



Boundary Estate

Conservation Area

1. Character Appraisal

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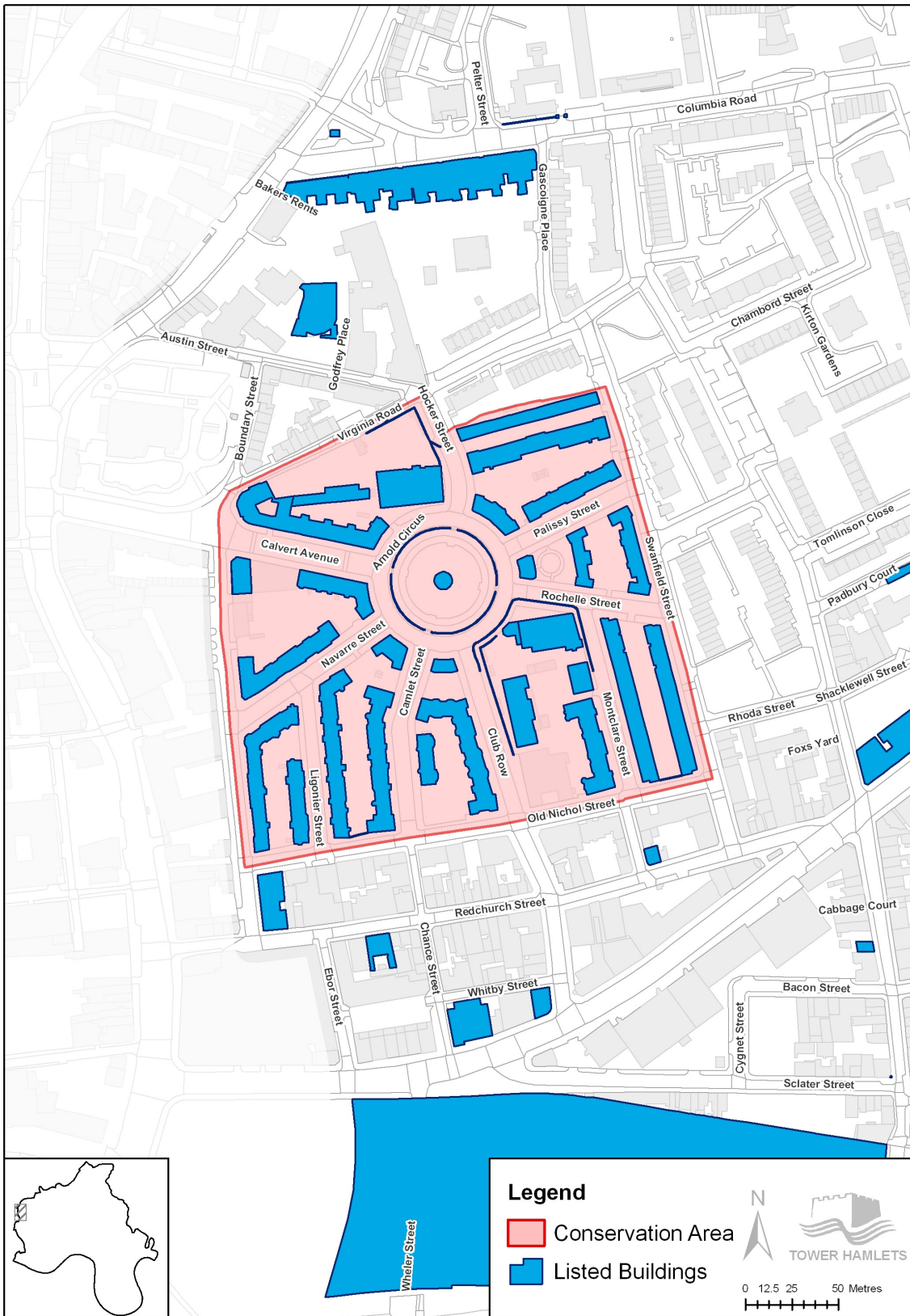
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Adopted by Cabinet: 7th March 2007

Introduction

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

This guide has been prepared for the following purposes:

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



BOUNDARY ESTATE 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 Boundary Estate Conservation Area was designated in December 1985. Situated in the north west of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, the Boundary Street Estate was built by the London County Council (LCC) at the turn of last century following one of the first slum clearances in the east end. Boundary Estate Conservation Area covers Arnold Circus and the surrounding social housing estate in an area formally known as “The Nichol”, and lies east of Shoreditch High Street and north of old Bishopsgate Goods Yard.

The Boundary Street Estate was built 1894-1900 after the LCC had taken control over social housing in London in 1889. The estate was the first to be developed by the authority and comprises 20 blocks of 5 storey flats, two schools (one still in operation), workshops and commercial shops, all built around a central circus.

History

By 1890, the terraces located in the Boundary Estate area formed one of the East End’s many slums. The two schools predate the residential buildings of the Estate. Rochelle School is mostly 1879 with two additions of 1899 to the northern of the two buildings. Virginia School was built in 1887, although the second floor was added in 1914-15.

The Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 gave the local government the power to demolish slum housing and as a result the LCC invested in the area, providing new social housing to accommodate the growing population arriving in London during the Industrial Revolution. “Old Nichol”, as it was known, was home to 5,710 people. This provided the target number to be re-housed in the new LCC estate following the slum clearance.

The original intention was to rebuild the area as a series of rectangular plots, however under the supervision of architect Owen Fleming, a new layout was proposed by the

Housing of the Working Classes branch of the LCC. Based around a central open area (Arnold Circus, a circular raised garden within a ring road) from which seven tree-lined streets radiated, this seven-pointed design echoed those built in other areas of London such as 'Seven Dials' in Covent Garden. Planned as free-standing blocks, separated by open spaces for light and fresh air, each building was designed for its situation, rather than the architectural uniformity typical of terraces and other existing social housing estates of the time (eg. 19th Century Peabody Trust). The architectural language of the Arts and Crafts movement was adopted as the common theme. The estate also accommodated a live/work community, with small workshops included in the design to promote local business and employment.

The Boundary Street Estate was recognised as an important step forward in the history of social housing. HRH Edward, Prince of Wales, opened the estate in 1900 and tried to capture the importance of the estate as a model for future similar projects in his opening speech:

“It is not, perhaps, too much to assume that everyone who takes any interest in the improvement of homes for the working classes has heard of the scheme undertaken by the London County Council...for the clearance and rebuilding of the huge slum in Bethnal Green, known as the Boundary Street area.”

Today, there is a strong sense of community, and the residents are making sustained efforts to improve the area.

Character

The character of the Boundary Estate Conservation Area is defined by the semi-formal, late 19th-century housing estate, which is made up of twenty (Grade-II listed) purpose-built housing blocks. The majority of the blocks are five stories high, each individually designed to reflect its position within the estate and its relationship to its surroundings. The raised central garden, known as Boundary Gardens, is the centre point of the estate, with the housing blocks arranged on seven unequally placed

streets radiating from this focal point. Calvert Street, the original main road leading from Shoreditch High Street was widened and extended to provide a grander entrance to the estate. The tree-lined Calvert Avenue was remodelled with shops facing onto the road and workshops to the rear. Today, these are still in existence, many with their original shop fronts.

The Boundary Estate Conservation Area is of special architectural and historical interest to the Borough. However, some of the buildings are in a bad state of repair, and the area suffers from traffic problems.

In recent years, the evening economy has expanded in the surrounding areas of Shoreditch and Brick Lane, which has created problems of noise, antisocial behaviour and demand for parking in the Boundary Estate.

Land Use

The prevailing character of the area is residential, with commercial uses confined to Calvert Avenue. The workshops and commercial units contribute to the village-like character of the Conservation Area.

Scale

The scale of the area is roughly uniform throughout the estate. The 4 or 5 story housing blocks are the main buildings in the Conservation Area and dominate the character. However there are smaller, more modest workshop and service buildings that break up the skyline.

Open Spaces

The main open space of the Boundary Estate Conservation Area is the grade-II listed Boundary Gardens. The bandstand, built in 1912, forms the centre-point of the estate. The roads radiating from Arnold Circus are planted with mature trees. There are over 50 tree preservation orders on trees within the Boundary Street Estate. The open areas between the housing blocks were designed to ensure “every living room

received sunlight at some point of the day”. These areas provide an important breathing space between the buildings and provide a play area for children.

The ironwork on the Boundary Street Conservation Area forms an important part of the estate as a whole in the form of railings, gates and balconies.

Views

“If a line is drawn from the sill of any window at an angle of 45°, it is clear of all obstruction from adjacent buildings”. This was part of the original concept of the estate and to a large extent the views in the Boundary Estate have retained this feature. The views from Arnold Circus down onto the radial roads are a unique feature of the raised central garden. The view from the bandstand along Calvert Avenue towards Shoreditch High Street is a particularly important one.

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 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 London Borough of Hackney 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 Boundary Estate is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- The western edge of the Conservation Area is the border with the London Borough of Hackney. Any management activities should be coordinated with their City Fringe Action Plan.
- The area lies within the Weavers Sub-Area of the City Fringe Area Action Plan. This plan identifies the area as predominantly residential in character, but with small employment uses scattered through the area.
- Two development sites are identified to the south of the area, and most of it lies within the strategic views consultation area.
- Nearly every major building is Grade II listed, and the Boundary Gardens in the centre are a Listed Park and Garden.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Grade II

- Bandstand at Boundary Street Garden, Arnold Circus
- Iron Railings and Overthrows at Boundary Street Garden, Arnold Circus
- 4-5 Virginia Road
- Marlow House, Arnold Circus
- Marlow Workshops, Arnold Circus
- Virginia Primary School, Arnold Circus
- Area railings at nos. 35 to 49, Arnold Circus
- Chertsey House, Arnold Circus
- Sunbury House, Swanfield Street
- Sunbury Workshops, Swanfield Street
- Taplow House, Palissy Street
- Hurley House, Arnold Circus
- Culham House, Rochelle Street

- Sonning House, Swanfield Street
- Henley House, Swanfield Street
- Walton House, Montclare Street
- Iron Railings between Henley House and Walton House, Old Nichol Street
- Cookham House, Montclare Street
- Porters' House (Former Laundry), Montclare Street
- Rochelle Primary School, Arnold Circus
- Iron Railings at Rochelle Primary School, Arnold Circus
- Rochelle Primary School House, Arnold Circus
- Playground Wall at Rochelle Primary School
- Sandford House, Arnold Circus
- Clifton House, Club Row
- Molesey House, Camlet Street
- Iffley House, Arnold Circus
- Laleham House, Camlet Street
- Hedsor House, Ligonier Street
- Benson House, Ligonier Street
- Iron railings, Gate and Gate Piers between Laleham House and Hedsor House, Old Nichol Street
- Abingdon House, Boundary Street
- Wargrave House, Navarre Street
- Shiplake House, Arnold Circus
- Walker House, 6-8 Boundary 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.

Despite the relatively high density of development, the streets have a quiet, residential feel, with some on-street parking. There is potential for improvement by reducing the quantity of highways engineering – for example the ‘cattle pen’ pedestrian barriers on the central circus may not be necessary. Also, alternatives to the vehicle barriers on Palissy St and elsewhere, which are more in keeping with the character of the area, could be investigated. Better cycle parking could also benefit the 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

Arts and Crafts architecture can sometimes be quite tolerant to sympathetic additions due to its asymmetry and composition from different elements. However, in the case of the Boundary Estate, the symmetrical compositions of the facades and the tight, systematic organisation of blocks around the Circus creates a coherent urban character with very limited scope for new development.

Although there is a mix of other land uses in the area, the predominant character of the area is residential. A significant increase in other uses, particularly the night-time economy, would be detrimental to the special quality of the area.

Two sites to the south of the Conservation Area between Old Nichol St, Redchurch St, Club Road and Boundary St have been identified as sites of potential development. Any development on these sites should respect the character of the Boundary Estate, and also endeavour to provide active frontages to the street.

As discussed above, there is potential for improvement to the street environment, including attention to railings. A public realm audit and strategy for the area could help identify and prioritize specific improvements. The large semi-public open spaces in the interior of the residential blocks are a consequence of the typology of the Boundary estate. Some of these spaces have been improved, for example with a children’s play

area, while some are not the social focus that they should be, and there is potential for improvement.

The Council will require traditional railings, ironwork and front boundary walls to be retained. New street furniture, including railings, bollards and street signs added to the Conservation Area should respect the character of the existing traditional railings and ironwork.

Within the Conservation Area, a significant amount of York Stone paving has been retained. Careful maintenance of this characterful element of the street scene is needed, and it should be extended where possible and appropriate.

The reintroduction of road setts to match or complement the original, for the whole Conservation Area, is a long term objective. Options should be investigated for appropriate and subtle traffic calming within the area.

Where practical, a shared satellite dish on the roof should replace several individual satellite dishes.

Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

Arnold Circus is the public space at the heart of the scheme, and is in urgent need of repair and maintenance. The green areas are unkept and overgrown, the railings are damaged, and surfaces have been vandalized. The Grade II-listed bandstand, an important and unifying feature of the space, is on the Buildings at Risk register. Some roof tiles are missing or damaged and the timber has been damaged and defaced.

Other open spaces and gardens are likely to be of historic value, and the Conservation department should be consulted on any proposed improvement works.

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 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 Listed Building Consent or Conservation Area Consent as appropriate 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 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:

Arnold Circus Bandstand and Railings

Arnold Circus E2

Priority – C (C)

Designation – Listed Grade II, Conservation Area, Registered Park and Garden Grade II

Condition - Poor.

Ownership - Local Authority

Summary

Bandstand 1899. The railings are corroding and causing the stonework plinths to spall. Scheme for repair of bandstand and surrounding park being developed by London Borough of Tower Hamlets and local residents.

Action Proposed to Secure:

- The Council will work with the Friends of Arnold Circus and other members of the community to assemble resources to repair and refurbish the bandstand, and support efforts to bring it back into regular use.

Any other threats to the Conservation Area

- The City Fringe is an area experiencing considerable change. This must be carefully guided to ensure that the quiet, residential character of the Boundary Estate is retained unharmed.

Priorities for Action (1-5)

1. Repair and refurbish the Bandstand at Arnold Circus.
2. Continue to support the Friends of Arnold Circus.
3. Prepare Detailed Design Guidance for works to the Boundary Estate.
4. Undertake a Public Realm Study to inform future improvements.
5. Co-ordinate conservation action with the adjoining London Borough of Hackney.