



# Wapping Wall

## Conservation Area

### 1. Character Appraisal

### 2. Management Guidelines

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

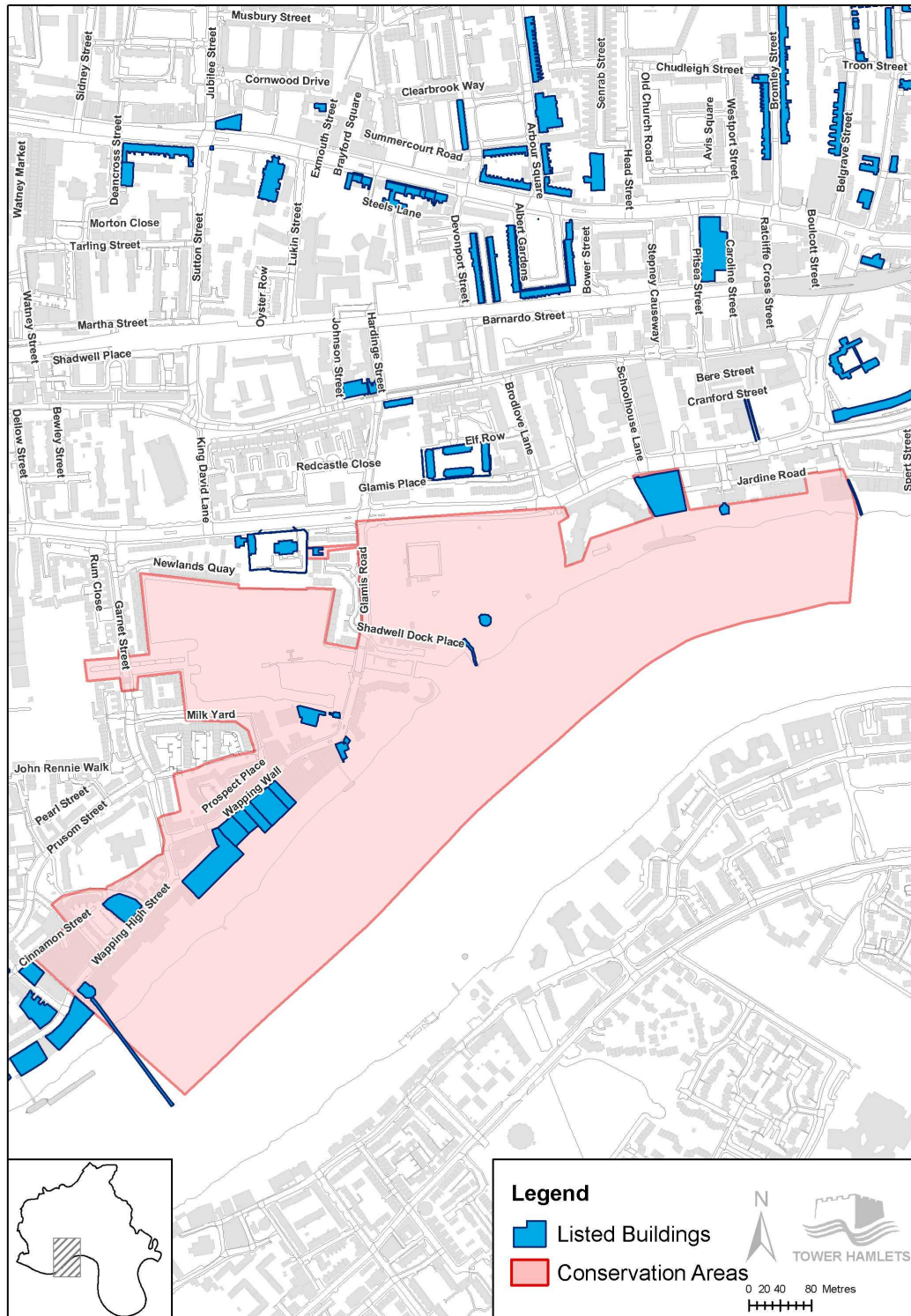
Adopted by Cabinet: 4th November 2009

## **Introduction**

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

This guide has been prepared for the following purposes:

- To comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69(1) states that a conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”
- To provide a detailed appraisal of the area’s architectural and historic character. To 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 WALL 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 Wall Conservation Area was designated in January 1983 by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC), extended by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in October 2008. Wapping Wall follows the eastern part of the road along the top of the dyke or river wall, after which it is named. Breaching of the wall was a serious problem until the 1580s when it was strengthened by the construction of a continuous line of wharves. The Docklands heritage has provided the framework for the area's regeneration.

## **History**

The Thames banks to the east of central London have historically provided ideal conditions for shipping docks. Draining of the marshes and construction of the river defence walls had begun by 1327, encouraging riverside settlement. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, both sides of the river were lined with wharf buildings serving the business needs of merchants and a thriving shipbuilding industry. The narrow plots defining the Thames frontage at the time were later amalgamated for the substantial 19th century warehouse developments. This obliterated many of the historic stairs and alleys that had afforded access to the riverfront for the local population.

The world's first under-river tunnel was constructed between 1825-43 to the design of Marc Brunel and linked the north bank of the Thames to the south at Wapping Station. Originally opened for pedestrian use, the Thames Tunnel was built to help carry the load from the London Docks. It was eventually converted in 1865–69 for the East London Railway to serve goods and passenger trains travelling south under the Thames through to Dover and Brighton.

East of Wapping Lane, the Eastern Dock was added to the original London Dock in 1824-8, later filled-in for housing development following its closure. Shadwell Basin, added from 1828, survives as an open stretch of water, reached by the inner Shadwell Entrance Lock (1858). The (rolling bascule) steel lifting bridge constructed in the 1930s

was restored as a fixed bridge by the LDDC in the 1980s, Another such bridge is at the west end of the basin, these are two of a number of artifacts preserved to tell the story of the Dockland's operations. By the 1960s, new methods of handling cargoes forced changes and finally the closure of the London Docks in 1968. The industry moved with the container ships to the new ports of Tilbury, Felixstow and Harwich. This shift towards industry did not occur without social upheaval. The area's population was reduced from 12,000 in 1851 to about 9,000 to make way for the dock and Edward VII Memorial Park, opened 1922.

There are few surviving industrial buildings in the Docklands. The Wapping Hydraulic Pumping Station is a successful example of the creative recycling of historic buildings, a type of development still encouraged that preserves and interprets the area's character and cultural history. Of the five hydraulic pumping stations constructed by the London Hydraulic Power Company, two were located in Docklands (Rotherhithe & Wapping). Wapping was the last to supply hydraulic power as a public utility.

In 1980, the LDDC was formed to expedite the regeneration of the London Docklands in response to economic decline in the area. In 1981 the LDDC took over management of 8½ square miles known then as the Docklands Urban Development Area (UDA), located in the Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark. The regeneration of the Docklands was initiated primarily for economic and social reasons, creating a unique opportunity to conserve the physical heritage. The ambience and historic character of the area was preserved and enhanced by ensuring the sensitive integration of high quality new development.

Having achieved the majority of its targets, the responsibility for London's Docklands was handed back to the local authorities by the LDDC in 1998.

### **Character**

The riverside features of London's Docklands contribute to the character and interest of the Thames shoreline. The river walls, originally built to protect the inland marshes from the river's tidal flow, are now characterized by a river-face of substantial 19<sup>th</sup> century

warehouses on brick wharves, interrupted by passages to stairs which provided access to the river, with 20<sup>th</sup> century jetties (formerly used for berthing and discharging of ships).

Entrance locks and the associated machinery & equipment including bridges, cranes, pumps and rails etc. all contribute to the character and historic interpretation of the area's industrial past. The organic development of the area is evidenced in the different projections of riverside buildings, some structures sitting forward of those adjacent, with a mix of masonry materials, predominantly brick, and jetties built of timber and iron.

The Wapping Wall Conservation Area includes one of London's finest stretches of 19<sup>th</sup> century riverside wharf and warehouse developments. Metropolitan Wharf, which encroaches some 40ft into the river, supports a mix of uses. Great Jubilee Wharf and New Crane Wharf (following the post-medieval river wall line) form a continuous 'wall' of buildings between the street and the Thames, retaining much of the character of the Docklands heyday.

The principles for redevelopment established by the LDDC are still largely followed by Tower Hamlets. Recycling of the remaining historic building stock is preferred to its demolition and redevelopment. Any new development should relate closely to the urban qualities of the existing environment, constructed in materials traditional to the area.

### **Land Use**

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most wealthy householders had moved away from the riverfront leaving the industrial and supporting commercial uses to define the townscape. The historic mix of uses associated with this once vibrant mercantile quarter were accommodated in smaller buildings. These were later displaced by 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse redevelopment along the riverfront. The associated street-level activity was further diluted by the residential redevelopment of the area which followed the closure of the docks in the 1960s.

Following their colonisation by artists as studios in the late 1960s and 70s the vacant warehouse buildings were converted to residential use. At the time, the majority of the existing housing stock in the area was in local authority ownership and an increase in private housing (including 40% affordable housing offered to locals) was considered key to creating a more balanced community. The subsequent redevelopment created an almost entirely residential area, with a few small commercial uses retained at street level. The 'Prospect of Whitby' (c.1520), named after a boat that moored there in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is one of the few public houses to survive along the riverfront. It represents a valuable reminder of the many public houses which used to serve the dock community.

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 Wall's narrow, enclosed streets contrast strongly with open areas in the Conservation Area.

King Edward VII Memorial Park is the largest park and sits just east of Wapping Wall. It affords spectacular river views and includes a number of landscape features, the Edwardian Rotherhithe Tunnel Vent Shaft. The park was planned 1910, opened to the public in 1922 and occupies the site of the former Shadwell Fish Market Estate. The park's riverside promenade is interrupted by Shadwell Pierhead and, although reinstated in front of Prospect Wharf, the riverside Thames Walk otherwise follows the historic traffic route along Wapping Wall and Wapping High Streets to the west, and the historic Thameside route to the east, past Grade II Listed Free Trade Wharf. The walkway includes a number of significant historic riverside features, including a the Grade II Listed passage and raised wet dock, timber walkway and pontoon and .

Public access to the river's shorefront has also been integrated into the redeveloped Prospect Wharf piers, however many of the historic stairs which once afforded public access to the riverbank are now closed.

### **Scale**

The western boundary of the Conservation Area is marked by Wapping Underground Station, on London's first under-river train link to the south bank. The tunnel's vent shaft and surrounding buildings contribute to the character of the area. Their relatively low scale provides visual relief from the corridor of buildings extending either side along Wapping High Street.

In summary, the south side of the principal street is defined by the substantial warehouse developments. On the north side, smaller scaled buildings at the boundary of the Conservation Area open out to vistas over parks and across basins, providing a transitional townscape between Wapping Wall and adjacent areas to the north and east.

### **Views**

Glimpses of the riverfront over historic stairs are still afforded through breaks in the barrier of buildings lining Wapping Wall, forming reminders of former public access to the river banks.

The Wapping Wall street corridor opens out as it curves around the boundary wall of Wapping Pumping Station onto Garnet Street. The view to the north is framed by the restored iron bascule bridge. To the south, the Prospect of Whitby pub steps down in height to expose an open sky at the riverside entrance to the Thames walk. The Shadwell Basin provides a clear space over which the historic church spires of St Paul's and St George in the East can be viewed. This maintains a visual link between the riverfront and the neighbourhoods to the north. The most significant river views are from the King Edward VII Memorial Park and the Thameside walk in front of Free Trade Wharf.



### Summary

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> 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 are reflected in these documents following 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 Wall is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.**

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

The exact information required will vary with each application, but in general applications must include:

- A clear design statement explaining the reasons behind the various architectural, masterplanning or other design decisions.
- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings

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

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

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

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

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

- At the national level, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Tower Hamlets to designate Conservation Areas in “areas of special architectural or historic interest”, and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. National policy for planning and the historic environment is set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15).
- At the regional level, policy 4B.1 of the London Spatial Development Strategy (or London Plan) states that ‘The Mayor will seek to ensure that developments ... respect London’s built heritage.’
- At the local level, the new Local Development Framework (LDF) of Tower Hamlets states that ‘the Council will protect and enhance the historic environment of the borough’. The Core Strategy states as an objective that we 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.
- The riverfront and Shadwell Dock, are parts of the Blue Ribbon network, and also of importance for nature conservation and archaeology.

### Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

#### Grade II\*

- Thames Tunnel
- London Hydraulic Pumping Station, Wapping Wall, London
- 37 Wapping Wall, London,

#### Grade II

- Free Trade Wharf, The Highway
- Stone Stairs slipway to the Thames and flagged Passage from The Highway
- Wapping Station, Wapping High Street
- Prusoms Island, 135 Wapping High Street
- 16 New Crane Place
- Lower Oliver's Wharf, 80 Wapping Wall
- Great Jubilee Wharf, 78 Wapping Wall
- Jubilee Wharf, 76 Wapping Wall
- Metropolitan Wharf, 61-75 Wapping Wall
- Prospect Of Whitby Public House, 57 Wapping Wall
- Shadwell Dock Stairs
- Air Shaft to the Rotherhithe Tunnel, King Edward VII Memorial Park

### Highways and Transportation Issues

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

The 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.

The East London Line runs through the western edge of the Conservation Area, stopping at Wapping Station before entering the historic Thames Tunnel.

### **Opportunities and Potential for Enhancement**

The street environment of Wapping High Street is at the heart of the whole area, and there is potential to improve the quality of the streetscape. In particular, the street lighting, bus stops, signage and road surfacing at present do not respect the historic value of the Conservation Area. Great care must be taken when introducing advertisements into the area, taking into account the historic maritime character.

Measures to protect the coherence and harmony of each refurbished warehouse building should be investigated. Re-opening of the river steps, with additional safety precautions, including lighting should follow.

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

There are few open spaces in the Wapping Wall Conservation Area. The largest are the riverside spaces around the Shadwell Dock Entrance, including King Edward Memorial Park, which contains two listed structures.

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 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](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:

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**

At this time, we are not aware of any other threats to the Conservation Area.

### **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.