



# Tower Hamlets Cemetery

## Conservation Area

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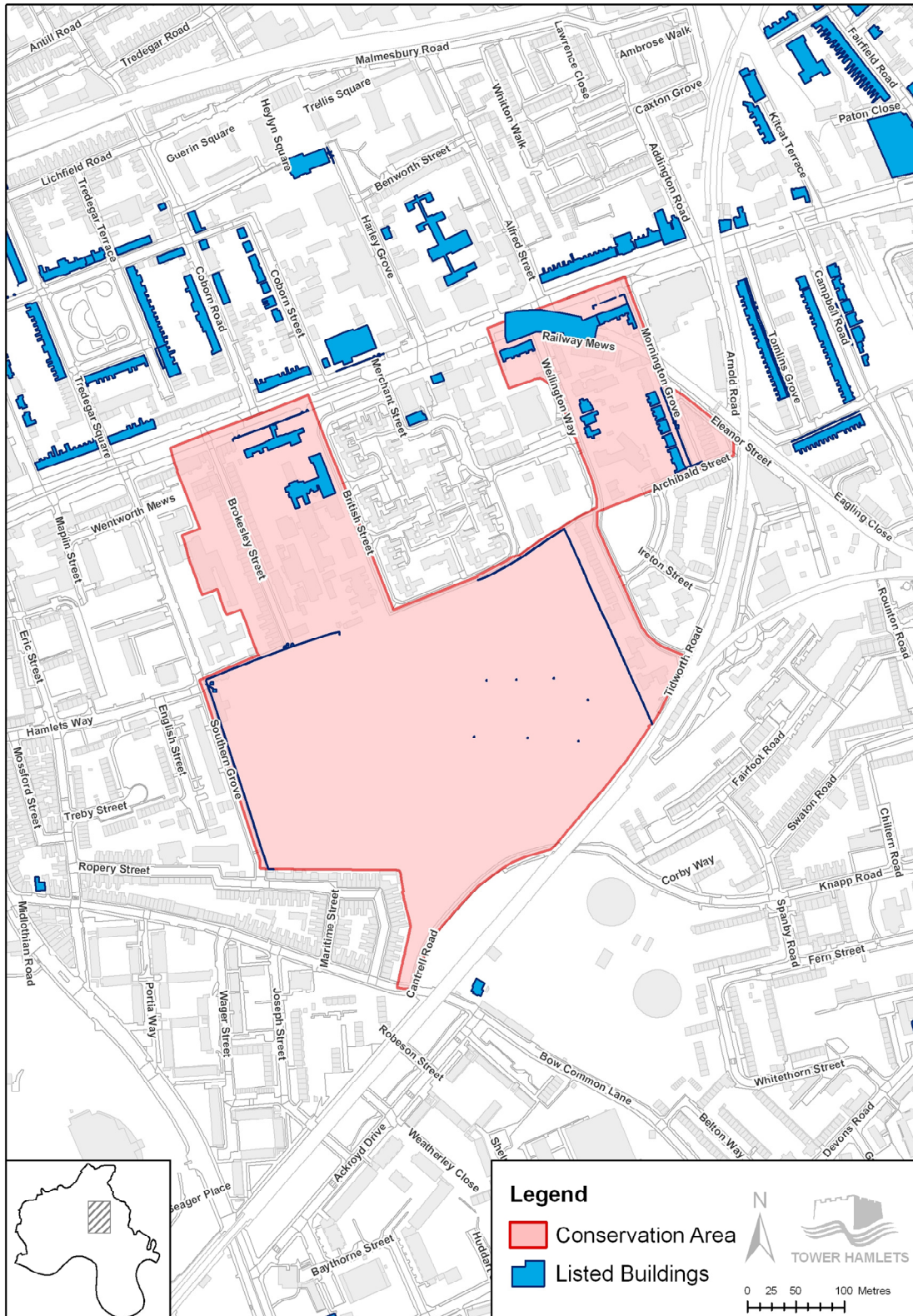
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
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## Introduction

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.



### TOWER HAMLETS CEMETERY 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 Tower Hamlets Cemetery Conservation Area was designated in November 1987 and is centred around the Victorian cemetery park in Bow. Bounded by Mile End Road to the north, the Conservation Area borders on the British Estate (built to replace the terraced row houses cleared in the 1970s) and includes the surviving residential townscapes of Brokesley Street and Mornington Grove, the St Clement's Hospital site and Wellington Primary School.

## History

During the 19th century, the land north of Bow Common Lane began to fill with the utilities that were a common characteristic of the Victorian city fringes: Tower Hamlets Cemetery opened in 1841, the work houses and infirmaries of the City Union (St Clements Hospital) were constructed in 1849 and the remaining areas were filled with streets of small terraces.

### Tower Hamlets Cemetery

By the mid 19th century, the city's church burial grounds were full to capacity and private cemetery companies responded to a commercial opportunity by opening a number of cemeteries on the fringes of Victorian London. The last of seven private cemeteries was established in Tower Hamlets in 1841. This was shortly before the mass closure of the inner-city burial grounds in the early 1850s and the subsequent opening of municipal burial grounds by local authorities.

An 1841 Act of Parliament established the City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery (also known as Bow Cemetery). The cemetery was laid out on drained open fields, with winding paths and ornamental trees, by Thomas Wyatt and David Brandon who were also responsible for the design of two chapels, later demolished by the GLC as part of the cemetery's conversion to a public park in the 1960s.



The company responsible for constructing the cemetery grounds was set up by prominent local businessmen, hoping to exploit the still sizeable middle-class market of the east end. Nevertheless, by 1851, 80% of the burials were common interments. As the majority of the income was expected to be generated from the more wealthy clientele, the character of the cemetery changed with the westward movement of the mercantile classes. The more lavish memorials were built within the first 20 years of the cemetery opening, close to the main entrance on Southern Grove. The growth of the east-end is demonstrated by the burial figures (250,000 by 1889). In 1896, a London-wide survey of burial grounds revealed that the private cemetery company was unable to cover the costs of the cemetery's up-keep.

The neglected and war damaged cemetery was acquired by the Greater London Council in 1965 and closed for burials in 1966 when an Act of Parliament was passed, designating it as a park. Management of the park has been the responsibility of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets since 1987. The cemetery, including the green space along Ackroyd Drive to the south, was declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2001.

### St Clements Hospital

Originally constructed as the City of London Workhouse for the East London and City of London Union in 1849, the St Clements Hospital site is separated from the cemetery's northern boundary by a substantial wall and public footpath. The original buildings, designed by Richard Tress, were later altered to form the City of London Union Infirmary in 1874. Following the reconstruction of Homerton Workhouse in 1909, the work house and infirmary at Bow were closed and later re-opened in 1912 as Bow Institution to treat the chronically ill. The London County Council (LCC) took over Bow Institution when the board of guardians was abolished in 1930, increasing bed numbers and opening a mental health unit in 1932. In 1936, the hospital was renamed St Clements. The western pavilion and chapel suffered considerable bomb damage during the Blitz.

The remainder of the Conservation Area consists of Victorian terraces with some buildings of special note, including Wellington Primary School, built by the LCC in 1928, and the Grade-II listed Bow Road Underground Station railway tunnel entrance.

### **Character**

The substantial institutional buildings of St Clements Hospital present the most prominent built fabric in the area, the site defined by a solid wall juxtaposed against the more open boundary of Tower Hamlets Cemetery. The hospital site has long been a prominent landmark in the locality and remains an important icon in the consciousness of the wider community. Its significance lies as much in the grouping of surviving buildings as in the fabric of individual structures, and provides a poignant representation of development history within the Borough.

Suffering bomb damage during the Blitz, the integrity of the historic buildings has been further compromised by site modifications, building demolitions and other alterations undertaken as a result of changes of use and mental health treatment methods adopted following the war. The site is Grade II listed and future redevelopment will need to respect the surviving pre-1948 building fabric, the historic layout and its presentation to Bow Road.

Tower Hamlets Cemetery is of considerable historic interest as one of a celebrated group of private cemeteries opened in the early years of Victoria's reign and the first private cemetery established in the east. Now a nature reserve resulting from a century of neglect, most of the 33 acres are heavily wooded and home to an important variety of wild plants, flowers and insects. The largest woodland in east London and principally noted for its ecological value, the cemetery also contains a wealth of 19th century historic monuments including a number of listed tombs. A valued local amenity and educational resource, Tower Hamlets Cemetery is in urgent need of significant conservation works. Despite this it retains a Victorian elegance characterised by the romance of gentle decay, which is fundamental to its character.

The surrounding residential areas are defined by a mix of mid-late Victorian terraces and post-war infill housing. Wellington Way, in particular, retains characteristics of a respectable Victorian neighbourhood

### **Land Use**

Land use is principally defined by open space which extends to the grounds of larger institutional buildings in the area, and the residential mansion blocks and terraces. A small amount of commercial and retail activity is located on Mile End Road.

### **Open Space**

Tower Hamlets Cemetery park defines its open space character.

The boundary walls and Cemetery entrance gates off Southern Grove are listed. Ironwork and railings to the front of St Clements Hospital are distinctive and are Grade II listed. There are also many original railings in the front gardens of the Victorian terraces in Brokesley Street.

Several trees within the Conservation Area are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The Southern Grove/Brokesely Street Tree Preservation Order Area straddles the north-western boundary of the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Conservation Area, and the area east of the British Estate is covered under the Wellington Way Tree Preservation Order Area.

### **Scale**

The scale of the Conservation Area is dominated by the listed buildings of St Clements Hospital and the residential areas characterised by a mix of low-medium rise housing. The British Estate has an undeniable impact on the setting of the Conservation Area.

## **Views**

Views in the area are framed along existing axes and paths. Opportunities to strengthen the visual and physical connection through the Conservation Area, and in particular between the urban fabric and the cemetery park, will be supported. Wider views connect the Conservation Area to other parts of the Borough, (eg. the Canary Wharf towers appear over the cemetery green, framed by the Victorian terraces and mansion blocks of Brookesley Street). Similarly, there is a vista along Wellington Way, with its mature plane trees and sympathetic new builds approaching the southern end of the street and Canary Wharf beyond.

## **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 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 the Tower Hamlets Cemetery is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.**

In Tower Hamlets Cemetery, 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.

- It is designated as a Local Wildlife Reserve, and an area of importance for nature conservation.

## Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

### Grade II

- St Clements Hospital, Bow Road
- Front Wall, Gate Piers & Gates at St Clements Hospital, Bow Road
- Boundary Wall and Gate Piers to Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Tomb of Ellen Wiskin, Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Tomb of John Smith, Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Tomb to east of tomb to John Smith, Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Tomb of Ellen Llewellyn, Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Tomb of Samuel Weddell, Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Tomb of Sarah Morris and George Morris, Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Tomb of Joseph Westwood, Tower Hamlets Cemetery
- Boundary Wall and Gate Piers to Tower Hamlets Cemetery, Southern Grove
- Bow Road London Transport Underground Station, Bow Road
- 1 Wellington Way
- 3 Wellington Way
- 5 Wellington Way
- 9-20 Mornington Grove
- Garden Walls and Piers at 9-20 Mornington Grove
- Wall across southern end of street, Mornington Grove
- K6 Telephone Kiosk outside 38 Bow Road

### Locally Listed Building

- Bollards at Brokesely Street/ Hamlets Way
- 32-40 Bow Road
- 48-56 Bow Road
- Boundary Wall to forecourt of 48-56 Bow 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.

The underground railway runs underneath Mile End Road at the northern boundary, and Bow Road station is situated in the north-east corner of the Conservation Area.

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

## **Opportunities and Potential for Enhancement**

There is potential for the main frontage to the Hospital on Bow Road to be enhanced. Options should be explored for improving the streetscape, particularly the bus stop, phone boxes and other street furniture, lighting and signage.

Bow Road will form a key route for visitors to the Olympics and it will be important to ensure that improvements planned as a part of this respect the character of Conservation Area.

Hamlets Way, running along the north side of the cemetery, feels very isolated, and consideration should be given to improving appropriate lighting. Opportunities for improving overlooking of the path should also be investigated.

The historic character of the houses and other buildings on the residential streets should be enhanced where possible – for example by maintenance of stucco render, or replacement of any damaged railings or missing features.

## Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

**As identified in the appraisal, the character of the cemetery itself has evolved over a long period of time, and it is now a unique place with an overgrown, other-worldly quality. This character and its ecological value today arose out of a lack of management, and of nature reasserting itself. Management and maintenance of the park should therefore be carried out with a very light touch and minimal intervention to conserve the many valuable monuments.**

Support will be given to the preparation of a conservation plan for Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

The paths are maintained by the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery and the Landscape section of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The conservation of gravestones is carried out by the Friends of Tower Hamlets as a volunteer initiative.

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 and/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:

English Heritage	<a href="http://www.english-heritage.org.uk">www.english-heritage.org.uk</a>
The Georgian Group	<a href="http://www.georgiangroup.org.uk">www.georgiangroup.org.uk</a>
Victorian Society	<a href="http://www.victorian-society.org.uk">www.victorian-society.org.uk</a>
20 <sup>th</sup> Century Society	<a href="http://www.c20society.org.uk">www.c20society.org.uk</a>
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	<a href="http://www.spab.org.uk">www.spab.org.uk</a>

## Listed Buildings at Risk:

### Tower Hamlets Cemetery

#### Southern Grove E3

Priority: C (C)

Designation: Conservation Area

Condition: Poor

Ownership: Local Authority

#### Summary

Opened in 1841. One of the seven private cemeteries of early Victorian London, and among the least known. Laid out on picturesque principles, with serpentine paths and (formerly) elaborate planting. War damage and neglect have combined to overpower the monuments. An active friends group has undertaken conservation work. A conservation plan is needed as the basis for repair and fundraising.

#### Action Proposed to Secure:

- Conservation Plan under preparation.

#### Any other threats to the Conservation Area

- The future redevelopment of the St Clements Hospital site will need to take careful account of the setting of the Conservation Area.

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

1. Upgrade the environment in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.
2. Liaise with the Better Tower Hamlets Team.
3. Encourage green links between Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Mile End Park
4. Support general improvement of links to park, including better wayfinding / signage.
5. Improve visitor information and interpretation of the area.