



Island Gardens

Conservation Area

1. Character Appraisal

2. Management Guidelines

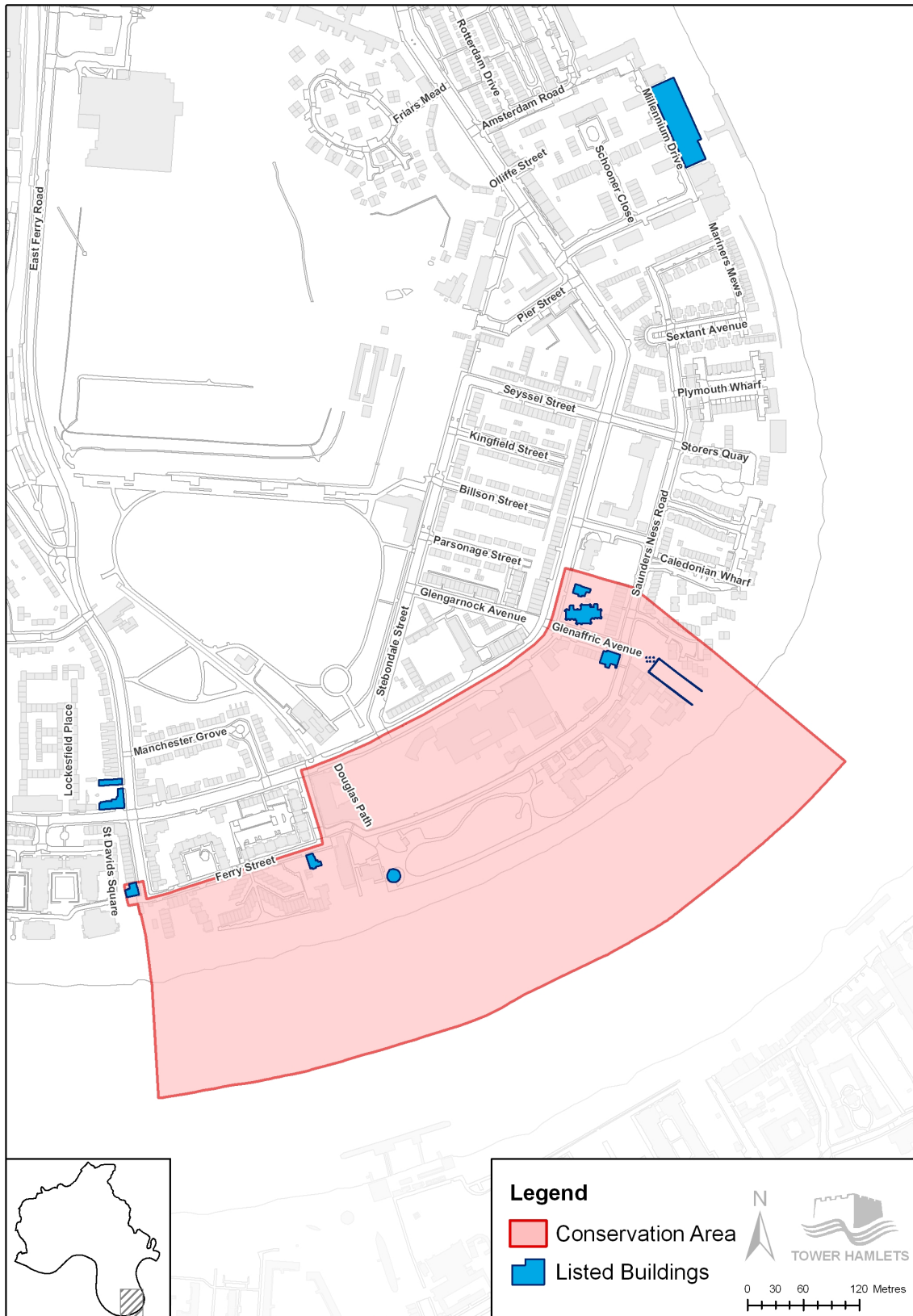
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Adopted by Cabinet: 7th March 2007

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.



ISLAND GARDENS CONSERVATION AREA

This map is indicative only and is not a planning document. For further information please contact the Council.

Produced 9 October 2006 from Ordnance Survey digital data and incorporating Surveyed revision available at this date. © Crown Copyright 1998. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without prior permission of the Ordnance Survey. Supplied by: London Borough of Tower Hamlets LA100019288

1. Character Appraisal

Overview

The Island Gardens Conservation Area was designated in March 1971. Island Gardens Conservation Area is located at the south end of the Isle of Dogs and is focused on the statutorily listed open space, developed to protect the axial views across the river of the Royal Naval College and the Queen's House in Greenwich. The importance of these views has secured the park's inclusion in the Buffer Zone of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site.

History

Island Gardens and its listed buildings are the only surviving post-war remnants of the area's pre-20th century urban history. The linear strip of land facing the Thames was formerly used for manufacturing and ship repair. The land between Manchester Road and Saunders Ness Road, adjacent to Island Gardens, was historically occupied by terraced worker's housing up until the Second World War when much of it suffered bomb damage. The remainder was cleared in the late 1960s, creating space for the George Green School and new estates of public housing.

Part of the Conservation Area falls within 'Cubitt Town', an area developed by William Cubitt from 1842 on land leased from the Countess of Glengall. It was leased for the purpose of establishing an industrial settlement which included a building yard, housing, wharves and the Newcastle Draw Dock on the River Thames. Cubitt also financed the building of Christ Church. Constructed between 1852-4 and designed by Frederick Johnstone, it is one of the few churches originally built to serve the communities associated with the industrial developments on the Isle of Dogs which survived the Blitz.

As early as 1848, John Liddell, a Medical Inspector to Greenwich Hospital put forward the idea of preserving an area on the Isle of Dogs facing the Greenwich Hospital from industrial development. His recommendations included the purchase of part of the riverside across the river from the hospital *'to prevent the total closure of its vistas,*

and to shut out the annoyances of gloomy unsightly and offensive buildings, that are sure to be erected'. Island Gardens was designed in 1895 by John J Sexby of the London County Council Parks Department on land between Wharf Road and the river acquired from Cubitt by the Commissioners of Greenwich Hospital. Formed from a reed-bed, the gardens were planted with trees to hide the industrial buildings on the Isle of Dogs from the Naval College. The gardens and plantings of Island Gardens are now protected by its listing.

Between 1861-5 Phillip Hardwick's development plan for the area was implemented and included the construction of Wharf Road, now Saunders Ness Road, through the estate, which defined a 200ft wide strip along the river. The first of 100 houses was not constructed until 1862. Almost all of the housing, built up until 1880, was lost during the Second World War. The 19th century terraced housing which occupied much of the area has been replaced with new residential development and the George Green School.

A large number of people have moved away from the Isle of Dogs at two major points during the 20th Century, the first through wartime bombing and the second following the 'wind-down' and eventual closure of the docks. When the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was set up in 1981, the population had declined to 15,500. Shortly after, the Greater London Development Plan identified the whole of the Isle of Dogs riverside frontage as an area where commercial and industrial uses should be phased out.

The Docklands Light Railway (DLR), extending down into the Isle of Dogs, originally terminated at Island Gardens Station. Housing development schemes such as those on Saunders Ness Road and Invicta Wharf were constructed in the 1980 and 1990s and the Island Gardens public open space was rejuvenated at the same time.

Character

The character of the Conservation Area is defined by its open space and low density development, as well as a significant quantity of established planting. The majority of

buildings are residential, constructed during the late 1970s and early 1980s and are of varying character and material. Very few surviving buildings date from the area's pre-industrial period or industrial heyday.

The park at Island Gardens is a valuable outdoor amenity space, and is dominated by the Grade-II listed rotunda entrance to the Greenwich Foot Tunnel. Designed by LCC engineer Sir Alexander Binnie and constructed between 1896 and 1902, the building creates both a visual and physical link across the river to its sister building.

Island Gardens itself has changed very little, still providing an open and green focus for the area. Dotted throughout the Conservation Area are a small number of listed buildings, the only significant grouping located within 'The Church of Christ and St John, Manchester Road' tree preservation order area. The Waterman's Arms public house is situated on Glenaffric Avenue with views out towards the Thames over the surviving Newcastle Draw Dock to Greenwich.

The Ferry House pub pre-dates all the buildings within the Conservation Area, appearing on early maps, dating it (probably) as 17th century in origin and associated with the Greenwich Ferry. This ferry ran for more than 500 years, using the site of the slipway in the boatyard opposite. 58-60 Ferry Street forms the only building within the Conservation Area pre-dating the industrialisation of the area. It was originally a riverside villa built in stages between 1830 and 1850.

Land Use

The prevailing character of the Island Gardens Conservation Area is a mixture of residential and community land use, and is defined by its significant open space. Residential developments are a mix of speculative and affordable and the area is generally non-commercial in nature. The granting of planning permission for purposes other than educational, community or residential is therefore unlikely. The retention of community uses for purpose-built buildings within the area will be encouraged.

The small cafe pavilion is a valuable service which adds to the amenity value while being relatively discreet and not disturbing the tranquil quality of the park. The tables and benches are organized discreetly in the northern part of the gardens under the trees.

Scale

The majority of building heights in the area vary between 3-4 storeys. The Christ Church spire provides a prominent landmark which should be protected.

Open Spaces

Designated as Metropolitan Open land and contained within the buffer of the Greenwich World Heritage Site, the gardens comprise three acres of waterfront park which form the heart of the Conservation Area and afford outstanding views of the Royal Naval College in Greenwich. The park is the only significant open space within the Conservation Area and has a cultural importance beyond the Borough. It is furnished and planted in a simple way so as not to detract from the world heritage site across the River Thames, and its essential character is derived from its simplicity, tranquillity and the outstanding views across the river.

Views

The arrangement and location of the gardens provides access to views across the river to Greenwich, once described by Wren as ‘the best view of Greenwich Hospital’, and made famous by Canaletto’s famous 18th century painting ‘A View of Greenwich from the River’. Views up and down the river, towards Trinity Almshouses and the Old Greenwich Power Station on the south bank of the Thames, are also significant.

The George Green School buildings form the low-scale backdrop to Island Gardens, affording views through the site to the river and Greenwich from Millwall Park and Mudchute.

The prominent spire of Christ Church is visible from much of the Conservation Area and can be glimpsed through the tree canopy from inside Island Gardens. The church spire is also visible from Greenwich and the safe-guarding of these views is particularly important.

The view up East Ferry Road, through the former Potter's Ferry to the river should be preserved. This was the link with Greenwich and the south for at least 500 years. There are also views from land and water of Johnson's Draw Dock and Newcastle Draw Dock.

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.

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 Island Gardens is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In Island Gardens, 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 area also falls within the Southern Sub-Area of the Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan, identifying the gardens as public open space and supporting the enhancement of the parks and riverside paths.
- The River is part of the Blue Ribbon network, and the river bank is identified as an area of importance for nature conservation.

Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

Grade II*

- Church of Christ and St John, Manchester Road

Grade II

- The Watermans Arms Public House, 1 Glenaffric Avenue
- Bollards at Dock Entrance to Newcastle Draw Dock, south-east side of Saunders Ness Road
- Newcastle Draw Dock, south-east side of Saunders Ness Road
- Entrance rotunda to the Greenwich foot tunnel.
- 60 Ferry Street
- Ferry House Public House, 26 Ferry Street

Locally Listed Building

- Christ Church Vicarage, Manchester 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.

Manchester Road is the main thoroughfare along the north side of the Conservation Area. There is a grid of smaller roads, including Glenaffric Avenue and Saunders Ness Road, and then a network of pedestrian lanes and pathways closer to the river. There are some areas of historic floorscape around the Ferry House public house in the west of the Conservation Area, which should be protected or enhanced.

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

Some public realm improvements have taken place recently in the east of the area between Glenaffric Avenue and the Newcastle Draw Dock, although further maintenance and landscaping improvements should be investigated. The historic interpretation signage has deteriorated to the point where it is difficult to read. Streetscape features such as railings and street signs should be cleaned and refurbished where necessary.

The 1980s riverside developments at Luralda Gardens and Cumberland Mills present many dead frontages to the surrounding streets and the narrow riverside walkway. In the event of any alteration or redevelopment on these sites, the potential should be explored for improving the quality of the public realm surrounding these developments through better lighting, landscaping and active frontages.

George Green's School occupies a large, constrained, prominent site within the Conservation Area. While the school itself is an important part of the area's history, dating back to 1828, the current buildings of the school do not in themselves make an important architectural contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Any future redevelopment should seek to maintain the open character of the Island Gardens themselves, protect views from Island Gardens to Christ Church and views from Millwall Park to Greenwich where possible, and present a positive frontage to the surrounding streets.

The development at Livingston Place and Midland Place should be recognised as a successful example of the staggered terrace housing type, with well-cared-for pedestrian routes through the centre. The potential for higher quality lighting and landscaping along the waterfront itself should also be investigated.

Trees, Parks and Open Spaces

Island Gardens itself is listed, and is the most important open space within the area. The special character of the gardens, in particular the unique views to Greenwich and its simple character should be protected. This needs to happen in coordination with other requirements under other legislation and policies.

All trees in Conservation Areas are protected, and some trees in the Churchyard 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 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 43: Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs.
- 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:

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

Any other threats to the Conservation Area

- There is an application to build a hotel across the top of the Ferry Slipway, which would cut off East Ferry Road from the slipway and river. As described in the Appraisal, this site is historic and should be appropriately protected.

Priorities for Action (1-5)

1. Improve and enhance the visitor environment and promote tourism.
2. Protect the setting of the Church of Christ and St John.
3. Ensure status of World Heritage Site is fully recognised in all changes to area.
4. Protect historic pubs in the area.
5. Improve riverside walk and its connections.