



Elder Street

Conservation Area

1. Character Appraisal

2. Management Guidelines

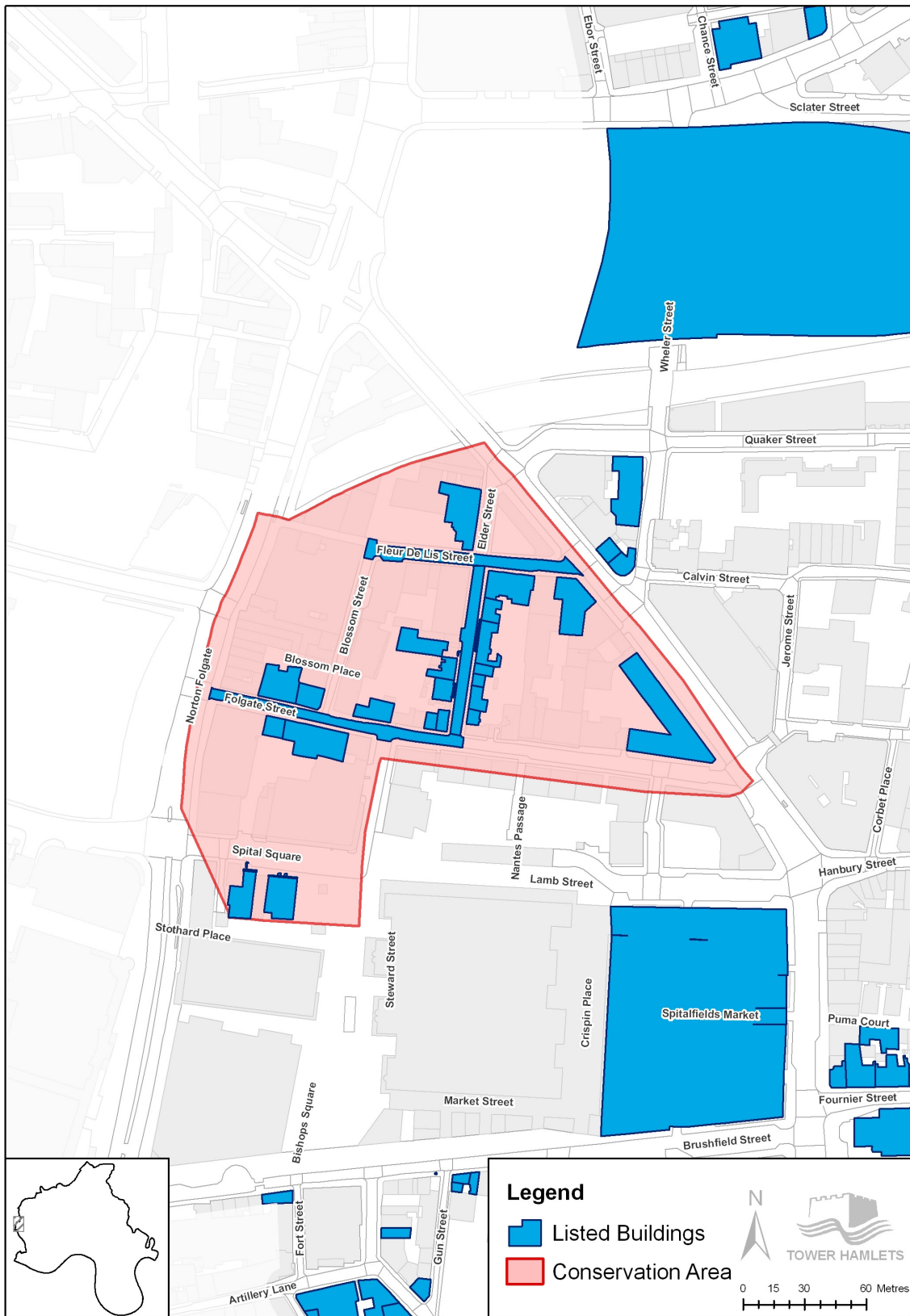
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Adopted by Cabinet: 7th March 2007

Introduction

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

This guide has been prepared for the following purposes:

- To comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69(1) states that a conservation area is “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”
- To provide a detailed appraisal of the area’s architectural and historic character.
- To provide an overview of planning policy and propose management guidelines on how this character should be preserved and enhanced in the context of appropriate ongoing change.



ELDER STREET 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 Elder Street Conservation Area was designated in July 1969 and lies just outside London's historic walls to the north-east. It is defined on its north-eastern side by the line of Commercial Street, to the west by Norton Folgate and to the south by Spital Square and Folgate Street. Each of these streets creates a different character on each edge of the Conservation Area. Overall this is a cohesive area that has little capacity for change. Future needs should be met by the sensitive repair of the historic building stock.

History

Originally an area of marshy ground outside the north-east corner of the ancient City of London, this Conservation Area contains the site of the Priory of St Mary Spital, which was established in this area in 1247. The 'Hospital of the Blessed Virgin Mary without Bishopsgate' provided care for the poor until it was closed by the dissolution of the monasteries in 1534-8, and 'Spitalfields' took its name from the fields next to the Hospital.

The 'Spittle House', possibly the gateway to the Priory, was reported to still exist in 1714-5. Several Priory buildings may have been converted into residential use, and fragments of the medieval structure still exist underground in the area.

Parts of the area were developed for residential use in the 17th century, but the Georgian houses that survive today were built after 1716. The majority of this Conservation Area lies within the St. John and Tillard Estate, and its development is described in detail by the Survey of London. Elder Street was begun around 1722 as a row of houses, which were originally only one room deep, and these houses now form the core of the Conservation Area.

Spital Square was created as an upmarket development of houses, which were occupied by owners of the silk weaving and trading industries. Spitalfields Market to the south was established in 1638 by Charles II.

In the 19th century, the population of Spitalfields grew to 100,000, of whom half were entirely dependent on the silk industry. Overcrowding was a problem, and this relatively inaccessible area of narrow passages and lanes gained a reputation as a lawless and disreputable district.

Opening up this area was one of the reasons for building Commercial Street, as well as its more obvious benefits of improving links to the Docks and improving sanitation in the area. The road was built in 1849-1857 along the north-eastern edge of the present Conservation Area, and many small buildings, alleyways and courtyards were demolished to make way for it.

Redevelopment along the line of the new street included a variety of commercial buildings. The diagonal cut of Commercial Street across the previous street grid created several triangular corner sites, which were normally used for entrances to the new buildings redeveloped along the road. On the NW corner of Folgate St and Commercial Street is the Peabody Buildings, the first of the Peabody Trust's model housing, built 1863-4 in a Gothic revival style, and known as 'The Cloisters'.

For most of its history, Spital Square was protected from noisy through-traffic by narrow entrances and bollards. This changed in 1917, when the eastern entrance was opened to market traffic, and again in 1929, when the historic narrow entrance from Bishopsgate was widened to from 19 feet to 48 feet.

In the 1920s and 30s, Spitalfields Market grew and consumed many of the historic houses on the eastern stretch of Spital Square. The houses on the north side of the western arm and the west side of the northern arm were demolished in the early 1930s to be replaced with a warehouse for the Cooperative Wholesale Society Fruit Warehouse.

The demolition of many houses continued, until the 1970s when determined efforts by the Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust succeeded in increasing awareness of the historic and architectural value of the surviving 18th century buildings and townscape. In recent years, a number of major office developments have been completed or are under construction, particularly just outside the Conservation Area to the south and west.

Character

The special character of the area is set out below.

Elder Street and Folgate Street

Elder Street and Folgate Street, at the centre of the Conservation Area, include most of the surviving 18th century developments and contain many original 3 storey brick houses. Their value comes from the consistent proportions of the street, the richness of the brick textures, the refinement of the architectural details, the harmonious relationship of the buildings and the prevailing domestic residential character.

The surviving gardens and trees in the back gardens of buildings on Elder Street are an important part of the area's residential heritage and should be retained.

Spital Square

Spital Square has lost much of its original character, although this can still be read in the quality of surviving historic buildings. The southern extension of Spital Square has been renamed Bishops Square, and forms part of the new Spitalfields office development.

37 Spital Square is the only surviving 18th century house - a 3-storey brick structure which is now the headquarters for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. St Botolph's Hall was built in 1891 and used by the Central Foundation School for Girls. Its richly detailed red brick and terracotta façade is a distinctive landmark in an environment of recent office developments.

North of Folgate Street

Blossom Street is an important surviving piece of 19th century townscape. On the western edge of this street are a series of high quality 4 storey brick warehouses built from 1886 onwards. They were occupied by Nicholls and Clarkes, Builder's Merchants until very recently.

This industrial character continues along parts of Fleur-de-Lis Street, although there are also many vacant sites in the area. Stone setts make a positive contribution to the character of these streets.

There are many vacant or underdeveloped sites, particularly in the north of this Conservation Area, which detract from the coherent building lines along most of the streets.

Norton Folgate

There is a mixed frontage to Norton Folgate which includes modern office blocks, the remains of Georgian residential development, later 19th century mixed-use commercial buildings and a 1930s showroom frontage at the north-west corner of the Conservation Area.

Although many of these buildings do not have exceptional intrinsic value, together they illustrate the area's residential and commercial history. They front on to an ancient road where evidence of the area's past is increasingly rare.

The site, known as the 'Nicholls and Clarke' site, by whom it was formerly occupied, represents a glimpse of the interwoven complexity often found in old London, and may include walls and other structures from the former Hospital Priory.

Commercial Street

After this street was built (along the eastern edge of the present-day Conservation Area), the edges were redeveloped creating a different character from the surrounding residential areas. The buildings vary from 3 to 6 storeys.

Land Use

The area retains its quiet, residential character, although there are many offices interspersed between the houses and flats. Small-scale services such as shops, restaurants and pubs also occupy the ground floors of some buildings. During the working week, there is a measure of commercial bustle, while at weekends the area is mostly quiet except for movement around Spitalfields Market, which is outside the Conservation Area.

Scale

The area is predominantly 3-4 storeys high with 3-storey Georgian houses in the core of the area. The buildings along Commercial Street are more substantial 5-6 storey buildings, to address the larger scale of the road.

The historic character of the area has been affected by large scale office development to the south, of 12 storeys or more, and by the 35-storey Broadgate Tower under construction to the west.

The narrow width of Fleur-de-Lis Street at its western end is a fragment of the medieval network of lanes which existed prior to the 18th and 19th century redevelopments.

Open Space

Most of the public realm in this area takes the form of streets, defined by buildings with no setback. Spital Square is not a traditional London residential square, but a widened street which retains its historic proportions. It is the only historic open space in the Conservation Area.

Views

The most significant views are those along the historic streets of Elder Street, Folgate Street, Blossom Street, Fleur-de-Lis street, and towards the surviving historic buildings

on Spital Square. The diagonal geometry of Commercial Street allows each corner of a building to act as a focus to views along the street, as demonstrated by the entrance to the Peabody buildings.

The view north from the south end of Blossom Street gives a dramatic and accurate glimpse of mid 19th century commercial London, including the warehouses, loading gateways, gas street lights, bollards and road setts. This includes the 1928 warehouse on the east side of the north end of Blossom Street.

Summary

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history, ancient monument and significant architecture, dating from the 13th to the 19th centuries. 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.

The area is on the border with the City of London and a coordinated approach is required to conservation.

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 Elder Street is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In Elder Street, 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 and/or conservation plan explaining the reasons behind the various architectural, masterplanning or other design decisions.
- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings
- Drawings, including construction details, produced at larger scale (eg. 1:50 or 1:20) clearly indicating the nature of the work proposed.
- Additional detail regarding materials and construction.
- Photos of the condition of existing building (including details where appropriate).

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

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

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

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

- At the national level, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Tower Hamlets to designate Conservation Areas in “areas of special architectural or historic interest”, and to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. National policy for planning and the historic environment is set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15).
- At the regional level, policy 4B.1 of the London Spatial Development Strategy (or London Plan) states that ‘The Mayor will seek to ensure that developments ... respect London’s built heritage.’
- At the local level, the new Local Development Framework (LDF) of Tower Hamlets states that ‘the Council will protect and enhance the historic environment of the borough’. This is described in detail in policy CP49 of the

Core Strategy of the LDF. In addition, applicants should note policy CP46 to ensure that access issues are properly addressed in work carried out in a Conservation Area.

- The area lies inside the area covered by the City Fringe Area Action Plan, and within the 'Aldgate and Spitalfields Market' Sub-Area. The Area Action Plan states that 'Regeneration and new development must strive for design excellence which respects and enriches the sensitive townscape and the built heritage of the area. New buildings and public spaces must enhance the historical features of the City Fringe, including the numerous Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, street patterns, and the Tower of London.' Policy CFR1 of the City Fringe spatial strategy states that 'development in the City Fringe should ensure ... the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment of the Borough.'
- Large parts of the area are identified as an area of archaeological importance.
- The area includes a nationally registered Ancient Monument, the Priory of St Mary Spital. Policy CON4 of the LDF states 'The Council will require nationally important remains to be preserved permanently in situ, subject to consultation with English Heritage. All development proposals affecting sites of known archaeological interest, or located in Archaeological Priority Areas, will be required to submit an archaeological assessment or, if necessary, a field evaluation as part of the planning application. The Council will require any investigations to be carried out in accordance with the British Archaeologists and Developers Liaison Code of Practice.
- The London Cycle Network plus runs along the north-eastern and southern edges of the Conservation Area.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Grade II

- 37 Spital Square
- Area railings at 37 Spital Square

- Street Lamp at Spital Square
- The Central Foundation School for Girls, Spital Square
- Forecourt Wall and Gate Piers at The Central Foundation School for Girls
- Folgate Street Road Surface (from the junction with Norton Folgate to the east side of the junction with Elder Street)
- 8 Folgate Street
- 10 Folgate Street
- 12 Folgate Street
- 14 Folgate Street
- 16 Folgate Street
- 18 Folgate Street
- 17 Folgate Street
- 19 Folgate Street
- 21 Folgate Street
- 27 Folgate Street
- 36 Elder Street
- Elder Street Road surface (from the junction with Folgate Street, to the north side of the junction with Fleur de Lis Street)
- 34 Elder Street
- 32 Elder Street
- Railings at Nos 32 and 34 Elder Street
- 30 Elder Street
- 28 Elder Street
- 24 Elder Street
- Fleur-De-Lis Street Road surface (from the junction with Commercial Road to the west side of the junction with Elder Street and Blossom Street)
- 1 – 3 Elder Street
- 5 Elder Street
- 7 Elder Street
- 9 – 13 Elder Street
- Railings at Nos 8 and 11 Elder Street
- 15 Elder Street
- 17 Elder Street

- 19 Elder Street
- 21 Elder Street
- 23 Elder Street
- Street lamp affixed to wall of 26 Elder Street
- 159 Commercial Street
- 151 Commercial Street
- 135-153 Commercial Street

Locally Listed Building

- 5-7 Folgate Street
- 11 Folgate Street
- 11a Folgate Street
- 4 Elder Street
- 6 Elder Street
- 8 Elder Street

Highways and Transportation Issues

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

All streets in this area are particularly important historic streetscapes, and any highways works should seek to preserve or enhance their character.

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 are many vacant or under-used sites in the northern part of this Conservation Area, which would benefit from sensitive re-development. Historic structures and buildings should be retained, and new development should respect the urban form, scale and block structure. Main entrances should be provided to the street, and servicing/parking arrangements should be discreet and appropriate to the townscape.

The Blossom Street warehouses were vacated by Nicholls and Clarke's in the last few years, and there are proposals to bring these back into use as part of a mixed-use residential and office development. Assuming that interventions to historic construction is kept to a minimum, the creative re-use of these buildings is welcomed.

Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

The historic space of Spital Square was a quiet, secluded residential open space for many decades. Its character has now changed significantly, although there is potential to improve the quality of the wider, western part of this street.

There are no parks in the area.

All trees in Conservation Areas are protected, and some trees are also covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). Notice must be given to the authority before works are carried out to any tree in the Conservation Area, and some works require specific permission. More information can be found in the Council's Guide to Trees, and on the Tower Hamlets website. Carrying out works to trees without the necessary approval can be a criminal offence, and the Council welcomes early requests for advice.

Equalities:

Valuing diversity is one of the Council's core values, and we take pride in being one of the most culturally rich and diverse boroughs in the UK. This core value has driven the preparation of this document and will continue to inform changes to this document in

the future. These values will also inform changes to buildings and places where this document provides guidance to ensure inclusivity for all sections of the community.

This Character Appraisal and Management Guidelines will support the Council's aims:

- a strong spirit of community and good race relations in Tower Hamlets.
- to get rid of prejudice, discrimination and victimisation within the communities we serve and our workforce
- to make sure that the borough's communities and our workforce are not discriminated against or bullied for any reason, including reasons associated with their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religious belief.

Please contact us if you feel that this document could do more to promote equality and further the interests of the whole community.

Publicity

The existence of the Conservation Area will be promoted locally to raise awareness of current conservation issues and to invite contributions from the community.

Consideration of Resources Needed to Conserve the Historic Environment:

The most effective way to secure the historic environment is to ensure that buildings can continue to contribute to the life of the local community, preferably funding their own maintenance and refurbishment. Commercial value can be generated directly from the building, through its use as a dwelling or office, or through its role in increasing the attractiveness of the area to tourists and visitors. However, it should be noted that economic reasons alone will not in themselves justify the demolition or alteration of a building in a Conservation Area. The Council will consider grant aid to historic buildings and places.

In order to meet today's needs without damaging the historic or architectural value of a building, a degree of flexibility, innovation and creative estate management may be required.

Ongoing Management and Monitoring Change:

To keep a record of changes within the area, dated photographic surveys of street frontages and significant buildings and views will be made every 5 years. Also, public meetings will be held every 5 years to maintain communications between all stakeholders and identify new opportunities and threats to the Conservation Area as they arise.

The Council recognises the contribution of the local community in managing Conservation Areas, and will welcome proposals to work collaboratively to monitor and manage the area.

In addition, the Borough's Annual Monitoring Report, prepared with the new Local Development Framework, will assess progress on the implementation of the whole Local Development Scheme, including policies relevant to conservation.

Enforcement Strategy:

Appropriate enforcement, with the support of the community, is essential to protect the area's character. The Council will take prompt action against those who carry out unauthorised works to listed buildings, or substantial or complete demolition of buildings within a Conservation Area. Unauthorised work to a listed building is a criminal offence and could result in a fine and/or imprisonment. Likewise, unauthorised substantial or complete demolition of a building within a Conservation Area is also illegal. It is therefore essential to obtain Conservation Area or Listed Building Consent before works begin.

If listed buildings are not maintained in good repair, then the Council can step in to ensure that relevant repairs are carried out. In some circumstances, the Council itself

may undertake essential repairs and recover the cost from the owner. The Council has powers of compulsory purchase, if necessary to protect Listed Buildings.

The Council will enforce conservation law wherever necessary, and will consider the introduction of Article 4 Directions to remove Permitted Development Rights where appropriate.

Further Reading and Contacts

- The Survey of London, volume 27: Spitalfields and Mile End New Town.
- The Buildings of England (London 5: East). Cherry, O'Brien and Pevsner.
- The Saving of Spitalfields. Girouard, Cruickshank and Samuel (the Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust).

The Council encourages and welcomes discussions with the community about the historic environment and the contents of this document. Further guidance on all aspects of this document can be obtained on our website at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk or by contacting:

Tel: 020 7364 5009

Email: dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk

This document is also available in Libraries, Council Offices and Idea Stores in the Borough.

For a translation, or large print, audio or braille version of this document, please telephone 0800 376 5454. Also, if you require any further help with this document, please telephone 020 7364 5372.

Also, you may wish to contact the following organizations for further information:

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

Listed Buildings at Risk:

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

Any other threats to the Conservation Area

- The City Fringe is an area experiencing significant change – this will need to be carefully guided to protect the special character of the Conservation Area. Particular attention will need to be given to large office developments and the proliferation of night-time economy uses.

- There are proposals for major development in the block defined by Norton Folgate, Folgate Street, Blossom Street and Fleur-de-Lis Street, which is the site of a scheduled Ancient Monument (the Priory of St Mary Spital, founded in 1247). Proposals will need to take account of the Ancient Monument, as well as the character of the Conservation Area.

Priorities for Action (1-5)

1. Prepare detailed study of the night-time economy to inform future decision making.
2. Prepare detailed capacity study of vacant and underdeveloped sites in the area.
3. Undertake further research into the history of the area to inform future development.
4. Prepare Stakeholder Guide with detailed design guidance for the area.
5. Undertake public realm study and implement improvements to historic streetscape