

# Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area



Draft Supplementary Planning Document  
2020

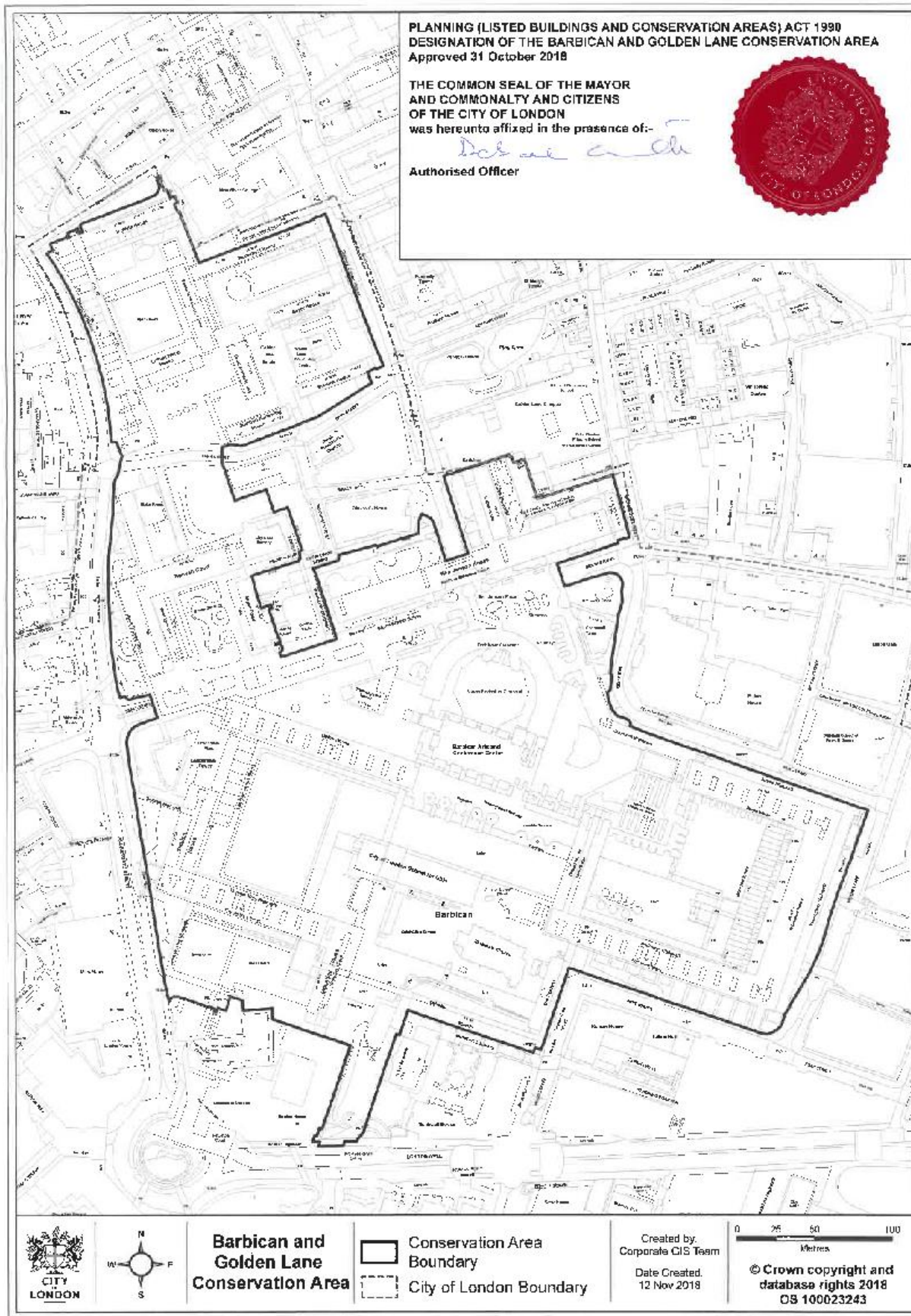


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# Map of the Barbican & Golden Lane conservation area (boundary designated October 2018)



# 1. Summary of character, appearance and significance

This supplementary planning document articulates the special character and appearance of the Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area and the policy framework for its management.

The area is characterised by 3 distinct developments: Golden Lane estate to the North, Barbican Estate to the south and Blake Tower (formally the Barbican YMCA) situated between the two. The characteristics which contribute to the special interest of the Barbican & Golden Lane conservation area can be summarised as follows:

- Two Estates which, together, provide a unique insight in the creative processes of a seminal English architectural practice, Chamberlain, Powell & Bon
- Integration of the ancient remains of the Roman and medieval City wall and the medieval church of St Giles Cripplegate in a strikingly modern context
- In scope and extent, the Estates are important visual evidence for the scale of devastation wrought by the Luftwaffe bombing campaign of 1940-41 known as the 'Blitz'
- Seminal examples of ambitious post-war housing schemes incorporating radical, modern ideas of architecture and spatial planning reflecting the development of Modernism
- Unprecedented and ingenious provision of open space and gardens within central London, which continue to be a defining characteristic of the Estates today
- New and striking architectural idioms, particularly at the Barbican, applied on a significant scale; a new architectural language deliberately modern and forward-looking; a way of planning and arranging buildings and spaces which was unprecedented in Britain and reflected evolving ideas of the modern city.



## 2. History

The conservation area lies to the north of the City of London, beyond the Roman and medieval City walls, however from the map above, you will see that this area also incorporates the corner of the Fort wall. This location meant the conservation area was not as densely developed as the rest of the City until the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when the City grew beyond its walls.

In the Roman period, there was an extramural cemetery at Smithfield just to the west of the City boundary – as was the Roman custom to bury the dead outside the City walls. In the late first or early second century AD, the Fort was then built to the north of Londinium. Later, around 200 AD, the Roman wall was erected and incorporated in the Fort wall, remains of which can be seen today from the conservation area. During this period, the character of this area was that of a sparsely populated suburb, immediately outside a military complex and near an area used for burials.

There are little traces of occupation known from the Saxon period, during which time the City appears to have been left unoccupied in favour of another settlement: Lundenwic, further along the Strand. However, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the old walled city was reoccupied by Alfred the Great. The Cripplegate, as it came to be known, is mentioned in the laws of Ethelred (978 – 1016 AD). It was then rebuilt in 1244 and again in 1492.

The word 'Barbican' derives from French and refers to a fortified outpost or castle outwork. Something similar once stood here which was known to the Normans as Base Court (or 'Bailey') and most probably founded upon the old Roman defensive architecture. This facility was defensive under Edward I but soon passed into the property of the Earls and Dukes of Suffolk.

St Giles' church was established by c.1115 with the present building dating back from c.1550. The churchyard was completed by 1181 (Lobel), and in 1270 appeared as a rectangular space immediately south of the church. In the west was a Jewish Cemetery, the only such in England, and was later converted into a garden after the expulsion of the Jews in 1290. By 1520 the churchyard occupied the land to the south and west of the church, following the distinctive right-angle of the City wall.

By 1676 it had been extended by some distance to the south, following the course of the City wall just past the bastion. On Rocque's map this section is labelled the 'Green Ch.Y', as opposed to the 'Cripple gate Church Yard' nearer the church. With minor encroachments here and there, this is the way it stayed until the devastation of WW2, when this locality was flattened.

The Blitz of 1940-41 devastated many English cities and London was no exception. Hit particularly badly was the ancient City of London, the Roman core which sprawled over two millennia the inner and then outer suburbs to form what we now call Greater London.

The City has survived many crises in its long history; abandonment, conquest, plague and war, however it was not until the Great Fire of London in 1666 that London became seriously disfigured with many buildings razed to the ground. However, from the smoking ruins it grew back, spurred by the barely containable commercial activity for which the City is known. These noble new buildings of brick and stone were the result of new building codes which were introduced to ensure that the Great Fire never happens again. Subsequently, in the four centuries between that time and our current moment, the City had been menaced by the threat of invasion but had passed the years largely unscathed other than by the natural procession of architectural trends.

It was during the First World War that it was realised that destruction could come from the air as well as the ground; in the early 1940s, when Britain was again at war with Germany, it was quickly realised how devastating aerial bombardment could be. Port and industrial cities like Plymouth and Coventry were targeted and later destroyed by German bombers. London as the capital and as a prominent dock city was an obvious target, too. During 1940 and 1941, thousands of tonnes of high-explosive and combustible bombs rained down on the City. Some quarters escaped with only superficial damage – and St Paul's Cathedral, miraculously, with hardly any – but some others were almost wholly destroyed. One such area was the tract of City to the north of the ancient Guildhall (its roof stove in by bombs, but the rest mercifully spared), to the east of Smithfield Market and to the west of the Moorgate, running up to the City's border with what is now Islington. This area of Cripplegate Ward had been largely occupied by garment warehouses and their wholesale destruction left deep basements, vast piles of rubble and a mere 48 residents.



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In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century over 130,000 people were residents within the City of London. However, by 1952 the number of people living within the square mile had dropped to just 5,000. Many residents who had lost their homes during the WWII bombing were re-housed in areas outside the centre. Business and commerce quickly became the mainland uses within the City. However, the Corporation of London was concerned with depopulation inside of the City and turned its attention towards this issue when planning to rebuild the City in a post-war era.

Following the end of WWII, there was a national expectation that living standards should improve, and provisions of new housing should be the latest in architectural design. Bomb damage combined with concerns about urban sprawl and loss of countryside led planners and architects to re-examine the potential of living in urban areas. Plans and reports at this time were concerned with land use zones, such as the grouping together of shopping and community facilities. Mixed developments of houses and flats with public open spaces and private gardens were becoming increasingly popular with planners and were based on the community principle of the 'neighbourhood unit' developed in the USA during the 1920s. During this time, there was also a shift away from the idea of a 'garden suburb', which had been popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The innovation of 'highwalls' as a means of separating road traffic from pedestrian movement and facilities was also an increasingly popular planning solution in developing self-contained communities.

Architectural competitions were launched by several local authorities across the country to design and construct high-density, low-cost modern housing. In 1951, the Corporation purchased land around Goswell Road and Golden Lane and announced a competition to design a housing estate primarily for single people and couples who had key jobs in the city, such as caretakers, nurses and policemen. This competition was won by Geoffrey Powell, a lecturer of architecture at the Kingston School of Art in 1952. He invited his colleagues Christoph Bon and Joseph Chamberlin to collaborate on a detailed design for the Golden Lane Estate. This was finalised in 1952 and later revised for an enlarged site area from 1954 after building began the year previously. The Golden Lane Estate was completed in 1962 as a landmark early modern housing scheme.

In 1955 the Corporation of London commissioned Chamberlin, Powell and Bon to prepare a scheme for redevelopment which was to be integrated with the proposed commercial development along London Wall as part of the Martin-Mealand Plan. This scheme was submitted to the Corporation in 1956.

Simultaneously, a voluntary group called the New Barbican Committee prepared a scheme for the redevelopment of the area. The scheme was refused by the Corporation and dismissed on appeal as it was considered that the vast commercial premises it proposed would greatly increase congestion in central London. The Minister of Housing indicated in his decision that there would be advantage in creating a genuine residential neighbourhood in the city, which incorporated schools, shops, open spaces and other amenities even if this meant foregoing profitable returns on the land.

The Corporation resolved to accept the Minister's recommendations and invited Chamberlin, Powell and Bon to prepare a revised scheme which was presented in November 1959. This scheme included flats and maisonettes, new buildings for the City of London School for Girls and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, a theatre, concert hall, art gallery, lending library, hostel for students and young people, shops, restaurants, public houses, car parking space, as well as reserving sites for a swimming pool and a gym. The scheme was accepted in principle and the Corporation undertook to construct the scheme itself. The

elevated walkway system on top of the podium, designed to separate pedestrians from vehicles, was carried forward in the Martin-Mealand scheme of the mid-1950s and was an important consideration.

Chamberlain, Powell and Bon produced their first detailed plans for the Barbican in 1956, which were revised in early 1959 and approved in December that year. In 1960, Ove Arup and Partners were appointed as structural engineers. Work on The Barbican began in 1963 and would be dogged by industrial disputes. Gradually, however, the mammoth Estate began to take shape. The first building to be completed was Milton Court in 1966, a now-demolished civic building. Next was the City of London Girls School in 1969, followed by a spate of residential blocks. The last buildings to be completed were the Barbican Centre and Frobisher Crescent, in 1982. That year, the Queen officially opened the Barbican Centre, describing it as 'one of the wonders of the modern world'.

Outwardly, the buildings of both Estates have hardly changed. Development has largely been subtle. In 2010, Frobisher Crescent was converted from office to residential use. In 2013-15, areas of the podium were resurfaced with bespoke clay pavers to match the originals. In 2018, Great Arthur House was re-clad to the original design. More obvious alterations are relatively minor in scope: a new canopy roof above Brandon Mews (1987) and the refurbishment of the lakes (2004).

Long praised as outstanding examples of their kind, at the turn of the century the Estates were recognised through listing. In 1997, buildings on the Golden Lane Estate were individually listed and in 2001 the entire Barbican was designated a single listed building (all at grade II, except for Crescent House at grade II\*). In 2003, the Barbican's landscaping and spatial planning received additional recognition through its listing as a grade II\* Registered Park & Garden; in 2020, the Golden Lane Estate received the same accolade at grade II.

*Parts of this text derive from the  
Barbican Listed Building  
Management Guidelines*

### 3. Planning Policies

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out the City Corporation's specific policies relating to the Barbican & Golden Lane conservation area. Development affecting this conservation area will be managed in accordance with legislation and the national and local planning policies set out below.

**Development should preserve and enhance the distinctive character and appearance of the Barbican and Golden Lane conservation area – as set out in this SPD – and the significance of individual heritage assets within the boundary. Where appropriate, development should seek to better reveal the significance of the conservation area and other individual heritage assets.**

#### Legislation

The Civic Amenities Act 1967 gave local authorities the power to designate conservation areas, and these powers are now contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act (section 69 (1) (a)) defines a conservation area as an area: "of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". Section 71 (1) of the Act requires the local planning authority to "...formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas" (see [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)).  
National policy

The Government's planning policies are contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which came into force on 27 March 2012 and which was last updated on 19 June 2019. Historic environment policies are detailed in chapter 16 which sets out the requirements for local authorities and applicants in relation to the conservation of heritage assets, including conservation areas. See [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk). The Department for Communities and Local Government have published Planning Practice Guidance for the NPPF, of which the section 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' is particularly relevant. See <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>.

NPPF historic environment policies are supported by the Planning Practice Guidance and Historic Environment Good Practice Advice notes 1-3, produced by Historic England. See:

[Gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

[Historic England](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)

#### London-wide policy

The London Plan (adopted 2021) forms part of the statutory development plan for the City of London and needs to be considered when considering development within the Conservation Area. The key policy is HC1 'Heritage conservation and growth' in Chapter 7 'Heritage and Culture'.

[The London Plan](http://www.london.gov.uk)

#### City of London policy

Planning policy for the City of London is contained both within the current adopted Local Plan (2015) and in forthcoming City Plan 2036, which is due to be published for pre-submission consultation in January or February 2021, following which it will be submitted to the Secretary of State. See [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk) for more information. Development proposals within the Barbican & Golden Lane conservation area must be considered in the context of the policies of the Local Plan 2015 (so long as it remains in effect) and the City Plan 2036. Within this framework, particular account will need to be taken of the following policies:

#### Local Plan 2015

CS10 Design

CS12 Historic Environment

DM12.1: Managing change affecting all heritage assets and spaces

DM12.2: Development in conservation areas

DM12.3: Listed buildings

DM12.4: Ancient monuments and archaeology

DM12.5: Historic parks and gardens

CS13: Protected views

#### Draft City Plan 2036

S8: Design

DE1: Sustainability Standards

DE2: New Development

DE3: Public Realm

DE4: Pedestrian Permeability

DE5: Terraces and Viewing Galleries

DE6: Shopfronts

DE7: Advertisements

DE9: Lighting



S11: Historic Environment  
 HE1: Managing Change to Heritage Assets  
 HE2: Ancient Monuments and Archaeology

S13: Protected Views  
 S14: Open Spaces and Green Infrastructure

### **Designated heritage assets**

Many parts of the Estates are already designated as heritage assets, as follows:

#### **Listed Buildings**

##### **Grade I**

Church of St Giles

##### **Grade II\***

Crescent House

##### **Grade II**

Barbican Estate

Dorothy Annan Murals, Cromwell Walk

Great Arthur House

Cuthbert Harrowing House

Bowater House  
 Golden Lane Community Centre  
 Bayer House  
 Stanley Cohen House  
 Basterfield House  
 Golden Lane Leisure Centre  
 Hatfield House

#### **Designated Landscapes**

Barbican Estate (grade II\*)

Golden Lane Estate (grade II)

#### **Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

London Wall: West and North of Monkwell Square

The buildings and spaces on the Estates are thus already protected in that in the exercise of planning functions, special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings. Conservation area status, following designation in 2018, requires that in the exercise of planning functions, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area.

Shortly after the buildings were listed, Listed Building Management Guidelines were developed for the Estates. These form the City Corporation's Management Strategy for the listed buildings and inform this document. The Listed Building Management Guidelines have been adopted by the City Corporation as Supplementary Planning Documents.

### **Non-designated heritage assets**

These are identified at the earliest stage in the planning process, with reference to current national criteria. This may be supported by additional research or investigations as appropriate.

### **Archaeology**

The City of London is the historic centre of London, with a rich history of monuments and archaeological remains surviving from all periods. It is an historic landscape which has shaped and influenced the modern townscape. There has been almost continuous occupation of the City from the initial Roman settlement, with some evidence suggesting earlier occupation. The development of the City is contained within the visible and buried monuments and archaeological remains. The history of settlement has led to the build-up and development of a very complex, and in some areas, deep archaeological sequence. Later building development and basement construction has partly eroded the archaeological evidence, and in some areas remains have been lost with no record or an incomplete record of only part of a site.

Due to the complex layering of remains above and below ground, the entire City is considered to have archaeological potential, unless it can be demonstrated that archaeological remains have been lost due to basement construction or other ground works.

Where developments are proposed which involve new groundworks an historic environment assessment, including an assessment of the archaeological potential and impact of the proposals, will be required as part of the planning application. Where significant remains survive, consideration will be given to amendments to the proposals to ensure that disturbance to archaeological remains is minimised or reduced.

The City Corporation will indicate the potential of a site, its relative importance and the likely impact to a developer at an early stage so that the appropriate assessment and design development can be undertaken. Developers should refer to the Archaeology and Development Guidance SPD (2017) for further information.

The Barbican & Golden Lane Conservation Area includes significant stretches of the Roman Fort and Roman and medieval London Wall, a Scheduled Monument, which were incorporated into the landscaping of the Barbican Estate. The surviving walls and medieval bastions are striking examples of the development of the defensive wall and its later incorporation into buildings as London grew. There is high potential for remains of features associated with the wall, such as the external bank and ditches and intra-

mural road to survive, as well as structures and buildings within the Roman Fort. Medieval burials in St Giles Cripplegate churchyard and the Jewish Cemetery, part of which survives as a raised feature on the west side of the wall and from the non-conformist Cupids Court burial ground, now Fann Street are likely to survive. There is potential for post-medieval remains of Bridgewater House and later buildings on this site.

## **Sustainability and climate change**

The City Corporation is committed to being at the forefront of action in response to climate change and other sustainability challenges that face high density urban environments. In adapting to meet these challenges, it is important that sustainable development is sensitive to the historic environment. In particular, areas will need to be resilient to warmer wetter winters, hotter drier summers and more frequent extreme weather events.

Issues specifically relevant to the Barbican & Golden Lane conservation area include:

- To minimise the risks of flooding elsewhere in the City, new development schemes will be expected to make use of appropriate rainwater attenuation measures such as the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and urban greening should be increased.
- The predominance of hard surfaces across the Estates may result in a tendency towards overheating. Opportunities will be sought to raise the level of urban greening to support biodiversity and wellbeing and combat increased temperatures as a result of climate change. This aspiration will be balanced by the need to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and the special architectural and historic interest of the listed buildings.
- The City is an air quality management area for fine particulates and oxides of nitrogen, and monitoring shows poor air quality in Beech Street. It is therefore essential that development does not exacerbate existing air quality issues, particularly around sites of particular vulnerability such as residential areas and childcare facilities. In March 2020, an experimental traffic scheme began at Beech Street to address the very high levels of air pollution in this part of the conservation area.

The Local Plan policy CS15 provides guidance on sustainable development and climate change and policy CS18 on SUDS supplemented by more detailed Development Management policies. The City Corporation has produced a Climate Action Strategy 2020-2027 which highlights the actions needed to enable the City to cope with changing climate.

## **Enforcement**

Breaches of planning control are investigated in accordance with the City of London Enforcement Plan SPD (adopted in June 2017). This sets out the City's approach to enforcement and the manner and timescales in which breaches will be investigated. See [City of London Corporation](#)

## 4. Boundary and Fringe

### Wards: Aldersgate and Cripplegate

#### Designation

The conservation area and its present boundary were designated in October 2018.

#### Immediate setting

The conservation area is situated at the City's northern edge, partially neighbouring the London Borough of Islington. Accordingly, the immediate setting of the conservation area is a densely developed urban heart, largely modern in architecture, variable in appearance and scale (from low- to mid-rise) and subject to frequent change and renewal.

#### Boundary

To the north-west, north and east the boundary is that of the City boundary with the London Borough of Islington. Development within Islington affecting the setting of this part of the conservation area is therefore outside the City's planning control. To the north the setting is typically low-rise and a mixture of modern and historic buildings, disposed upon a traditional street pattern. To the east there is a mixed townscape of mid-rise, post-war housing schemes, open spaces and more traditionally scaled buildings of various periods and uses. To the south, there is a hinterland of large post-war buildings and a scattering of heritage assets: the scheduled stretches of the Roman and medieval City wall and the Cripplegate under the roadway, the Salters' Hall, remains of St Alphege tower and the Minotaur Statue (all grade II listed). To the west, a modern tract of townscape along Aldersgate Street, with glimpses beyond of Smithfield and Charterhouse Square.

#### Between the Estates

The Estates were designed as separate, self-contained entities and read as such. Between them, within the City, is a fragment of historic street network with a small group of largely modern buildings. Most of these are of no inherent interest but there are two exceptions: the Jewin Chapel, opened in 1960 and a non-designated heritage asset, and the Cripplegate Institute of 1894 (with a modern extension), a grade II listed building.

## 5. Buildings, Open Spaces and Public Realm

The Barbican and Golden Lane Estates are a striking zone of brutalist, modernist architecture in the heart of central London. The Golden Lane Estate was one of the first post-war housing projects to move on from the traditional style of public housing which gained popularity throughout the interwar period. It employed fresh, modern forms to striking effect, audaciously blobbed with colour to emphasise the move away from the blitzed past. Its successor, the Barbican, went further in its rejection of traditional architectural norms. This brutal – brutalist – mass of concrete reimagined the traditional townscape with a series of airy walkways intermingling with dramatic, sculptural buildings, rushing water and verdant planting.

In themselves, the two Estates are highly significant. But the side-by-side juxtaposition of them allows for a wider story to be read: the development of building construction technology and standards, the evolving post-war notions of architecture and spatial planning and the increasing powers and maturity of their architects Chamberlain, Powell and Bon. Furthermore, the Estates are monuments to the shift in the public consciousness and appetite for different lifestyles emerging in the twentieth century and accelerated by the Second World War.

The intrinsic character and appearance of these set-pieces endure so much so that despite the passage of fifty years the Estates continue to be seen as desirable locations. Both deliver successful mixed-use developments needed when ensuring they can adapt and respond to external pressures of climate change, continued maintenance and cultural vitality, whilst including tranquil places with access for all.

In addition to the postwar Estates, the conservation area contains a fragment of older townscape: the remnants of Bridgwater Square, once part of the sixteenth century Bridgwater House and garden and now protected under the London Squares Preservation Act 1931 (amended 1961).

### a. Golden Lane Estate

#### Introduction

Golden Lane Estate was designed to accommodate a community of essential workers (policemen, married nurses and caretakers etc) and meet all their needs within the site boundaries. The intention was to create a densely packed residential site with 200 persons to the acre with a high number of small residential flats and a variety of community amenities. On completion, the number of residential units totalled 1400 flats and maisonettes, community centre, nursery and playground, swimming pool, badminton court (now a tennis court), gardens, open spaces, a line of shops and a pub.

The original design for Golden Lane Estate was dominated by a block eleven storeys high with twelve low blocks and a community centre arranged around a series of courts. The design was modified over the 9 years it took to build from the competition entry submission in 1952 due to the original site being extended and, in 1955, with the increase in height of the tallest proposed block, Great Arthur House. The changes resulted in a much less symmetrical scheme and an evolution of design aesthetic. Crescent House, the final building to be constructed, marks a departure from the earlier curtain wall blocks of the 1950s. and the ideas explored in the design of this building had a significant impact on the development of the Barbican Estate.

This scheme pioneered new philosophies of Modernist Planning, high rise density, formal prescriptive urban design to minute detail and the removal of roads in preference for a new kind of urban network.

Powell claimed that 'there is no attempt at the informal in these courts. We regard the whole scheme as urban. We have no desire to make the project look like a garden suburb.' (Architectural Association Journal, April 1957)

#### Overall character and appearance

The Estate comprises residential blocks shielding and looking inwards to the community spaces at the heart of the Estate. The site boundaries did little to reference the surrounding built form, architectural styles or character which made it a strong architectural statement, defiantly urban in character. While coherence and continuity are maintained throughout the estate, each building type has a distinctive architectural signature, avoiding the anonymity of many subsequent local authority housing developments. Of particular note is the perceptible development of the architectural language used from the estate's inception in 1951 to its completion in 1962. The contrast between those buildings designed and completed during the earlier phase – Great Arthur and Stanley Houses, the initial four east-west maisonette blocks and the community



centre – and the final block completed, Crescent House, is striking, with Cullum Welch House appearing to occupy a transitional position.

The influence of the architectural language of Le Corbusier is evident throughout the estate, from the light, ribbon windows, pilotis, the omission of ornamentation in favour of expressed structural details, the fine, simple design of the leisure centre to the tougher pick-hammered concrete and segmented curved canopy of Crescent House. The roof and terrace profiles of the buildings of the estate, visible from many vantage points, have a strong sculptural and material identity.

The ensemble of spaces and buildings and the experience of composed sequential views has been described as 'reminiscent of Gibberd's estate of 1944-1949 at Somerford Grove, Hackney (altered)' which has informed by George Cullen's planning principles of designing to Townscape principles.

### **Grid Architecture**

The character of Golden Lane Estate is defined by the combination of monumental scale housing blocks and the spaces in between with views dominated by the interaction of vertical and horizontal planes set at right angles on a grid plan form, expressing sharp geometry and modernist aesthetic.

### **Levels and Layers**

The Estate is made up physical layers which are revealed and emphasised by sculptural elements; the lower-level parking layer is revealed by large circular concrete air shafts which create dramatic light shafts at the lower level and present as sculptural forms in the landscape at grade. The building entrances and private outdoor spaces are often sunken which create a protected and intimate environment for residents and users of the buildings, contrasted with the more open spaces which seamlessly connect into the public realm such as on Aldersgate street and Fann street. The changes in level are characterised by wide stairscapes or sculptural ramps in the landscape. These complement the large sculptural building elements such as the roof of Great Arthur House and the lightwells within Crescent House and the parking level below all of which make up the composition and experience of the Estate.



(placeholder image)



(placeholder image)

### **For Locals**

Golden Lane is more open in feel than the Barbican. Rather than the latter's more formal entrances fortified with boundary walls, the spaces of Golden Lane flow easily into the streets through gaps in the building frontage and the raised blocks on Pilotis, all of which create permeability at ground level. However, although designed on a basic grid form, the experience of way finding through the estate is far from simple. This quality gives it its insular nature and clearly divides the public as visitors, who are likely to struggle navigating by sight, and residents /frequent users of the buildings as locals who are familiar with the layout.

### **Architecture and spatial planning**

*From the Listed Building Management Guidelines*

The Golden Lane Estate demonstrates to a remarkable degree clear planning and definition of spaces – private, public, community, retail, pedestrian and vehicular – which are nevertheless interrelated and interconnected.

Central to the strategic design of the estate was the creation of a discrete and coherent urban entity, 'turning its back' on its surroundings. This correspondingly adds importance to those locations where views and access into the estate are provided. For example, the design of Stanley Cohen House along Golden Lane, with its colonnade and extended canopy, was deliberately designed to frame views into the estate.

The entire estate interior was originally designed for pedestrian use only, with no vehicular traffic at ground level, leaving large areas of the site as open space. This was one of the earliest examples of this strategy.

As much attention was paid to the form and function of the hard and soft landscaping of the courts as the buildings surrounding them. In some cases they were conceived as an extension of living space – illustrated in particular by the south elevations of the maisonette blocks, Basterfield, Bayer, Bowater and Cuthbert Harrowing Houses, which have steps from the ground floor maisonettes to the lower-level landscaped courts. The external spaces are as important to the character and special interest of the estate as the buildings themselves. The estate is distinctive in its diversity of building types. It combines a variety of architectural forms – each with its own specific qualities and characteristics – which develop from and complement each other. This is explained in part by the fact that, while coming together to form the practice of CPB, each of the three architects was individually responsible for different components of the

estate: Geoffrey Powell for the overall layout of the estate, the external landscape, Stanley Cohen House and the community centre; Peter Chamberlin for Great Arthur House; and Christof Bon for the maisonette blocks – names.

All the buildings of the estate are characterised by a strongly defined geometry. Volumes and elevations are formed by a variety of components, including clear and coloured glazing; aluminium and timber window frames; brick cross walls and piers; concrete floor slabs; and concrete balconies and balustrading. The materials and components of the roofs, façades, balconies and landscape surfaces combine to create an architectural language which is both specific to each type of building and also homogeneous across the Estate.

Among the most striking elements are the glazing and glass cladding, and the extensive use of fair-faced, pick-hammered or bush-hammered concrete. Many finishes are finely detailed, such as slender aluminium window frames, while others are more robust, such as black tubular handrails around the courts. The original distinctive and innovative cast aluminium signage – house names, numbering and wall-mounted bas-relief plaques – provided a consistent scheme throughout the estate.

## **Individual elements**

### **Buildings**

#### **Great Arthur House**

In some ways the architectural anchor of the estate, Great Arthur House is the most outstanding and dominant of the residential blocks, using bright yellow cladding panels, rising above all other buildings within the complex and donned with an impressive sculptural roof. Unlike the other residential blocks which interlock together, Great Arthur House stands in a rather splendid isolation. The large forecourt spaces to the East and West of the building are spacious, allowing an appreciation of the building's entire silhouette and height. Despite its scale, the building makes use of a lofty roof canopy aluminium and glass prefabricated panelled elevations, which appears to float above an undercroft, giving it a sense of lightness. This is contrasted with the use of solid painted concrete elements; the projecting balconies on the East and West elevations and the bright yellow columns which run the length of the building can be glimpsed from the North and South elevations. Further contrasts are drawn between the curvilinear roof and the soft lines this creates on the skyline with the graphic grid of the elevations below it. The curves in the roof recur at ground level in the air vent and rotunda landscape features.

Great Arthur House was a fundamental element in the estate's design, as emphasised by its rooftop canopy and other features. It was the first tower to exceed the 100ft height restriction and was for a time the tallest residential building in London, later exceeded by the Barbican towers.

Its recent refurbishment of cladding panels and windows throughout the building has revitalised the architectural impact of this building and sustainably extended its lifespan.

#### **Crescent House**

Completed last in the second phase of the masterplan, Crescent House is distinct from the other low rise housing blocks in its architectural language and form. Unlike the other residential blocks, Crescent House deviates from the grid plan and follows the sweep of the curve of Goswell Road and does not make use of primary coloured panels to accent the elevation. The barrel-vaulted roofscape is perforated by lightwells which apartments pivot around; dark wood window frames deviate from the primary colours and the aluminium framed windows which characterise the rest of the estate. These elements illustrate transition to a new architectural style and influenced the approach for the Barbican which proceeded. The ground floor is particularly different because it is designed to be outward looking, with an active frontage and more direct engagement with the street than the other blocks.

### **Residential blocks**

The residential blocks comprising Basterfield, Bayer, Bowater, Cuthbert Harrowing and Hatfield Houses are arranged in an interlocking grid to form the boundaries of the estate and the inner series of courtyard spaces. These blocks follow a common formula of long oblongs with clearly defined front and a rear elevations exhibiting resident balconies and windows contrasting with the short flank elevations being much plainer and expressed circulation routes such as communal stairwells. Each building has its own graphic articulation but all are common in their expression of large windows, horizontal slabs and vertical sheer and partition walls which interweave in different configurations, often with circulation expressed on the elevations which is also exposed to the elements.



## Facilities

Crucial to creating a self-contained community at Golden lane is the provision of amenities: the community centre, the leisure centre and the shops. The leisure centre is a particularly important component of the estate, both in its design and planning and in the facilities it provides. It contributes to the original intent to create an urban 'village' enjoying a wide range of amenities. The community centre was interpreted as the nucleus of the scheme, the focus on the social life of the estate and placed centrally in the main pedestrian piazza. This has recently been sensitively refurbished by Studio Partington and is once again is at the heart of the GLE

*From the listed building management guidelines*

The shops underneath Crescent house were designed to be double fronted, engaging with the public realm on Goswell Road and the upper terrace of the court facing into the estate.

The design of these buildings is distinct from the residential blocks their purpose as a communal amenity is articulated by their accessible and low rise nature, the heavy use of glass particularly in the leisure centre and shops creates an openness and transparency with views through the buildings.

The simplicity and lightness of the form of the recreation buildings are reinforced by a limited palette of black and white and absence of primary colours used elsewhere in the estate.





## Open spaces

The architects (namely Powell, a keen gardener) conceived of landscape and buildings as one. The guiding philosophy was to subvert the traditional street by substituting roads with a streetscape of hard and soft geometric forms. The requirement to include basement storage under the tower blocks led the architects to make use of the deep basements left by bombed out buildings to produce an urban landscape on varying levels which undulates through the Estate.

The external landscape was carefully designed by the architects around a series of courts, each with its own distinctive character. Some are more formally set out within defined boundaries of the residential blocks, using landscape elements such as planting, hard surfacing, water to create patterns intended to be viewed from above as a fifth elevation from the residential apartments above, while others bleed freely into the public realm. In all the spaces, there is a coherence and reference to the limited palette of materials and colours, monumental spaces contrasted with smaller human scale elements and graphic aesthetic of the building elevations.

Since completion there has been small changes made to the estate, but original designs have broadly survived. The garden areas and features, such as the bastion, children's play area, roof-top garden, are still extant and are important contributors to the character of the Estate. They are an integral part of the composition and interplay of ornamental garden and hard landscaped and are used much in the same way.

The layout of the blocks in the estate shapes the viewer's experience of a sequence of views which narrow and widen as they move through the series of courts. The spaces become noticeably more intimate at the centre of the estate where they are enclosed by the residential blocks, sunken and surrounded by the apartment balconies above.



(placeholder image)

## Ecology and Trees

There are several notable trees on the Golden Lane Estate:

- A fine semi-mature *Cedrus deodara* on the lawn in front of Basterfield (planted in the early 1990's);

- A *Fagus sylvatica* 'Dawyck' at the level change between the Rotunda and the Great Arthur east forecourt (1990's also);
- *Catalpa bignonioides* (a replacement for an earlier one) north of Cuthbert Harrowing;
- The formal double row of trees along the Fann Street boundary of the GA west forecourt was predominantly *Robinia pseudoacacia* but is now a mixed group of tree species, including some of the 'originals';
- The large acer on the corner of Fann St and Golden Lane is on the Estate land although it reads as a street tree;
- There are a number of mature cherry trees (very associated with '60s planting tastes) in the sunken garden south of Bowater and some more in the planting south of Hatfield.

The pond and the reclaimed giant roughhewn stepping stones have a somewhat Japanese-inspired feel. The small beds incorporated in the paving and grass pattern near the pond were once intended to have single colour bedding plants in them to accentuate the ground plane treatment, to be viewed from above.

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## Public Realm

Much of the estate looks inwardly away from the surrounding public realm with only gaps in the building frontage allowing passage and glimpses through the estate. The transition between public and estate boundary is not formalised but the permeable boundaries such as the pilotis under Crescent House and the portal, now infilled, on to Golden Lane provided informal gateways. The exception is the line of shops beneath Crescent House which terminates with the Shakespeare pub on the corner of Fann Street. This directly engages the street with active frontages and creates a busy space for businesses, residents and the public to inhabit.

## Materials and colour palette



(placeholder image)

The texture and colour of the facing materials were key aspects of the design of Golden Lane. Pick-hammered concrete and expressed loadbearing brick crosswalls gave depth to the elevations while the use of opaque glass cladding created interest through colour. As the architects' ideas developed, the design of the blocks became more robust and textured with bush-hammered concrete that was later used on the Barbican Estate.

Strong colours are used to powerful effect throughout the estate. The original colours – primary colours and black, white and grey – reflect the architectural ethos of the time (and provide continuity with other contemporary Chamberlin, Powell and Bon projects). The concept behind the scheme was to use strong colours for curtain walling, combined mainly with black and white, with occasional use of strong colours for painted surfaces, such as tomato red.

The materials and components used are an important element of the estates character and special interest. The architects deployed considerable variety in materials and components to create richness and contrast, also as they evolved their architectural style. Generally, the materials and detailing chosen by the architects – including ambitions and innovative elements such as vertically sliding windows to the maisonette blocks – have been remarkably successful, proving to be robust, durable and effective for over half a century.



Among the most striking elements are the glazing and glass cladding, within an aluminium framework, of Great Arthur House, repeated in the maisonette blocks. The use of bright primary coloured glass cladding – in yellow, blue and red – provides a distinctive signature to those buildings completed during the first phase.

The extensive use of concrete – fair-faced, pick-hammered or bush-hammered – also distinguished many buildings on the estate. Much of the concrete was intended to be left exposed but, because of uneven weathering, was subsequently painted. In some cases, however, such as the club rooms, Cullum Welch and Crescent Houses, it has remained unpainted. Pink brick and blue or purple engineering bricks were used extensively for load-bearing and other walls. Full-height glazing and slender concrete columns or *pilotis* as structural support for the swimming pool and gymnasium result in a very different aesthetic. Similarly, panels of black and white tiles on the east and west elevations of the community centre provide a distinctive quality to that building.

Many of the finishes are finely detailed, such as the slender aluminium window frames of the earlier residential blocks, and the mosaic tiles employed on Crescent House. In other cases, more robust materials are employed, such as the black tubular handrails used around the courts.

In their choice of materials, the architects contrasted those elements required to be strong, such as structural concrete, load-bearing walls, or guard rails, with more delicate elements such as windows and spandrel panels. 'We feel strongly that other values besides refinement should be pursued, particularly clarity of form and – sometimes – robustness... This contrast between the rough and the smooth, the bright and the dull – even between the clean and the dirty – creates a tension which is the essence of architecture – when the choice of materials and the balance between them is right of course!'

### **Management Strategy**

The City Corporation's management strategy for the Golden Lane Estate has already been partially formulated and published in the Golden Lane Estate Listed Building Management Guidelines 2013. This considers the Estate a whole, individual blocks, spaces and landscape as well abstracted themes, such as Colour and Transparency, which are common to the estate elements.

A listed building guide specifically for residents was published in 2008 with the intention of enabling a better understanding of the implications of doing work to their listed homes and providing a practical guide through the permission process.

### **Potential Enhancements**

The post-war, modernist character of the Estate has survived well. Small-scale enhancements to urban greening, lighting and wayfinding could all help to enhance the Estate yet further, alongside ongoing projects of repair and maintenance of the fabric. Additionally, the reversal of later alterations could be beneficial where this would better reveal and enhance the original architectural character of the Estate.

## b. Barbican Estate

### Introduction

Built between 1962 and 1982 for the City of London Corporation to designs by the architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, the Barbican Estate is a sprawling, mixed-use development arranged upon a raised pedestrian podium above ground-level car parking. Prevaillingly residential, with over 2,000 flats, maisonettes and terraced houses of varying configurations, the Estate incorporates schools and arts buildings: the Arts Centre, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the City of London School for Girls. Additionally, the medieval church of St Giles is located within the southern part of the estate.

Nearly fifty years on, the Barbican still feels quite futuristic. It is a successful twentieth-century architectural experiment, for various reasons: the integrity and skill of the architectural vision – in plan and detail – and its faithful execution, the single ownership of the site, the continuous investment in maintenance and repair, the prominent central London location and residential community. Because of its success, the Barbican has avoided the feeling of distaste and obsolescence that has dogged brutalism in other cities (e.g. Rodney Gordon's Tricorn Centre in Portsmouth, now demolished).

However, the Barbican is both a piece of city and a stand-alone set-piece. It is entirely different in disposition to the more traditional surrounding streets. And the Estate cannot really be critiqued like an area composed of ordinary streets with individual buildings that contribute or not to its character and appearance. Because, externally, it has undergone very little alteration (apart from modest works to the civic buildings), the Barbican has the inner integrity of a single composition and consequently should be considered as such.

With Golden Lane, this quality sets it apart from other conservation areas in the City, which are aggregates of many individual buildings (arguably, with its blocks conjoined by the podium, the Barbican is a single building) and spaces of varying qualities, rather than a single composition. Unlike other conservation areas, the development pressure is very different. There is little prospect of substantial external change in the Barbican. Rather, development pressure is likely to come in the form of adapting and modernising the whole as technologies and patterns of behaviour change.

The individuality of the Barbican goes beyond its city context, for it is not quite like anything else even in London. It is like an amalgam of the Brunswick Centre and Alexandra Road Estate, London Borough of Camden, and the Trellick Tower in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. As a piece of masterplanning and architectural design, the innate quality of the Barbican has been recognised by its 2001 listing; also, by its survival comparatively unaltered (although this has to do as much with the entire Estate being under the control of a single body, the City of London Corporation).



## Overall character

The Barbican Estate is characterised by its singularity of composition, enormity of scale and sublimity of effect. It is less an aggregate of individual buildings and more a single, consistent piece of architecture that expresses its basic formula (bush-hammered concrete, orthogonal forms, lateral or vertical emphases) in a series of building typologies that are arranged to produce effects of void, depth and awe.

It's also a very well executed concept, with no lessening of the effect anywhere within the Estate. This is partly a testament to the generosity and skill of its creators and partly to the way it has been maintained since it was built. The quality of execution ensures that, for the pedestrian, the Barbican is an immersive experience, with no let-up of the sense of navigating through a new piece of city.

This summed up well by the routes into the Barbican, most of which lift the pedestrian off ground level. It can be a challenging place to approach and orienteering within can be difficult for those unfamiliar with the Estate. This is because the Barbican does not possess the traditional townscape of streets and junctions framed by buildings. Indeed, part of the point of the Barbican was to upend this traditional configuration. Here, there are no carriageways, and footways pass under, over, through buildings, instead of past them.

## Architecture and spatial planning

*From the Listed Building Management Guidelines*

In successfully combining such a wide variety of uses across a large estate of dense, high quality housing, the Barbican Estate is a unique example of coherent inner city planning of the post war era. It also combined the key planning themes of highwalks and megastructure, both favoured planning strategies of their time.

The planning of the Estate as a complete composition, the placing of the towers with their distinctive silhouettes, the form of, and relationship between, the lower scale housing blocks and the spaces and other uses all contribute to the Estate's special architectural interest. While the residential towers of Lauderdale, Shakespeare and Cromwell with their saw-toothed balconies proclaim the Estate far beyond its immediate

boundary, it is the smaller scale building set around landscaped courts that create and ambience of the Estate itself.

The geometric order of the buildings and spaces is a strong feature of the estate when read in the context of the City plan and the discipline of its planning in contrast to its surroundings is equally legible in three dimensions. The formal composition of buildings around a series of spatial 'reservoirs' balances a sense of segregation from the city with its actual proximity, enhanced by the highwalk connections.

Despite the high density of the scheme the civic scale and grandeur of the main spaces with their interpenetrating views prevent the development from feeling oppressive. Routes traversing the Estate are provided between, through and under building and across spaces – continuing into the adjoining parts of the City – and this permeability is a significant part of the Estate.

The architectural vocabulary of the residential buildings, incorporating such features as planting balconies and white barrel-vaulted roofs, distinguishes these buildings from the others on the Estate. However, the overall plan form of the Barbican, and the integrated relationship between buildings, spaces, lakes, podium walkways all contribute to the special value of the composition as a totality. The structural expression of the individual buildings on the Estate, the scale and rhythm of columns, edge beams and the consistent use of a limited palette of selected materials – bush hammered concrete, brindled brickwork, metal and timber framed glazed panels and screens are all particularly characteristic.

The architects explored Brutalism in the Barbican design which they had experimented with in some of the later phases at Golden Lane. The Brutalism movement was associated with the honest use of materials, mainly exposed concrete, and expression of form, function and spaces. Bush hammering, where the surface of the concrete is altered using a power hammer with a special head to expose the aggregate, is used across the Estate. It gives buildings distinctive form and texture and is an important characteristic of the Estate.

## **Individual elements**

### **Slab blocks**

The most numerous building type in the Barbican. They are in most cases roomy and mid-rise in height. Set on various alignments, these frame different incidents – from formal green spaces like Thomas More and Speed Gardens to more informal, harder-landscaped spaces. Theirs is a horizontal emphasis. On the elevations, strong horizontal lines of concrete are slatted with windowbox colour and hardwood aperture frames. Eyelike semi-circular dormers are paired and evenly distributed across the roof, belonging only to the slab blocks and helpful signifiers of their residential function. All of this raised above podium level on thick, gnarly columns to allow people movement below.

In the South Barbican, the slab blocks are: Andrewes House, Defoe House, Thomas More House, Speed House (all the largest, all on a lateral alignment), Gilbert House, Seddon House and Mountjoy House (all on a vertical alignment). These form a strong interlocking group that on plan resemble two symmetrical squares. Navigating the central areas of the Barbican, the feeling is always of being surrounded by them; their insistent laterality provides the foreground and background to a user's experience.

In the North Barbican, the slab blocks are: John Trundle Court, Bunyan Court, Bayer Court, Ben Jonson House and Breton House. These form a more irregular group than those in the South Barbican; the first three forming an informal garden court and the second two reading more as two blocks linked at right-angles. Because of this, these slab blocks are a less immersive experience than those in the South Barbican; instead they read more as individual buildings to be appreciated from certain vantages.

A unique example of the type is Frobisher Crescent, in which the formula is applied on a semi-circular crescent instead of orthogonal form. Appearing as a curvaceous distortion of the slab blocks, it makes for a pleasing juxtaposition.

### **Towers**

Perhaps the most distinctive parts of the Barbican, the towers advertise its presence on the skyline and provide for the most dramatic architectural set pieces within. All that concrete fixed so high up in the air could be crushingly oppressive, but fortunately the towers' skyline presence are redeemed by skilful and emphatic architectural treatment: strong verticals crashing to earth and rows of sharp balconies forming serrated edges. In many views, the vertical towers collide satisfyingly with the horizontal slab blocks. Their irregularly triangular plan forms mean that their profiles are pleasingly varied and dynamic. They are the most overwhelming parts of an overwhelming whole.



Three towers are evenly spaced along a lateral axis on the divide between the North and South areas. From west to east, they are Lauderdale tower, Shakespeare tower and Cromwell tower. To the north is another, the Blake Tower, of a very different architectural treatment but tied into the whole by the shared material palette. This was originally conceived as a YMCA, hence its different scale and architectural treatment to the others.

### **Houses**

Echoing the traditional building forms lost to the war, the houses are of varying sizes and configurations but take as their general principle that of the traditional terraced house. Their materiality and detailing differs from the larger slab blocks: for their external walls they tend to employ brick or tiled finishes, rather than the bush-hammered concrete; they are differently fenestrated. Nestled against larger slab blocks are Lambert Jones Mews and Brandon Mews, while The Postern and Wallside are terraces to the southern end of the Barbican frame views of the ruins of the Wall.

### **Public Realm, Open Spaces and Trees**

Sprawling across the whole Estate is the podium – a mauve plane running under and between the blocks, stepping up from South to North as it traverses Beech Street. The tones of the original clay tiles subtly vary from purplish mauve to an orange hue; as the podium, despite being raised, was designated as 'ground' level, and therefore was floored with fired earth. This unified treatment ties the whole estate together at pedestrian level. Embedded within it at various points are planting beds, particularly in Beech Gardens which divides the north from the south, and relics such as tombstones and lampstands echoing the previous urban forms on the site.

The qualities of the podium underscore the Estate's distinction from the surrounding streets outside the conservation area. Indeed, the consistent, purplish groundscape is atypical in conservation areas, which generally feature traditional highway paving treatments and forms. With the architecture, the podium emphasises the Barbican's modernity and conceit as the next chapter in the story of a city. Below the podium, at true ground level, are the car parks and storage areas, largely plain concrete forms and surface treatments. The major public realm focal point at this level is Beech Street, a long, linear road which carries vehicles under the Barbican Estate. It takes the form of a broad carriageway flanked by narrow footways and is heavily vehicular in character; lidded by the podium and Beech Gardens above, Beech Street experiences high levels of air pollution and offers a poor pedestrian experience. Colourful panels on the walls attempt to relieve the space but with limited success. In 2017 a work by the graffiti artist Banksy appeared at the junction with Golden Lane.



Open space in the Barbican is not just confined to the podium, though. As mentioned, the blocks disposed to create a series of distinct voids between the architectural volumes, occupied by water, greening or the ruins of earlier buildings. These are vital elements in the overall composition of the Estate. As well as accentuating the dramatic architectural treatments and allowing combinations of intriguing views, the 'voids' provide vital breathing-space from the brutalism of the architecture and the materials. Without the plentiful greening and water-features, the Estate would be too gaunt and forbidding, while the architectural fragments from earlier ages – newly framed – are a remind of the phases of history here before the Barbican.



### **Civic Buildings**

At the upper end of the South Barbican are disposed civic buildings of an outwardly familiar but quite different architectural vernacular. Completed in 1969, the first element to be finished, the Girls' School is a low rectangular block with strong vertical brick piers and horizontal concrete bands forming a fenestrated grid. Combining as it does both horizontal and vertical emphases and materials otherwise used on separate typologies across the Estate, it stands apart from the architecture. There has been some infilling and westerly extension, but of a low and extremely muted kind.

Located to the north-east of Gilbert Bridge, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama comprises a series of mauve brick projections, like the podium plucked up and scrunched into oriel-like shapes, above paired columns forming a loggia facing the private half of the lake. From this part of the complex emanates the sounds of various instruments, an intangible but nevertheless significant part of the overall ambience.

### **Arts Centre**

In some respects, a focal point of the Estate, the Barbican Centre has a dramatic lakeside setting and is prominent in many views from the South Barbican. To the lake it presents a series of concrete 'chimneys' or tall rectangular forms, with an upswept concrete canopy slicing across mid-way up. The Centre can of course be entered from outside the Estate, via Silk Street, through a low glazed portal under a huge bush-hammered concrete soffit interspersed with regular windows and crowned with an upswept canopy. Above this can be seen the brick flytower of the theatre, ensconced in the large and angular glazed canopy over the Conservatory housing tropical plants.

The presence of the civic buildings and Art Centre not only add subtle variations to the overall architectural character of the Estate; they enhance the overall ambience and sense of place framed by the architecture by introducing uses with differing intangible signatures; they add music, schoolchildren and culture to a residential area.

### **Character sub-areas**

#### **South Barbican**

Comprising the southern two-thirds of the estate up to Beech Street/Beech Gardens, the South Barbican area includes most of the buildings, green spaces and water features. There are a series of courts formed by

the slab blocks. To the south, lower buildings where the ruins are, the estate rising in scale to the height of the towers at Beech Street. The whole estate is set out on a diagonal axis which corresponds to the surviving corner of the Roman fort wall and bastion which are preserved in a green setting to the south. Here, the rubble masonry of the ruins is seen against grass, trees and undergrowth like a fragment of the countryside.

At the southernmost end of estate are the 'foothills' of the Barbican, where the scale is lowest and closest to that of more traditional forms of building, which are illustrated by the remnants of the Roman and medieval City wall and the church of St Giles Cripplegate. The former is especially important in the Barbican's development. This 'shoulder' of the wall – actually belonging to the Fort wall – forms a right-angle on a skewed alignment, a form felt in all the corners of the Estate. It is immediately echoed in the alignment of the footprints of Mountjoy House and the City of London School for Girls; its form is seen beyond in the alignment of Defoe House and Seddon House and slab blocks at the east end of the lake. Hence the inclusion in the conservation area of this foundational element.

This southern 'ruin park' is framed by Barbican buildings of a relatively low scale: Mountjoy House, The Postern and Wallside. Moving north, to the heart of the Estate, the slab blocks increase in size, forming two large courts either side of the church of St Giles Cripplegate, dramatically retained in a sea of podium bricks, with inset gravestones and lamp standards like echoes of the traditional streetscape that once lay upon the site. The gothic architecture of this medieval, much-restored church contrasts so starkly with the Brutalism of the Estate that the peculiar qualities of each style are emphasised.

The Girls' School adjacent is of a scale comparable to the church. Both buildings sit on an island with water on three sides. Elsewhere, the scale of slab blocks such as Andrewes House and Thomas More House increases, presenting huge walls of bush-hammered concrete with horizontal emphases as backdrops against which to see ever-changing combinations of the buildings. Through this area of larger building stretches a rectangular lake, surrounded by cliff-faces of concrete. The effect is like a manmade canyon or gorge, best appreciated from the Gilbert Bridge which crosses the water to the Barbican centre. From here, views are also possible into the large 'courts' on either side; their horizontal rows of windowboxes greenly break the bands of concrete, giving the slab blocks a stacked, terraced quality.

From the Lakeside Terrace can be seen the three towers to the north. They loom the Barbican's architectural style over a clutch of lower-rise curiosities: the Barbican Centre, Conservatory and Frobisher Crescent. All three offer something architecturally different: the Centre and Conservatory as variances from the residential block language indicating the presence of different cultural and horticultural uses within; Frobisher Crescent as a warped, curvaceous version of the linear slab block.

### **North Barbican**

The North Barbican is much smaller in footprint than the south and perhaps a little more urban in feel. The slab blocks are more compact, the layout of the area less expansive and defined more by the linearity of Beech Gardens and adjoining Ben Jonson House. Instead of the expanses of lawn and water to be found in the south, Beech Gardens takes the form of a series of tiled planters integrated into the podium, the original planting scheme comprised lawns, flower beds, trees and shrubs. In 2013, the gardens were re-planted by Nigel Dunnett with an array of grasses, perennials, shrubs and trees. These flourish in phases, creating continuous and successive colour washes over the gardens. The formal planters here contrast effectively with the Barbican Wildlife Garden, an unruly square of community planting and wildlife habitats, outstandingly biodiverse.

### **Management Strategy**

The City Corporation's management strategy for the Barbican Estate has already been partially formulated and published in the following volumes of the Barbican Estate Listed Building Management Guidelines:

- I – Introduction
- II – Residential
- IV – Landscaping

Future volumes will provide management strategies for the following areas:

- III A – Arts Centre [currently in development]
- III B – Guildhall School of Music
- III C – City of London School for Girls



Originally published in 2005 and updated in 2012, volume II governs works to the residential buildings on the Estate. Adopted in 2015, volume IV addresses the Estate's important landscaping and public realm, while volume III A is in preparation and will provide guidance on the management of the Barbican Arts Centre.

### **Potential Enhancements**

The Estate has survived well and is an unforgettable architectural and spatial experience. Small-scale enhancements to urban greening, lighting and wayfinding would all help to enhance this experience, alongside ongoing projects of repair and maintenance to the brutalist fabric. Additionally, the reversal of later alterations could be beneficial where this would better reveal and enhance the original architectural character of the Estate.

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## 6. Streets, Routes and Transportation

Uniquely amongst City conservation areas, the Barbican and Golden Lane Estates contain no streets in the traditional sense. The Estates were designed to be free from the traditional street network, incorporating instead their own distinctive public realm and routes between and under buildings.

Only fragments of Bridgewater Square and Fann Street are included within the boundary, while Beech Street runs below the Barbican podium and therefore does not affect the character and appearance of some parts of the conservation area in the usual sense.

### **Beech Street Zero Emissions Scheme**

Enclosed by the podium level above, and as a key route east through the City, Beech Street has historically had high levels of air pollution.

In March 2020, the City Corporation introduced experimental traffic changes on Beech Street, Bridgewater Street and Golden Lane in order to address this problem. Beech Street has become a zero-emission street. This means only pedestrians, cyclists and zero-emission vehicles may traverse its length (access for off-street premises excepted).

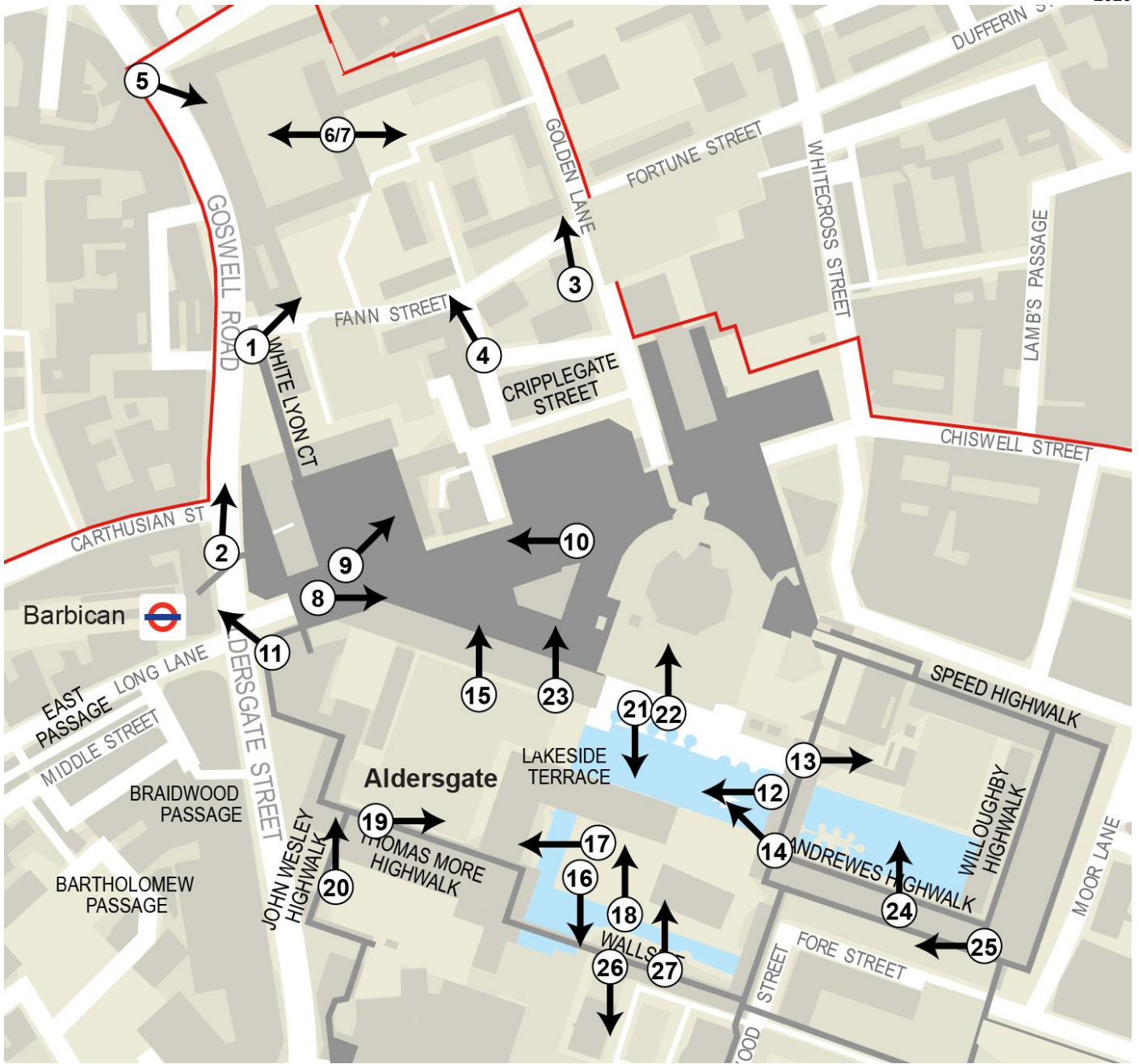
The experimental scheme will run for up to eighteen months. If made permanent, there could be potential to reconfigure the layout and appearance of the street, transforming the look and feel of the street and enhancing the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area.

## 7. Views

The below list of views within the conservation area is given as a starting-point. Views from these fixed points represent only a portion of the pedestrian experience of the conservation area. They cannot capture the extraordinary, ever-changing combination of architectural volumes and voids seen on perambulations through the estates. These are beyond the ability of any one fixed view to convey. Nevertheless, the following views help to indicate the architectural and spatial complexity of the conservation area. Moreover, it is important to note that the views out of the Estates, with glimpses of the surrounding City, are likely to change because the conservation area sits within the dynamic context of an urban heart.

1. Outside north side of Blake Tower, looking north-east towards Great Arthur House
2. Views of Crescent House along Aldersgate Street from the south
3. From junction of Fann Street/Golden Lane looking north along Stanley Cohen House
4. From Fann Street looking north between Cuthbert Harrowing and Bowater Houses
5. From Baltic Street looking south at Hatfield House
6. From the centre of the Golden Lane Leisure Centre looking west
7. From the centre of the Golden Lane Leisure Centre looking east
8. From west end of Beech Gardens looking east
9. From west end of Beech Gardens looking north-east
10. From east end of Beech Gardens looking west
11. From northerly corner of Seddon Highwalk through 'arrow slits' from Seddon Highwalk onto Aldersgate Street
12. From the centre of Gilbert Bridge looking west
13. From the centre of Gilbert Bridge looking east
14. From south end of Gilbert Bridge looking north-west
15. From podium under Shakespeare Tower looking up
16. From St Giles Terrace looking south
17. From St Giles Terrace looking west
18. From St Giles Terrace (near north gravestones) looking north
19. From Thomas More Highwalk looking east
20. From Thomas More Highwalk looking north
21. From Lakeside Terrace (centre) looking south
22. From Lakeside Terrace (centre) looking north
23. From Lakeside Terrace (west end) looking north
24. From Andrewes Highwalk (centre) looking north
25. From Andrewes Highwalk (centre) looking west
26. From the west end of Wallside looking south
27. From the east end of Wallside looking north

Additionally, in the Barbican Listed Building Management Guidelines vol. IV key views are discussed at 1.5.75 ('Significant Vistas') and are listed in appendix A1.



Views map



## 8. Nocturnal Character

Conservation areas are experienced by night as well as by day. Nocturnal patterns of activity and illumination can affect how their special character is appreciated. Lighting scale, intensity, colour temperature and uniformity all influence traditional townscapes. For example, a particularly bright form of internal illumination can draw undue attention and be particularly strident in a historic context, whilst a modern building with a highly glazed façade can result in greater light spill, trespass and detract from a visual hierarchy at night.

Nocturnally, the Barbican and Golden Lane conservation area differs to the others. Light spills from the thousands of residential units in an infinite series of combinations, making the illumination of the Estates by night – particularly the Barbican with its high-, mid- and low-rise units – extraordinarily diverse and subtle. Their nocturnal character is largely residential, but on a giant, modernist scale, creating an arresting and memorable experience by night. In addition to the darkness and soft illumination, other factors combine to enhance this intangible character: soundscape of water, absence (mostly) of traffic noise, tranquillity – or as much as there can ever be in the heart of a capital city. By night, the contrast between the residential estates and surrounding commercial buildings is also marked. Light incursion from the larger office buildings bathe the fringes of the Estates, a reminder of their location in the commercial heart of a capital city.

And there is, of course, the Barbican Arts Centre complex at the heart of that Estate, host to a range of evening programming with its own lighting signature.

Proposals to augment or alter the lighting of the conservation area must derive from the relevant passages of the City of London Lighting Strategy (2018). The relevant guidance is contained under section 4.3.6 – 'Culture Mile' character area.

## 9. Local Details

Blue plaques, architectural sculpture, memorials and public statuary add another layer of character to conservation areas. However, the Barbican and Golden Lane conservation area is again different to all others in this respect as a result of its comprehensive redevelopment. Such details, where they exist, tend to be incorporated into the new buildings as 'found' relics of previous structures, rather than surviving in their original context.

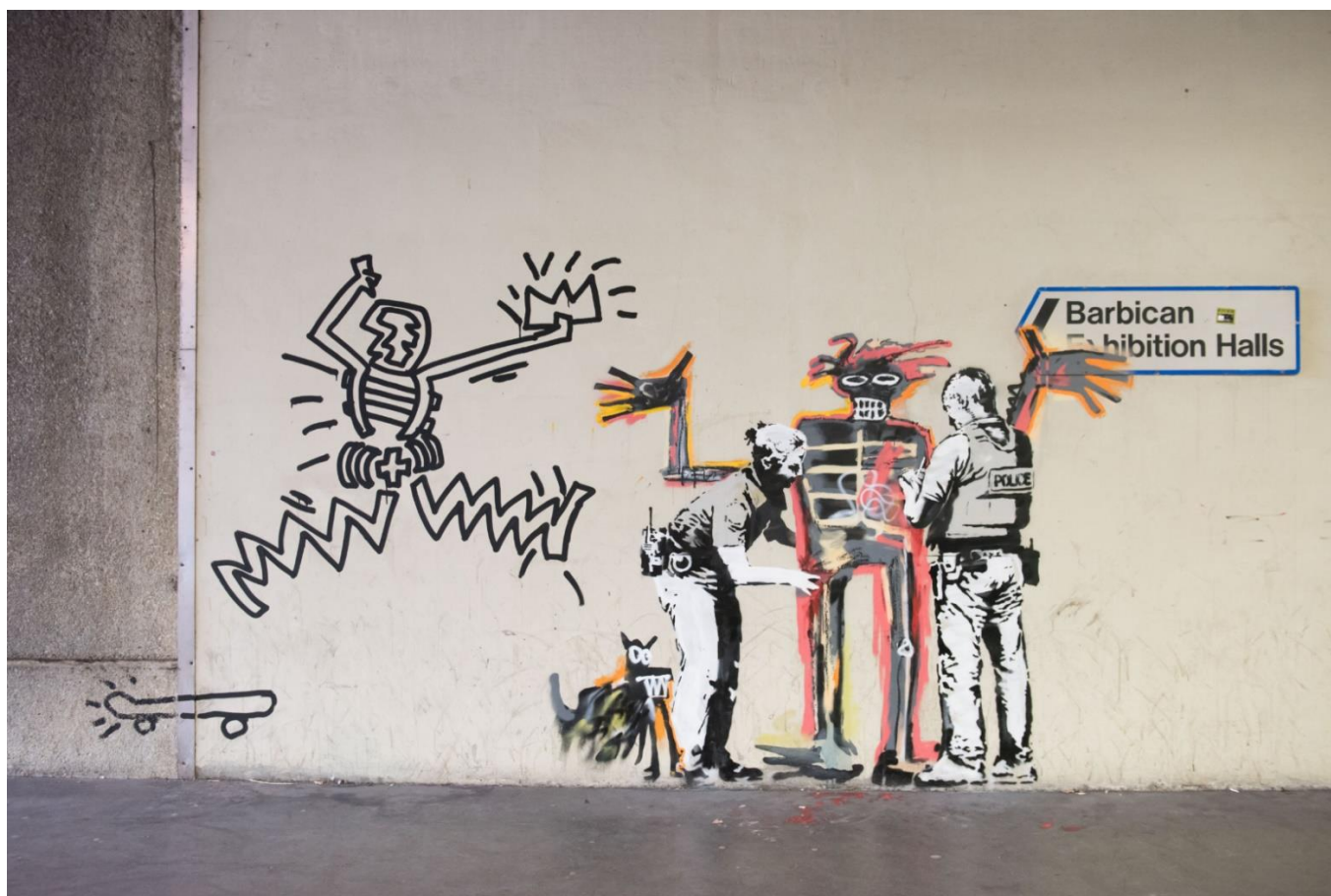
For instance, on the **Lakeside Terrace**, there are a number of important historic memorials and funerary structures that evoke the poignancy of the former use of the churchyard in the conservation area. They are to be found embedded in tiles on the area of the podium around the church of St Giles. Here and elsewhere on the Barbican Estate can be found traditional lamp standards, striking oddly traditional notes amidst the futuristic architecture and public realm.

On **White Lyon Court** is preserved a carved stone relief of 1908 by Horace Grundy of figures in 16th century dress refining gold. It came from the premises of W. Bryer & Son, gold refiners, at 53-54 Barbican, demolished 1962

Artworks proliferate. On the **Cromwell Highwalk** are displayed a fine series of murals from the former Telephone Exchange building on Farringdon Street by Dorothy Annan (and which are grade II listed). More recently, the artist known as Banksy left an artwork referencing a Basquiat exhibition held at the Barbican.

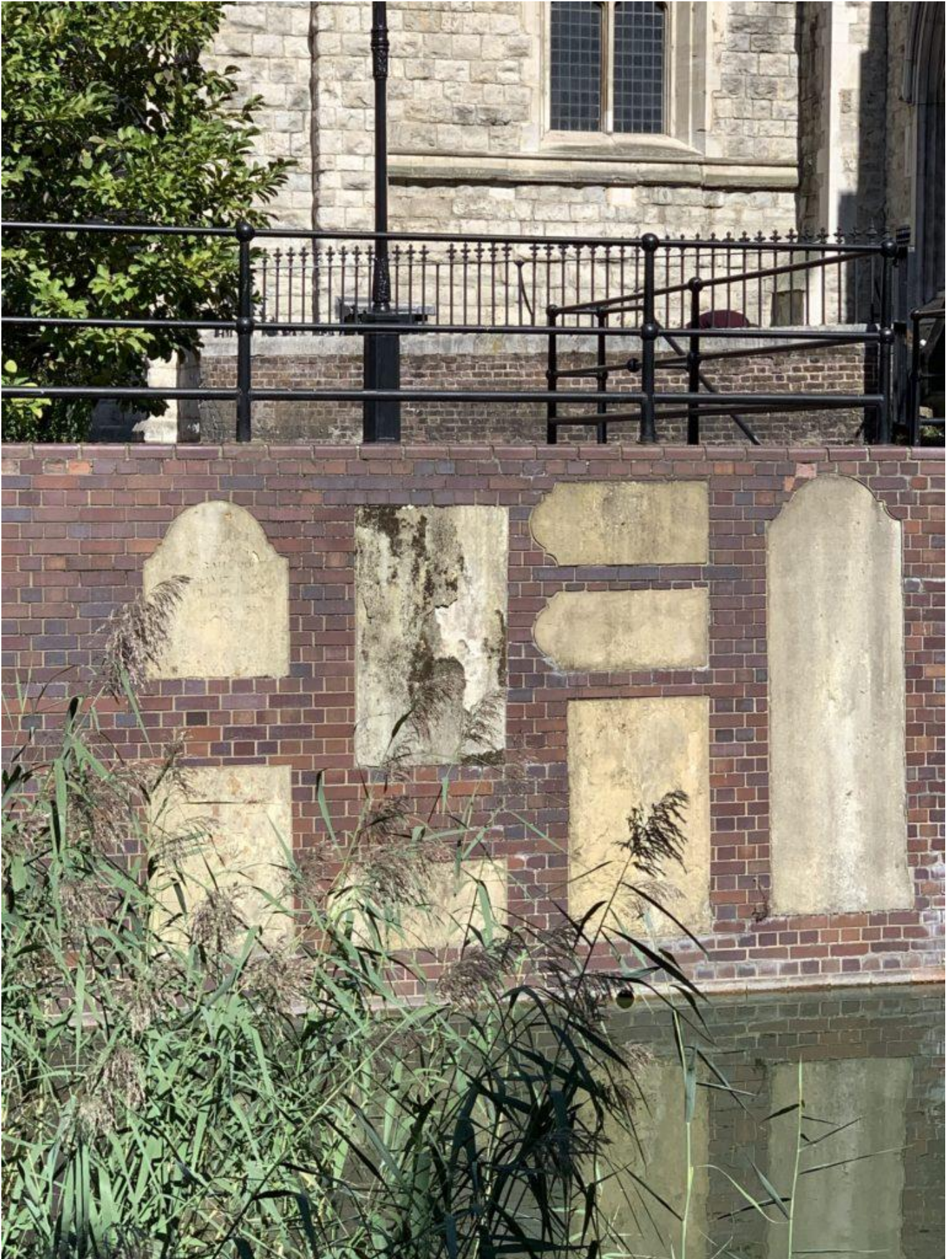
Across the two Estates, a plethora of plaques record lost historic buildings or other features of interests. Some of these are City of London Blue Plaques, while others are one-off installations. All add a further layer of historic and aesthetic interest to the conservation area.

On **Beech Gardens** is preserved Mendelssohn's Tree – the remains of a 500 year-old Beech tree toppled by a storm in the forest of Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire in 1990. It supposedly sheltered the composer Felix Mendelssohn during his frequent visits to that area.



The Banksy below the podium, junction of Golden Lane and Beech Street, 2017





Gravestones idiosyncratically re-set into the podium at St Giles Terrace, Barbican





The Dorothy Annan murals, created c.1960, relocated to Cromwell Highwalk 2013.



Sculpture by Matthew Spender, 1994