

Committee(s): Planning & Transportation Committee – for decision	Dated: 18/07/23
Subject: Creechurch Conservation Area Proposal	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin	For Decision
Report author: Ben Eley, Environment	

Summary

As Local Planning Authority, the City Corporation has a statutory duty to consider, from time to time, the potential for new conservation areas within the City’s boundary. Whilst undertaking an intensive characterisation and heritage significance assessment of the Square Mile to inform the emerging City Plan 2040, and in response to key stakeholders during the consultation on the draft City Plan, a potential new conservation area has been identified in the Creechurch locality, near Aldgate.

The area has been assessed in line with national and local planning policy and Historic England’s guidance on such matters. This assessment identified that the character and appearance of the area has the potential to be designated as a conservation area, due to its special architectural and historic interest. A proposed draft conservation area boundary (Appendix 1) and supporting conservation area proposal (Appendix 2) are now proposed for public consultation.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Consider the assessment;
- Agree that the area has the potential to be designated as a Conservation Area, subject to public consultation;
- Authorise public consultation to be carried out on the proposal for a new ‘Creechurch Conservation Area’.

Main Report

Background

1. The proposed area, located within the wards of Aldgate and Portsoken, is richly historic, comprising a critical mass of characterful, late Victorian/Edwardian warehouses built on the site and echoing the layout of the Holy Trinity Priory, foremost amongst the medieval City's monastic foundations, and studded with three outstanding places of worship: Bevis Marks Synagogue, St Katherine Cree Church and St Botolph Aldgate Church (all listed Grade I).
2. In part, the timing of this assessment has been prompted by a separate proposal for a conservation area in this locality that has been received by representatives of Bevis Marks Synagogue. The proposal prepared on behalf of the Bevis Marks Synagogue is included in Appendix 3.
3. The City's assessment set out in Appendix 2 has arisen from a comprehensive characterisation and heritage significance assessment, of the City as a whole, and of the City Cluster in particular, which will underpin the emerging City Plan 2040 and relevant strategic policies. The characterisation and heritage significance assessment has taken place alongside ongoing consultation with key stakeholders, including the GLA, Historic England (HE) and the Bevis Marks Synagogue.
4. As a Local Planning Authority, the City Corporation has a statutory duty under s69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to consider whether it should designate conservation areas, which are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.
5. S69(2) of the Act states that: 'it shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this Section and to determine whether any parts or further parts of their area shall be designated as conservation areas; and if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly'.
6. In the exercise of planning functions, the City Corporation is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas and to prepare proposals for their preservation and enhancement. Relevant policy is contained within the City's Local Plan 2015, emerging City Plan 2040, the London Plan 2021 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
7. The designation of a conservation area brings certain demolition of unlisted buildings and structures (known as 'relevant demolition') within the area under the control of the local planning authority, in the absence of planning permission for redevelopment. Conservation area designation is unlikely to give rise to unduly onerous requirements for property owners to obtain planning permission. There are some minor permitted development rights which do not apply in conservation areas but (other than in respect of demolition) these are not significant. For example, it would not change permitted development rights in relation to changing windows. The Mayor of London's powers are unchanged whether the development is within or outside a conservation area. The character and appearance of the conservation area is a significant material consideration in

the consideration of planning applications in that area. Some further controls would be exercised over the control of advertisements and there would be greater control over works to trees.

8. There are currently 27 conservation areas in the City, with the most recently designated being the Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area in October 2018. The City has previously carried out reviews of conservation areas and their boundaries on a comprehensive basis, with the last such review carried out in 2007, to ensure that conservation area boundaries continue to be clear, precise and meaningful. It is anticipated that the next be undertaken following the adoption of the City Plan 2040.

Current Position

9. The assessment of the character, appearance and heritage significance of the proposed area and its eligibility for designation as a conservation area has been carried out in accordance with the NPPF and Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2nd ed, 2019). The assessment and proposal are set out in Appendix 2.
10. The assessment has taken into consideration the alternative proposals tabled by representatives of the Bevis Marks Synagogue.
11. Having assessed the wider area in accordance with national criteria and guidance, it is considered that the proposed area is of sufficiently strong character, appearance and significance to be proposed for designation as a conservation area, subject to public consultation and the final authorisation of Planning and Transportation Committee. The proposed Creechurch Conservation Area boundary for consultation is set out in Appendix 1. The methodology underpinning this recommendation has been peer reviewed by Dr Nigel Barker Mills, an expert in the field of conservation of the historic environment, who has concluded that the methodology of the assessment is sound.

Proposals

12. Subject to Committee support, it is proposed that public consultation be carried out on the proposals for a new 'Creechurch Conservation Area'. The consultation period is proposed to be carried out over late Summer and early Autumn 2023, with the aim of reporting the results back to this Committee before the end of the calendar year.
13. The consultation is proposed to be held for a minimum of eight weeks and would be carried out in accordance with Historic England guidance and the City Corporation's Statement of Community Involvement (2023).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. The City Plan 2040 is undergoing review. This decision is separate from the City Plan process.

Financial implications

15. None

Staff resource implications

16. Staff time to support the development of the conservation area proposal will be met through the ongoing work of the Planning & Development Division

Legal implications

17. The legal framework is set out in the body of the report.

Equalities implications

18. An Equalities Impact Assessment would be completed if, following consideration of consultation feedback, it is intended to progress the designation proposal. Any report back to your committee recommending designation would include information regarding the Equalities Impact Assessment to ensure that any relevant impacts are taken into account in deciding whether or not to designate.

Risk implications

19. None

Climate implications

20. A Sustainability Appraisal would be completed if, following consideration of consultation feedback, it is intended to progress the designation proposal. Any report back to your committee recommending designation would include information regarding the Sustainability Appraisal, to ensure that any relevant impacts are taken into account in deciding whether or not to designate.

Security implications

21. None

Conclusion

22. The assessment has concluded that the area at Appendix 1 has the potential to satisfy the criteria for designation as a conservation area, subject to public consultation.

23. It is recommended that public consultation, commencing in late Summer 2023, be carried out in relation to this proposal.

24. The outcome of the public consultation and recommendations will be reported back to Planning and Transportation Committee before the end of the calendar year.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Creechurch Conservation Area – Proposed Boundary Map
- Appendix 2 – Creechurch Conservation Area Proposal
- Appendix 3 – Background Papers (A. Prepared on behalf of the Bevis Marks Synagogue: Proposed Bevis Marks/Creechurch Conservation Area; and B. Letter to the City regarding the Proposed Conservation Area)

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