

Review of Existing Conservation Areas & their boundaries -
Review No.1 - Lambeth Palace Conservation Area (CA 10)

(Bishops Ward)

Report by the Director of Environmental Services

Consulted Formally: CEO, B.Sol, EDFCS & EDHS

Authorised for submission by:
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PURPOSE

To review the Lambeth Palace Conservation Area (CA 10) and its boundaries

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee approves the extension of the Lambeth Palace Conservation Area under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/398
- (2) That the Committee approved the detailed boundary of the area as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/398

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 Existing conservation areas and their boundaries are currently being reviewed by the Council, 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 Unitary Development Plan Policy C1 states that the Council will consider whether Conservation Areas should be extended or new ones designated in areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.

1.3 The proposal to extend the Lambeth Palace 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. The Lambeth Palace Conservation Area was identified as a priority case for review due to the considerable development pressures in this northern part of the borough.

1.4 The Lambeth Palace Conservation Area is the first conservation area to be re-assessed under the borough-wide review. It is one of Lambeth's very first conservation areas - designated in 1968 it originally consisted only of Lambeth Palace itself and its grounds. It was extended in 1978 to include Archbishop's Park and a number of historic buildings lining Lambeth Road, and again in 1980 to include the historic part of the St. Thomas's Hospital campus which dates back to 1871.

1.5 A detailed re-assessment of the Lambeth Palace Conservation Area by the conservation team 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 in October 1995 (Conservation Area Practice). These standards include the quality of existing buildings within and adjacent to the conservation area, the mix of uses, characteristic materials, vistas along streets and between buildings and the importance of landscaped areas.

2. Justification

Following a comprehensive review of the conservation area and its boundaries several anomalies have been identified and to remedy these, certain small extensions are now proposed. The main weakness of the current boundary is that it protects most of the historic buildings such as Lambeth Palace and the important Archbishop's Park, but does not protect their setting.

2.1 The most obvious anomaly is the western boundary of the conservation area which terminates on the riverfront - ignoring the fact that the borough boundary runs along the centre of the River Thames. This inconsistency was recognised in 1983 when the adjoining South Bank Conservation Area was designated - this more recent conservation area boundary runs down the centre of the river rather than along the riverbank. The realigning of the conservation area boundary along the borough boundary is important to bring it into line with the adjacent South Bank conservation area boundary and to ensure that any developments beyond the embankment affecting what is one of the most prominent and high profile stretches of the Thames (for example any future proposals for new bridges, riverboat piers, floating lidos etc.) are subject to the standards of high quality design required by conservation area status.

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2.2 It is also proposed to extend the boundary to a point about 70 metres south of the existing boundary to include Lambeth Bridge itself and Lambeth Bridge House which stands directly opposite the Grade I listed 15th Century gatehouse to Lambeth Palace and the Grade II* listed St. Mary's - now the Museum of Garden History. This extension should therefore protect the important setting of the Palace from the south and its relationship with the river frontage. Lambeth Bridge is a handsome five-span structure designed by Sir George Humphries with Sir Reginald Blomfield - one of the finest British architects of the Twentieth Century - as consultant architect. It was designed in 1929 and opened by George V in 1932. It is characterised by elegant granite obelisks surmounted by pineapple finials on either side of the approaches and a cast iron balustrade with pairs of lamp standards either side of the bridge in each span. Facing the bridge is Lambeth Bridge House - a monumental building of nine stories erected in the late 1930's which occupies a highly sensitive position overlooking Lambeth Palace. It is of grey brick with stone dressings and was formerly occupied by the Ministry of Works and later the Department of the Environment. It is now vacant and it is understood there are current proposals to refurbish the building as apartments. Conservation Area status should therefore ensure that a high quality refurbishment scheme is achieved on this very prominent site.

2.3 The third omission is the exclusion of two prominent sites within the St Thomas's Hospital complex which overlook Archbishop's Park and the grounds of the Grade I Listed Lambeth Palace which are themselves listed Grade II* on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. These sites are occupied by two institutional buildings - St. Thomas's House and Riddell House, both built earlier this century. St Thomas's House is a large 7 storey building built of red brick and stone dressings in a classical manner with a full height stone pediment at the centre of the block facing the original Victorian buildings. It was built by Harold Wynne Currey (grandson of the architect of the original 1871 hospital buildings) in 1925-27 to accommodate the growing medical school. Riddell House stands at right angles to St. Thomas's House - it is of a similar monumental scale but is of an even simpler design in the institutional neo-Georgian idiom popular in the 1930's. The six storey building, built in 1936-37 as a nurses home, is of a dark red brick with a rusticated ground floor plinth, three horizontal bands of portland stone and a regular Georgian style pattern of fenestration. The only concessions to decorative ornament are a pedimented stone surround to the first floor window in the centre of the building overlooking the park and a grand stone portico on the west elevation facing the hospital campus. The building was designed by the accomplished architect Sir Edwin Cooper who designed such well known landmarks as Marylebone Town Hall, the former Port of London Headquarters in Trinity Square and the Star and Garter Home in Richmond.

2.4 Immediately to the east of Riddell House the north-west corner of the park - a landscaped area enclosed by high railings marking the boundary with Lambeth Palace Road - at present lies outside the conservation area boundary. This is presumably because at the time of designation it was just a left-over strip of land following the construction of the new stretch of Lambeth Palace Road built in the early 1960's to relieve the old alignment which ran through the middle of the hospital complex. This anomaly is easily resolved by simply extending the boundary to include this part of the park as well as the adjacent Riddell House and St Thomas's House.

2.5 It is also proposed to include a small extension of the boundary to the north and east of Archbishop's Park to secure the setting of the park. This includes York House - a large five storey Peabody Trust block of flats built in 1935 which has an attractive neo-Georgian style elevation fronting Archbishops Park - a good example of an apartment building of that era, a short terrace of old cottages (Penhurst Place) and an urban studies centre accommodated in an old Victorian building. Finally a small addition to the south is proposed to include Pratt Walk which was laid out in 1775 and contains an elegant Georgian terrace of Grade II Listed townhouses which retain a wealth of original architectural features including fluted friezes, pedimented doorcases and semi-circular fanlights. A less inspiring inter-war block of flats stands on the corner overlooking the Palace grounds, which represents an interesting redevelopment opportunity. Again conservation area status could help to ensure a high quality development which befits the sensitive nature of the site and complements its historic neighbours.

2.6 Summary

The above proposed modifications have all been carefully assessed in accordance with the criteria recommended by English Heritage and all four extensions are considered worthy of being included within the Conservation Area. The properties proposed to be included within the conservation area are an important and coherent part of the overall historic character of the neighbourhood which surrounds Archbishop's Park and Lambeth Palace. The two areas to the north and east of the park have a direct impact upon the setting of this fine long established urban park which deserves the protection afforded by conservation area status. The extension of the conservation area to include the River Thames and Lambeth Bridge are logical adjustments which also bring the Conservation Area boundaries into line with those of the neighbouring Westminster City Council (Westminster Abbey & Parliament Square and Smith Square Conservation Areas).

The inclusion of Lambeth Bridge rectifies the bizarre anomaly whereby only the northern half of which (i.e. the half under the jurisdiction of Westminster) was protected from demolition by conservation status, thus recognising the architectural qualities of this fine structure. Finally the small extension to the south to include the elegant Georgian Pratt Walk is another important step to further protect the heritage of this part of the borough. The boundaries of the extended conservation area are now far more logically defined - formed by the railway line to the east, post-war hospital and commercial development to the north, the borough boundary along the centre of the Thames to the west and primarily post-war commercial development on the Albert Embankment and Lambeth Road to the south.

3. Public Consultation

3.1 Letters of consultation asking for the views of owners/occupiers of the properties/land within the proposed extensions to the Lambeth Palace Conservation Area were sent on 28th August 1997. These letters also outlined the type of controls that would apply within a conservation area. Two letters have been received from residents in Pratt Walk and Penhurst Place, the former stating that they were 'delighted to learn of the proposal and giving their strong support to the extension' and in the latter case welcoming the extension as 'an excellent proposal', adding that she 'fully endorsed the sentiments expressed for the area'. The Vauxhall Society wrote to say that they 'very much welcome the proposal which addresses their own recommendation to extend the boundary to the middle of the River

Thames in harmony with the City of Westminster conservation areas, made as part of the UDP consultation. They also support the inclusion of Lambeth Bridge House, Pratt Walk and of the areas immediately adjoining Archbishop's Park such as Penhurst Place'.

A letter has also been received from Guy's & St Thomas' Hospital Trust which refers to their proposals for a new Women & Children's Hospital on the site of Riddel House and St Thomas' House which have been the subject of pre-application discussions with the planning authority. (only initial indicative plans have so far been submitted to officers) They argue that the Trust would wish to support the spirit of extending the conservation area and feel that the new building would enhance the conservation area more than the existing buildings, however they consider that it would be inappropriate to include in the conservation area the buildings which are proposed to be demolished and replaced. The same principle they argue applies to a site on Carlisle which they have earmarked for residential accommodation. They request that these elements of the extensions are deferred until the planning applications for the replacement buildings are approved, or, if this is not possible, they would like to receive assurances that the extension of the conservation area would not adversely affect their building programmes.

It is considered that the extensions to include these hospital owned-sites can be justified on the grounds that these sites are of considerable townscape importance which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Lambeth Palace Conservation area - particularly the very important setting of Archbishop's Park. There is a presumption in favour of the retention of the historic buildings, however if the hospital authorities can justify their demolition and can demonstrate that the replacement development is of a higher quality in terms of its contribution to the townscape and the preservation or enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area, then the Council will consider their replacement by a new building. The same would apply to any site on Carlisle Lane. This view has now been conveyed to the Hospital Trust.

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 Lambeth Palace Conservation Area 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 small area of the extensions.

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 & Department of National Heritage: Planning Policy Guidance (PPG15): Planning & the Historic Environment (September 1994)
English Heritage: Conservation Area Practice (October 1995)
Survey of London Vol. XXIII (South Bank & Vauxhall) - London County Council 1951
The Buildings of England - London 2: South - Bridget Cherry & Sir Nicholas Pevsner 1983

12. Audit Trail

Committee deadline: 29th September 1997
Author: Edmund Bird - Conservation Officer ext. 67182
Date drafted: 10/8/97

Consultation with other Officers/Directorates

Date	Name	Directorate	Date Received	Date Cleared	Date Returned
9/9/97	P. Davies	EDFCS	9/9/97	22/9/97	22/9/97
9/9/97	C. Lee	B.SOL	9/9/97	16/9/97	16/9/97
9/9/97	P. Hart	CEO	9/9/97	16/9/97	16/9/97
9/9/97	H. Mills	EDHS	9/9/97	17/9/97	17/9/97

Date sent to Committee Secretariat: 24th September 1997

Date received by Committee Secretariat: