

## Appendix 2: Creechurch Conservation Area Proposal

July 2023



## **Contents**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Background
- 1.2 Policy/Legislative Context

### **2. The Creechurch Area**

- 2.1 Location
- 2.2 Historical development
- 2.3 General character and uses

### **3. The Assessment**

- 3.1 Methodology
- 3.2 Assessment
- 3.3 Eligibility for Conservation Area status

### **4. Proposed Creechurch Conservation Area**

- 4.1 Proposed boundary
- 4.2 Overarching summary of special interest
- 4.3 Architectural/artistic interest
- 4.4 Historic interest
- 4.5 Archaeological interest

### **5. Conclusion & Next Steps**

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

As part of work towards the City Plan 2040, the Planning & Development Division has, since Spring 2022, been undertaking an extensive and systematic characterisation and heritage significance exercise. This is a robust assessment of the character and heritage significance of the City at both a macro strategic and local level, examining everything from the City's role and character in pan-London strategic views to granular assessments of the character and appearance and heritage significance of different Character Areas in the City. This will form part of the evidence base underpinning the City Plan 2040. The potential for a new conservation area in the Creechurch locality was identified as part of this work.

In Spring 2023, the City received a proposal for a new conservation area in the same Creechurch locality from representatives of Bevis Marks Synagogue (Appendix 3). In view of both factors, it was decided to formally assess the potential of the locality for conservation area designation alongside, but separate from, the City Plan 2040 process, and to report the results of the assessment to Planning & Transportation Committee with a view to undertaking public consultation on them.

## 1.2. Legislative & Policy context

### **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990**

S69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 obliges local authorities to determine which parts of their areas are of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas. 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'.

Once designated, local authorities are further obliged (s71) to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement, to present such proposals for consideration at a public meeting in the area and to have regard to any views expressed at the meeting concerning such proposals.

It is the general duty of all Local Planning Authorities, in the exercise of planning functions, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the

character or appearance of conservation areas (s72). Relevant policy is contained within the City's Local Plan 2015, emerging City Plan 2040 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The designation of a conservation area brings certain 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 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 character and appearance of the conservation area is a significant material consideration in any proposals for alteration or redevelopment of sites within the area. It would require that considerable importance and weight be attributed to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

### **National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance**

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF mentions that Local Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, taking into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.

Paragraph 191 states that “when considering the designation of conservation areas, local planning authorities should ensure that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest.”

Once a proposed area is designated, paragraphs 206 and 207 are of relevance. Paragraph 206 states that Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within their setting, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Paragraph 207 states that not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 201 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 202, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole.

As set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), when a conservation area is designated, a conservation area appraisal can be used to help Local Planning Authorities develop a management plan and plan-making bodies to develop appropriate policies for local and neighbourhood plans. A good appraisal will

consider what features make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of the conservation area, thereby identifying opportunities for beneficial change or the need for planning protection. (paragraph 025)

According to paragraph 55 of the PPG, generally the requirement for planning permission for works to unlisted buildings in a conservation area is the same as it is for any building outside a conservation area, although some permitted development rights are more restricted in conservation areas. In addition, planning permission is required for the demolition of certain unlisted buildings in conservation areas (known as 'relevant demolition').

## **2. The Creechurch Area**

### **2.1. Location**

Creechurch is located to the east of the City and comprises (approximately) the area bound by Bevis Marks to the north, Creechurch Lane/Bury Street to the west, Leadenhall Street to the south, and Aldgate to the east. It is located in part in the City Cluster tall buildings area. It is notable, like the Leadenhall Market and St Helen's Conservation Areas, for being in amidst the high-rise modernity of the Cluster and there is a strong defining juxtaposition between the areas historic buildings and the tall modern buildings.

### **2.2. Historical development**

#### **Early History**

Roman occupation of the locality is not well understood, but the City wall and Aldgate were constructed by the 3rd century AD. Aldgate, one of the seven City of London's historic gates, and the easternmost gateway through the London Wall leading to Whitechapel and the City of London, stood at the corner of the modern Duke's Place, on the east side of the city, with a busy thoroughfare passing through it.

During the later Roman and Saxon period, the focus of settlement lay to the west of the City and the Strand, with the Creechurch locality being only sporadically occupied.

One of the first Augustinian monastic houses in England, Holy Trinity Priory was founded just inside the City wall near Aldgate in either 1107 or 1108 AD by Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I. From the outset, the Priory seems to have been especially high-status and popular with the elite. Royal patronage led to the construction of a splendid complex. Amidst the mainly timber and brick buildings on surrounding streets, Holy Trinity Priory would have been a distinctive, enriched grouping of stone buildings, with much fine glazing and ornamentation. A medieval pointed stone archway, which was probably part of the southern wall of the chancel of Holy Trinity Priory Church, survives and is embedded in the party wall between nos. 39 and 40, and nos. 72 and 73 Leadenhall Street. The surviving archway is Grade II listed.

Within the precinct of Holy Trinity Priory stood the original building of St Katharine Cree Church which originated as a Priory chapel and later became a parish church.

Immediately west of the Priory complex was another medieval religious establishment, the Abbot of Bury St Edmund's Inn, the boundaries of which now

correspond to Bury Street, Bevis Marks and Heneage Lane. An eclectic mix of historic and modern contextual buildings survive here.

### **Early Modern – C16 and C17**

These two centuries brought considerable upheavals to the locality, disrupting the settled medieval character established over four hundred years.

By the early 16th century, and as can be seen on the map of Holy Trinity Priory c.1520 (Historic Towns Atlas), the Priory had expanded and developed and at its peak occupied the Creechurch locality the land now bounded by Bevis Marks, Leadenhall Street, Bury Street and Aldgate.

During the English Reformation, Holy Trinity Priory was the first monastic house to be dissolved by Henry VIII, in 1532, three years before the general Dissolution. It marked one of the first occasions that a religious complex had been repurposed for the secular world. The buildings and land associated with it were given or sold to prominent courtiers and City merchants over the next thirty years.

These include Thomas Audley, who as Speaker and then as Lord Chancellor was a key figure in the break with Rome. After his death in 1544, the Priory site then became the property of the Duke of Norfolk, another leading courtier, with further adaptation of the Priory buildings into a mansion; Duke's Place is so named for this. The western section of the Priory was given to Sir Thomas Heneage, with today's Heneage Lane marking the separation of the two halves.

Following its subsequent sale to the City Corporation in 1592, the Priory site broke up into smaller and smaller plots, having a profound impact on the character of the area. The Priory buildings and old Tudor mansions fragmenting into smaller houses and industrial premises. No trace of them remains above ground today (but for the vestige of arch preserved in Nos. 71-77), but the layout of the complex is preserved in the street pattern: Mitre Square corresponds to the Priory cloister; Mitre Street, the nave of the Priory church. A Priory chapel became the church of St Katherine Cree, rebuilt in its present form in 1631.

The locality mostly escaped destruction in the Great Fire. The 1676 Ogilby and Morgan map demonstrates the extent of post-medieval change, with the layouts of the Priory and Inn having been largely subsumed by a street pattern that begins to resemble the present, with most of the main streets having been formed: Leadenhall Street, "Beavis Markes", Berry Street and Bevis Lane. St Botolph's is shown on the same location with its churchyard clearly defined, as well as St Katherine Cree and its associated churchyard.

In the early C17 the Jewish community began to return to Britain; semi-formally during the Commonwealth, during which time a house on Creechurch Lane was converted into a Synagogue for semi-public worship. The site of the first resettlement synagogue is marked by a plaque on the Cunard Building which reads -"Spanish &

Portuguese Jews' Congregation - The site of first Synagogue after the resettlement 1657 - 1701."

In 1688, many Sephardi (originating from the Iberian Peninsula) Jews from Holland settled in the area growing the community. Consequently, the Sephardi congregation needed a larger space for worship. In response, the Bevis Marks Synagogue was constructed between 1699 and 1701 to the designs of Joseph Avis, a master builder and Quaker who had previously worked with Christopher Wren. It is the oldest synagogue in the country and the only synagogue in Europe that has held regular services continuously for over 300 years. It represents tangible evidence for the historic and on-going relationship that the Jewish community has had with this part of the City.

By the end of the C17 the Ashkenazi (originating from northern and eastern Europe) Jewish community had grown to such an extent that they moved to a new building, The Great Synagogue situated on what is now Duke's Place. The congregation continued to grow in the 18th century and in 1722 and then between 1788 and 1790, larger replacement synagogues were built on the site. The third and final synagogue of 1788-90 was destroyed by German bombs in 1941.

### **Georgian and Victorian**

Growth of the City in the C18 saw the eventual breach of the Roman and medieval City wall; in places the wall and gates were demolished entirely, removing the visual and physical distinction between the ancient sites within the walls and the more recent, fashionable suburbs located without.

The church of St Botolph Without Aldgate was originally attached to the Priory of the Holy Trinity. It was rebuilt just before the Dissolution, but subsequently declared unsafe and demolished in 1739, replaced by the present building.

The GOAD map of 1887 provides a snapshot of the uses in the area, which at this time were mixed, with warehouses jostling for space amongst offices, schools, churches, synagogues, public houses and many more. The map also shows the intricacy and survival of the street pattern which, despite some site amalgamations, remained ancient and medieval in character.

Later phases of the area's development saw the construction of warehouse buildings in the late C19 and C20. Handling commodities such as tea and fruit, these buildings remain and form the heart of the locality's character.

The earliest appearance of the name Mitre Square, which occupies the site of the cloister of Holy Trinity Priory, seems to be in 1830. By 1888, Mitre Square was predominantly lined with four large warehouses, a yard, a commercial building and a few old houses. Mitre Square has undergone total rebuilding since 1888, with the majority of the demolition taking place as late as 1979/80.



### **Modern – C20 and C21**

By the early C20 Creechurch Lane had assumed its present form, and Holland House had been constructed on the east side of Bury Street, introducing a strikingly distinctive faience-led, vertical form of architectural expression to the locality. Otherwise, the area remained markedly traditional in character, with most of the building plot sizes small and recognisably medieval. Of particular note were the tiny plots between Heneage Lane and Creechurch Lane.

The locality escaped significant destruction in the Blitz; only suffering bomb damage towards its easternmost part. The Great Synagogue on Duke's Place was destroyed, together with buildings south of the School, which plots were subsequently swept away in a road widening scheme, giving the School its present, open setting to the south.

Despite avoiding the bombs, the locality could not avoid the trend towards road-widening and site amalgamation that saw the coarsening of the fine grain that had prevailed hitherto. In the 1970s, International House was constructed on a series of amalgamated sites that included the former site of the Great Synagogue; it established an unfortunately large, blocky sense of scale that is perpetuated in its successor, One Creechurch Place. In the same decade, Bevis Marks was widened, resulting in the clearance of small plots either side and the construction of buildings which frame the Synagogue today, including No. 33 Creechurch Lane and Nos. 10-16 Bevis Marks; Copenhagen House on the west side of the Synagogue was built in this decade, too. All these buildings saw the clearance and amalgamation of small, ancient plots, as did the redevelopment in the 1980s of the sites around St Katherine Cree churchyard.

The IRA bombings in 1992 and 1993 transformed the streetscape to the west of the locality along St Mary Axe, destroying the Baltic Exchange and resulting in the very different townscape character of 30 St Mary Axe and its plaza framing the locality to the west. Contrastingly, to the east, Aldgate Square was laid out upon the former Aldgate Gyratory in the early decades of the C21, redressing some of the wrongs wrought by earlier traffic schemes and resulting in a more verdant, open, tranquil and sympathetic setting to the least of the locality.

### **2.3. General Character and Uses**

The Creechurch area is characterised by the fine group of late C19 warehouses at its heart (Creechurch Lane/Mitre Street), which have since been converted to other uses, typically residential/office in the upper floors with the lower floors given over to active uses including pubs and restaurants. The size of these units are typically small and combine to form a sense of granular, traditional character at the heart of

the locality. Residential properties are mainly concentrated to the southern part of Creechurch Lane (including nos. 10 to 20), north of St Katharine Cree, and on Mitre Street (including nos. 27 to 31).

These uses are diversified by the presence of the Aldgate School, with its fine Edwardian building forming a commanding presence to the east of the locality and generating patterns of activity (i.e. processions of schoolchildren; their whoops and cries) that are distinctly different to the office uses surrounding and help to reinforce the sense of Creechurch as somewhat separate from the commercial core of the Cluster, transitioning into the East End.

This sense of escape/retreat is further enhanced by the three places of worship in the area, which give the locality a sense of ancient roots and, in the form of Bevis Marks Synagogue, the presence of a particularly rare and special form of faith. Amidst all this variety and interest, such office uses as exist in the locality are generally understated and located in the more neutral, modern buildings as part of a historic street pattern.

Finally, the locality is rich in open spaces: Mitre Square, Aldgate Square, the churchyards of St Botolph Aldgate and St Katherine Cree, the courtyard of the Synagogue and the playgrounds of the school (though these last two are not publicly accessible). With their planting, historic monuments and street furniture, trees and general sense of respite from the highly urban mood of the Cluster, these spaces offer crucial respite and further bolster the interest and amenity of the locality.

## 3. The Assessment

### 3.1. Methodology

The assessment included below has been undertaken to inform the designation process. In assessing the area, the relevant advice note prepared by Historic England, “Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Ed, 2019)”, was used as guidance.

This Advice Note provides best practice advice on identifying potential conservation areas, assessment of such areas and content of conservation area appraisals, designation and management of proposals in conservation areas.

The Advice Note does not set out an overly prescriptive framework for identifying and designating conservation areas, instead being more advisory in nature. At para 11 it suggests three basic questions to test the eligibility of a place for conservation area designation, which have been addressed in section 3.3, below.

At para 72, the Advice Note gives examples of the circumstances where special character could exist and therefore justify designation as a conservation area, but does not require adherence to, some different traits of special architectural and historic interest which have led to designation. They are reproduced below and renumbered for cross-referencing:

- I. areas with a high number of nationally or locally designated heritage assets and a variety of architectural styles and historic associations;
- II. those linked to a particular individual, industry, custom or pastime with a particular local interest;
- III. where an earlier, historically significant, layout is visible in the modern street pattern;
- IV. where a particular style of architecture or traditional building materials predominate; and
- V. areas designated because of the quality of the public realm or a spatial element, such as a design form or settlement pattern, green spaces which are an essential component of a wider historic area, and historic parks and gardens and other designed landscapes, including those included on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest.

Although not a requirement for justifying designation, the Creechurch locality possesses several of these characteristics, which have been identified at section 4.2 below.

A convenient starting-point for the assessment was provided by the boundary as proposed by the Synagogue’s representatives (Appendix 3). The area assessed is

that bounded by Bevis Marks/Duke's Place to the north, Bury Street/Cunard Place to the west, Leadenhall Street/Aldgate High Street to the south and Aldgate to the east.

The assessment below covers each of these streets and buildings and takes the form of street-by-street commentary. Where areas, including spaces, individual buildings, structures and/or streets are not considered to meet the criteria for inclusion in a conservation area, this is explicitly indicated. As per Historic England's Advice Note, boundaries have been defined by physical features where possible.

## 3.2. Assessment

### Creechurch Lane

Creechurch Lane is, with Mitre Street, at the heart of the Creechurch locality. The southernmost part, just off Leadenhall Street formed part of 'Bury Street', the ancient west boundary of Holy Priory; somewhat confusingly, the present-day Bury Street was formed on land to the west of the former Abbot of St Edmundsbury's Inn that neighboured the Priory complex to the west. By 1746 only a small spur was named Creechurch Lane, the remainder of it being called King Street which led to the surviving vestige of the Priory's Broad Court; by 1916 this whole arrangement had been renamed and rationalised into the street's present-day appearance.

The street takes most of its character from the group of late C19 warehouses that survive on the eastern side of the street (**Figure 1**), which are of consistent scale, and adjoin the important church of St Katherine Cree. The difference in brick colour and ornate details of the warehouse buildings adds interest to the continuous building facades. The character of this area is also defined by the narrow street and pavement widths and continuous building line. The slightly curved alignment of the street creates interest in views north and south. Surrounding modern development is evident in the street, with some tall buildings being visible above the historic roofline of the warehouses, including One Creechurch Place.

At the corner of Leadenhall Street and Creechurch Lane is the Guild Church of St Katharine Cree (**Figure 2**), a Grade I listed church of 1631 (the tower has been dated to c.1504). This church predates the Great Fire and the building is a rare example of the early use of classical architectural motifs (internally) alongside the then more traditional perpendicular gothic (externally). The church was consecrated by Archbishop Laud, an influential clergyman under King Charles I. It occupies the site of a parish church established by 1414 within the Priory boundary. It is of outstanding architectural, historic and archaeological significance, and is one of the 'anchor' heritage assets in the locality. It has a strong relationship with those historic buildings enclosing it and can be seen against the dramatic backdrop of the Cluster from most places.



Figure 1: Historic Warehouses, Creechurch Lane

The neighbouring group of warehouses includes Nos. 2-16 Creechurch Lane, a grade II listed tea warehouse building of 1887. The building is five storeys high, of brick, iron and stone and gives a typical flavour of the locality. It incorporates many surviving warehouse features such as external cranes and loading bays which contribute to its special historic and architectural interest and also its townscape value. The complex forms a group with the warehouse buildings immediately to the east and on Mitre Street.

Cree House (Nos. 18-20, unlisted), to the north, is an imposing warehouse building that occupies a prominent corner block with Mitre Street. It dates from 1892, by M. E. Collins, for Phillips & Co fruiterers. It is of five storeys with an additional attic storey with richly carved terracotta panels and keystones illustrating fruits and the other commodities originally stored within.





*Figure 2: St Katharine Cree*

Further north, Fibi House, at Nos. 22 and 24, a pair of four storeyed tea warehouses of 1895, yellow brick dressed with red, above stone-faced ground floors. The building forms the easternmost end of the warehouse group and shares with the others simple brick and terracotta detailing. The building was converted to offices in the mid-20th century but retains a convincing warehouse exterior.

The little Sugar Bakers' Court, just south of Fibi House, was first laid out c. 1586 by William Kerwin. This is another typical City alley of historic character and appearance. The glazed white brick of the warehouse elevations facing into the court bring some reflective light into the alley. The modern development at One Creechurch Place (outside of the proposed conservation area) now forms a rather abruptly modern and characterless terminus to the eastern end of the alley.

On the western side of Creechurch Lane is No. 33, a modern office building of 5 main storeys. Consent was granted for the building on 27 June 1978 and construction began shortly after. The building, originally known as Arthur Castle House, is clad in a purplish marble with vertically rising brown tinted square windows and infill panels. Although the building is not of any special architectural or historic interest, the footprint of the building reflects the historic street pattern and its height, mass and scale are sympathetic to its context.

### **Mitre Street**

Turning east from Creechurch Lane is Mitre Street. It runs along and perpetuates the alignment of the nave and chancel of the former Priory church and, with Mitre Square, the cloister: two key and fundamental features of the Holy Trinity complex. The western part of the street is lined with additional warehouse buildings, which were formed in the early C19, cutting through courts and yards of the Priory. When visible, tall buildings to the east, including views of 30 St Mary Axe from Mitre Street provide a dynamic backdrop to the historic warehouse buildings (**Figure 3**). Further east, the character is more modern, with the exception of the southern elevation of the Sir John Cass School. Mitre Square contributes to a sense of openness at the eastern part of the street.

Nos. 12-14 Mitre House is a former tea warehouse of 1895 by Weightman and Bullen. The building is of five storeys and relates well to Fibi House across Sugar Baker's Court and has a well-modelled brick elevation to Mitre Street that forms a convincing group with the other 19th century brick frontages. The ground floor incorporates a shopfront punctuated with columns with Classical detailing.

Nos. 27-31 incorporate three different frontages of former warehouses dating from 1891 and 1888. Five storeys high, they are attractively varied in materials, design and detailing and enrich the group of warehouse buildings to the north and east. The northernmost frontage incorporates references to the Priory site in the form of carved mitres.

Mitre Square is the site of the former cloister of Holy Trinity Priory and, in its loosely square form, reflects the preceding claustral shape. It was recently relandscaped in connection with One Creechurch Place. Although the modern landscape treatment has no particular aesthetic pretensions, the layout of the space that marks the historic cloister is of historic interest, and the planting and stone materiality creates a tranquil oasis. To the north and east it is framed by One Creechurch Place, which presents unforgivingly modern elevations which detract from its sense of place: a deficiency redressed to the south by the warm red brick and lively architectural detailing of the School, and the brick wall and traditional iron railings (and extensive greenery) delineating the playgrounds and the south side of St James's Passage, communicating with Duke's Place.



*Figure 3: Historic Warehouses on Mitre Street, with 30 St Mary Axe in the background*

Nos. 32-40 is a modern stone-faced building of sympathetic scale and modelling, relating well in these traits to the unlisted warehouses adjacent. It constructed in 1991 to designs by Ley, Colbeck and Partners, and incorporates the passageway from Mitre Street into St Katherine Cree churchyard. An open space within the Priory complex, it became a churchyard associated with St Katherine Cree in the medieval period. It ceased to be a churchyard in the 1870s and was converted into a public garden, last relandscaped in the 1960s. The space forms a loose polygon enclosed by the rear of buildings on Leadenhall and Mitre Streets, with a church hall facing to the west. These elevations are of brick or stone and provide an appropriately traditional setting. Unusually, the church is separated from the churchyard. Around the perimeter is York stone paving enclosing a gravelled central area containing chest and table tombs, planting, benches and trees. Just to the east of the entrance is a carved stone gateway, originally placed at the south-east angle of the yard,



dated 1631 that now encloses a fountain. Surrounded by buildings, there is a special sense of enclosure, history and verdancy in this space.

### **Aldgate**

To the west of Leadenhall Street, north of Aldgate is the Grade II\* listed Aldgate School (**Figure 5**). The school dates from 1908 and was formerly located in the churchyard of St Botolph Aldgate and on Jewry Street. It now stands within the site of the former Priory complex on the site of the Priory garden; a sense of openness is retained in the playgrounds, formed on the sites of buildings demolished in the 20th century. In the neo-Wren style, constructed of red brick and Portland stone with a green slate roof. Due to its size arrangement, the building is prominent within the locality and is the focus of a number of views from surrounding streets. The main elevation incorporates a central cupola facing east onto the new pedestrian Aldgate Square while secondary frontages facing onto Aldgate High Street and Mitre Street. Its materiality, scale and detailing reflect the warehouse group at the north end of Mitre Street.



*Figure 4: St Botolph-Without-Aldgate*

East of the school extends Aldgate Square, one of the largest open spaces within the City. The Square was formally opened in 2018 and includes a central lawn area flanked by raised planters which provide informal seating, tree planting on the southern boundary; and a water feature. The cafe on the square, Portsoken Pavilion (named after Portsoken ward), was designed by Make.



*Figure 5: Aldgate School*

The square sits between Sir John Cass School and the church of St Botolph-Without-Aldgate (Grade I, Figure 4) and its churchyard. The present church building dates from 1744, after the collapse of an early C16 church built by the Priory (itself a rebuilding of an early medieval predecessor). Designed by George Dance the Elder, the present building is of yellow and red brick with partly painted stone dressings, of similar, simple classical architecture as the Synagogue, but of greater ornament, sporting pediments, quoins and Venetian and Gibbsean windows. The church tower and spire rise prominently from the body into open clear sky, and have a landmark quality (indeed, the church is noted as one with a Skyline Presence in the Protected Views SPD). The railings and gates (also Grade I), the yard and associated planting

and trees make a positive contribution to the townscape. Further interest is added through the presence of historic street furniture outside the church: the Police Call Box (c.1935, grade II listed) and the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain, c.1906.

The whole ensemble of School, Square and Church form a striking and sympathetic townscape group of great character and interest, showing how new public realm can beautifully stitch together existing heritage assets, bestowing a unique sense of place on the site of the Aldgate and the easternmost edge of the Creechurch locality.

### **Bury Street**

Bury Street forms the westernmost edge of the locality, an obvious division between the more historic, granular scale to the east and the much larger and more modern scale of the City Cluster around. It branches west from Creechurch Lane and kinks round to run north to join Bevis Marks; it delineates the boundaries of the Abbot of St Edmundsbury's Inn (hence 'Bury').

Assessed here are the buildings on the north side of the section branching from Creechurch Lane and those lining the east side opposite Gherkin Plaza. No. 31 Bury Street forms the corner building with Creechurch Lane. It was a 1960s extension to Holland House (see below) which obliterated the historic James' Court immediately to the west and extinguished the southernmost section of Heneage Lane, which originally ran all the way from Bevis Marks to Bury Street. Of insipid and bland design, the building cannot lay claim to any architectural or historic interest; nor can it be said to be a good visual neighbour to its surroundings because of the way it crashes into the historic street pattern. Accordingly, the building is not considered to meet the criteria for inclusion in a conservation area.

Nos. 33-34, on the southeast corner of Bury Street, is a four-storey building with a basement and attic storeys built for Messrs Burge, grain dealers in 1912. It is a characterful survival of a small-scale early 20th-century office building, once a common type in the City. It has good quality carved stone detailing and makes an effective contrast with the adjacent Holland House (the original form of which it stymied, and subsequently influenced, because Messrs Burge refused to sell up to that building's developers).

The most prominent building on the street is the grade II\* listed Holland House (Nos. 1-4 Bury Street, **Figure 6**), built to designs by H.P. Berlage for a Mueller, a Dutch shipping company. Completed, unusually, in 1916 (enabled by Dutch neutrality in WW1), the building consists of six storeys with additional set back roof storeys. Its Expressionist style, distinctive detailing and materials, making it a striking landmark and singular in its use of grey-green faience materials. It has a very high quality of detailing and execution and is one of the architecturally standout buildings in the locality. It wraps around Renown House onto the southern part of Bury Street, continuing the same style and architecture, with a strong and imposing carved corner feature in polished black marble, with stylised prow of ship.





*Figure 6: Holland House, Bury Street*

To the south, Nos. 5-10 (Copenhagen House) is an office building, constructed in 1977 by Hildebrandt & Glicker. The building has an imposing presence within the street, due to its width but also its robustness and pink granite façade. The building has an affinity with the offices of similar date on Leadenhall Street and Mitre Street and is cut from similar cloth to No. 33 Creechurch Lane. Like those, the scale, modelling and layout of this building are in sympathy with its more historic neighbours in the locality.

Terminating the east side of Bury Street to the north, Nos. 11-12 Bury Street is the earliest building in this street block after the Synagogue: an early C19 house, of five storeys with a modern two-storey mansard roof extension. The façade to Bury Street is of stock brickwork with stucco dressings; the ground floor has been altered considerably to incorporate a large glazed entrance; to the rear it presents a plainer, beautifully patinated brickwork elevation to the Synagogue courtyard. The building is a rare survivor of its kind in the locality and adds variety and interest to the townscape.

### **Bevis Marks/Duke's Place**

Bevis Marks is a busy, heavily-trafficked street. Assessed here are the buildings running southeast from Goring Street to Aldgate Square: a mixed architectural group, of no prevailing architectural or scalar character, and of variable quality. Such

character as exists is defined mainly by a mix of tall contemporary buildings and C20 buildings of more modest scale.

The north side of Bevis Marks comprises buildings of variable period, quality, style, and materials. No. 24 is a façade retention scheme by Ivan Starkin which incorporates a simple but characterful 1920s stone frontage with corner turret; the remainder is modern and of no significant architectural or historic interest. Nos. 19-22 are a lower, undistinguished modern range. No. 18 (John Stow House) is a modern building of different scale again, set back further from the street than its neighbours; No. 17 possesses a limited degree of individual interest as a 1935 warehouse by Lewis Solomon, with vaguely Art-Deco stylings and visually prominent bands of alternating Portland stone and metal spandrels. No. 40 Duke's Place, opposite, is of a similar aesthetic but differing scale and block plan. Nos. 32-38 Duke's Place, by Seifert, breaks the building line again and is a generic office block of its kind. Duke's Place terminates with a curio: Irongate House (1973-8 by Fitzroy Robinson), seven storeys of strongly modelled elevations clad in stonework fragments of a meteorite that struck South Africa, of geological and some architectural individual interest.

The north side of Bevis Marks, then, has isolated moments of historic fabric but possesses no consistency in scale, architectural treatment, building line or block plan. Compared with the rest of the Creechurch locality, it possesses a haphazard townscape of little inherent architectural or historic interest, which does not share the characteristics of the more consistent townscape prevailing elsewhere in the locality. As such, the north side of Bevis Marks/Duke's Place is not considered to meet the criteria for inclusion in a conservation area.

On the south side of the street, Nos. 10-16 Bevis Marks, Biiba House, is a 1970s building of dark orange brick, four storeys high with a set-back fifth floor. The building deals with its tricky narrow site (created by 1970s road widening) by introducing a colonnade at ground floor level. It incorporates late 19th century pediment and gated archway associated with Bevis Marks Synagogue (located to the south), of historic and architectural interest. The building is an important frontispiece building to the Synagogue and its courtyard, and is of sympathetic scale, form and materiality.

Located off Bevis Marks, reached through the gated archway in Nos. 10-16, is Bevis Marks Synagogue (1701 by Joseph Avis, **Figure 7**) set within its discreet courtyard. Glimpsed tantalisingly through the elegant ironwork gates of this portal, the Synagogue is an undemonstrative brick building, rectangular in plan, with simple elevations of red brick and modest Portland stone dressings with classical stylings. Above these, a slate roof is set behind a plain parapet above cornice level. The courtyard is surrounded by buildings of various dates but mostly consistent scale and, Valiant House excepted, framing the Synagogue with brickwork elevations with regular window openings. There is an intimate sense of enclosure, seclusion and

quietness upon entering the courtyard that contrasts strongly with the bustle of the main street, despite the presence of tall buildings in the Cluster beyond these self-contained immediate boundaries The Synagogue has strong functional, aesthetic and historic relationships with the adjacent Rabbi's House (2 Heneage Lane) and the Vestry (4 Heneage Lane).



*Figure 7: Bevis Marks Synagogue, western elevation*



As the oldest Synagogue in the UK, the building is of outstanding architectural and historic interest. It was the first purpose-built Synagogue in the City of London following the readmission of the Jewish community in the C17. It is the oldest Synagogue in Britain still in use for continuous worship; a line of continuity unbroken since it was constructed. As such, it has profound and multifarious associations with generations of Jewish people for whom it figured enormously, particularly in the heady years following its opening. The rich and intricate manner of worship within the Synagogue is partly shared with other Jewish communities and partly unique to Bevis Marks.

The building's discreet, off-street location in an enclosed, private courtyard may or may not have stemmed from a law forbidding the Jewish community from building on a high street, but it symbolises the long and complex history of the Jewish community in the City (and Britain), from formal expulsion in 1290 by Edward I to semi-formal readmittance during the Commonwealth and subsequent resettlement. This is a long, profound and intense narrative, at once apparent in the relationship between the Synagogue, its courtyard, and the main street. Of outstanding architectural and historic significance, the Synagogue is one of the 'anchor' heritage assets in the locality.

After Heneage Lane and the north-east elevation of No. 33 Creechurch Lane (see below and above), the remainder of the south side of Bevis Marks, running into Duke's Place, is occupied by the modern development at One Creechurch Place. This is a very large office building of black metal cladding and glazed panels with an amorphous and uninviting ground floor presence. It has a wholly negative relationship with the Creechurch locality; and harmed the surrounding street pattern, architectural quality and materials to the buildings immediately neighbouring and surrounding, it establishes hard visual and physical barriers between them, save for a link between Creechurch Place and Mitre Square that reorientates a historic connection and creates an unforgiving visual setting for much of the buildings in the locality. As such, One Creechurch Place is not considered to meet the criteria for inclusion in a conservation area.

### **Heneage Lane**

The eastern elevation of the Synagogue faces into Heneage Lane (**Figure 7**), a narrow thoroughfare paved with Yorkstone flags and incorporating traditional iron lamp standards. This is quintessential City alley, defined by a strong sense of enclosure, due to its narrow width and the scale of the buildings on both sides of the lane. The historic character and feel of the lane are further reinforced with the presence of the historic lampposts that make a very positive contribution to the area. The prevailing scale, seclusion and subservience it offers to the Synagogue's east front is an important element of the historic area around the Synagogue.

Just north of the Synagogue building and attached to it is the Rabbi's House, No.2 Heneage Lane, dating from the 19th century (between 1875 and 1916). The part of the building facing onto Heneage Lane is of red brick with red Mansfield stone dressings with Tudor detailing and a plainer stock brick elevation to the Synagogue courtyard. Although of different style to the Synagogue, the patina, texture, colour tones and modesty of the Rabbi's House makes it a sympathetic neighbour.



*Figure 8: Heneage Lane*

To the south of the Synagogue is the Vestry and Valiant House (no. 4 Heneage Lane). The Vestry dates from the late 19th century and though incorporated into the wider Valiant House development, it continues to serve as a vestry and is visually distinct from its more modern adjunct. The three-storey elevation to Heneage Lane is



of high-quality rubbed and carved red brick, and incorporates beautiful brickwork detailing to the window surrounds and cills at first floor level, which feature fine carved rosettes. The third floor is plainly rendered and the fourth mansard floor is recessed from view. The elevation is of a highly sympathetic scale approximate to that of the Synagogue and its materiality and architectural detailing complement that of the Synagogue and the Rabbi's House, with which it forms an integral group.

The main elevations of the adjoining Valiant House (1978-81 by Peter Black and Partners) incorporate glazed bands and dark brown cladding. Rising to seven storeys, extends above the Synagogue complex with a largely black flank wall of grey cladding rising above them, in views from Heeneage Lane. Its architectural treatment, forms, materials and detailing depart from the modest brickwork elevations of the other buildings facing the Synagogue from within the courtyard or along Heeneage Lane, within the proposed conservation area.

The western part of Heeneage Lane is defined by the 1970s office block at no. 33 Creechurch Lane. As described in more detail above, this building is of no inherent interest, but is of a sympathetic scale, materiality and character, importantly preserving the historic street pattern and secluded, quiet lane character.

### **Leadenhall Street**

Leadenhall Street is one of the City's principal and most well-known streets and has undergone a radical transformation in character in recent years, with many of the tall buildings of the City Cluster having a street presence here. The section here assessed is the north side running east from Cunard Place to the junction with Aldgate. The size of the road, the presence of sizeable and tall buildings and the increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic create a more bustling character and feel that contrasts with the more secluded, granular and historic character of the Creechurch locality.

Cunard House is a modern building (completed c.2000) of no inherent architectural or historic interest, although one of its predecessors on the site was the first Synagogue, converted from a house, following the resettlement. Although of broadly sympathetic scale and materiality to the other buildings in the locality, it is notably higher and relates more in orientation and 'feel' to bigger buildings along Leadenhall Street than the smaller-scale, more granular character of the Creechurch locality. As such it is not considered to meet the criteria for inclusion in a conservation area.

After the important elevation of St Katherine Cree (see above) are a pair of modern buildings which help to define the street block around the churchyard, and which are of broadly sympathetic scale, materials and detailing: No. 80 Leadenhall Street by Hamilton Associates (1990) and No. 78-79, by Ley, Colbeck & Partners (1991). Though modern, these buildings form quieter, more neutral components of the Creechurch locality, and maintain the building line and scale of the street block.



*Figure 9: No. 80 Leadenhall Street*

The corner plot of Leadenhall Street and Mitre Street, Nos. 71-77, is a prominent corner site and one of the key gateways into the locality from the east. The existing building dates to 1986-7 by Gollins Melvin Ward, of five storeys with two additional floors set-back. The building maintains the scale and building line of the street block, with the curved SE corner of the building forming a point of architectural interest; through windows here can be seen a section (grade II listed) of the Holy Trinity Priory comprising a tall late C14 Gothic window arch relocated here from another site.

Of historic, architectural and townscape interest is also the grade II listed pump at the junction of Leadenhall Street and Fenchurch Street. A 'well' is mentioned here in the C13. The present tapering stone pier with vermiculated blocks looks mid-C18 but with a Victorian pedimented top and brass dog's head spout. Although now surrounded by modern office blocks, the Pump is reminiscent of the earlier history of the area; it is a de-facto memorial to the Aldgate Pump epidemic and signifies the start of the East End, as well as a point from which distances were measured into the counties of Essex and Middlesex.

### 3.3. Eligibility for Conservation Area Status

Historic England Advice Note 1 proposes, at para 11 (p.5), three questions to define eligibility for conservation area status:

- a) Does the area have sufficient architectural or historic interest for the area to be considered 'special';
- b) Whether this is experienced through its character and appearance;
- c) Whether it is desirable for that character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced, and what problems designation could help solve.

In respect of (a) and (b), the Creechurch locality is found to be richly historic, with a multi-layered sense of place stemming from the ancient delineation of the Roman and medieval City wall and Aldgate and the layout of the Holy Trinity Priory, foremost amongst the medieval City's monastic foundations, both of which have perceptibly influenced the modern street plan. Although upstanding remains of these structures are not now visible in the townscape (with the exception of the Grade II listed archway to the rear of nos. 39 and 40 Mitre Street), the archaeological potential, placenames, forms and spaces (e.g. Aldgate, Mitre Street and Square, Creechurch Place, St Katherine Cree churchyard) they bequeathed convey a strong sense of special historic interest.

Above ground, there is significant architectural interest in the streets and buildings subsequently developed from the early modern period onwards: the two City churches and Bevis Marks Synagogue offer outstanding examples of their types; Holland House strikes a pleasingly eclectic note; the Creechurch/Mitre Street warehouses are a rare and fine group of their kind. The locality is found to possess a varied, characterful and interesting group of historic buildings studded with highly significant historic places of worship and interspersed with more neutral modern buildings that help to create a consistent sense of townscape and distinctive sense of place.

For clarity, the following streets and buildings are considered to depart from these qualities, and for the reasons set out above are not considered eligible for inclusion in the proposed conservation area:

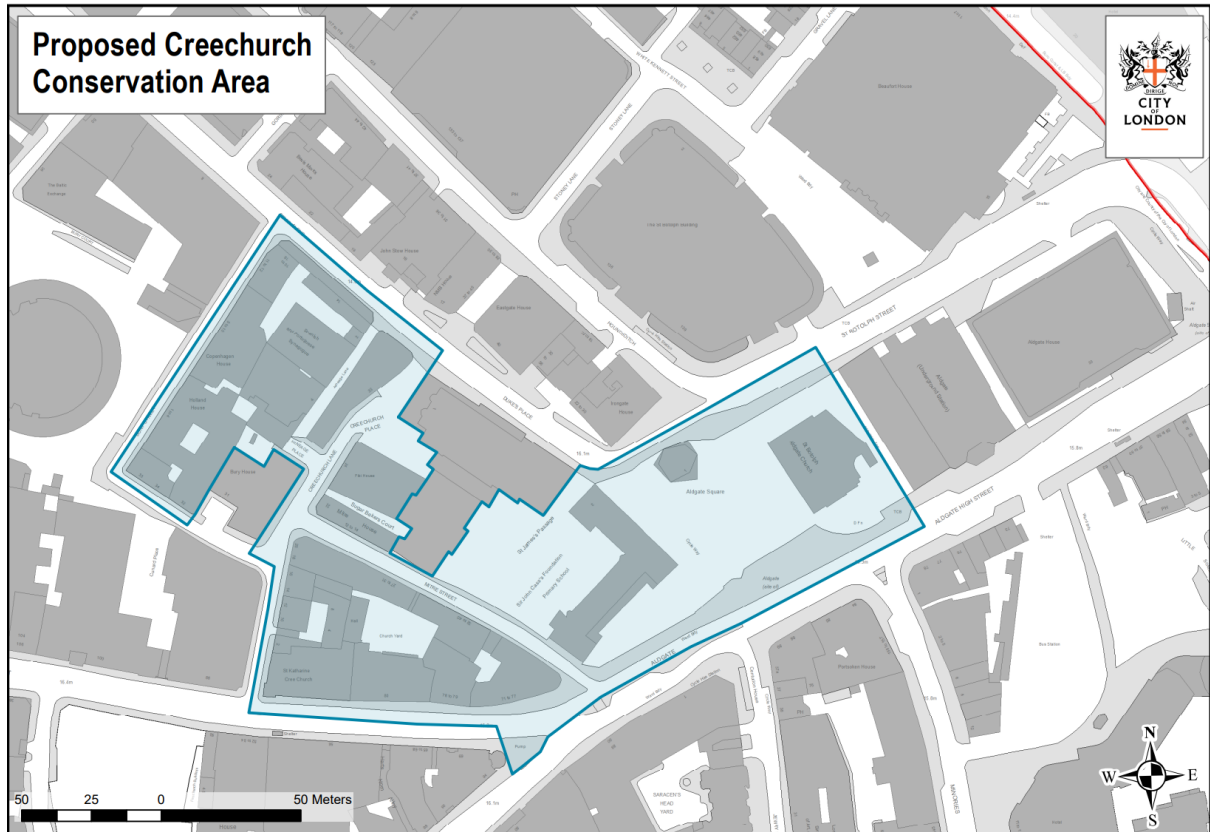
- Bevis Marks/Duke's Place (north side), from Goring Street to Aldgate
- No. 31 Bury Street
- One Creechurch Place
- Cunard House

Otherwise, a conservation area is proposed with the boundaries tightly drawn around the streets and buildings described above. In respect of question (c), it is considered highly desirable to preserve the architectural charisma and sense of history

prevailing in the Creechurch locality; and that conservation area designation would be an appropriate management tool to achieve this overall aim, and for preserving and enhancing the appearance particularly of the unlisted group of late C19 warehouse buildings at the heart of the locality, but also of the cohesiveness of the area's character and appearance as a whole.

## 4. Proposed Creechurch Conservation Area

### 4.1. Proposed boundary



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#### West

The boundary would run along the middle of Creechurch Lane, then kink and follow the footprint of No. 31 Bury Street in order to exclude it from the area, then return along the rear of Holland House to Bury Street, whence it would proceed along that middle of that street west and then north to Bevis Marks.

#### North

The boundary would run along the middle of Bevis Marks to the building line of One Creechurch Place, whence it would be drawn tightly around the footprint of that building to exclude it from the conservation area, returning along the west side of St James's Passage to the end of Duke's Place, whence it would run east along the middle of St Botolph Street to St Botolph Row.

#### East

The boundary would run along the middle of St Botolph Row to the middle of Aldgate High Street.

## **South**

The boundary would run along the middle of Aldgate High Street/Aldgate to the tip of Fenchurch Street, so as to incorporate the Aldgate Pump; it would then kink back up to Leadenhall Street and run along the middle of that street to the centre of Creechurch Lane.

### **4.2. Overarching summary of special interest**

- (i) Strong and visible associations with the Roman and medieval City wall and Holy Trinity Priory, visible in the modern street pattern [HE bullet III]
- (ii) A characterful group of late C19/early C20 warehouses on Creechurch Lane/Mitre Street that are fine examples of their kind and survivors of a type now rare in the City [HE bullets I, IV]
- (iii) Three places of worship of (in a City context) unusually diverse origins and of outstanding architectural and historic interest: Bevis Marks Synagogue (first purpose-built since resettlement and now oldest in UK), St Katherine Cree (a former Priory church) and St Botolph Aldgate (an extramural parish church) [HE bullet I]
- (iv) A proliferation of historic open spaces of diverse scales, functionality and appearance [HE bullet V]
- (v) Strong and continuing associations with the Jewish community following resettlement in the C17 [HE bullet II]

### **4.3. Architectural/artistic interest**

The oldest building in the proposed conservation area is St Katherine Cree (tower of c.1504, church of 1636), an architecturally unusual City church in that it comprises a very early and idiosyncratic marriage of perpendicular Gothic externally and classicism internally; the earlier, diminutive, ragstone-walled tower speaks powerfully of the building's humble status as a parish church and, before that, a small Priory chapel.

Bevis Marks Synagogue (1701) is an excellent example of a simple, non-Anglican, C17 place of worship. The simplicity of its exteriors belies a fascinating complexity of influences. The Queen Anne stylings reflect both the simple vernacular of nonconformist chapels (Joseph Avis was a Quaker) and also the simpler elevations of some of the contemporaneous City churches; architecturally, therefore, it sits somewhere between the churches of the state religion and the buildings of the nonconformist faiths. This reflects the moment of its construction, at the turn of the C17/C18, when the rebuilding campaign of the City churches was well under way and the City was teeming with skilled carpenters and masons, many with links to

Wren and his office. Though simple, the elevations are executed to a very high standard of quality, again reflecting the proliferation of expertise with brick and woodwork at this time.

Some forty years later, the church of St Botolph Aldgate was rebuilt by George Dance the Elder in an amplified version of the simple Classicism employed at the Synagogue. It is a robust composition employing all the usual stylistic devices of the day and has a fine, landmark quality. Collectively, the three places of worship in the proposed conservation area are fascinating illustrations in the shifting tastes as to the suitable architectural clothing of a place of worship. The surviving house at Bury Street (1811) illustrates, albeit later, the way this style was employed on secular buildings of the period.

The group of C19 warehouses are a fine illustration of the kind of small-scale, robust, free-classical mercantile architecture once widespread in the City; they display assured handling of scale and proportion and judicious use of simple classical devices such as rustication, keystones and columns; Cree House, a focal point of the group, goes further with striking terracotta banding and fine carved brickwork and cast terracotta incorporating fruit motifs. The group are executed to a high level of skill. Also, of the C19 are the Vestry and Rabbi's House flanking the Synagogue, modest but well-crafted and executed examples of their kind.

The Aldgate School is another prominent presence within the proposed conservation area. Of a fine, Edwardian neo-Wren style – such that its main east front has the air of a miniature Hampton Court – it is a judiciously designed and proportioned and superbly executed building, of characterful Portland stone and warm red brick, rubbed for details such as keystones and pilasters. It incorporates much characterful ornament such as the little statues of children on the east front and is attractively patinated.

The standout building of the C20 in the proposed conservation area is Holland House. For a sense of its architectural impact, it is best viewed with its neighbour, Renown House. Designed by H.P. Berlage, the building exhibits a tensely vertical main elevation to Bury Street (a response to the original narrowness and exclusively oblique views of that street), with an asymmetrical entrance and simple, vaguely Art Deco detailing; it broke all the architectural rules the City tended to favour at that time, a flavour of which is given by the staid Classicism of Renown House.

Later C20 buildings tend to be of lesser inherent interest, but there is an important consistency in the way they conform to the scale and building lines of the street blocks to which they belong and employ sympathetic materials and simple details. They act as neutral punctuation marks within the proposed conservation area, allowing the historic buildings and spaces to shine.

#### **4.4. Historic interest**

There is evident, superlative historic interest in the locality's connection with the Roman and medieval City wall (substantive parts of which and the Aldgate survive below ground as Scheduled Ancient Monuments) and Holy Trinity Priory, one of the foremost monastic foundations of the medieval City, of such importance that medieval English royalty were buried here; it was the earliest to be dissolved in England and therefore of particular interest in this respect; parts of it were sold off to significant courtiers including the Duke of Norfolk.

Of the individual buildings, St Katherine Cree (the oldest surviving above ground) is a nationally-rare type: an early C17 church built during the schisms of Charles I's reign, when few new churches were built; it was consecrated by Archbishop Laud, the controversial Carolean churchman. The church itself stands within the Priory precincts and originated (not this building, but its predecessor) as a Priory chapel.

Bevis Marks Synagogue lends the locality profound associations with the Sephardi Jewish community, who settled here following resettlement in the C17 and have maintained an unbroken presence ever since; the area also has, through the lost presence of the Great Synagogue on Duke's Place, historic associations with the Ashkenazi Jewish community.

The group of C19 warehouses at the heart of the proposed conservation area are a fascinating illustration of how a once-prestigious monastic complex evolved through a period of dissolution and subsequent aristocratic occupation/landlordism to arrive at relatively humble mercantile uses; they illustrate the shifting fortunes of a more peripheral area of the City tucked within the wall and gates, away from the centre, and a once-widespread mercantile warehousing function of the City which is now far less visible.

Through Holland House, the locality has associations with H.P. Berlage, an influential C20 Dutch architect, and the Dutch shipping company Mueller. Other individual associations of note include, but are not limited to, Geoffrey Chaucer (who lived in the Aldgate), the Duke of Norfolk, Archbishop Laud, Samuel Pepys (who visited the preceding Synagogue on Creechurch Lane) and George Dance the Elder.

#### **4.5. Archaeological interest**

There is considerable archaeological potential to uncover more of the precincts and remains of Holy Trinity Priory and the Abbot of St Edmundsbury's Inn, as well as burials in the former churchyards. Many of the individual buildings, particularly the



tower of St Katherine Cree and the Synagogue, hold evidential value as to construction methods and design practices of their eras.

## 5. Conclusion & Next Steps

- A new conservation area is proposed at the Creechurch locality, informed by the detailed assessment set out above;
- The proposed boundary differs from that proposed by the Synagogue in that it would exclude the following buildings:
  - Those on Bevis Marks/Duke's Place (north side), from Goring Street to Aldgate
  - No. 31 Bury Street
  - One Creechurch Place
  - Cunard House;
- Subject to committee support, the next step would be to consult publicly on the proposals, in line with the City's Statement of Community Involvement, to obtain the views of occupiers in the area, consultees including Historic England and the general public on the proposals;
- The results of the consultation and the proposed conservation area boundary would then be reported back to Members for a decision on whether to designate the proposed Creechurch Conservation Area.
- If the Conservation Area is designated, the subsequent step would be to prepare a Character Summary and Management Strategy document to set out the City's proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area.