

Town Planning Committee
Monday 31st March 1980

DD 
I.P. /79-80

LAMBETH PALACE CONSERVATION AREA - EXTENSIONS

(Bishops Ward)

Community Plan Ref. (1979 edition) 1.5.1.1.

The following report is submitted by the Director of Development Services. The original draft was prepared by J. Sutcliffe (Principal Planning Officer, Urban Design Group, DODS) on 26th February 1980.

SUMMARY

The following report reconsiders the boundary of the Lambeth Palace Conservation Area and proposes an extension of the area to include the older parts of St. Thomas's Hospital, the Medical School and their river frontages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Town Planning Committee

- 1) That the Committee approve the designation of the area shown on Plan No. UD/CON/113G as a Conservation Area, subject to formal consultation with the GLC in accordance with Section 277 of the T & C P Act 1971.
- 2) That the officers be authorised to consult local organisations and other bodies concerned and seek their views on the proposed designation.
- 3) That officers be authorised to inform the Department of the Environment of the proposed minor extensions to the outstanding conservation area.

For decision

1. Policy Considerations

The original conservation area was designated under the Civic Amenities Act 1967, in July 1967. It included the main complex of the Palace buildings and its present gardens.

The conservation area was extended in February 1969 to include part of the embankment in front of the palace and again in March 1978 to include Archbishops Park and development associated with it.

In March 1974 the Secretary of State for the Environment designated the conservation area to be of "outstanding" quality under provision of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972.

The criteria for the designation of Conservation areas has changed over recent years and, as set out in the approved 'Strategy for the Designation of New Conservation Areas' (TP 94/79-80), now includes a wider variety of buildings and areas which illustrate the historic evolution of the borough. This area is one of those indicated in the approved strategy (Plan UD/CON/208).

2. Financial Considerations

There are no financial effects resulting from this proposal.

3. Reasons for the Review

The original conservation area focused on the oldest and most important listed building in the area. It was extended as the philosophy of conservation developed, to include areas associated with the palace in historic or townscape terms. The old buildings of St. Thomas's are similarly important but they have not previously been considered for inclusion in the conservation area.

4. The case for St. Thomas's

The origins of St. Thomas's Hospital lie with the foundation of St. Thomas Spital (after the canonization of Thomas a Becket in 1173) within St. Mary Overy Priory, near London Bridge, in the twelfth century.

The hospital was refounded on a site near Borough High Street in the thirteenth century until the development of the Charing Cross Railway in the nineteenth century required the hospital to be moved.

The Metropolitan Board of Works reclaimed the present site of the hospital in conjunction with construction of the Embankment as a major metropolitan improvement.

The foundation stone of a new hospital on its present site was laid by Queen Victoria in 1868 and she opened the hospital in June 1871.

It is believed that Florence Nightingale was consulted on the design of the new hospital. A spine block incorporating various administrative and surgical facilities ran parallel to the river. The ward blocks were at right angles to the spine extending towards the river, each terminating in twin towers with balconies overlooking the river.

A medical school was built at the southern end of the site.

The development was conceived in the "Italianate" style by Henry Currey and constructed in Fareham red bricks with stone dressing.

The hospital was very badly damaged during the Second World War and much of the northern part of the hospital became unusable.

Originally Palace Road ran just to the east of the spine block of the hospital. The need for larger premises caused development to the east of this road; a necessary but inconvenient arrangement.

In 1961 the main site of the hospital was enlarged by the diversion of Lambeth Palace Road. Most of the northern part of the hospital has been completely redeveloped. Although the northern end of the original plan of the old hospital has been demolished the chapel, the southern half of the spine, three of the ward blocks and the medical school, have survived. In addition many of the original sculptures and other sculptural details have been incorporated within the new building. The

appearance of the older buildings is spoilt, and maintenance complicated, by the large number of temporary buildings which clutter the courtyards between the ward blocks and which were built over what was Palace Road.

The hospital authority will be considering action to improve this area following a rehabilitation and improvement study by the consultants, Donald Insall and Partners.

The hospital chapel and the medical school are included in the statutory list of buildings of architectural and historic importance.

5. Conclusion

The older parts of St. Thomas's and the medical school are of high architectural merit. They are part of an internationally important townscape and are significant elements of the nineteenth century development of Lambeth's riverside. The hospital has an important place in medical as well as local history, of which the remaining older parts of the hospital are expressive evidence.