

# Report – Planning and Transportation Committee

## Proposed Creechurch Conservation Area

*To be presented on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024*

*To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons  
of the City of London in Common Council assembled.*

### 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. Following authorisation by your Planning and Transportation Committee, between September and November 2023 a public consultation was held on a proposal for a potential new conservation area in the Creechurch locality, near Aldgate.

976 responses were received in total, a welcome and unprecedented level of engagement in a City conservation area proposal. Following analysis of the responses and the boundary of the area for inclusion, it is proposed that one conservation area be designated, covering the area identified on the map in Appendix 1. The City Corporation have completed an equalities screening.

A report outlining the results of the public consultation, analysis and conclusions was considered by your Planning and Transportation Committee at its meeting on 12 December 2023, along with an addendum report. [The full reports and appendices are available on the City Corporation webpages.](#)

Following consideration, your Committee took the view that it would endorse the officer recommendation to designate the area identified on the map in Appendix 1 as the Creechurch Conservation Area.

### RECOMMENDATION

That this Honourable Court **approves** the designation of the area identified on the map in Appendix 1 as the 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 including three outstanding places of worship: Bevis Marks Synagogue, St Katherine Cree Church and St Botolph Aldgate Church (all listed Grade I).
2. In July 2023, a request to publicly consult on proposals for a conservation area in this locality was reported to your Planning and Transportation Committee. Underpinning this was an assessment which identified that the area has a core group of buildings

and spaces of sufficient special architectural and historic interest to warrant conservation area designation. Committee authorised a public consultation on this core group, hereafter referred to as 'Option 1', alongside two other options proposed by Members: 'Option 2', which included 31 Bury Street (which had not been included in Option 1), and 'Option 3': the separate proposal for a conservation area tabled by representatives of Bevis Marks Synagogue.

3. 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 which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate those areas as conservation areas.
4. 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'.
5. It is the duty of the City Corporation, as Local Planning Authority, from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. In the exercise of planning functions with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, the City Corporation is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. Relevant policy, to be taken into account when determining planning applications affecting the historic environment, is contained within the City's Local Plan 2015 (in particular in section 3.12), emerging City Plan 2040 (in particular in section 6.4), the London Plan 2021 (chapter 7) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (chapter 16).
6. Paragraph 191 of the NPPF 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."
7. Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition) Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management provides information on conservation area appraisal, designation and management.
8. 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.

9. Where a site does not fall within a conservation area, but neighbours or is adjacent to it, the local planning authority are still required to consider whether the redevelopment of that site would cause harm to a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 199 of the NPPF provides that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset the greater the weight should be). Paragraph 200 of the NPPF goes on to provide that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
10. 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.

### **Public Consultation – responses**

11. Officers had originally hoped to run an eight-week consultation period, however, the start of the consultation period was delayed slightly to allow Officers to prepare the consultation material and respond to some questions raised by interested parties about the proposed consultation.
12. The consultation period ran from 21 September 2023 to 6 November 2023, as set out in the consultation pages and documents and on the City's webpages. Officers were working to a timetable to allow the final report to be brought back to your Planning and Transportation Committee on 12 December 2023. The length of the consultation is considered to have been appropriate and fair in the circumstances and was made clear in the consultation documents.
13. Between 21 September and 6 November, a public consultation of over six weeks was carried out. Three public drop-in sessions were held when officers were available to answer questions:
  - Artizan Street Library (20th October) – 5 people attended;
  - Holland House (26th October) - 5 people attended; and
  - Bevis Marks Synagogue (30th October) - 8 people attended
14. A bespoke website hosted by Commonplace was created for the consultation, as well as a webpage in the City of London website, including information about the consultation and a link to Commonplace.
15. Hard copies of the consultation material were placed at: Artizan Street Library; Shoe Lane Library; Barbican Library; and the Planning Information Desk (Guildhall).
16. Notification emails were sent to 2,703 existing subscribers in the Commonplace database that have opted to be notified of new Commonplace engagements in the Creechurch Area. Notification emails were also sent to 495 recipients who are listed on the City's Local Plan Database.

17. The public consultation was advertised in the press including City Resident, and in September's Members' Briefing (which is a public document). In addition, 12 site notices were placed in and around the proposed conservation area.
18. 976 responses were received including from statutory bodies, residents, building occupiers in the area, individuals and local bodies. 84.5% of the responses supported Option 3, the proposals tabled by representatives of the Bevis Marks Synagogue. The consultation responses contained a wealth of useful and relevant information which has fed into the current proposal.
19. Historic England, the government's heritage advisor, supported the proposals and recommended Option 2 extended to include two sites – One Creechurch Place and Cunard House – which would better recognise and reflect the unique Jewish history of the area, and also allow for a more coherent boundary. They recommended considering the inclusion of the buildings on Bevis Marks/Duke's Place and the production of a Management Plan to manage change if the conservation area were to be designated.
20. The consultation drew great interest from the heritage sector. Several of the statutory amenity societies provided lengthy responses: the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society and the Twentieth Century Society. SAVE Britain's Heritage provided a detailed response. All these respondents suggested variously extended versions of Option 3 to encompass additional buildings to the south, east or west.
21. Representatives of the Synagogue submitted several, comprehensive responses supporting Option 3; these included valuable new historical information relating to the special historic interest of the area identified in their revised Conservation Area proposal. Additionally, the vast majority of the consultation responses supported Option 3 with many references to the importance of the existing Synagogue, former synagogues and their sites and the Jewish heritage of the area. Representatives of the two churches in the area supported this option.
22. Representations were received from commercial occupiers in the area, including from representatives of sites at 31 Bury Street, Cunard House, 10-16 Bevis Marks and 33 Creechurch Lane. These generally favoured Option 1, which excluded their sites from the proposed conservation area, and questioned the justification for a larger conservation area.
23. The City of London Conservation Area Advisory Committee supported the designation of Option 3, which they considered would include buildings of interest and would offer better protection to the buildings which form the core of the area in light of the provisions of the NPPF; and that this option would show and enhance the City's respect for diversity.
24. Full details of the public consultation, analysis and conclusions is contained within the background papers to the report. Redacted, printed copies of the responses are available in the Members' Reading Room.

## **Proposals**

25. It is the statutory duty of the City Corporation 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'.
26. Following the public consultation and taking into account the breadth and depth of new information and various alternative boundary proposals, it is now proposed that a single conservation area be designated. The proposed boundary would align with Option 3, that originally tabled by the representatives of the Synagogue.
27. Upon the recommendation of officers, your Committee considered that this would (i) encompass the area which justifies status as a conservation area because of its special architectural or historic interest, and in particular, the Jewish and other heritage in this part of the City, (ii) best respond to and take into account the findings of the consultation and (iii), as a result, optimally capture the special architectural and historic interest inherent in the Creechurch locality. Omission of the sites referred to in paragraph [21] above would result in a conservation area which did not encompass the extent of the area of special architectural or historic interest. Option 3 allowed for a more coherent boundary.
28. A map of the proposed area and the designated heritage assets is included in Appendix 1.
29. The area identified is of sufficient architectural or historic interest to be considered to be special. That special interest is experienced through both character and appearance, in particular the strong and visible associations with the Roman and medieval City wall, Holy Trinity Priory and the rich Jewish history of the area exemplified by Bevis Marks Synagogue, the characterful group of historic warehouses that illustrate the area's later development, and the rich sense of diverse historic uses, and in particular faiths, exemplified by the historic places of worship, and that it is desirable for that character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced. Designation could ensure that special attention will be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the whole area identified in Appendix 1, when exercising planning functions in relation to buildings and land within that area.
30. Notice of designation, with particulars of its effect, must be published in the London Gazette and at least one newspaper circulating in the local planning authority's area. Notice of designation must be given to the Secretary of State and Historic England and the designation of the area must be registered as a local land charge.
31. Following designation, a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy would be prepared. It is currently anticipated that this would take place over Spring 2024, with a public consultation on the draft in late Spring/early Summer 2024.

## **Conclusion**

32. Following the assessment of the area and consultation responses, and approval by your Planning and Transportation Committee, it is recommended that the area within the proposed boundary identified on the map in Appendix 1 be designated as a new conservation area called 'Creechurch Conservation Area'.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Creechurch Conservation Area – Proposed Boundary Map
- Appendix 2 - Implications

## **Background Documents**

- The report outlining the results of the public consultation, analysis and conclusions considered by your Planning and Transportation Committee at its meeting on 12 December 2023, along with an addendum report, Appendix 2 – Consultation Statement, Appendix 3 – Creechurch Conservation Area proposal, Appendix 4 – EIA Screening and Appendix 5 – Consultation Responses (redacted) are [available on the City Corporation Webpages](#).

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 12th day of December 2023.

SIGNED on behalf of the Committee.

**Deputy Shravan Joshi MBE**  
Chairman, Planning and Transportation Committee