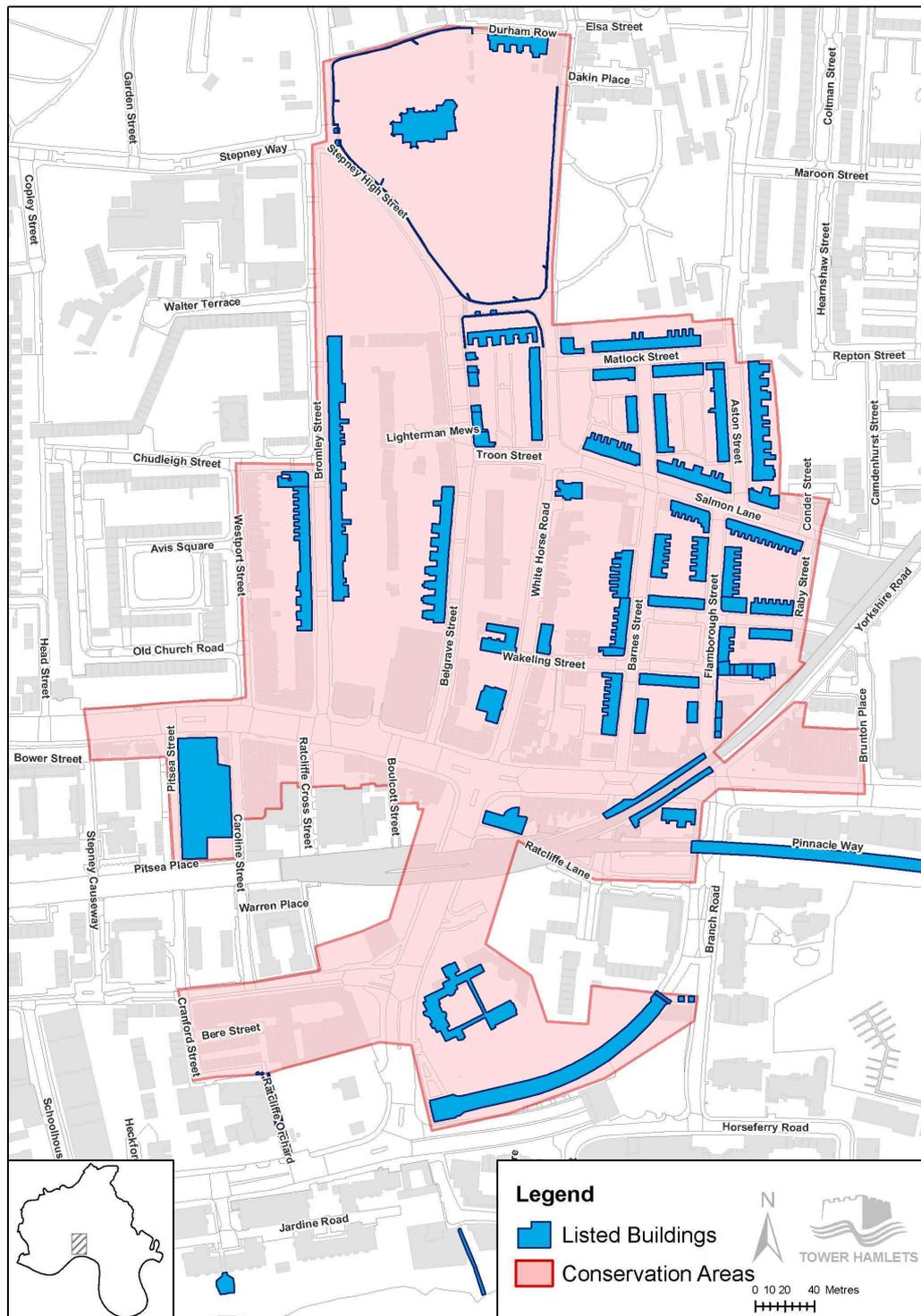
Link to and adoption of Addendum 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016

## 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.



**YORK SQUARE 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 York Square Conservation Area was designated in January 1973, extended October 2008. The Conservation Area has an irregular boundary. Its northern boundary reaches to Durham Row and terraces facing Matlock Street. It includes and goes beyond Commercial Road to the south, along Butcher Row towards the Limehouse Link. The western boundary is defined by 474 Commercial Road and Chalkwell House, just west of Pitsea Street. The eastern boundary comprises terraces facing Aston Street, Raby Street and Brunton Place.

The purpose of designating the York Square Conservation Area was to protect the architectural integrity of the Mercer's Estate, the diverse concentration of historic buildings in around Commercial Road, and along Butcher Row. It also protects public open space and the high quality townscape around the Grade I listed Parish Church of St Dunstan and All Saints and its churchyard, which forms the northern boundary of the Conservation Area, and St James's Gardens, which lies between the Grade II\* Listed St Katherine's Foundation and Rotherhithe Tunnel.

## History

The Parish Church of St Dunstan and All Saints is Saxon in origin with many later medieval additions and modifications. It is one of the most important parish churches in England. It was rebuilt in 952 after Viking raids by St Dunstan who was by then Archbishop of Canterbury and played a key role in forming the character of England. John Collett was also Rector of this Church during 16<sup>th</sup> Century. He was the founder of the St Paul's School and leader of the English School of Philosophy, which began in Florence under Ficino. Colletts friend's included Erasmus, Calvin and Zwingli, all of whom visited him in England. Up until 1906, the church's graves carried the greatest collection of elegies of any parish church of England. It also has literary connections including with the Shakespeare family, whose arms are found within the church.

The church was the Parish Church of the Parish of St Dunstan and Stebenheath, which before 1800 comprised mainly of small settlements and open heath. The parish included most of the present day Borough of Tower Hamlets and some of present day Hackney before it was subdivided into the various Hamlets under the jurisdiction of the Constable of the Tower of London. The area around Butcher Row was once a focus for the Hamlet of Ratcliffe. However, a fire wiped out half of Butcher Row in 1794. The Grade II\* Listed Royal Foundation of St Katherine dates from that time and includes relics from earlier buildings in some of the newer buildings on site.

The area continued to subdivide to accommodate the rush of workers who moved to work in the dock areas from 1800-70 to form what is now known as the East End of London. It became the present day Borough of Tower Hamlets in 1965 after the amalgamation of the Metropolitan Boroughs of Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney.

During the 18th century, much of the heath in this area was laid out as market gardens that supplied markets in London. Most of the land was owned by the Mercers Company, the Guild for dealers in textile fabrics. This is why the 19<sup>th</sup> Century development at York Square area is often referred to as Mercer's Estate. Stowe's map of 1755 shows the Parish of St Dunstan and All Saints in very much the same setting as today, with the Hamlet of Mile End Old Town to the north and the Hamlet of Ratcliffe to the south; its boundary running down Barnes Street.

White Horse Road was known as Cliff Street from the 14th to 16th centuries. It was the medieval route from Ratcliffe to St Dunstan's Church. By the 17th century, housing was developed both sides of White Horse Road when it became a village street and its name was changed to White Hart Street.

London was expanding rapidly by the early 19th century. The docks were being built at this time and Commercial Road was opened in 1810. It linked the docks with the City of London. Detailed plans were drawn up to develop the area immediately to the north of this new road in 1823 by a surveyor called George Smith. The pace of building was swift and the development was substantially complete by 1828.

The largest houses were to be built on Commercial Road itself, whilst a spacious square (later named York Square) was positioned as a focal point for a grid of streets to be laid out towards the medieval Parish Church of St. Dunstan and All Saints, where the residential areas open out into the grounds of the Parish Church. Salmon Lane is an exception to the 1823 grid pattern. This is because it is an ancient country lane that provided access to Limehouse. It contains buildings constructed at various times during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and is altered to the west by Troon Street.

The builders did not adhere strictly to George Smith's plans. The demand for houses was such that they were able to construct smaller houses to maximise their profits. Despite this, the development was laid out to enlightened planning principles, with wide streets, squares and central gardens, forming a spacious and airy streetscene that contrasts with some of the high density areas being developed closer to the City.

The former Limehouse District Board of Works Offices was constructed between 1862-4. It was funded by the Metropolitan Management Act of 1855, which gave parishes power to manage rates and drainage. The office was constructed by C.R Dunch (surveyor) at No.43 White Horse Road. It involved the demolition of 6 freehold houses.

The terraces surrounding York Square were acquired by the GLC in 1973 and were among the first to be renovated by the Council.

### **Character**

York Square Conservation Area was constructed to a consistent Regency design which was typical of the area. It consists mainly of a grid of two storey terraced houses with butterfly roofs and front parapets. Many of these are Grade II listed. Many of the terraces in the York Square area open directly onto the street. Terraces set back from the street were originally enclosed by cast iron railings, set in a stone plinth and are important to the character and appearance of the street. Some of the surfaces have York Stone paving

Streets are characterised by the homogenous layout of small scale streets and uniform modest terraces of narrow, flat fronted houses and the grid street pattern focuses upon York Square. The plan incorporated a hierarchy of streets and some terraces within York Square itself were built with a mansard storey, giving these properties greater prominence and indicating their relative importance within the hierarchy of roads in the Mercers estate. This is an original uniform treatment and thus the homogeneity is both intended and witnessed on the north and south sides of York Square. The largest houses were on Commercial Road, the more modest on local side streets.

The more irregular and varied development on White Horse Road reflects its development over time as a street that precedes the 1823 grid design. Unique buildings on the road include the locally listed White Horse Pub (now the White Swan) on the intersection of Commercial Road and Butcher Row and in the former Limehouse District Board of Works Offices. The locally listed Works Office with two storey plus basement was conceived on a generous scale, but is of moderate size and contains relatively few rooms. It has an elaborate stuccoed, Italianate façade to the street, with the rear of the building plain. In 1994, the building was converted to the Half Moon Youth Theatre but with a much damaged interior. The former two storey Hamlet of Ratcliffe School, founded in 1710, also locally listed, stands just beyond. The locally listed Vicarage stands on the corner with Salmon Lane.

Doors and windows are set in simple brick openings, with fine gauged brick arches above. The architecture relies on simple, well-balanced proportions and regularity. The earlier terraces are constructed entirely in brick, and the later ones were decorated with stucco mouldings.

Original shop fronts within the Conservation Area, typical of the late 19th century, survive at 84 and 88 White Horse Road, 14 Salmon Road, 8 Flamborough Street and 17 Barnes Street. These were constructed of timber and painted, with many having attractive moulded details, adding character and individuality to the area.

To the east, Belgrave and Bromley Streets retain both Grade II and locally listed terraces with stuccoed lower storeys built in 1829-43.

St Dunstan and All Saints Church is an important Saxon Parish Church with commanding medieval additions that reveal its importance over time. A fire gutted the interior of the church in 1901 and consequently, new east facing windows and a south aisle were restored. Further repairs were made after war damage.

Commercial Road was constructed in 1810 and land on either side was sold to speculative builders. This resulted in piecemeal development over time that retains a period character but contrasts with the highly planned grid that characterises other parts of the Conservation Area. The road is now characterised by commercial premises at ground floor with mainly residential uses at upper floors.

Limehouse station is within the Conservation Area to the south of Commercial Road. The station was opened 1840 as part of the London and Blackwall Railway. The station has been previously known as Stepney, Stepney Junction and later Stepney East station. Another station some distance to the east on the London and Blackwall Railway, open between 1840 and 1926, had previously been called Limehouse. The main route from Fenchurch Street to Shoeburyness via Basildon crosses Commercial Road just after Limehouse Station and its railway bridge is a locally listed structure. It was originally built between 1847 and 1849 in a joint venture between the London and Blackwall Railway and the Eastern Counties Railway.

Beneath the locally listed bridge stands No's 582-8 Brunswick Terrace, which form a handsome group of four (originally seven), three storey, Grade II listed houses dating from 1820-30, complete with Greek Doric columns. They represent some of the grandest terraces to survive on Commercial Road. Also located on the southern side of Commercial Road is the well preserved, former Troxy cinema, built in 1931-3 by George Coles and Arthur Roberts. It was built as a lavish auditorium for 3000 people in French Art Deco style; it is Grade II listed and presents a tripartite front, with strong horizontal patterning.

Butcher Row, to the south of the railway line, contains a fine group of significant buildings, and the open space and mature trees of St James's Gardens, which abut the Grade II Listed Limehouse Link and leads across a foot and cycle bridge towards

the Limehouse Basin. It has three main building groups. The Grade II\* Listed Royal Foundation of St Katherine, constructed after the fire of 1794 is a reminder of the earlier hamlet of Ratcliffe. Thames House is a grand 1919-22 factory, now studios, with baroque features. Opposite Thames House is, no 571 Butcher Row, which is the forlorn relics of the Ratcliffe Baths of 1900, with its mullioned windows to a red brick gabled block. The gap sites are an opportunity to re-knit these historic buildings into a coherent streetscene and reconnect them to the rest of the Conservation Area with buildings of an appropriate scale and character.

### **Land Use**

The Conservation Area is predominantly residential with dispersed ancillary commercial uses, notably corner public houses at 17 Barnes Street, 49 Bromley Street, 1 Durham Row, 8 Flamborough Street and 94 White Horse Road. There is a local shopping parade at the southern end of White Horse Road and more diverse uses exist off Commercial Road.

### **Scale**

In the core residential streets of the York Square Conservation Area, development is almost universally in terraced form. The terraces are of two storeys with a strong horizontal emphasis. Some have basements and a few have mansard storeys above roof level. Each terrace has a coherent original rear elevation, which contribute to the overall character of the area, as viewed from rear gardens. Many have rear additions. These retain significant side returns because the rear additions cover just half of the width of each property. The rear additions are primarily single-storey, with some terraces having two-storey rear additions. They are mono-pitch, with some characterised by roofs that slope away from the main building and others have roofs that replicate the roof pitch of the butterfly roofs above.

There are some larger buildings on White Horse Road, although these are usually grouped in rows of buildings with a common roof or parapet line. The scale increases to 3-4 storeys on Commercial Road, in keeping with the character of a major highway. There are also some isolated buildings of a different scale, such as the villas in Flamborough Walk.

## **Open Space**

An important aspect of the Victorian and Edwardian urban improvements was the creation of parks and preservation of open spaces. In 1887, the large churchyard of the Parish Church of St Dunstan and All Saints was made available for public recreation. It continues to form a significant presence, in the area enhanced by the open parkland, enclosed by Bromley and Belgrave Streets. Within the grounds is a surviving medieval monument to the wealthy Mercer and Lord Mayor Henry Colet who died in 1510. Other tombs memorable for their maritime associations exist at St Dunstan.

The former churchyard provides a spacious public green space for local residents, enhanced by the mature trees and lawned areas of the churchyard. Its setting enhances the character of the Parish Church of St. Dunstan and All Saints. A tree lined, paved avenue (accessed from a gated entry off White Horse Road) cuts through the grounds, in approach to the church.

St James's Gardens provide an appropriate setting for the Grade II\* Listed Royal Foundation of St Katherine. It has a grand avenue of mature trees and provides a cycle and pedestrian link to the Limehouse Basin.

## **Views**

Long views exist, particularly views of the 19th century buildings along Bromley, Flamborough, Barnes, Whitehorse, Matlock and Aston Streets. These help to reveal this example of the 19th century vision for East London, expressed in York Square's 1832 plan, with its existing townscape made up of a uniform, continuous modest terraces on narrow allotments. The wide streets of Butcher Row present long unobstructed views of its buildings.

## **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. The character and appearance of the area, as described in this appraisal, define its special qualities. There are minor improvements that could be made to buildings in the Conservation Area, but overall this has little impact on the qualities that led to its designation.

**Please also see associated addendum which was adopted on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

## 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 operate 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.

### 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 York Square is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In York Square, 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, master planning or other design decisions.
- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings

- Drawings, including construction details, produced at larger scale (e.g. 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 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.

## Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

### Grade I

- Stepney High Street - Parish Church of St Dunstan and All Saints (The Church of the High Seas)

### Grade II\*

- The Royal Foundation of St Katherines, Butchers Row

### Grade II

- 3-19 Durham Row
- Durham Row - Iron railings, gate at end of St. Dunstan's Churchyard
- Stepney High Street, Iron railings, gate piers and gates at St Dunstan's Churchyard
- 1-10 White Horse Road - Mercer's cottages
- Stepney High Street, Gate piers and overthrow at Lady Mico's Almshouses
- 34 Belgrave Street – The Mercer's Arms Public House
- 36-40 Belgrave Street
- 50-52 Belgrave Street
- 62-68 White Horse Road
- 6-90 Bromley Street
- 9-47 Bromley Street
- 49 Bromley Street – The British Prince Public House
- 29 Aston Street
- 1-15 Barnes Street
- 17 Barnes Street – The Ship Inn
- 19-31 Barnes Street
- 2-10 Barnes Street
- 12-22 Barnes Street
- 3-7 Flamborough Street
- 8 Flamborough Street – Queen's Head Public House
- 1A Flamborough Street
- 9-15 Flamborough Street
- 1-8 York Square

- 9-16 York Square
- 34 Belgrave Street – The Mercer’s Arms Public House
- 36-40 Belgrave Street
- 50-52 Belgrave Street
- 582-588 Commercial Road
- Commercial Road – London Opera Centre (Former Troxy Cinema)
- Shadwell Portal to the Rotherhithe Tunnel

### **Locally Listed Building**

- 13 to 49 Belgrave Street
- Depot - White Horse Road
- 43 White Horse Road
- 42 Belgrave Street
- 54 Belgrave Street
- 58 Belgrave Street
- 109 to 135 White Horse Road
- 94 White Horse Road
- 14 to 28 Matlock Street
- 1 to 13 Matlock Street
- 47 to 55 Barnes Street
- 24 to 38 Barnes Street
- 1 to 27 Aston Street
- 2 to 34 Aston Street
- 3 to 45 Salmon Lane
- 4 to 36 Salmon Lane
- 33 to 45 Barnes Street
- 1 to 11 Chasely Street
- 2 to 12 Chasely Street
- 1 Flamborough Street
- 2 Flamborough Street
- Wall – Flamborough Street
- 6 Flamborough Street
- Stepney East Station - Commercial Road

- 556 Commercial Road
- 90 White Horse Road

### **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.

Commercial Road is a busy traffic route in the Conservation Area and indeed across the Borough, attracting constant vehicular traffic particularly as the principal route between the East End and the City. It is currently dominated by the highway function of the road with high traffic volumes, noise and vibrations and is not entirely pedestrian friendly. Options for improving the pedestrian and cycle environment along Commercial Road and side streets in the York Square Conservation Area should be investigated.

Generally, controlled road side parking for residents is provided in and around York Square. Some York stone paving survives and has been recently reinstated in some areas. Future similar works are encouraged.

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**

Preservation of the historic setting of the church and public churchyard gardens are of utmost importance. These views should be maintained and protected where appropriate, continuing the historic ties between the Stepney Church and the

community. The maintenance of the church and churchyard, including its benches, signage and tombstones should be ensured.

Any new proposed buildings should respect the established historic building line and follow the established scale, mass and the traditional narrow and deep plot sizes, which are generally typical of terraced form development. Regard should be given to the prevalent traditional building material in the vicinity, generally yellow stock bricks and Welsh slate roofs. Design need not copy or mimic the Georgian style which prevails. Attention should be given to the basic elements which tie a terrace or group of buildings together, such as storeys heights, the prevailing parapet line and overall proportions. It is characteristic of London terraces to have small rear extensions. Extensions should be subservient to the original building. The materials and design should sensitively complement the existing building. Private gardens are important to the setting and amenity of a building and should be retained, keeping traditional brick walls. Timber fencing is generally out of character with this area. Mansard roof extensions can destroy the scale and balance of a unified terrace and are not suitable in most of the York Square Conservation Area.

### **Trees, Parks and Open Spaces**

Enclosed within historic iron railings and gates, the Parish Church of St Dunstan and All Saints and churchyard are a focal point of the York Square Conservation Area, both historically and in its use as a public park today. The surrounding green open spaces, pathway, mature trees and park furniture have all been well maintained.

The Parish Church of St Dunstan and All Saints churchyard is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). It is considered very important that the gardens, including the sacred character of the churchyard are preserved. This principle should be observed in all future management and maintenance of the churchyard gardens.

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 inclusively 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 LDF, 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.

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](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk) or by contacting:

Tel: 020 7364 5009

Email: [dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto: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:

Mile End Old Town Residents Association

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)

20<sup>th</sup> Century Society

[www.c20society.org.uk](http://www.c20society.org.uk)

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

[www.spab.org.uk](http://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**

- Loss of original timber windows and replacement with uPVC.
- Excessive traffic flows along streets within the Conservation Area.
- Loss of elegies written on tombstones and graffiti in Churchyard

### **Priorities for Action (1-5)**

- Introduce enhancements to streetscape
- Introduce “Article 4 directions” to protect houses
- Investigate traffic calming measures
- Produce design guide for the Conservation Area
- Set up local Conservation Advisory Group

**London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

**ADDENDUM to York Square Conservation  
Area Character Appraisal and Management  
Guidelines Document**

**Adopted July 2016**

The additional guidance contained within this Addendum relates to non-listed houses within this Conservation Area



### **Purpose of this Addendum**

The purpose of this Addendum is to support residents who would like to make a planning application to extend their home in the York Square Conservation Area. It contains guidance covering extensions to the roof and to the rear of residential properties, in the form of an addendum to the existing guidance for the Conservation Area. Council officers have examined the Conservation Area in detail and have presented their recommendations in the form of this addendum, which should be read in conjunction with the York Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal which is available on the Council's website.

In order to further assist residents with the planning application process, officers have also prepared a Mansard Roof Guidance Note. This contains information on the most relevant planning policies that the Council must consider when making decision on planning applications; the character of historic roofs in Tower Hamlets; the elements of Mansard Roofs and best practice advice on how you should approach the design of a new mansard roof in a conservation area; and finally, the document includes some helpful tips for you to refer to when making a planning application for a new mansard roof in a Conservation Area.

The document is available on the Council's website at [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk).

### **York Square Conservation Area Character Appraisal Addendum**

Whilst the Council has a duty to ensure that change preserves or enhances a Conservation Area, it is aware of the space pressures facing families and the need to accommodate changing residential needs within its Conservation Areas.

The guidance below is specific to the York Square Conservation Area. It is intended to help home owners in understanding the character and significance of the Conservation Area and in submitting planning applications within this Conservation Area. It is divided into two sections and relates to (i) roof extensions and (ii) rear extensions.

#### **(i) Main roofs (i.e. the principle roof – excluding rear extensions / additions)**

York Square Conservation Area is largely composed of a series of earlier nineteenth century residential terraces. The two storey brick terraces are elegantly proportioned, although modestly scaled. Within this area there is more overall variety in terms of roof form, than is the case in many other Conservation Areas in the Borough but it is notable that in general each terrace has a consistent appearance with a single type of roof.

Map 1, appended to this Addendum forms an audit of the existing types of main roof (i.e. excluding the rear extension) which are located within the York Square Conservation Area.

The audit includes all roofs in the Conservation Area, including listed buildings, although this guidance applies only to non-listed buildings.

The Audit clearly illustrates that in most cases, the basic historic forms of the main roofs of the various terraces have survived, even where roof covering materials have been subject to change and/or other small scale changes have occurred.

Many of the terraces within the Conservation Area feature London (or Butterfly) roofs. These are an inverted 'V' in form with a central valley and ridges on the party walls between the individual houses of the terrace. These roofs are of low pitch and are concealed from the street (i.e. the front) behind parapets producing a hard, straight edged appearance and a strong silhouette. This visible lack of roof is an important architectural characteristic. At the rear, the parapet is nearly always omitted and the row of gently pitched gables is clearly evident. Chimney stacks are located along the party walls between houses (often in pairs); visible and silhouetted on the skyline they are important Conservation Area features, and together with chimney pots and party walls form a significant part of the Conservation Areas character and appearance. The design and details of these features vary with changing architectural fashions, but their rhythm and consistency can contribute significantly to the special interest of a terrace.



**Salmon Lane (above):** The London (or Butterfly) roof, concealed from the street behind a continuous parapet is highly characteristic of large parts of the York Square Conservation Area. In this particular example the parapet line is broken by chimney pots, this creates a strong and distinctive silhouette important to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



**Rear of Aston Street from Matlock Street London (or Butterfly) roof – rear elevation (above):** The parapet is omitted from the rear elevation of houses with London roofs exposing the distinctive pattern of gables and valleys to view.



**Rear of Matlock Street from the Burial Ground (above).**



**Troon Street looking North (above).**

There are also a number of roofs which offer a slight variation on the London Roof, the valley gutter runs to front to back as usual, but at the front each pitch is hipped. This hip spans part of two properties with the running up the middle to the chimneys on the ridge. This type of roofs can be seen on Flamborough Street, Chasely Street and Salmon Lane.



**Chasely Street, the modified London roof is visible from the street (above).**

The Conservation Area also includes examples of simple double pitched roofs, but these are few and far between. Cranbrook Cottages on Bere Street is one example. These are modest turn of the century properties.



**Cranbrook Cottages (above)**

Several terraces within the area feature traditional mansard roofs which are less common in London than is often supposed. The inclusion of a mansard roof gives the terraces a very different feel from the adjacent terraces with London roofs. The mansard roof increases their height and alters the way they relate to the street. It also alters their character substantially. Those terraces on the North and South side of York Square have what appear to be original mansards and are of a larger scale. This is possibly the result of their position on the main square within the area.



**Original mansards facing the open space on York Square (above):** the one at either end is hipped, it is this which allows the gable to have a straight top.

The Conservation Area also contains a number of later twentieth century terraces which were built with front elevations of similar proportions to the historic terraces but with differing roof forms and rear elevations.

#### Sensitivity to change (Significance)

Historic England in their guidance regarding alterations to the London terraced house 1660 -1860 note the need to retain the structure, character and appearance of a building, and note that proposals should not impair or destroy the overall shape and proportion of a house or detract from its historic character (*English Heritage 1996: London Terrace Houses 1660-1860*). This relates to a number of features but is particularly relevant when considering alterations to the roof form.

Map 1 indicates some non-listed residential properties where alterations to the main roof form could be considered to be less harmful to the significance of the roof, the terrace and the wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These locations are shown on the map as properties where roof alterations might be considered acceptable subject to a detailed planning application. The locations shown on the map are based on a thorough assessment of the sensitivity to change of main house roofs within the Conservation Area. This assessment was undertaken in light of relevant national and regional guidance.

The degree of significance which was ascribed to main roofs took into account:

- *visibility and impact on the public realm*
- *historic integrity (degree of change);*
- *the historic and architectural interest of the buildings concerned;*
- *the completeness of the group or terrace of houses concerned;*
- *the consistency and uniformity of the existing roofscape and its contribution to the character of the Conservation Area; and*
- *significance in terms of the Conservation Area.*

The map indicates that there are few areas where changes to the main roofs would not harm the overall significance of the terrace, and Conservation Area. In areas identified for potential change it is important to note that there is no 'one size fits all' approach; scale and design in relation to the host building and surrounding buildings, materials etc. remain important.

### **(ii) Rear extensions**

Many of the houses within the Conservation Area were built with rear extensions (sometimes referred to as 'back additions', 'outriggers' or 'closet wings') as part of the original building. Some however, are slightly earlier and are flat backed, for example those in York Square and this is significant in its own right.

Stefan Muthesius in *'The English Terraced House'* states that "The back extension is the most varied and complicated part of the terraced house".

In the Georgian era, often there were no extensions to a house or where they existed they were purely functional and were not of a standard form. Generally service rooms were accommodated in the basement with the ground and first floor being reserved for the more important public rooms.

The extension to the Victorian terrace house had its origins in the grander houses of an earlier era. Space was ordered according to a structural hierarchy, with the more public spaces such as the parlour located at the front of the house, whilst the more private service spaces were located within the basement or to the rear of the house in the back extension.

Some of the terraces within York Square have basements which are evident within the street scene in terms of pavement grills, but which open to a lower level on the garden side, in these instances there are fewer rear extensions. However, provision of a basement was costly and some of the flat backed terraces within the Conservation Area are very modest in scale and character and no original basement was included.

As the Victorian era progressed and housing needed to be provided more quickly and economically the basement was increasingly replaced by a back extension at ground floor level. The extension was initially a small extra

space for a scullery but as time went on it increased in scale to include a kitchen with a bedroom above.

Economy continued to play a role in the evolution of the back extension with the early single storey single unit extensions with three independent walls housing a scullery being replaced by paired extensions under one roof. In York Square however, many of the extensions are the independent type, houses not being paired.

Within this Conservation Area, where extensions exist they vary in scale, from the small scullery extension to the larger more modern extension intended to provide bedroom or bathroom accommodation.

Extensions varied in width, height and length according to the builder but tended to increase in scale as the century progressed. However, there is usually a degree of consistency within a terrace. Within York Square, there are a variety of extensions of very different scales, many are modern and have been designed to accommodate the services which the original house did not possess. Historic maps clearly show privies in the gardens of many of the properties. However, these modern alterations appear to have been tackled within terraces as a whole rather than on a piecemeal basis.

Map 2, appended to this Addendum includes a thorough audit of the existing types of rear extension which are located within the York Square Conservation Area. (To gain a full picture, the audit includes all rear extensions in the Conservation Area, including listed buildings).



**Rear of houses on Barnes Street showing two storey rear extensions with mono pitch roofs (above).**

#### Sensitivity to change (Significance)

The scope for rear extensions to be altered is often greater than for roof extensions. There are large parts of the Conservation Area where rear elevations are considered to have less significance in terms of the character

and appearance of the Conservation Area. Where new extensions are not visible from the public realm their impact on the overall character and appearance of the Conservation Area is minimised.

The variety of rear extensions across the Conservation Area mean that there is no standard solution and when putting an application together it will be important to consider, the consistency and rhythm of neighbouring properties, the existing rear building line etc. It should be noted that the public spaces to the rear of these terraces means that what is not visible from the public realm in many locations might be visible in this particular Conservation Area.

When assessing an application for a rear extension the following matters are taken into account:

- *visibility from street and impact on the public realm;*
- *historic integrity (degree of change);*
- *the historic and architectural interest of the buildings concerned;*
- *the consistency and uniformity of the existing group or terrace of houses concerned; and*
- *significance in terms of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.*

The impact of the proposals upon the amenity of neighbouring properties, the design, scale and materials are important considerations when assessing proposals for a rear extension. An extension should always be subordinate to the main building.

It is important to note that all general planning policies apply as elsewhere in the Borough.

Generally a single storey extension to infill a side return where an extension already exists will be acceptable. Ideally this should be a lighter weight structure, its features should respect the scale of those features on the existing building and ideally it will be set back from the rear wall of the existing extension so that the prominence of the historic building envelope is preserved.

A common form of extension requested is a wrap around extension. This may be acceptable, where the garden is of a suitable size, and where it is not visible from the public realm. This might be at basement level where the garden level is lower than the street level.

Where the terrace is flat backed and there is a basement a small single storey extension at basement level might be acceptable, as this would not impact on the more important elements of the back elevation and the visible staircase window.

**It is advisable to speak to the Council's Duty Planner before submitting an application. The Council runs a pre-application service which you may wish to use. Details are available on the Council's website.**