



WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET CONSERVATION AREA

Character appraisal and management plan

Adopted October 2021



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PREFACE

What is a conservation area?

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 ensure that change preserves or enhances the specific character of these areas for everybody.

The special character of these areas does not come only from the quality of their individual buildings, but from the value of these buildings as a group and from their setting. Elements such as the historic layout of roads, paths and boundaries and characteristic building and paving materials all contribute to the familiar and cherished local scene.

What is the purpose of this document?

This document has been prepared to comply with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 69(1) which 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”. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan provides a detailed description of the area’s architectural and historic character and management guidelines on how this character should be preserved or enhanced in the context of appropriate ongoing change.

This document has also been prepared to support relevant strategic objectives contained within the council’s Conservation Strategy 2017 – 2027 including objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 2.6.

Who is this document for?

This is an inclusive document which is intended to engage with many different people and organisations. It will depend on the support of the community to achieve its objectives.

The character appraisal and management plan is aimed primarily at the residents, businesses, developers and others living and working in the area. The document has

also been prepared to align conservation objectives within different parts of the council, to help to meet the objectives of the Conservation Strategy and to 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 change constructively.

What is the status of this document?

This character appraisal and management plan has the status of planning guidance. It replaces the previous character appraisal and management guidelines, adopted in 2007. It should be read in conjunction with Tower Hamlet's Local Plan and the London Plan. All planning applications for sites within the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area should be informed by this document. It is a material consideration when planning applications affecting the conservation area are assessed.

Equality and diversity

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 informed 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 and as such this document provides guidance to ensure inclusivity for all members of the community.

This character appraisal and management plan will support the council's aims set out below:

- Creation of a strong spirit of community and good race relations in Tower Hamlets.
- The removal of prejudice, discrimination and victimisation within the communities we serve and our workforce.
- To ensure 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.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area was designated in September 1998. The boundary was amended in 2021, with two small areas added and one area removed.

The Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area marks the western end of the A11, an ancient route linking the City with Essex and Continental Europe via Harwich. The new parish of Whitechapel, originally part of Stepney, developed as a suburb of London around this ancient route, taking its name from the whitewashed walls of the 13th century chapel (the parish church of St Mary). The form and variety of the properties fronting Whitechapel High Street reflect the street's consistently intensive use throughout the Borough's history.

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from as long ago as the 16th century and including much of interest from the 19th century and early 20th century.

The character and appearance of the area, as described in the appraisal in the first part of the document, define its special qualities. The second part of the document, the Management Plan, contains relevant policy and guidance as well as development guidelines intended to ensure that future change is sensitive to the area's special character

1.1. Location and setting

The Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area is located in the north-eastern section of Aldgate, in the west of the Borough.

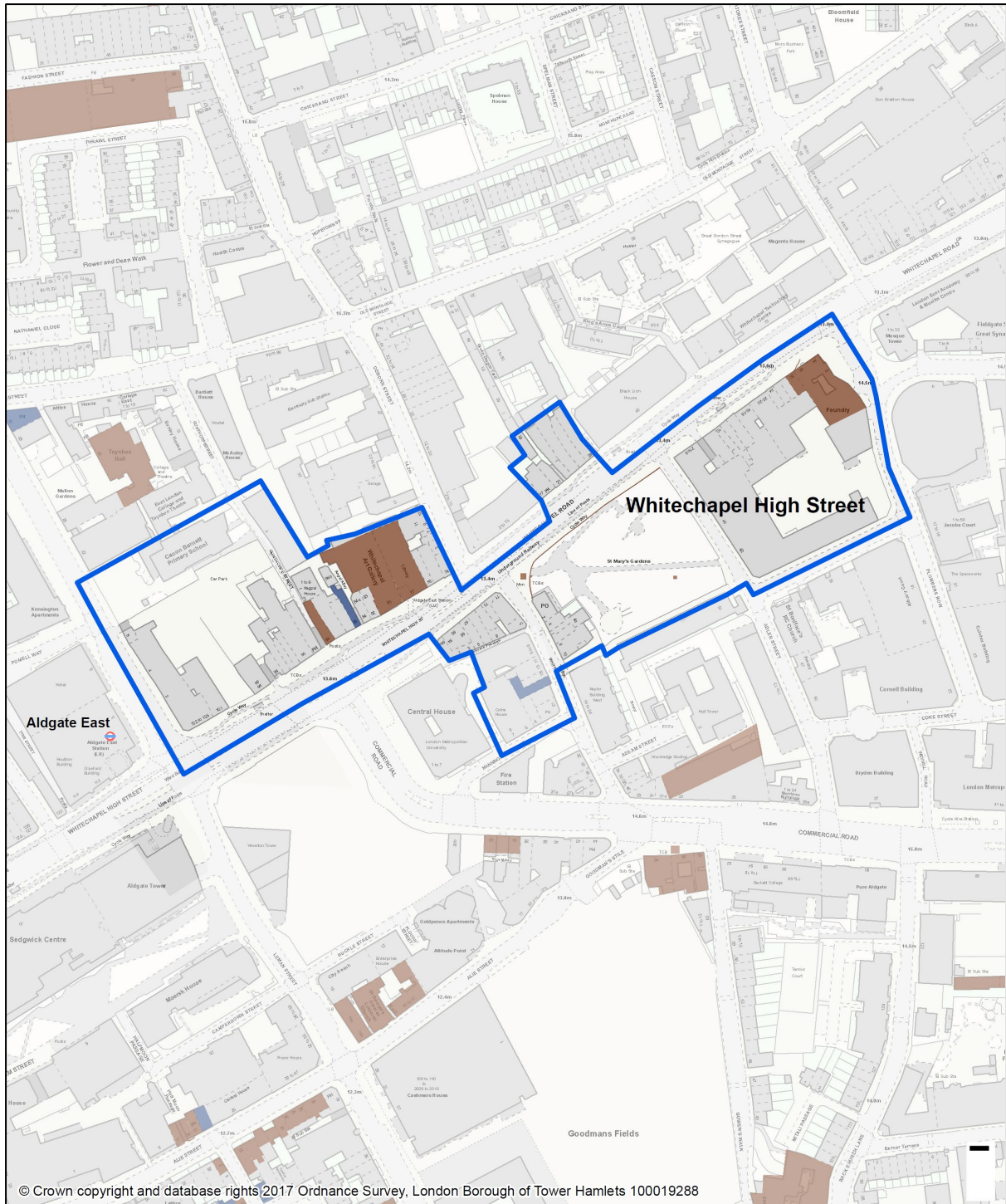
The boundaries of the conservation area follow the historic footprints of buildings set on long, narrow plots, some amalgamated in twos and threes, but always presenting a narrow street frontage in relation to their depth. The area contains individually

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significant buildings and, collectively, the surviving pre-war townscape is of historic and architectural importance, worthy of preservation and enhancement.

The setting of the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area, and especially the areas surrounding it to the south, east and west, contrast in scale and architectural articulation with the development within the conservation area. Aldgate Place, the new mixed use development in and around the south western corner of the conservation area, dominates the eastern edge of the Commercial Road / Whitechapel High Street intersection. Central House (outside the boundary of the conservation area) provides a transition in scale between the very large scale City development to the west and the more intimate historic scale of the buildings lining Whitechapel High Street.

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-  Conservation Area
-  Statutory Listed Buildings
-  Locally Listed Buildings

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

2.1. Evolution of the area

Whitechapel High Street and Whitechapel Road are probably on the same route as part of the old Roman road from Aldgate to Colchester. In the medieval period, Whitechapel High Street was known as 'Algatestrete'. From the eastern end of Whitechapel Road, the Roman road probably ran in a north-north-easterly direction to cross the River Lea by the ford at Old Ford. Following the building of Bow Bridge across the River Lea at Stratford, the old Roman road (from the eastern end of Whitechapel Road to Old Ford) was replaced by what is now Mile End Road and Bow Road as the main section of the main road from the City of London to Essex. Archaeological evidence has revealed that a thriving suburb had been established by the end of the Saxon Period and continued to grow as ribbon development along the north side of the highway, catering for travellers and accommodating the 'nuisance' trades which had been refused permission in the congested City. Fields to the south of the road were quarried during the 13th century and 14th century for gravel and brickearth and used by local industries for making pots and casting bells. At the same time, green areas to the east were rapidly covered by streets and housing. The village or suburb of Whitechapel expanded to the point where it required its own chapel.

Constructed in 1250-1286, the first chapel of ease to St Dunstan of Stepney, built of clunch or white chalk rubble, gave Whitechapel its name. Rebuilt in the 14th century as St Mary Matfelon to accommodate the steadily growing population, it became the parish church of St Mary Whitechapel when the area became a separate parish in 1338.

Fuelled by the river trade, the suburbs of Whitechapel, Spitalfields, Wapping, Ratcliffe and Limehouse were largely built up by the end of the 1500s. By the 17th century, Whitechapel High Street was lined with coaching inns and the impressive houses of rich merchants. The courtyards of many coaching inns still survive today, for example Green Dragon Yard, Angel Alley and Gunthorpe Street which are all located on the north side of Whitechapel High Street/ Road. Gunthorpe Street was formerly known as George Yard, but was eventually renamed in October 1912 after John Gunthorpe, a former rector of St Mary's Whitechapel.

The increasing size and affluence of the City drew people from Essex, Suffolk and beyond. However, the sudden increase in number of those moving to London from these areas resulted in properties being subdivided and becoming over-crowded. This marked the first emergence of the East End slums. Ogilvy and Morgan's map recorded by 1677 that the area was densely developed with long narrow yards leading off 'White Chapel' which was very wide and dominated the area. Several of the yards remain and the legacy of elongated, narrow plots survives as a characteristic of the conservation area. The church of St Mary Whitechapel was rebuilt again in 1672-3 in a form which reflected evolving forms of worship and changing architectural fashions. The new church re-used some of the old foundations and the lower parts of the tower.

The construction of the enclosed docks in the 19th century meant that new roads were necessary to handle massively increased traffic through the area, by-passing the narrow streets of the congested City. Commercial Road was created in 1802-4 in an effort to link the docks and the City but its westernmost section (within the conservation area) was not completed until 1865 thus linking it directly with Commercial Street, to the north which had been laid out by 1845.

An important new junction, Whitechapel High Street, Commercial Street, Drum Street/ Commercial Road and Leaman Street had thus been created. Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road/Drum Street marked the start of the two most important thoroughfares in the East End and thus the junction became the effective gateway to the area.

The links with the docks encouraged the establishment of new industries within the area. By 1864 Whitechapel (and East Smithfield) had become home to the capital's sugar refineries, employing German migrants and processing the raw material imported through the West India Docks. The refineries survived in Whitechapel until the 1870s when the business went into decline, making way for warehousing after the construction of railway links to the docks.

The Victorian East End accommodated a range of industries and crafts which needed to be close to the City. The location of industrial sites in amongst commercial and residential uses was a characteristic of the area, which helped to set it apart from the

City. Industries were as likely to be home based or located within small workshops as they were within larger purpose-built factories. Some continued the traditions of earlier centuries – many of London's arms makers, for example, kept workshops in Whitechapel to be close to the armouries of the Tower of London and the Proof House of the Gunmaker's Co.

Other industries, including tobacco, brewing and engineering were also located in the area. The silk-weaving industry, in decline since the late 18th century, evolved into a massive clothing industry employing large numbers of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe in the 1870s. Overcrowded slums housed the working class in appalling conditions and Whitechapel became synonymous with poverty and destitution. The back streets were a maze of disreputable yards and courts, forming the backdrop to the infamous Whitechapel murders. The obvious deprivation within the area, meant that eventually it became the focus for Victorian philanthropic endeavour, galvanised by Samuel Barnett of St Jude's Whitechapel who founded Toynbee Hall (just to the north of the conservation area boundary), an organisation which acted as a catalyst for social reform and also the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

In 1875-78 the Church of St Mary Whitechapel was rebuilt and yet again in 1880 after it suffered serious fire damage. The church had a commanding tower and spire located hard against the pavement on the southern edge of the street.

From 1870 until 1972, the acute angle formed by the junction of Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Road (Drum Street) was dominated by Gardener's department store, an impressive building with a clock tower. This major road junction, which was often called 'Gardener's Corner', became a focus for commercial activity. The late 19th century and early 20th century saw rebuilding of some older properties, reflecting the continuing commercial importance of the area's major thoroughfares, such as the impressive No.102 – 105 Whitechapel High Street and No.2 Commercial Street (at the junction of Whitechapel High Street and Commercial Street) for T Venables and Son (Drapers and Furnishers). Early 20th century photographs recall a very busy, urban junction with trams threading through heavy horse traffic.

The area around Whitechapel suffered much bomb damage during the Second World War. The chief loss within the conservation area was the Victorian church of St Mary

of Whitechapel, which was largely destroyed by air raids in 1940 and completely demolished some time later. By the mid 20th century the character of the area was beginning to change. As the area was designated for commercial use, post-war redevelopment had a lower priority than the much more urgent need for new housing further east.

In the 1970s, the area became predominantly Bangladeshi, with people moving to the area seeking work. The Bangladeshi community make up over half the ward's population and make a major contribution to the area's very rich and distinctive character.

In the early 1970s Gardener's store was destroyed by fire and in 1976 'Gardener's Corner' was replaced by a traffic gyratory system which severely compromised pedestrian movement through the area, creating a poorly defined, illegible, car-dominated environment. The later 20th century was a period of relative decline. The area's role as a shopping centre was very much reduced and the condition of many older buildings noticeably deteriorated making the area less attractive. As part of efforts to improve the area, the damaging gyratory was removed several years ago and the street layout simplified in a pattern which reduced the previous vehicular dominance and better connected the historic thoroughfares.

In the early years of the 21st century, the conservation area, situated next to Spitalfields and the City started to benefit from substantial increased investment. Recent years have seen an increase in the amount of residential development within former commercial areas such as this and the area is now viewed, once again, as a highly desirable area for retail premises. Despite the level of change and reconstruction, much older fabric remains and it is this which informs the special character of the area. The information and guidance provided in this document is intended to ensure that change is sensitive to that special character.

2.2 Historic and architectural buildings of significance

The majority of buildings within the conservation area positively contribute to its special character and appearance.

There are a number of listed buildings within the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area. Relevant Historic England list descriptions are available at <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>

Grade II* Listed Buildings

Whitechapel Art Gallery, Whitechapel High Street

Built in 1897–99, The Whitechapel Art Gallery opened to the public as the East End Art Gallery in 1901, founded by the social reformer and missionary Canon Samuel Augustus Barnett and his wife Henrietta. The gallery was designed by Arts and Crafts architect Charles Harrison Townsend who also designed the nearby Bishopsgate Institute in the City. The Art Gallery is one the few examples of Art Nouveau architecture in London. The rendered panel, between the turrets on the front elevation was originally intended to support a mosaic by Walter Crane, but this was never executed, the space intended for the mosaic is now occupied by an artwork by Rachel Whiteread which was fixed to the upper part of the gallery façade as part of the London 2012 Festival. The artwork chiefly consists of gold leaf covered, bronze leaves (cast from the architectural details of the front façade).

Church Bell Foundry, Nos. 32-34 Whitechapel Road (railings and gate to no. 32)

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry, established in 1570, was reputed to be the oldest manufacturing company in the UK, and had been casting bells in Whitechapel for over 400 years before its recent relocation to Dartford. Some of the more notable of these bells included Big Ben, Philadelphia's Liberty Bell and those for Westminster Abbey. The foundry, house and shop had moved across Whitechapel Road to the most recent site on the south side of Whitechapel Road in 1738, and formed one of the most significant building groups of its kind in London. The foundry recently ceased operation. Permission has been granted to convert the historic building to new uses including workshops and a café whilst retaining partial foundry use.

Grade II Listed Buildings

Whitechapel Public Library, No. 77 Whitechapel High Street

Whitechapel Library was established in 1891-2 as one of three free libraries in the East End founded by Passmore Edwards, and was acquired in 2003 by the adjacent

Whitechapel Gallery. The building was skilfully converted and now forms an important part of the Gallery. The front facade includes much terracotta decoration. A weather vane had originally been intended for the top of the library building, but was never realised. However, as part of the conversion a weather vane was designed by Rodney Graham, Canadian artist, sculptor and musician and now adorns the cupola.

Tomb in south east corner of former St Mary's Churchyard, Whitechapel Road

The 18th century Maddox tomb is located in the south east corner of Altab Ali Park.

Drinking Fountain set in wall of former St Mary's Churchyard, Whitechapel Road

Drinking fountain with pink marble basin and plaque set in Norman style arch. Erected 1860 but moved to present position 1879.

Wall of former St Mary's Churchyard, Whitechapel Road

Wall of former St Mary's Churchyard dating from 19th century. Red brick wall with deep white stone capping. Red brick gate piers with white stone bands and carved stone caps.

No. 30 Whitechapel Road

Three storey building dating from the early 19th century, located next to the Whitechapel Foundry. The shopfront dates from the 19th century.

No. 88 Whitechapel High Street

No.88 is an early 19th century building with a 1950's shop on the ground floor. The special interest of the building (with regard to its listed status) is limited to the two Arthur Szyk signs dating from 1934-5; one of the signs is fixed to the front of the building and the other is located above the first floor lift shaft.

Locally Listed Buildings

No. 85 Whitechapel High Street

Built in 1900 as Ye Olde Angel Public House on a site which had been occupied by a public house since at least 1744. The building ceased to be a pub by 1910. The

extremely narrow façade recalls the ancient plot widths of the area. The white rendered facade, topped by a decorative gable is rich in architectural detail.

No. 17 Whitechurch Lane

Three storey building with accommodation within the roof. The building dates from around 1840. The ground floor was originally an open carriageway leading to stables at the rear. The first floor incorporates blind arcading. The roof appears as a mansard from the street but incorporates a central valley in the upper part.

The Bar Locks PH, No. 21 Whitechurch Lane

Three storey corner pub with mansard, gable to corner and prominent chimney at parapet level fronting Manningtree Street. There has been a pub on this site, at the corner of Whitechurch Lane and Manningtree Street, since the mid 18th century, but the existing building appears to date from the late 19th century. The pub was called the Horse and Groom until 2006.

2.3. Archaeological significance

The Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area is located within a Tier 2 Archaeological Priority Area (APA), as identified by Historic England in its update of APAs, completed for Tower Hamlets in October 2017. This APA is identified for its potential to contain remains of Roman and later activity including settlement along a historic routeway.

APAs highlight where important archaeological interest might be located, including potential for new discoveries, based on the history of the area and previous archaeological investigations. APAs in Tier 2 are described as those on which the Greater London Historic Environment Record 'holds specific evidence indicating the presence or likely presence of heritage assets of archaeological interest'.

For more information please see the Greater London Archaeological Priority Area Guidelines published in July 2016, available on the Historic England website. The website also provides a link to the Tower Hamlets Archaeological Priority Areas Appraisal (2017) produced by Historic England.

3.0 TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER

3.1. General historic character and plan form +

The piecemeal development of much of London's East End contrasts with the planning that occurred in the west of the city. Victorian East London was characterised by densely built urban communities, with houses crowded into rambling narrow streets, courts and winding alleys, mixed in with the industry that provided employment. Whitechapel developed around brickyards and tenter grounds, a townscape character which survives to this day in the small streets and narrow passages of the conservation area. Elongated plots with narrow frontages to streets relate directly back to medieval burgage plots (a medieval term for a town rental property owned by a king or lord).

The townscape is further typified by small-scale, single and double-fronted properties lining Whitechapel Road and Commercial Road. Rebuilding and partial rebuilding has taken place many times over the same sites, resulting in overlays of building forms and styles. Often buildings were given a facelift to bring the main street frontage up to date whilst leaving much of the rear parts of the building relatively unaltered. The resulting stylistic variety of architecture contributes to the historic interest and cultural significance of the area and makes a positive contribution to the area's townscape. Whilst the style and form of buildings vary, there is a consistent, relatively small scale to most of the historic buildings within the area; this scale is an important characteristic

3.2. Layout and plan form

The fine grain of the conservation area is expressed by its relatively narrow plots and building frontages. The widths of buildings along Whitechapel High Street vary from 3.5m to 16m, but are on average around 9m. Most buildings fill the full plot and are generally on rectangular footprints.

The urban fabric of the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area retains much of its historic form, based on a tight perimeter block structure. Consolidated continuous frontages, strongly define street edges and buildings are located right at the edge of footways. Commercial units activate main frontages. Internal areas of urban blocks often contain auxiliary structures which are accessible by tight alleyways through street-front properties. The historic church yard with remains of the foundations of St

Mary of Whitechapel was transformed into a public open space (Altab Ali Park) bounded by streets on three sides, with a pedestrian route along the southern side.

3.3. Density and land uses

The area's traditional 'High Street' role, serving the retail needs of the local neighbourhood, declined in recent years, partly due to the spread of office development on the city fringe and partly due to changing retail patterns. Nevertheless, largely driven by the area's proximity to the City, Whitechapel has retained its commercial/retail land uses and is now thriving in a different form, with the area characterised by small-scale retail and industrial enterprises. The Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area remains distinct from the large scale corporate and commercial operators present in the surrounding areas. Small businesses and retailers dominate the conservation area, which is also reflected in lower land use densities than those in the wider Aldgate area.

3.4. Building heights and massing

The buildings of the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area reflect the historic scale of inner London.

The Whitechapel High Street frontage is typified by narrow plot widths with terraces punctuated by alleys leading to a jumble of infill buildings, some of which front onto narrow passages and backland courts. Solutions adopted historically to maximize usage of limited and restrictive sites included the construction of tall buildings relative to their plot width. The buildings are therefore between three and five storeys, sometimes adopting mansard roofs to further maximize internal space. Variations in the width, height and style of buildings have developed gradually within plots over time, allowing a variety of buildings to exist as a harmonious and cohesive group in a dense urban context. This subtle variety in height, accentuated by architectural treatment, creates a charming organic character and is an important attribute.

3.5. Topography and important views

The Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area is generally flat and therefore all important views are shaped by the form of the built environment.

Tall buildings form part of the backdrop of the conservation area in several views, particularly in views east towards the City but there are still many views from within and outside the area in which the rich skyline of the historic conservation area buildings can be appreciated against an unobstructed sky. Such views are important. A good example is the view from the west of Central House looking north towards the long row of properties on the north side of Whitechapel High Street.

Altab Ali Park provides a spatial opening out of the enclosed street scene. The modest scale of surrounding buildings combined with generous distances between the edge of the park and buildings creates a sense of openness within and around this very urban park.

The view along narrow Gunthorpe Street, terminates directly on the spire of the Grade I listed Christ Church Spitalfields. This visual relationship is important in understanding the historic narrative of the wider area and the physical relationship between Whitechapel, Aldgate and Spitalfields.

4.0 ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The majority of buildings within the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area, contribute positively to the special character of the conservation area. These buildings are identified as positive contributors due to their siting, building envelope and massing, appearance and materials. All buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area should be preserved and where alterations are proposed these should preserve or enhance their contribution to the conservation area. Demolition of any positive contributors will not be supported. Equally, any alteration that is not sympathetic to the special character of the conservation area will not be supported

4.1 Building typology and form

The varied buildings fronting the main streets within the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area are predominantly grouped in terraces. There is a broadly consistent scale, with relatively minor variations in building heights and frontage widths. The relatively narrow plot widths and variety of architectural treatments give a subtle vertical emphasis even where buildings are joined together in long rows.

The conservation area includes a wide range of architectural styles reflecting the organic growth of the area. Three of the most significant buildings in the area, the Whitechapel Gallery, the Bell Foundry and Cannon Barnett Primary School highlight the contrast in architectural style and materials. They form key heritage landmarks in the area.

The Jacobean inspired architecture of the facades of No. 65 Whitechapel High Street, No. 2 Whitechurch Lane and the former Whitechapel Library at No.77 Whitechapel High Street, stand out in terms of their ornamental richness. Red brick walls form the background to white stone window dressings and mullions, decorative cornices, string courses and in some instances even quoins on bay windows. Decorative gables and low parapets expose high roofs covered with clay roof tiles.

Other buildings consistently reflect on this materiality in more modest and simplified ways. In general, pitched roof slopes or flat roofs are concealed behind high parapets or gables. Ornamentation is usually limited to lintels and cornices. Modern infills such as Nos. 82-83, 84 and 87 Whitechapel High Street, successfully interpret the language of brick walls and stone frames to openings in a more consolidated and geometric way.

The few former industrial buildings, such as No. 3 Gunthorpe Street and the Bell Foundry, are located away from the major frontage of Whitechapel High Street. They have footprints much larger than average in the area but are of moderate scale of up to two industrial height storeys.

4.2 Key architectural features and building materials

The area is characterised by a number of building materials. There is a prevailing use of red and yellow stock brick on many buildings, which is often decorated with architectural ornament in other materials including stone, stucco, render and terracotta. Facades are predominantly flat with architectural features adding depth and texture. Stone window framing, sometimes including projecting sills, mullions and transoms appears on historic and modern buildings. Decorative stone or stucco cornices emphasize the horizontal composition of many of the façades. Original shopfronts were made mostly of timber, but many have been replaced by inappropriate later metal shopfronts. Despite the loss of historic shopfronts many historic pilasters and corbels survive.

Roof slopes are predominantly hidden behind high parapets or gable ends. Gables, often inspired by Baroque or Classical precedents accentuate several of the historic narrow facades. A wide variety of historic window frames have survived within the area. There are many timber framed sash windows, some divided into small panes by Georgian/early Victorian type glazing bars, others featuring the larger single panes of the later Victorian era and early C20. Metal window frames are a characteristic feature of inter-war and mid C20 buildings within the area, the glazing bar arrangement of these windows varies greatly.

5.0 PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE

5.1. Streets roads and yards

The public realm within the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area is focused on historic Whitechapel High Street and Whitechapel Road (A11) which runs southwest – northeast through the centre of the conservation area.

There is a distinct hierarchy of streets within the conservation area, recalling its historic development. The wide Whitechapel High Street/Whitechapel Road with its relatively wide footways (3-7m) and cycle routes, have been a main route into and out of the City for centuries; Commercial Road and Commercial Street have a width commensurate with important, planned C19 thoroughfares, but side streets (Whitechurch Lane, Adler Street and Plumbers Row) are narrow and the historic

alleyways (Gunthorpe Street and Angel Alley) are tighter still, recalling the historic street pattern.

5.2. Street surfaces

The main streets within the conservation area have contemporary surfacing, including large concrete paving slabs on footways, blue asphalt on the cycle path and dark grey asphalt on the carriageway, bounded by narrow concrete kerbs. Some side streets and historic alleyways, such as Gunthorpe Street and Manningtree Street, have preserved granite cobbles with low granite kerbs.

5.3. Street furniture

All street furniture in the conservation area, apart from the Grade II listed drinking fountain on Whitechurch Lane (set within the boundary wall of Altab Ali Park), is contemporary. The street scene is generally free from clutter and furnishings are limited to standard lamp columns, road signs, Sheffield cycle stands and litter bins.

Seating and play spaces in the park are predominantly built into the landscape in the form of contemporary art features.

5.4. Altab Ali Park

In 1989 St Mary's Gardens (the former White Chapel Churchyard) was renamed Altab Ali Park, in memory of a young Bengali man who was murdered nearby in a racist attack on 4th May 1978. The contemporary iron gateway erected directly behind the C19 gothic gate piers (part of the historic boundary which is the only surviving element of the C19 church) was commissioned by the Borough to commemorate the 'turning point in the struggle against racism that his death marked'. The park contains a replica of the Shaheed Minar (Martyrs' Monument), unveiled in 1999, which holds very strong, local community value as the focus of the annual Martyrs' Day commemorations. The park was re-landscaped as part of the High Street 2012 project. The partially redesigned landscape was intended to highlight the rich history of the area. The main public space in the area, the park is located within a highly visible location and is a popular destination during the summer months.

The conservation area is relatively rich in greenery, given its location in the heart of a tight knit urban environment. The large mature London Planes around the street boundary of Altab Ali Park enhance views along Whitechapel Road and Adler Street. Additional smaller scale trees to the south of the park insulate residential properties along St Mary's Path from visual intrusion.

5.5. Public art

There are a number of pieces of public art within the conservation area which reflect the rich cultural diversity of the area, these include:

The Shaheed Minar (Martyr's Monument) in Altab Ali Park. This is a smaller version of Dhaka's Shaheed Minar, originally designed by Hamidur Rahman in 1963, which commemorates activists of the Bengali language movement, killed in 1952.

The decorative metal overthrow attached to the historic gateposts to the entrance of Altab Ali Park, at the corner of Whitechapel Road and Whitechurch Lane was commissioned by the Borough to remember Altab Ali and the 'turning point in the struggle against racism that his death marked'.

The Grade II Listed Arthur Szyk signs, dating from 1934-5, attached to No.88 Whitechapel Road.

Rachel Whiteread's Tree of Life sculpture added to the front façade of Whitechapel Art Gallery in 2012.

5.6. Street trees

Whilst the street scene of Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area is dominated by hard landscaping, trees play an important role in marking special points, from a townscape perspective. As well as the trees within Altab Ali Park there are two small areas of greenery marking significant places within the street scene. The first is on the northern side of Whitechapel High Street, where the mature London Plane terminates the vista from Commercial Road.

The second is in front of the Bell Foundry, at the corner of Whitechapel Road and Fieldgate Street. Here three mature trees define a pocket square at the front of the Grade II* Listed Bell Foundry building at 32-34 Whitechapel Road. The trees provide a visual end to views along Whitechapel Road, Plumbers Row and Fieldgate Street. Their canopies provide a sense of enclosure to the square and create a quieter setting around the historic building at the edge of busy A11 transport corridor.

6.0 HERITAGE AUDIT

The condition of buildings and the public realm within the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area varies markedly, with some buildings being in a poor condition. A lack of investment, inappropriate alterations and the loss of historic features cumulatively threaten the special character and appearance of the conservation area. It is these same threats which, if addressed, offer the opportunity for significant enhancement.

6.1. Lack of investment and inappropriate alterations

Often a lack of investment can result in a gradual deterioration of the built fabric as maintenance is reduced and the cost of repairs minimised. The exteriors of historic buildings within the area feature a rich variety of materials and details which are a major part of its historic and architectural character, but which are vulnerable to neglect and poorly considered change. The opportunity exists to reverse this change with carefully considered investment, which retains the surviving historic fabric and builds upon it.

Some buildings were built with render or stucco applied to the exterior. In several cases the render is in poor condition due to the lack of maintenance or poorly carried out repairs.

In several cases, original brick facades have been painted to the detriment of the appearance of the building.

The rear parts of many buildings are in poor condition due to lack of maintenance, poorly undertaken repairs and the erection of poor quality extensions. On its western edge, Altab Ali Park is overlooked by the rear of a group of historic properties which

front on to Whitechurch Lane. Several of these properties are in poor repair which detracts from their character and appearance and harms the setting of the park.

6.2. Loss of historic features

The appearance of some buildings has suffered from the removal of historic architectural features including chimney stacks, original windows frames and decorative architectural features including cornices and decorative window surrounds. This has harmed the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Window frames are key historic features. The installation of inappropriate upper floor windows has detracted from the appearance of several buildings within the conservation area.

In some instances historic photographs or surviving historic features offer precedents for appropriate reinstatement of lost features

6.3. Shopfronts, fascia signs and associated features

A large number of retail units feature poorly designed replacement shopfronts and fascia signs which take no account of the architectural character of the host building and thus detract from the host building and the area generally. In many cases original decorative corbels have been removed along with original cladding materials and decorative pilasters dividing the shop units.

6.4. Vacant/underused properties and sites

The vast majority of ground floor shops and ground floor commercial units are occupied (at the time of writing in 2018) but there appears to be some underused/vacant floor space on upper floors of buildings within the conservation area. This is a contributing factor to the neglect of building fabric.

The Bell Foundry recently ceased operation. Permission has been granted to convert the historic building to new uses including workshops and a café whilst retaining partial foundry use.

Within the tight knit building fabric of the conservation area, there are several empty sites.

- The car park site to the south of the Cannon Barnett Primary School
- The vacant plot at the north side of the junction of Whitechurch Lane and St Mary's Path
- The vacant plot between 96 and 101 Whitechapel High Street
- The empty north west corner of Mulberry Street and Plumbers Row

Development proposals for these gap sites within the conservation area must be appropriate in terms of scale and form and architectural quality. All of the above sites are located within a rich historic context but each represents a unique challenge ranging from the carpark site to the south of Cannon Barnett Primary School, which is located at the heart of an urban block, to the vacant plot between Nos. 96 and 101 Whitechapel High Street which is a gap located in a significant row of buildings fronting on to one of the Borough's most important thoroughfares.

6.5. Development outside the conservation area boundary affecting its setting

The conservation area is located at the extreme west of the Borough, close to the City of London. Very large developments outside the boundary of the conservation area have caused harm to its setting and further large developments within the conservation area's setting could further compromise the character or appearance of the conservation area and its setting.

6.6. Public realm and open space

Altab Ali Park, a much loved feature of the area, is very well used and would benefit from some soft landscaping improvements. The western boundary of the park, formed by the rear fences of properties fronting on to Whitechurch Lane, is in poor condition and detracts from the setting of the park.

7.0 INTRODUCTION TO MANAGEMENT PLAN

7.1. Background

This management plan sets out the borough's commitment to high quality management of conservation areas and their settings. The management plan provides guidance to residents, businesses and other stakeholders about the special elements of the area's character and how these can be preserved or enhanced. The management plan also sets out the considerations that should be taken into account at the earliest possible stages of the design process and addressed as part of any planning application.

Conservation areas are as much about history, people, activities and places as they are about buildings and spaces. Preserving or enhancing the borough's architectural and historic built heritage 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, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. The re-use of historic buildings and places is environmentally responsible, as it protects the energy and resources embodied in them and combats climate change. Demolition and rebuilding of buildings can have a big impact on the environment and can result in a large amount of waste and associated air pollution.

Recommendations for additions to the statutory list are considered by Historic England.

7.2. Policy and legislation

In conservation areas, planning controls are more extensive. Permitted development rights are more limited, and demolition and works to trees are controlled. 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. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which relates to planning functions within conservation areas,

includes that 'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'. You are strongly advised to contact the council to check if works you are proposing need permission.

Any new development should have regard to relevant national, regional and local planning policy including the following:

- the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- the NPPF;
- the London Plan alongside the City Fringe Opportunity Area Planning Framework;
- the Local Plan;
- the Tower Hamlets Conservation Strategy
- Historic England guidance; and
- this character appraisal and management plan.

Further information can be found on the council's website, on the government website and on the GLA website. Altab Ali Park (formerly St Mary's Gardens) is designated as public open space. The conservation area is included within an Archaeological Priority Area. Whitechapel Road, Commercial Road and Commercial Street are all strategic roads.

Statutorily listed buildings

If a building is statutorily listed, any alterations to the property, either internally or externally, will require listed building consent from the Council. Listed building consent is required for any works of demolition, alteration or extension to the building, which would affect its special architectural and historic interest. Works within the grounds or curtilage of a listed building can also require consent. Repairs to listed buildings may also require consent. It is always advisable to inform the council of any plans you might have to carry out repairs. Replacement of any historic fabric usually constitutes an alteration and therefore requires listed building consent.

The council has a duty of care to ensure owners and prospective owners of listed buildings are aware of the need for maintenance and repair of such buildings. Regular

maintenance can prevent serious and expensive problems at a later date. 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 in such circumstances.

Locally listed buildings

Local listing is a protection offered by the local authority to buildings it believes are of local significance. A heritage asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest, locally listed buildings are included within this designation. The effect of an application on a non-designated heritage asset is a material consideration when deciding planning applications, and local listing strengthens the case for retention of a historic building. There are three groups locally listed building within the conservation area. Although locally listed buildings do not benefit from the statutory protection outlined previously, they have been recognised as being of local townscape importance. The council expects to see their retention and evidence that any proposed alterations enhance the building's character or appearance. Full justification for any redevelopment proposals will be sought, including convincing evidence that the building could not be retained. Economic reasons alone will not always justify redevelopment.

Article 4 Directions

Where evidence suggests that the exercise of permitted development would harm the special character of the conservation area, the council can serve an Article 4 Direction to withdraw specific classes of permitted development that would otherwise apply. It is important to note that an Article 4 Direction does not necessarily prevent the type of development to which it applies but requires planning permission to be obtained for the specified types of development. There is no fee for planning applications required due to an Article 4 Direction.

For specific information on Article 4 Directions please see the General Permitted Development Order (1995) and 2010 amendment and accompanying Government Circular (available from the DCLG website), as well as the guidance provided in

Historic England's Advice Note 1 (Second Edition) 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' which was published in February 2019 (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/heag-268-conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management/>)

Archaeological investigations

Any new development that lies within the Archaeological Priority Area will be required to include an Archaeological Evaluation Report and will require any nationally important remains to be preserved permanently at the site, subject to consultation with Historic England.

Trees in conservation areas

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is an order made by the council to protect specific trees or groups of trees in the interests of amenity. A TPO prohibits the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting or wilful damage of a protected tree without permission and is a designation which is applied selectively.

Whilst some trees in a conservation area may be protected by a TPO all trees in a conservation area are protected by the provisions of section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, These provisions require owners to notify the council if works to trees are proposed. To do this a works to trees application form should be completed. The application must describe the works proposed and include sufficient particulars to identify the tree or trees which are the subject of works. Only one section 211 notice is need to carry out a number of different operations. Notification should be made at least six weeks before the works commence to allow the council sufficient time to assess whether the works are acceptable or not. If the works are not supported and modified proposals cannot be agreed then the trees must be protected by the council serving a TPO.

Carrying out works to trees without the necessary approval can be a criminal offence, and the council welcomes early requests for advice.

7.3. Outline guidance for applications

When planning applications in a conservation area are decided, the Council, as the local planning authority, will pay special attention to whether the character of the area is preserved or enhanced by the proposal. The special character of Whitechapel High Street is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.

In the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area, as in other conservation areas, planning controls are more extensive than normal. Before carrying out any work in this area, you may need to apply for consent even for minor work such as replacing railings. These consents include planning and listed building consent, as well as others for work such as felling trees. Planning permission is required to demolish any building bigger than 115m³, 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. Locally listed buildings are those of townscape value which the Borough wishes to protect.

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

- A clear Design and Access Statement explaining the reasons behind the various architectural, masterplanning or other design decisions
- A Heritage Statement where the impacts of the application on the significance of heritage assets or the impacts of demolition within the conservation area are set out
- Contextual plans, sections and elevations of existing buildings (at a scale of 1:50 or 1:100)
- Drawings of proposed works, including construction details, produced at larger scale (e.g. 1:20 or 1:10) clearly indicating the nature of the work proposed
- Existing and proposed townscape views where relevant
- 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 where a validation list can be found. If in any doubt, the council welcomes and encourages early requests for advice or information. More information is available on pre-application advice on the Council's website. 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.

7.4. 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, but grant funding even for cases that meet the defined criteria, is extremely limited.

8.0 DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

8.1. General approach

Development in the conservation area should enhance the unique characteristics of Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area, reinforcing its distinctive identity and contributing to its historic sense of place. New buildings should be of a high design standard, reflecting the scale and variation typical of the historic townscape. Individual buildings should display their own identity within the historically-set parameters (scale, grain, building line). These parameters are responsible for the creation of a coherent streetscape and locally distinctive character derived from an otherwise diverse collection of different designs, styles and materials. Retention and restoration of existing buildings which contribute to the character of the area provides the foundation

for the area's development. The council encourages the sympathetic re-use of existing buildings in conservation areas. Where development has harmed a conservation area it is possible, under certain circumstances, that further development may help to mitigate this harm.

8.2. Demolition

Demolition of buildings within the conservation area

The Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area has a well-established and distinguished character distinctive from its surroundings in terms of its grain and scale. The council will resist unjustified demolition where this is considered to be harmful to the special character or appearance of the conservation area. Any applications including demolition will be assessed in line with national, regional and local policy and guidance including the National Planning Policy Framework.

Planning permission is required for demolition or substantial demolition of all buildings or structures larger than 115m³ in conservation areas. What constitutes substantial demolition is considered on a casebycase basis by the Local Planning Authority. Where a building is statutorily listed, listed building consent will be required.

Where corner buildings are threatened with demolition this can cause a wider threat to the terrace as a whole, this will be resisted. The demolition and replacement of a central building forming part of a small terrace will also be resisted as this can result in further proposals and cumulative impacts.

If demolition work occurs without the necessary consent the council is likely to pursue planning enforcement action that may result in prosecution and a substantial fine. The demolished structure may be required to be rebuilt. It should be noted that the council will not normally grant planning permission for demolition without relevant permissions having been obtained for an acceptable scheme for the redevelopment of the site.

With regard to vacant sites, or those in poor condition, it should not be assumed that any development is automatically better than the current situation.

Partial demolition

In most cases, the council would expect to see buildings retained but in some exceptional cases it may only be possible to retain a building in part; either by retaining elements of a building or through façade retention. Partial demolition will only be considered acceptable when it can be demonstrated that the proposed demolition can be carried out without unacceptable risk to the parts of the building to be retained and that any new development integrates with and respects the remaining historic fabric. This should be outlined as part of a Heritage Statement. A report of any structural implications will also need to be submitted. In many cases it may be possible to salvage and re-use elements of the historic fabric for example bricks, slates or window frames or external features. Any partial rebuilding will require materials to match and will be controlled by condition. It may be necessary to record the existing building, prior to alteration.

Demolition of buildings adjacent to the conservation area

Demolition of unlisted buildings outside a conservation area does not always require planning permission. However, proposals to demolish and re-develop sites adjacent to a conservation area boundary should preserve, and where possible enhance, the setting of the conservation area to ensure that the significance of the conservation area is not harmed

8.3. New development

New developments should respect the fine grain character and straightforward legibility of the historic street pattern. Any replacement buildings should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and ensure that its significance is not harmed. Any new development on potential infill sites (as highlighted in Section 6.0 in the Appraisal) should sit comfortably with the existing character or appearance of the conservation area.

Where existing buildings have a negative impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area, it may be possible to alter the exterior of the building so that it enhances the character or appearance of the area. The council would only encourage replacement of these buildings if the replacement is of high quality and has a positive impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area.

All new developments should be sympathetic to the character or appearance of the conservation area in terms of scale, materials and design.

The overall conservation area is characterised by a prevailing building height of four to five storeys. In many cases, given the complex history of development in the area, cornice/eaves heights vary across a terrace and this characteristic is an attractive feature of the area. New development should aim to fit into and complement this context.

The design of new buildings should be fully informed by the positive aspects of adjacent buildings and how they contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area. A degree of architectural variety is an important attribute of much of the conservation area and therefore it may not necessarily be appropriate to copy adjacent buildings.

The overall quality of architectural detailing will be key to producing a successful scheme which builds on the qualities already present within the area. In order to ensure necessary architectural quality, detailed design should be explored and agreed early in the planning process.

The quality of external materials will also be key to producing a successful scheme. The conservation area features a wide range of high quality, natural and naturally derived materials including stone, bricks, slate and terracotta. It is expected that the choice of new materials will be informed by the local context and build on this richness.

The design of shopfronts and fascia signs should not be considered in isolation and, along with security measures, should be considered at an early stage. It is essential that the scale and proportions of all elements of any new shopfronts and fascia signs relate to the overall proportions of the host building and to neighbouring properties where appropriate. Given the age of the buildings within the conservation area, this is likely to involve the design of taller shopfronts (and shallower fascia signs) than are considered standard in other areas. Older shopfronts were characterised by high quality, long lasting materials. Standard aluminium shopfronts are unlikely to be

considered appropriate within the conservation area. It might be necessary to adopt a flexible approach to corporate logos, if these are considered to be harmful to the character of the conservation area.

8.4. Property conversion

The permitted development rights for this area of the Borough have been removed in relation to the conversion of offices (Use Class B1(a)) to residential (Use Class C3). Where property conversion or change of use is permissible, external changes are likely to require planning permission. Any external changes should relate well to the public realm, should respect the character of the host building and should be in keeping with the character or appearance of the conservation area.

8.5. Extensions and alterations

Roof extensions

The variety of building heights, particularly along Whitechapel High Street, forms an integral part of the character of the Whitechapel High Street Conservation Area. Roof additions which seek to introduce a consistency in height are likely to be resisted. In many cases the historic roof structure and relationship to other buildings within the conservation area will either preclude roof extensions or make it very difficult to achieve an acceptable design. Where roof extensions are considered appropriate, the design must relate well to the design and proportions of the host building and must use high quality materials that respect the character or appearance of the conservation area. The impact of any roof extensions on the public realm and views from within the conservation area should be carefully considered in order to ensure the character or appearance of the conservation area is preserved and enhanced.

Rear extensions

There are very few opportunities for rear extensions within the conservation area. Where the opportunity exists, extensions should remain subservient to the host building both in terms of scale and proportions. Only high quality materials, such as brick, stone or, in some cases, reconstituted stone, that respect the character or appearance of the conservation area will be accepted. The visibility of proposed rear extensions from the public realm must also be carefully considered to ensure that, not only the impact on the host building, but also on the wider conservation area, is

acceptable and preserves and enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area.

External alterations

Where external alterations are proposed to existing buildings, these must seek to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Piecemeal alterations can be harmful to the special architectural and historic character of a building. Any alterations to historic fabric should be on a like-for-like basis in terms of materials and design. Where inappropriate or unsympathetic alterations have occurred in the past, these should be rectified in accordance with the historic materials and appearance. In cases where the alterations are to a building which is not historic, the design and materials used should be in keeping with the character of the conservation area. Any external alterations to individual buildings will have an impact on the wider conservation area and so must be considered within the wider context.

8.6. Energy efficiency improvements

Window replacement and alteration

Window replacement and alterations to existing windows are often successful ways of improving the energy efficiency of a building. A careful study of the existing building should be carried out in order to identify the original window design and materials. This should form a good template for the kind of windows that will be acceptable in terms of materials, design, glazing bar details, window opening patterns and type of glass. In most cases historic or original windows should be retained and repaired, draught proofing added and if necessary internal secondary glazing installed. Where it is acceptable to replace the existing windows with double glazing care must be taken to ensure that the double glazing is of an appropriate design, that it is possible to replicate the dimensions and opening arrangements of the existing historic windows, that the double glazing is of a slim profile and that spacer bars are white and are unperforated, rather than perforated metal. Top-hung or outward opening windows will not be supported on historic buildings, unless this reflects the original glazing pattern.

It may be necessary to apply for planning permission to fit new windows (such as double-glazing) in a flat or maisonette. Planning permission will not be required to add internal secondary glazing. It is also unlikely to be necessary where you are fitting

windows which are identical to those which are being removed i.e.like-for- like replacements. However, if the new windows differ in appearance or size to those you are replacing (for instance, different glazing patterns or opening methods) you may need to apply for planning permission. The detailed design, materials, dimensions, glazing bar pattern, glazing thickness and opening methods are all important considerations when new or replacement windows are proposed.

The replacement of historic windows to listed buildings will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that they are beyond reasonable repair. If this can be demonstrated, then any replacement of windows should be on a like-for-like basis, matching the original design exactly. This will require listed building consent and, if any changes are proposed in terms of design, materials or thickness, planning permission may also be required. Energy efficiency can be improved through draught proofing windows or through the installation of internal secondary glazing. These works will not require listed building consent, unless they obscure important historic features or cause harm to historic fabric.

Cladding, rendering or painting of external walls

The council will seek the retention or reinstatement of original façade treatments of buildings which contribute positively to the special character or appearance of the conservation area. Unless it can be demonstrated that existing exposed brickwork had originally been rendered or painted, the rendering or painting over of external brickwork will not be supported.

External insulation through rendering or other methods will not be supported. Any additional insulation should be installed internally where appropriate so as not to inappropriately alter the external appearance of the building. In a listed building, internal insulation would need listed building consent. In most cases it is unlikely to be acceptable.

8.7. Other external changes

Alterations which change the appearance of buildings within the conservation area should be carefully considered. The council will not support the addition of satellite

dishes, banners or antennae or other fixtures on elevations that front the street. The addition of grilles and louvres to the front of buildings is also unlikely to be supported. These should be placed on rear or side elevations if required and carefully designed so that they are incorporated into the overall building design. The council welcomes the removal of unwanted and unnecessary clutter from the exterior of buildings within the conservation area.. Development proposals that involve the re-use and/or conversion of existing buildings will be expected to address this issue where appropriate.

8.8. Public realm improvements

Where there are historic surface finishes such as stone setts or paving, the council will seek their retention, as these form an important part of the character of the conservation area. Any major investment in buildings should also include public realm improvements where appropriate. New schemes should aim to retain historic surfaces and any new surfaces should be sympathetic to the conservation area. Junctions between different surface treatments should also be carefully considered.

The quality of the streetscape, the surface materials, street furniture and other features can all form an integral part of the character or appearance of the conservation area. Any work carried out should respect this historic character, using natural materials and colours that are in keeping with the character or appearance of the conservation area. For works to Whitechapel High Street and Whitechapel Road, TfL's Streetscape Guidance should be consulted. On narrow side streets, setts and cobblestones should be reinstated where possible and, historic kerb stones retained. Any paving works should be sympathetic to the historic character of the conservation area. Larger rectangular paving slabs ideally in natural stone or high quality composite stone, are more sympathetic to the character of the conservation area than smaller modular paving. Each case will be assessed on its own merits. In addition to the TfL guidance, for developments which impact on public spaces, the council's Street Design Guide and Historic England's Streets for All: London document should be referred to. An important aim should be to reduce street clutter, such as obsolete signage and modern phone boxes.

Altab Ali Park (formerly St Mary's Gardens) forms a vital part of the history of the area. Ongoing management of the park should be sensitive to its historic importance including its archaeological importance as the site of the original White Chapel, and its more recent significance as a memorial to Altab Ali, and a symbol of the community's resilience against racism and a focus for Martyrs' Day commemorations. Regular maintenance of this heavily used public space is essential. It is considered that there is scope for future improvements to the park. Any new furniture or play equipment within the park should be integrated into the landscape.

All trees in conservation areas are protected, and some trees are also covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Additional information on trees can be found in the policy and legislation section of this document and on the council website.

8.9. Shopfronts and signage

The richness in the variety of details to shopfronts and buildings is integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Existing timber fascias, pilasters and corbels should be retained or restored where they have been lost. In cases where shopfront corbels do not survive, careful study should be made of adjacent shops to see if any appropriate examples remain – these should form the template for re-instatement.

It should be noted that a standard corporate approach to signage may not be considered appropriate due to size, colour or illumination. As such, proposed designs and/or materials may have to be amended to suit the historic context. Any hanging or projecting signs should be well designed, bespoke timber hanging signs of an appropriate size for the shopfront or building. Traditional materials should be used and plastic signage will not be supported. No upper level signage, projecting signs or banners, will be supported.

Hand painted timber fascia signs or fascias with individually applied lettering are encouraged throughout the conservation area. Internally illuminated plastic fascia signs are not appropriate and will not be supported.

8.10. Vacant sites and hoardings

Vacant sites must be carefully managed to ensure that they cause minimal harm to the conservation area. These sites must be maintained and should not be allowed to fall into disrepair. Where hoardings are used around vacant sites or on sites that are currently undergoing building works, these must be consistent in terms of height, materials and appearance. Hoardings should be maintained in a good state of repair so as to not detract from the character or appearance of the conservation area. Where possible, hoardings should be used positively to inform the public of the history of the site or wider area.

8.11. Development affecting the setting of the conservation area

The conservation area is situated in a densely built up part of the borough close to the boundary with the City. It includes several important views, such as the view from the west of Central House looking towards the long row of properties on the north side of Whitechapel High Street, feature groups of historic buildings with an unobstructed historic skyline. This forms their setting. Development which interferes with the viewers' ability to fully appreciate the significance of the heritage assets concerned will be resisted.

The openness of Altab Ali Park contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the conservation area and provides a welcome visual break in the street frontage and relief from the busy Whitechapel Road and Whitechapel High Street. It is important that development on sites surrounding the park (both within and outside the boundary of the conservation area) is sensitive to this context, conforms to the overall scale of the conservation area and protects views of open sky from the park.

It is important that development proposals on the edge of the conservation area and in surrounding areas include a fully detailed assessment of any impact on the historic significance of the conservation area.

To enable the council to assess relevant applications, the council will expect applicants:

- i. to identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected by a proposal;

- ii. assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s)
- iii. assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance of the heritage assets ;
- iv. demonstrate that they have explored ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.

9.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

9.1. Ongoing management and monitoring change

The council recognises the contribution of the local community in managing conservation areas and will welcome proposals to work collaboratively to monitor and manage change in the area. Public meetings will be held to maintain communications between all stakeholders and identify new opportunities and threats to the conservation area as they arise.

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

9.2. Planning enforcement

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 illegal. It is therefore essential to obtain planning permission and/or listed building consent before works begin.

An enforcement notice, served by the council may require works to rectify unauthorised alterations. This notice is entered on the Local Land Charges records which could make the future sale or financing of the property more difficult.

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.

10.0 USEFUL CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

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: planning@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, you may wish to contact the following organisations for further information:

- Historic England <https://www.historicengland.org.uk>
- The Georgian Group www.georgiangroup.org.uk
- Victorian Society www.victorian-society.org.uk
- 20th Century Society www.c20society.org.uk
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings www.spab.org.uk
- East London Postcards www.eastlondonpostcard.co.uk