

Review of Existing Conservation Areas & their boundaries -  
Review No.7 - Albert Square Conservation Area (CA 4)

(Stockwell Ward)

Report by the Director of Environmental Services

Consulted Formally: CEO & B.Sol

Authorised for submission by: Tony Hall, Acting Director of Environmental Services

Contact for enquiries: Edmund Bird - Conservation Officer (tel: 0171 926 7113)

PURPOSE

**To review the Albert Square Conservation Area (CA 4) and its boundaries**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee approves the extension of the Albert Square Conservation Area under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/414
- (2) That the Committee approved the detailed boundary of the area as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/414

For decision

**1. Context**

1.1 The function of the planning system is to regulate development and use of land in the public interest. The best of the Borough's built and landscaped environment can be valued and protected as part of this regulation through the designation of new conservation areas or the extension of existing ones. The enduring quality of these areas adds to the quality of life of the residents by protecting and enhancing the local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness and civic pride.

1.2 Historic areas are recognised for the contribution they make to our cultural inheritance and economic well-being. Areas which are considered to be of special architectural or historic interest are currently being assessed as part of the borough wide review of existing and potential conservation areas, in accordance with guidance contained within Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15) (sec. 4.3) issued by the Department of National Heritage and the Department of the Environment. The importance of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of areas of historic or architectural interest and setting high standards of design for new development in and around these areas is also a key policy contained within the Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan. The UDP (1992) identified this extension to the Albert Square Conservation Area as a priority (Policy C2 - Chapter 6: Conservation & Design)

1.3 The proposal to extend the Albert Square Conservation Area was identified as a priority in the report on the review of existing conservation areas and their boundaries which was approved by the Environmental Services Committee on the 21st July 1997 (Ref. ES 55/97-98). That report set out a methodology of the review based upon six main elements which included the rectifying of anomalies, often caused by developments which have taken place subsequent to the original designation of a conservation area, and the inclusion of buildings of historic interest which were not recognised at the time of the original designation - in this case nearly 30 years ago.

1.4 The Albert Square Conservation Area is one of Lambeth's very first conservation areas - designated in 1968 it originally consisted only of Albert Square itself, but it was extended in 1976 to include Wilkinson St, St Stephen's Terrace and Aldebert Terrace.

1.5 A detailed re-assessment of the Albert Square Conservation Area by the conservation officer has now been completed and the purpose of this report is to examine whether the current boundary is adequate when set against the new standards outlined within PPG 15 and guidance issued by English Heritage (Conservation area appraisals - March 1997). These standards include the origins and historic development of the area, the prevailing uses within the area and their influence on building types, plan form and the layout of the area; the architectural and historic quality, character and coherence of historic buildings and their style and materials; and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area. They also take into account the contribution made by key unlisted local landmark buildings, the character and relationship of spaces within the area, the setting of the conservation area and definition of significant vistas and panoramas and the extent of loss, intrusion or damage i.e. the negative factors which have exerted a detrimental impact upon the character and/or appearance of the historic area.

## 2. Justification

2.1 Following a review of the conservation area and its boundaries only one small area considered worthy of inclusion has been identified - the short terrace of six five storey town houses (Nos. 166-176 Clapham Road) which were built shortly after Albert Square was laid out in the late 1840's. These grand properties were built soon after the terraces which form Albert Square and are of a similar scale and design - of stock brick with generous stucco dressings. The properties are interesting examples of early Victorian architecture - the villas are symmetrically grouped in pairs, giving the appearance of being a continuous terrace by the linking together of their one/two storey entrance structures. Although they are all of similar height and general design, the architects have cleverly varied the architectural details to create the impression of being separate villas - four of the properties for example have rusticated stucco ground floor elevations, each 'pair' has different designs of window pediments -either flat ledges, triangular pediments or arched pediments and the middle 'pair' has a tall parapet instead of a fourth storey.

2.2 The terrace is set back from Clapham Road behind large front gardens which are generally well landscaped with shrubs, hedges, lawns and flower borders. The fine London plane trees which line both

sides of the avenue leading into Albert Square are also included within the extension as they form an important gateway into the square.

**2.3** Although the terrace is generally well maintained, there are certain missing architectural features which should ideally be re-instated, including a missing parapet and missing glazing bars and timber pelmets on the first floor of No. 172. Three satellite dishes also mar the character and appearance of Nos. 170 & 172.

#### **2.4. Summary**

The above group of historic properties and the avenue of plane trees are considered worthy of being included within the Conservation Area. The properties and the avenue are an important and coherent part of the overall historic character of the of the Albert Square Conservation Area, forming a gateway to the square which should be preserved and enhanced.

### **3. Public Consultation**

Letters of consultation were sent on the 19th December 1997 to owners/occupiers of the properties within the proposed extension to the Albert Square Conservation Area, and also to the Albert Square & St Stephen's Association, the Vauxhall Society and English Heritage asking for their views. These letters also outlined the type of controls that would apply within a conservation area.

The English Heritage Historic buildings Inspector has responded, expressing his view that the proposed extension is 'entirely reasonable' as the properties 'are clearly contemporary and the tree lined approach to the square is an important part of Albert Square'.

The Albert Square & St Stephen's Association have written to advise that their committee of residents met to consider the proposed extension of the conservation area on the 6th January 1998. They were unanimous in strongly supporting the proposal on the grounds that the additional area to be included is not only correct in historic terms (being part of the same parcel of land developed at this time) but also because the land and buildings form a vital part of the setting of houses in the Square.

The Vauxhall Society have written to say that they 'welcome the Council's proposal' noting that it accords with Lambeth's earlier proposal to extend this Conservation Area included within the UDP (issued in 1992) - they particularly support the inclusion of the broad avenue lined by mature plane trees which links the square with Clapham Road. They do however raise the serious concern regarding both the Council's resources and its commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation with particular reference to the mounting problem of litter and rubbish in the area, the new refuse collection arrangements, the poor maintenance of the street lighting and the increasing levels of commuter parking.

The Borough Solicitor, Chief Executives and Regeneration & Special Projects all advised that they had no observations on the proposal.

#### **4. Effects of Designation**

Under the Town and Country General Permitted Development Order 1995 (the GPDO) and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), conservation area designation has a number of practical implications for the area. These are outlined below:

- (i) Designation would take effect on the date of the Committee's resolution to agree to the recommendations in this report.
- (ii) Conservation Area Consent is required to demolish or partially demolish buildings within a conservation area (Section 74 of the Act).
- (iii) Some permitted development rights are restricted within a conservation area, e.g. neither stone cladding, or roof extensions are allowed without planning permission.
- (iv) Consent for all advertisement hoardings, temporary or permanent, is required.
- (v) The Council must be informed of all works to trees within a conservation area 6 weeks in advance to give time to issue a Tree Preservation Order, if required.
- (vi) The design quality of all new development in a conservation area is important. Planning Policy Guidance: Planning & the Historic Environment (PPG15) and Section 72 of the Act state that all development is required to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. PPG15 goes on to state that new buildings should respect their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well established character and appearance of its own.
- (vii) The council has the power to make a direction withdrawing certain other permitted development rights.

#### **5. Procedure After Designation**

Following Committee approval of the report a number of actions would be undertaken:

- (i) All owners of properties/land within the area designated as an extension to the conservation area would be informed in writing of the designation, which would also be advertised in the local press and the London Gazette.
- (ii) English Heritage and the Borough Land Charges section would be notified of the decision.

- (iii) The production of a character statement and design guidance for the whole of the extended conservation area would be reported to Committee for approval as resources permit.

## **6. Legal Powers and Advice**

6.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 gives the Council power to declare a new conservation area or extend an existing one. Section 69 (2) 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 any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas; and if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly”.

6.2 Section 69 (4) states that:

“The designation of any area as a conservation area shall be a local land charge”.

6.3 Section 70 (5) of the Act states that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should publish notice of any designation, variation or cancellation with particulars of its effect, in the London Gazette, and in at least one newspaper circulating in the area of the LPA.

6.4 Section 71 (1 - 3) of the Act identify future dates on the Council associated with a designation, stating:

“(1) It shall be the duty of a LPA from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation area.

“(2) Proposals under this section shall be submitted for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate.

“(3) The LPA shall have regard to any views concerning the proposals expressed by persons attending the meeting.”

## **7. Environmental Implications**

The extension of the Albert Square provides the Council with additional development control powers to protect and enhance this small area, it also places a duty on the Council to include this area within a plan outlining the aims of preserving and enhancing the conservation area as a whole.

## **8. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications to the Council as a direct result of this report.

**9. Staffing & Accommodation Implications**

9.1 There are no staffing implications as a direct result of this report. The additional powers associated with the extension of the conservation area could generate additional workload for Development Control staff, but it is anticipated that this will be minimal given the very small number of properties concerned.

9.2 The duty to prepare public design guidance and enhancement schemes is already a part of the conservation team's future work programme.

**10. Equal Opportunities**

There are no implications for equal opportunities as a direct result of this report, however any improvements to the urban environment gained as a result of the extending the conservation area should benefit all groups in society. Any improvements will of course take into account the needs of people with mobility problems (e.g. traffic calming initiatives).

**11. Background Documents**

Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1991

Department of the Environment: Planning Policy Guidance(15): Planning & the Historic Environment (1994)

English Heritage: Conservation area appraisals (March 1997)

Survey of London Vol. XXVI (Lambeth - Part II - Southern Area) - London County Council 1956

A History of Our Conservation Area - Albert Square & St Stephen's Association (1986)

**12. Audit Trail**

Committee deadline: 9/2/98					
Author: Edmund Bird - Conservation Officer ext. 67182					
Date drafted: 8/1/98					
<u>Consultation with other Officers/Directorates</u>					
Date	Name	Directorate	Date received	Date cleared	Date Returned
12/1/98	S. Whitaker	CEO	13/1/98	14/1/98	16/1/98
12/1/98	M. Dickens	B SOL	13/1/98	15/1/98	15/1/98
12/1/98	P. Hart	CEO	13/1/98	15/1/98	22/1/98
Date sent to Committee Secretariat:					
Date received by Committee Secretariat:					