



REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR (PLANNING)

PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

17/07/90

UNDERWOOD STREET PROPOSED
CONSERVATION AREA

Classification DECISION	Enclosure B
Ward(s) affected WENLOCK	

SUMMARY

1. This report seeks Members approval to the designation of the Underwood Street Conservation Area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. (A) That the Committee resolves to designate the Underwood Street Area as indicated by the boundary on Map No. TP 01-00-257 (to be displayed at Committee) as a Conservation Area under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, Section 277 as amended.

(B) That officers be authorised to carry out statutory notification and publicity in connection with this designation.

BACKGROUND

3. In January 1989, Planning and Economic Development Committee agreed a Conservation Strategy for the Borough, including priorities for Conservation Area designations; the Shoreditch Area (including Underwood Street) was included in the "high priority" category.

NEED FOR THE CONSERVATION AREA

4. The area around Underwood Street is considered to have an attractive architectural and historic character (described in detail in the Appendix). This character is presently under threat from redevelopment proposals for new buildings for office and business uses. This part of the Borough is part of what is known as the "City fringe" and is under pressure from expansion of the City functions. There are currently several such proposals lodged with the Council, which involve demolition of existing buildings of character occupied or last used for traditional industrial uses employing local people. It is felt that the character of the area is worthy of sympathetic treatment and hence Conservation Area status. The specific redevelopment proposals for the Underwood Street area indicate the need for urgent action to protect its character. A detailed appraisal of the whole of South Shoreditch is now being undertaken with the intention of putting forward further suggested Conservation Areas.

CONSIDERATIONS

Land Use and Ownership

5. The properties in the area comprise a mix of industrial, storage and office uses, with some retail uses on the City Road frontage. All are in private ownership with the majority being held on leasehold basis by the firms and companies within particular buildings. There are no residential buildings within the area.

Practical Effects of Designation

6. Demolition of all buildings (not just listed buildings) in Conservation Areas requires the consent of the Council; this is not the case outside Conservation Areas. This is considered to be a most useful addition to the Council's planning control powers in attempting to protect an area's character.

7. In addition, it should be noted that the problem is not simply the prospect of the replacement of older buildings of character with inappropriate new buildings; it is also that the uses in the older buildings are frequently of an industrial nature providing manual employment with a high take-up by local people, whereas the proposals for the new buildings are often for office uses where the take-up of jobs by local people is at a lower rate. Insofar as the policies of the Hackney Local Plan for the Shoreditch Defined Employment Area seek to safeguard manual/industrial employment, Conservation Area designation would assist in achieving this objective.

8. Conservation Area status would also assist in ensuring that high standards of design are achieved where new buildings are considered appropriate. A design guide and a programme of enhancement works will be drawn up following designation. However, designation does not mean that there would be a requirement or a compulsion on small scale or industrial occupiers to spend money upgrading their buildings to a very high standard; rather it means that where proposals are put forward by owners or developers they can be controlled to safeguard and be sympathetic to the character of the area.

9. Head of Engineering is concerned that alterations to allow improved servicing of existing properties should still be possible. It has been explained that provided alterations are carried out in an appropriate manner and style, they would be supported by the Planning Division as they would be in line with the industrial employment and land use policies of the Hackney Local Plan.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

9. The designation of the area as a Conservation Area will allow for tighter control of development and design and will enable the areas special character and architectural interest to be enhanced. Policies ENV6 and 7 in the Hackney Local Plan are to be applied in order to achieve satisfactory development within the area as well as protecting existing buildings. Policies ENV1 to 4 would apply to a Conservation Area by virtue of Policy ENV8. The entire area proposed falls within the Shoreditch Defined Employment Area. The Hackney Local Plan Policy EMP2 allows for an element of business/office development and general industrial development in the area. Given the potential for office development it is appropriate that the Council employ all available powers to protect existing buildings and facilitate high architectural and townscape standards.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

11. Letters have been delivered to all premises in the area informing occupiers and owners of the proposed Conservation Area. An exhibition showing the boundaries of the area, photographs etc. has been mounted and a local meeting held. Any objections received will be reported to Committee.

12. English Heritage and Hackney Society both welcome the proposal. In addition Hackney Society have indicated they would welcome further Conservation Area designations in the South Shoreditch Area.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

13. There are no direct implications for black and ethnic minorities in the Borough.

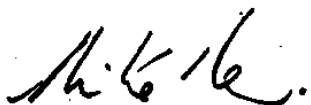
IMPLICATIONS FOR STAFFING

14. Applications for Conservation Area Consent to demolish buildings would represent new work. However, given that these would normally be associated with planning applications for redevelopment which would have been received anyway, and that the issue of demolition, although not able to be controlled, would have been considered anyway, it is anticipated that the increase in workload can be accommodated within the existing staff resources of the Planning Department.

15. Apart from placing a notice in one local and one national newspaper (from existing budget) there are no financial implications in this report.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DECENTRALISATION, WOMEN, PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, OFFICE ACCOMMODATION AND MANAGEMENT TEAM

20. None.



MIKE NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)

Tom Finnin Lead Originator

22/06/90
04/07/90 updated

APPENDIX

DESCRIPTION

Historical Context

1. The area still reflects today the medieval field and path pattern. Shepherdess Place was an ancient footpath. The Lumley Almshouses on the north of the area were built in 1672 but demolished in the nineteenth century. A public house has been in the south-west of the area since at least 1720. The "Shepherd and Shepherdess" Tavern, later the "Eagle" gave rise to Shepherdess Walk.
2. In the eighteenth century the area was known as "Finsbury Fields" i.e. they were mainly grounds, referred to in 1068. The area as a whole was made over as walking grounds with trees paid for by the public. In Henry VIII's reign when the fields were enclosed there was a violent successful uprising, which led to the fields being kept open. Hackney has long had a record of socialist rebellion.
3. The layouts of the area was already established by 1720. City Road (Turnpike) was laid out in the eighteenth century. By 1827 there were houses and shops along the road, Shepherdess Walk and Westmoreland Place was laid out to the east. By 1870 the area was intensively developed with houses and shops/workshops. The usage of the area greatly changed between 1901-1914 when the Police Station (with cells) was built, as were the external industrial buildings and warehouses. These had a wide variety of uses and services. Hoxton had one of the worst crime records in London and the buildings had to be very secure, as shown by thier construction with courtyards. Transport was good with Wenlock and City Road Basins off the Regent's Canal very nearby.
4. The present Eagle Tavern and grounds are an important part of East End social history. A building was on the site in 1720 as referred to above. In the nineteenth century the Eagle and the Grecian Saloon next to it were one of the most important and popular music halls in London. The building is in the song "Up and down the City Road/In and out the Eagle/Thats the way the money goes/Pop goes the Weasel". It was there that Marie Lloyd as the daughter of a barman there made her singing debut; she was to become the most famous music hall entertainer of all.

Architectural/Urban Design Appraisal

5. There are certain unique qualities in the urban design of this area; firstly, the street layout is an orthogonal (right angled) grid which derives from the historical pattern of paths as dictated by the formally laid out walled gardens on the site; secondly, the buildings conform to a uniform and unbroken building line and have similar overall heights; and thirdly, the buildings are all unusually tall in relation to the widths of the streets. These characteristics combine to give the area a canyon like appearance which offers a particularly strong feeling of enclosure and overlooking to those passing through. There are no breaks in the street wall, vertical openings are punched into the buildings' interior courtyards through archways. The sense of overlooking is enhanced in places by the presence of high level doors and loading bays opening directly on the street wall served by projecting cranes or gantries.

6. The architectural characteristics are common to industrial/warehouse buildings in Shoreditch as built around the turn of the century. There is a uniform vertical emphasis provided by the ground to parapet projecting structural columns on every building. The only truly varied area is Westland Place, whose short length displays a veritable museum of architectural types from the delicately shaped brickwork of a simple narrow fronted Georgian terrace building to the heavy cast iron lintols of a late Victorian sweatshop.



MAP TP 01-00-257



Scale 1:1250

UNDERWOOD STREET CONSERVATION AREA

BASED UPON THE ORDNANCE SURVEY
1:1250 MAP WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE
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