

Committee/Meeting: <b>Cabinet</b>	Date: <b>6 October 2010</b>	Classification: <b>Unrestricted</b>	Report No:	Agenda Item No.
Report of: <b>Corporate Director Development and Renewal</b> Originating officer  <b>Mark Hutton -Team Manager</b> <b>Development Design and Conservation</b>	Title: <b>Conservation Strategy</b>  Wards Affected: <b>All</b>	Lead Member: <b>Cllr Marc Francis - Housing, Heritage and Planning</b>  Strategic Priority: <b>'A Great Place to Live'</b> Community Plan Theme: <b>Building Strong and Prosperous Communities</b>		

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report presents Tower Hamlets' first Conservation Strategy reflecting the importance of the borough's heritage. The Strategy has been created to comply with guidance in the Government's newly published Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS 5) to create such a Strategy, and the Council will be the first to implement a Strategy in London. The new Strategy can be found at Appendix 1 together with a summary of the extensive public consultation undertaken in order to evolve the Strategy at Appendix 2.
- 1.2. The Conservation Strategy seeks to describe and highlight the opportunities provided by Tower Hamlets heritage. It will help to achieve the Tower Hamlets Community Plan objective of "A Great Place to Live".
- 1.3. The development of this cross-cutting Strategy has taken place with a range of services across the Council and with partner agencies in the Tower Hamlets and beyond. It has been extensively consulted with the community.

## **2. DECISIONS REQUIRED**

Cabinet is recommended to:-

- 2.1. Approve the Conservation Strategy set out in Appendix I and authorise the Director of Development and Renewal after discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Housing, Heritage and Planning to publish the Strategy making minor changes, further desktop publishing or work on the layout.
  - 2.2. Authorise the Director of Development and Renewal to produce and publish a Strategy Delivery Workplan after discussion with the Lead Member for Housing Heritage and Planning.
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***Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)***  
***List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report***

Brief description of “background papers” Name and address where open to inspection:

<b>Conservation Strategy Baseline Audit</b>	<b>Mark Hutton x5372</b>
<b>Key Issues papers</b>	<b>Anchorage House PO BOX 55739</b>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<b>2 Clove Crescent</b>
	<b>London E14 2BE</b>

**3. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 3.1. Tower Hamlets has an irreplaceable heritage of historic buildings and places. The Strategy has been produced to achieve key goals to:
- 3.2. Guide the protection and maintenance of the Borough’s cultural heritage of buildings, townscapes, designed landscapes and archaeology.
- 3.3. Highlight how the built heritage can promote social inclusion, enhance local identity, and investigate how other benefits can be identified, illustrated and utilised.
- 3.4. Drive initiatives around the care, reuse and enhancement of historic buildings and places, particularly around seeking regeneration.
- 3.5. Help to spread benefits of heritage through participation of local resident groups, voluntary sector and other stakeholders.
- 3.6. Align the Council's care of the historic environment with the Government’s recently issued new Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5). One of the key recommendations in PPS5 is for the development of a positive pre-active strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, which this strategy fulfills.
- 3.7. Assist in delivering the Council’s Local Development Framework Core Strategy which is aligned with the priorities of the Community Plan 2020; the Conservation Strategy particularly supports the theme of ‘A Great Place to Live’. Key elements of the Strategy will support the LDF through Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents including the Development Management DPD and Site and Place-Making DPD.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1. The Conservation Strategy aims to guide decision making for Tower Hamlets’ heritage. It sets out the long term vision for the heritage, and the Strategy Goals and Objectives to help deliver that vision. It provides

strategic guidance at Borough level. Other ways this could be achieved are by doing the minimum relying as a Council on existing statutory instruments and procedures, together with existing policy approaches and continuing approaches to English Heritage and other organisations for support as required. However, this would not allow the benefits of an overall strategy to give a joined up approach to the heritage to come forward, and in the long term would be less cost-effective and to the overall detriment of the historic environment. There is no option to do nothing as the Council would not be taking its legal duties forward, not responding to the policy requirements of PPS5 and would not be able to offer the leadership required on this issue.

- 4.2. The Conservation Strategy has therefore been written to be proactive in managing our heritage for current and future generations – it will help ensure that the Borough’s heritage is protected and enhanced within a changing environment, and also help ensure that heritage continues to actively contribute to the social and economic regeneration of the Borough.

## **5. BACKGROUND**

- 5.1. There is commitment - both nationally and locally – through the law, and just as importantly, through public sentiment, to protect the historic environment and the heritage that it includes. In taking this important commitment forward the Conservation Strategy recognises that Tower Hamlets will continue to undergo significant change, but at the same time the history and heritage of the borough is an irreplaceable legacy which must be protected.
- 5.2. The Strategy will ensure that as Tower Hamlets changes the heritage will significantly contribute to the ongoing success and vitality of the borough. It will do this by highlighting the important role that the heritage can play in sustainable development by providing the foundation for the boroughs distinctive character and sense of place, and how the heritage will be contributing to social and economic development, the climate change agenda and quality of life. In recognition of this the Strategy has been funded by English Heritage, and in consultation, has been very strongly supported by stakeholders.
- 5.3. Tower Hamlets has a long history of trade and industry, migration and change, and these key social themes have influenced the development of the Borough, and shaped the extensive heritage that can be found here. It is heritage of international, national and local importance and a rich resource: the historic environment includes two World Heritage Sites, 58 Conservation Areas, historic buildings of which over 2000 are Statutorily Listed, together with important archaeology, parks including the nationally important Victoria Park, open spaces and views, heritage collections and intangible heritage.

- 5.4. Care and responsibility for this resource is spread widely, both within the Council and in the community- between many individuals and organizations, the Strategy will bring all these elements together in one document for the first time.

## **6. BODY OF THE REPORT**

### **What is the Conservation Strategy?**

- 6.1. Tower Hamlets history and heritage is an irreplaceable legacy for the borough to be proud of; and to promote and protect into the future. At the same time, we are also committed to ensuring the ongoing success and vitality of our Borough through new sustainable development.
- 6.2. The Strategy recognises the important role that heritage can play in that sustainable development – by providing a foundation for the Borough’s distinctive character and sense of place, and by contributing to social and economic development, the climate change agenda and quality of life.
- 6.3. The Conservation Strategy has therefore been written to be a practical and proactive management tool for the future of the Borough’s heritage – it will ensure that the heritage is recognised and given due weight where development is proposed in a changing environment, and also help ensure that heritage continues to actively contribute to the social and economic regeneration of the Borough. Importantly it will assist in defining an appropriate balance between the Borough’s heritage and the overall needs of the Borough in decision making about new development impacting on the heritage.
- 6.4. The Strategy seeks to bring together everything that we do to protect the Borough's heritage as well as focusing on new activities, building on existing and new partnerships, where we these can have the most impact.
- 6.5. The Conservation Strategy is the first strategy of its type in London, being the first to take an integrated view across all aspects of the heritage resource.

## **7. HOW WAS THE CONSERVATION STRATEGY EVOLVED?**

- 7.1. The first stage involved collection and analysis of data, and development of a Baseline Audit and Key Issues Paper. The Paper set out the profile of the Borough and the broader strategic context, summarized the historical development of the Borough and the heritage resource that can be found here today, described the values and benefits of the heritage resource and how that resource is currently managed and protected, and described

government and statutory body guidance for heritage protection and enhancement. Based on these findings, it then identified a series of emerging issues facing the heritage.

- 7.2. The findings from this Baseline Audit and Key Issues Paper informed the development of a draft Conservation Strategy. Widespread public consultation was carried out to secure community and stakeholder input into this draft Conservation Strategy to evolve the final document with the greatest possible input from the public.

### **Initial Consultation Period**

- 7.3. The aim of the consultation process was to engage with all local community and interest groups, and with key internal Council and external stakeholders.
- 7.4. This comprised taking the draft strategy out to the community; exhibitions and drop-in sessions at Idea Stores, a public meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January at Oxford House in Bethnal Green, individual presentations to groups and organisations, together with interactive workshops with young people.
- 7.5. The draft was published for comment on the Council's website, and distribution of hard copies to Idea Stores and Libraries in the Borough.
- 7.6. Additionally consultation took place with key national and local stakeholders including amenity societies, the Council's Conservation and Design Advisory Panel, English Heritage and the GLA. Both English Heritage and the GLA Historic Buildings Advisor at TfL expressed a high level of support for the Strategy, in the case of the GLA's Advisor noting that it is "a comprehensive and forward-thinking strategy which I am sure will be an exemplar for other boroughs to follow".

### **Response to Consultation**

- 7.7. All consultation responses from all sources were recorded in detail, and an action plan evolved to implement relevant changes to the document. In the light of consultee comments, significant changes were made to the Strategy to bring it in line with consultee comments. Principal themes taken forward were improving Council leadership around the heritage; increasing community involvement with the heritage; building heritage skills locally; increasing tourism and heritage interpretation and increasing protection of the heritage, all of which are now reflected in the strategy. Details of the public consultation are set out in Appendix II.

## **8. HOW DOES THE CONSERVATION STRATEGY FIT WITH OTHER KEY INITIATIVES?**

- 8.1. The Conservation Strategy is a key document that feeds into the Borough's Local Development Framework, and that is aligned with the Core Strategy 2025. It also actively contributes to the key priorities of the Tower Hamlets Community Plan 2020, which sets out an overarching aim to "improve the quality of life for everyone who lives and works in the Borough". The Conservation Strategy particularly supports this overarching aim through the theme of "A Great Place to Live".
- 8.2. Strong integration with these and other Borough strategies is key to the deliverability of the Conservation Strategy, and key elements of this Strategy will be incorporated into the Local Development Framework through Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents, such as the Development Management DPD and Site and Place-Making DPD. The Conservation Strategy will be in alignment with the Government's recently published Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS 5) on Planning for the Historic Environment, which will be a vital element in the Council exercising its town planning powers going forward. The Strategy will also contribute to the wider sustainability agenda.

## **9. KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE CONSERVATION STRATEGY**

- 9.1. The key challenges facing Tower Hamlets' heritage have been investigated in two principal ways. Firstly by an assessment of the physical assets themselves, and just as importantly, through the consultation with key stakeholders and borough residents, who have closely informed the evolution of the Strategy.
- 9.2. The challenges focus around the 6 key themes of new development and conservation; the overall condition of the heritage; how the heritage resource is understood and appreciated; its values and benefits; the protection and guidance given to the heritage; and finally management and resources.
- 9.3. Where housing regeneration and high density development is proposed this is seen as putting pressure on the setting and key views of some of the heritage. Heritage buildings are at risk through neglect, inappropriate works and damage, undermining their heritage value. Some street clutter and other public realm issues are also impacting on the quality of heritage resources.
- 9.4. Limited contribution to tourism and local economy was noted together with limited interpretation and signing. Limited community participation in the

heritage was also recognized, and greater involvement of borough residents with the heritage was identified as a key challenge.

- 9.5. Protection and guidance was also seen as limited to current statutory instruments, such as Listing. This has resulted in limited protection of industrial archaeology, innovative post-war housing, locally listed buildings, setting and views. The current statutory List of Listed Buildings was identified as poor, with one of the highest tallies of new listings of all London Boroughs.
- 9.6. Overall it was identified that the heritage is owned by many different individuals and organisations, with often insufficient resources for maintenance. Coordination around the care of heritage resources was not seen to optimally productive, together with less emphasis on monitoring the condition of the heritage in recent years.
- 9.7. The process of developing the Strategy has enabled us to review the key challenges and to clearly identify where we should be doing more to tackle the issues identified. These challenges will be tackled through an implementation plan to be evolved from the Strategy.

## **10. THE CONSERVATION STRATEGY KEY GOALS – SUMMARY**

- 10.1. To tackle the key challenges to the heritage the Strategy is written with clear Goals and Objectives that comprise its main themes. These are summarized below:

<b>10.2. Strategy Goal 1: Understanding the Significance of the Heritage</b>
<b>Objective 1.1:</b> Ensure that the significance of heritage resources is understood
<b>Objective 1.2:</b> Build a better understanding of the significance of the intangible heritage and of local heritage, working closely with community groups.
<b>Objective 1.3:</b> Ensure that planning applications and decisions are based on an understanding of the significance of the heritage.
<b>Objective 1.4:</b> Develop up to date, integrated information systems on heritage that are easily and widely available

<b>10.3. Strategy Goal 2: Increasing Community Pride, Ownership and Involvement in Heritage.</b>
<b>Objective 2.1:</b> Increase community understanding, pride and enjoyment of the Borough's diverse heritages.

<p><b>Objective 2.2:</b> Increase general access to the heritage, and improve connectivity between different heritage resources.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2.3:</b> Increase awareness of the heritage and its needs.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2.4:</b> Provide opportunities for education and for local communities to develop heritage related skills.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2.5:</b> Increase community involvement in the ongoing management and promotion of the heritage.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2.6:</b> Encourage the development of strengthened community and external stakeholder resources to participate in heritage.</p>

<p><b>10.4. Strategy Goal 3: Ensuring Effective Governance and Management of the Heritage.</b></p>
<p><b>Objective 3.1:</b> Increase co-ordination with key internal Council stakeholders to effectively manage and promote the heritage on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p><b>Objective 3.2:</b> Increase the resources available for the Borough's heritage</p>

<p><b>10.5. Strategy Goal 4: Increasing the Heritage's Contribution to Regeneration</b></p>
<p><b>Objective 4.1:</b> Work with community, stakeholder and other partner groups to secure economically viable futures for heritage resources and street markets.</p>
<p><b>Objective 4.2:</b> Encourage development that is sensitive to, and that celebrates the Borough's heritage.</p>
<p><b>Objective 4.3:</b> Increase the contribution that heritage can make to tourism.</p>
<p><b>Objective 4.4:</b> Increase the contribution that heritage can make to the sustainability and climate change agenda.</p>
<p><b>Objective 4.5:</b> Increase recognition of how heritage contributes to regeneration and of the benefits this brings.</p>



#### **10.6. Strategy Goal 5: Improving the Condition of the Heritage**

**Objective 5.1:**

Continue to actively seek to remove all heritage resources from Heritage Risk register.

**Objective 5.2:**

Develop and implement an integrated monitoring and maintenance regime for the heritage that includes all heritage owners.

**Objective 5.3:**

Proactively encourage heritage owners to use appropriate resources when undertaking works to their properties.

#### **10.7. Strategy Goal 6: Ensuring Effective Protection of the Heritage**

**Objective 6.1:**

Ensure that the key heritage resources that contribute to an understanding of Tower Hamlets' history and development are included within the Borough's designations.

**Objective 6.2:**

Increase the clarity around what developments are permitted and appropriate in Conservation Areas.

**Objective 6.3:**

Increase the protection available to locally important heritage resources.

**Objective 6.4:**

Increase the protection for the setting of key heritage resources and key views.

**Objective 6.5:**

Increase the protection available to the intangible heritage of the Borough.

**Objective 6.6:**

Increase enforcement to protect the heritage.

### **11. LAUNCHING THE STRATEGY**

11.1. The Conservation Strategy has been completed in a format accessible to all, with innovation carried through from the public consultation, including a clear layout and use of graphics. A formal launch campaign will include presenting to key stake-holders including English Heritage at a public presentation, as well as informing all who contributed as part of the public consultation. The cost of this will be met from existing budgets.

### **12. DELIVERING THE CONSERVATION STRATEGY NEXT STEPS AND MONITORING PROGRESS**

12.1. The Conservation Strategy will enable the Council to take a proactive and strong leadership role around the Borough's heritage. However, conserving and protecting the Borough's heritage will also require the involvement and contribution of a range of community, stakeholder and partner groups. It will require prioritisation, with a particular focus on the significance of the

heritage resource.

- 12.2. A separate practical Delivery Workplan will be developed for the Conservation Strategy. The Plan will set out key actions required to take forward the Strategy Goals and Objectives, and set their relative prioritisation and firm timescales. It will identify the key accountabilities and the partners for the actions, as well as identifying potential funding sources and costs. It will also set out an approach for monitoring and evaluating progress against the Strategy. This Delivery Workplan will be developed with public and stakeholder involvement through consultation as it will require the co-operation and assistance of many individuals and organisations. All organisations and individuals who commented on the Conservation Strategy and assisted with its evolution will be consulted on this Workplan.
- 12.3. The Delivery Workplan will be completed by March 2011, which will set the targets for delivery of the key themes of the Strategy. It is this document which will drive the roll-out of the Strategy, and going forward allow the Council to identify and priorities conservation initiatives and to set them in an overall framework, together with measuring out-turns and performance.

### **13. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

- 13.1 This report seeks approval from Cabinet to authorise the publication of the Authority's first Conservation Strategy and to allow officers to subsequently produce and publish a Conservation Strategy Implementation Plan.
- 13.2 In addition, approval is sought to allow the Director of Development and Renewal in conjunction with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Housing, Heritage and Planning, to publish the Strategy: making minor changes, further desktop publishing and work on the layout.
- 13.3 Any expenditure relating to the Strategy, such as desktop publishing and printing costs will be met within existing revenue resources identified within the Conservation and Urban Design general fund allocation.
- 13.4 Strategy Goal 3, Objective 3.2 seeks to 'Increase the resources available for the Borough's heritage'. There is currently a general fund budget of £51,250 in respect of historic buildings, which is used to fund listed building works such as shop frontage repairs/replacements and is awarded following an application process.
- 13.5 There is currently no further Council funding available to fund improvements to the Borough's heritage portfolio. The Strategy will be used to support bids to third party funding providers such as English

Heritage to secure future funding streams. In addition, it will be used during Section 106 (planning obligation) negotiations for developers' contributions.

#### **14. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL SERVICES)**

- 14.1 The Conservation Strategy will play a key role in assisting the Council to accord with Government Guidance in the new PPS5 (Policy HE3) insofar as the Strategy will be a key document informing future Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents including the Development Management DPD and Site and Place-Making DPD.
- 14.2 The Conservation Strategy is not being adopted as an LDF document, rather it is an overarching strategy that will inform the LDF, and therefore will not attract the same weighting in terms of the Council's local planning policy. However approval of the Conservation Strategy by Cabinet will see the Strategy approved as a key strategic policy tool to inform LDF documents and will bring about the results set out at part 3 of this report. Such approval raises no immediate legal implications.
- 14.3 The Conservation Strategy will be implemented through a separate Implementation Plan and thus the approval of Cabinet to authorise the production of this Plan is welcomed in order to formally bring about the key actions required to deliver the Conservation Strategy.

#### **15. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 15.1. The Conservation Strategy specifically addresses inequality and the needs of all people living in the borough. A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken in formulating the strategy. Key findings are:

##### **Reduce inequalities**

- 15.2. Achieving this will involve increasing the information that is made available about the heritage – but doing so in an accessible and informative way that appeals to and has meaning for all sections of the community, including young people, diverse ethnic groups and those on low incomes:
- 15.3. It also involves providing concrete opportunities for people to get more involved in the heritage, and to have positive cross cultural contacts and experiences. This already began during the public consultation of the draft Strategy, where public exhibitions and meetings allowed people of different ages, genders, culture and religious faith to contribute and discuss their

ideas for the Borough's heritage.

- 15.4. Going forward, the Conservation Strategy has identified a number of opportunities for involving various community groups, including local schools, youth groups, third sector organisations, residents' associations, diverse ethnic community groups or volunteers in the heritage. This will be identified in the Implementation Plan

#### **Ensuring community cohesion**

- 15.5. Tower Hamlets is a Borough of diverse communities and diverse heritage. Therefore the Conservation Strategy aims to increase community understanding, pride and ownership of the breadth of heritage in the Borough, including the heritage of more recent communities. It also aims to encourage wider and informed participation in sustaining it, including among young people.
- 15.6. This helps to promote mutual interest and respect for the Borough's diverse heritage and also for its diverse communities to be engaged with the heritage.

#### **16. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT**

- 16.1. The Conservation Strategy focuses on managing and enabling change to heritage resources in a way that preserves them and their significance. In this it provides for sustainable development in the widest sense.
- 16.2. The heritage resource covered by this Strategy includes all aspects of the historic environment that result from the interaction between people and places. This is heritage in its broadest sense and the Strategy takes an integrated, holistic approach to its conservation, particularly around the re-use and better exploitation of existing resources to provide for sustainable action for a greener environment.

#### **17. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 17.1. The Strategy's success in meeting its targets will depend on robust performance and risk management. The Conservation Strategy out-turns will be managed through the Council's performance and risk management framework to ensure that progress is tracked and remedial action put in place to address any risks.

#### **18. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 18.1. One of the areas of focus of the Conservation Strategy is increasing understanding and protection of the Borough's heritage. These measures

will contribute to a better environment, particularly around removing the blight of dereliction, with greater pride of place and seek to ensure a sense of greater community ownership of heritage places and assets. With greater levels of participation in the heritage, delivery of the Conservation Strategy should, therefore, have a positive impact on aspects of crime relating to the built environment.

## **19. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT**

- 19.1. One of the key Strategy Goals of the Conservation Strategy is to ensure the most effective governance and management of the heritage. As part of this, it sets out the vital aim to increase co-ordination with key Council stakeholders to effectively manage and promote the heritage on an ongoing basis, with a commensurate saving in resources.
- 19.2. Management responsibility for the breadth of Tower Hamlets' heritage is divided between a number of Council departments and functions (such as Development Management, Local History Library and Archives, and Parks and Open Spaces). In addition, many of the heritage resources are impacted by, or have impact on a further range of Council departments including Strategic Transport, Public Realm, Housing Regeneration, Children's Services and Cultural Services.
- 19.3. The Conservation Strategy seeks to ensure integrated planning with these key Council stakeholders ensuring that the Conservation Strategy is aligned and mutually reinforcing with the relevant key strategy and policy documents of other departments, to help us better understand where resources need to be prioritised.

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 – Conservation Strategy
- Appendix 2 – Summary of Public Consultation