



# Ropery Street

## Conservation Area

### 1. Character Appraisal

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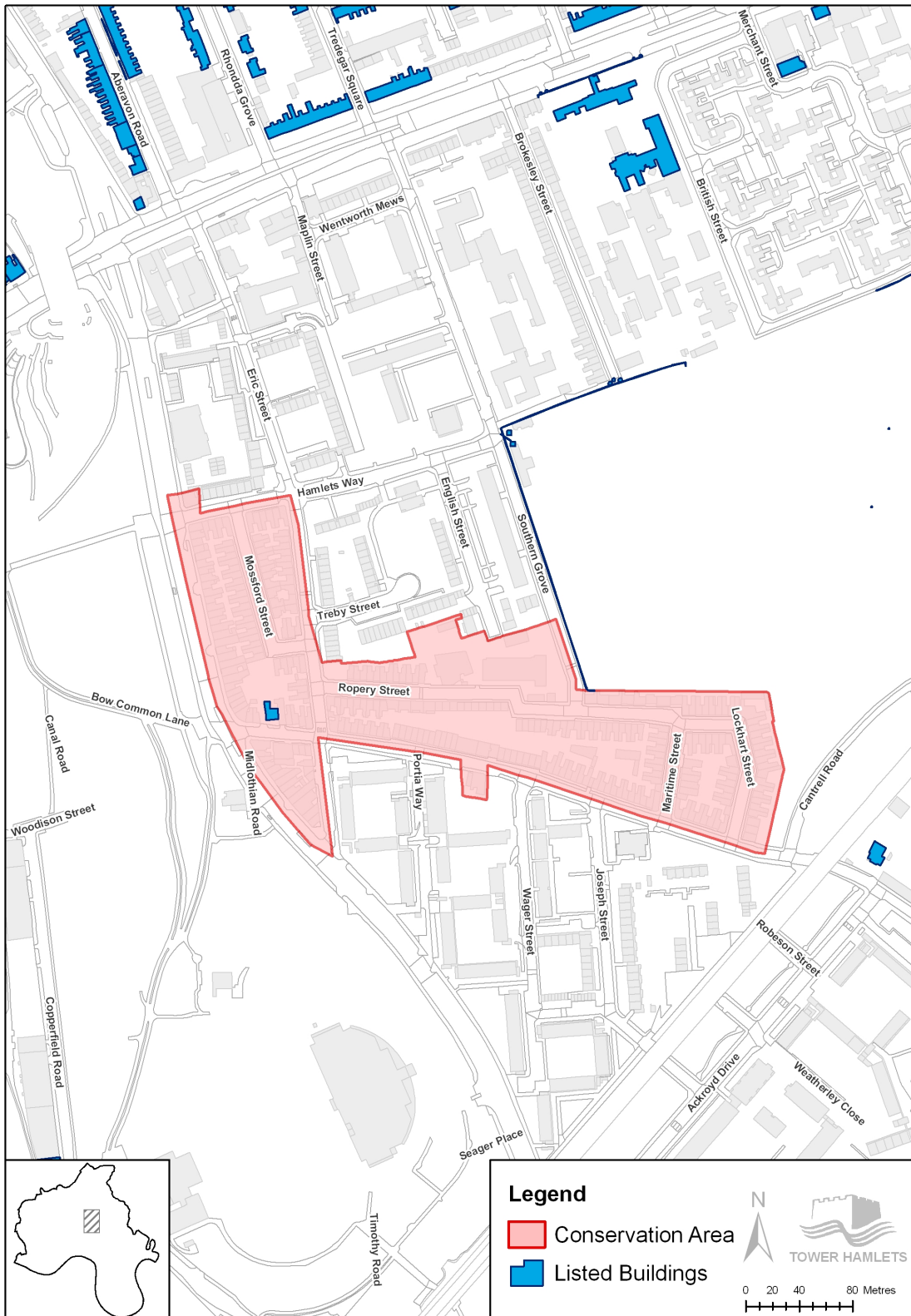
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Adopted by Cabinet: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2007

## 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 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.



### ROPERY STREET CONSERVATION AREA

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

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# 1. Character Appraisal

## Overview

The Ropery Street Conservation Area was designated in May 1987. Bounded by Burdett Road to the west, Bow Common Lane to the south, Tower Hamlets Cemetery to the east and a jagged boundary reaching up to Hamlet's Way in the north, Ropery Street sets the main street scene in the Conservation Area. Whilst there is only one locally listed building within the Conservation Area, at 218 Bow Common Lane, overall the terraces are collectively regarded as of townscape merit.

## History

Until the second half of the 19th century, the area now occupied by the Ropery Street Conservation Area was previously occupied by open farmland. Historical maps show that during the early 19th century, a scatter of ropeworks and other industries were present along Bow Common Lane, which led to Bow Common. Currently within the Conservation Area, there is one locally listed building, known as "The Ropery" at 218 Bow Common Lane. The first directory entries in 1811, list John Soanes as a rope and twine maker at this property in the parish of Stepney. As recorded in the 1881 census, the household was occupied by Susan Soanes, who was described as a rope manufacturer.

Whilst the land north of Bow Common Lane was filled with utilities such as the Tower Hamlets Cemetery (1841) and gasworks (1850), the remaining land was filled with streets of Victorian terrace housing, characteristic of the 1880s.

## Character

The prevailing character of the Ropery Street Conservation Area is defined by its uniform group of terraces, dating back to the mid-late 19th century. Much of the character of the terrace is gained from its overall uniformity and rhythm, proportions, height, bay width, consistent setback, matching materials and details. The streetscapes are considered significant as a group of buildings, as opposed to

separate terraces having individual architectural merit. Stylish terraces with two storey bay windows and lavish stucco trim of circa 1870 remain along Mossford Street. Terraces with simpler details exist along Ropery Street, to the southern edge of the Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

The anomaly in the Ropery Street Conservation Area is the property at 218 Bow Common Lane. Originally built as a country residence, 218 Bow Common Lane is a detached Regency style villa. It presents a double fronted property with a hipped roof, of unusually steep pitch, covered in clay pantiles and setback from the road. One of the first properties erected in this locality, it predates the remainder of the Conservation Area, which is largely of the 1870s. Contrasting with the Victorian character and terrace typology, 218 Bow Common Lane was locally listed to ensure that its historical interest and character was recognised in regards to any future proposals.

### **Land Use**

The land use character of the Ropery Street Conservation Area is predominantly residential, with commercial businesses on ground floor along its peripheral streetscapes, such as Hamlets Way and Burdett Road.

### **Scale**

The existing scale of the area is predominantly low, with the terrace housing along its streetscapes a uniform 2-3 storeys in scale. The Avery Hill College building is the one exception, rising to three high storeys.

### **Open Spaces**

The Ropery Street Conservation Area does not contain any large open spaces, although it is adjacent to Mile End Park. The public space is clearly defined and enclosed by the lines of terraced houses.

## **Views**

Long views run along street axes, highlighting the repetition and rhythm of the continuous terrace housing, in particular along Ropery Street and Bow Common Lane. Views of the trees within Tower Hamlets Cemetery from Lockhart St are also a unique characteristic of the area.

## **Summary**

This is an area of particular special architectural and historic interest, illustrated by its rich history and significant architecture, dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier. The character and appearance of the area, as described in this appraisal, define its special qualities. There are a few gap sites and some minor inappropriate buildings in the Conservation Area, but overall these have little impact on the qualities that led to its designation.

## 2. Management Guidelines

### Overview

This Management Plan has been prepared in consultation with the community, to set out the Borough's commitment to high quality management of Conservation Areas and their settings. The Development Design and Conservation Team operates within the context of the Development and Renewal Directorate of the Council, alongside Major Projects, Development Control, Strategy and Building Control.

Areas are as much about history, people, activities and places as they are about buildings and spaces. Preserving and enhancing the Borough's architectural and historic built heritage over the next decades is of vital importance in understanding the past and allowing it to inform our present and future.

Conservation Areas also promote sustainability in its widest sense. The Council is committed to this in Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy its Local Development Framework (LDF). The re-use of historic buildings and places is environmentally responsible as it protects the energy and resources embodied in them and combats global warming.

Consideration of appropriate amendments to the boundary of the Conservation Area, and recommendations for additions to the register of listed buildings, either the statutory or local list, will be considered by the Council.

### Who is this document for?

This is an inclusive document which will engage with many different people and organisations. It will depend on the support of the community to achieve its objectives. It is aimed primarily at the residents, businesses, developers and others living and working in the area. The Conservation Area belongs to its residents, as well as the whole community, and their priorities will be reflected in these documents after the consultation process.

The document has also been prepared to align conservation objectives within different parts of the council, and provide a single point of reference for the management of the area. It represents our shared commitment to conserve the special architectural and historic character, and to help manage sensitive new development and refurbishment where appropriate to successfully preserve and enhance the quality and character of the area.

### **Outline Guidance on Applications**

Before carrying out any work in this area, you will need to apply for consent even for minor work such as replacing railings. These consents include planning, listed building and Conservation Area consent, as well as others for work such as felling trees.

**When planning applications in a Conservation Area are decided, the planning authority will pay special attention to whether the character of the area is preserved or enhanced. The character of Ropery Street is described in detail in the Appraisal in the first part of this document.**

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

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

- A clear design statement 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 London Cycle Network runs down the western side of this Conservation Area.
- The builder's yard in the centre of the western block is identified as a development site.

## Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area

### Locally Listed Building

- 218 Bow Common Lane

## 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.

A landscape study and review of the pavement surfaces should be conducted, so as to improve the environment.

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

Any redevelopment of the builder's yard should conform with local planning policy, and respect the character of the surrounding buildings.

There is potential for repair and refurbishment to improve the quality of many residential buildings in this Conservation Area. Issues such as cracked stucco,

damaged railings, graffiti, and untidy cabling all detract from the inherent quality of the terraced houses. In addition, uncoordinated painting and re-surfacing of walls and narrow front yards have all detracted from the coherence of the terraces.

Further enhancement of these residential terraces could be achieved by introducing more subtle, higher quality street furniture, following the example of the lighting on Mossford St and elsewhere. The street lighting along Bow Common Lane, for example, is inappropriate for a Conservation Area. Any new features should be introduced in a judicious and minimal way which does not over-clutter the streetscape and respects the historic character of the streets. Re-introduction of road setts and appropriate tree planting would further contribute to the cohesiveness of the Conservation Area.

Options for improving the Burdett Road frontage should be investigated. Proposals should reduce the amount of street clutter, improve the quality of street furniture such as lighting, and improve parking and delivery arrangements while being sensitive to the requirements of local businesses.

### **Trees, Parks and Open Spaces**

As described in the Appraisal, there are no major open spaces within the Conservation Area, although views exist to trees in both Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Mile End Park.

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

## **Equalities:**

Valuing diversity is one of the Council's core values, and we take pride in being one of the most culturally rich and diverse boroughs in the UK. This core value has driven the preparation of this document and will continue to inform changes to this document in the future. These values will also inform changes to buildings and places where this document provides guidance to ensure inclusivity for all sections of the community.

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

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

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

## **Publicity**

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

## **Consideration of Resources Needed to Conserve the Historic Environment:**

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

alteration of a building in a Conservation Area. The Council will consider grant aid to historic buildings and places.

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

### **Ongoing Management and Monitoring Change:**

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

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

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

### **Enforcement Strategy:**

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

If listed buildings are not maintained in good repair, then the Council can step in to ensure that relevant repairs are carried out. In some circumstances, the Council itself may undertake essential repairs and recover the cost from the owner. The Council has powers of compulsory purchase, if necessary to protect Listed Buildings.

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

### **Further Reading and Contacts**

- The Survey of London, volume 27: Spitalfields and Mile End New Town.
- The Buildings of England (London 5: East). Cherry, O'Brien and Pevsner.

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

Tel: 020 7364 5009

Email: [dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:dr.majorprojects@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

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

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

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

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

### **Listed Buildings at Risk:**

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

### **Any other threats to the Conservation Area**

- This is an established residential area where subdivision of family housing into flats and HMOs should be resisted, to avoid a dilution of its existing character.

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

1. Strengthen existing local shopping parade along Burdett Road.
2. Encourage better links between shops/cafes and Mile End Park.
3. Assist repair of buildings in the area with grant aid.
4. Re-introduce historic street surfaces.
5. Investigate and implement a plan to green the environment.