

Review of Conservation Areas & their boundaries Review No. 6 - Proposed Extensions to the Vauxhall Conservation Area (CA No. 32)

(Oval Ward)

Report by the Director of Environmental Services
Consulted Formally: CEO, B.Sol & EDE
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PURPOSE

To designate extensions to the Vauxhall Conservation Area (No.32)

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the Committee approves the extension of the Vauxhall Conservation Area, under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/412.

(2) That the Committee approves the detailed boundary of the area as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/412.

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 in September 1994, and Conservation Area Practise issued by English Heritage in October 1995. 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. Policy CI 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 A strategy for the review of existing conservation areas and their boundaries 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 17 years ago. This report identified three approaches for implementing this review: development pressures, pressure from local residents and a geographical basis starting with conservation areas in the north of the borough. Three conservation areas in the north team have already been reviewed and extended (Lambeth Palace, Kennington and Albert Square) - this is the fourth to be assessed as part of this review.

1.4 Vauxhall Conservation Area was designated in September 1981 when it comprised of Harleyford Road, and most of the westernmost end of Kennington Lane. It was extended in November 1984 to include Bonnington Square and most of Vauxhall Grove.

1.5 A detailed re-assessment of the Vauxhall Conservation Area has now been completed and the purpose of this report is to examine whether the current boundary is adequate when set against the guidance outlined in PPG 15. This guidance is concerned with the quality of existing building within/adjacent to the conservation area, the mix of uses, characteristic materials, vistas along streets and between buildings and the importance of landscaped areas. The proposal to confer Conservation Area status upon Vauxhall Park is contained within the Deposit Lambeth Unitary Development Plan (Proposed Changes report October 1993), this designation would therefore, implement this long-standing UDP proposal.

2. Justification

Following a comprehensive review of the conservation area and its boundaries, an extension to the south of the existing conservation area to include Vauxhall Park, Lawn Lane and St Anne's Church is propose' and a small extension to the north to include Nos. 32 & 34 St Oswald's Place.

2.1 Vauxhall Park & Lawn Lane

Vauxhall Park is a very attractive late Victorian municipal park - it was one of the very first parks to be opened by the London County Council in 1890 two years after its creation. It was part of a large estate surrounding a mansion once owned by Noel de Caron, a Flemish envoy to the Court of Queen Elizabeth I. In the 1880's the estate was bought by John Cobeldick of St.Piran's Stockwell Green who purchased the land for a housing development. This speculative residential development was successfully thwarted by a very early conservation group founded by the campaigner Octavia Hill - the Kyrle Society which was dedicated to secure public open spaces in metropolitan areas. Octavia and her fellow campaigners who included Mark Beaufoy MP for Kennington and proprietor of the nearby Vinegar Distillery, and Millicent Sir Fawcett (wife of the pioneering blind Postmaster-General Henry Fawcett who introduced the Postal order and encouraged the employment of women in the GPO), managed to persuaded Cobeldick to sell his land to the Metropolitan Board of Works and a special Act of Parliament was passed in 1888 to enable the park to be created. A statue to Henry Fawcett by Tinworth, a gift to the Vestry by Sir Henry Doulton, was unveiled by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1893, but this was broken up and removed in 1960 although the bust survives on the top floor of the nearby Henry Fawcett Junior School.

The park was laid out and funded by the Kyrle Society who employed the pioneering female landscape architect Fanny Wilkinson to design its layout. The elegant gate piers which still survive were designed by the eminent Victorian architect who was responsible for the Homiman Museum - C. Harrison Townsend. The Beaufoy family guaranteed to pay for the maintenance of the park for the first three years and the park was opened by the Prince of Wales in July 1890. The park contains tennis courts, a bowling green and a children's playground (first provided in 1894) along with grassed areas shaded by mature plane trees, a fountain, seating areas, flower beds and pergolas. Numerous other features have disappeared from the park over the years including a Doulton Fountain, a bandstand and a children's lavatory block in the Festival of Britain style complete with a mosaic mural decoration. It is obvious that significant additional investment in the park is needed - particularly the restoration of the original gate piers at the north western corner and the re-in statement of the railings which were probably removed during World War II and replaced by unsightly steel mesh fencing,

The four buildings of historic interest which overlook Vauxhall Park are also proposed for inclusion within the Conservation Area by virtue of their architectural interest and their contribution to the setting of the park. The first three are located on the northside of Lawn Lane. The most imposing is the fine late Victorian Park Mansions. It is a five storey block of 50 flats built in the 1890's on a monumental scale and enclosed by original iron railings. It has well detailed red brick elevations incorporating elegant gables, bay windows, slated mansard roofs and tall chimneys. The second group is a good example of more recent commercial architecture. Park Place consists of three blocks of offices with stock brick elevations on a rendered ground floor plinth, dominated by giant pedimented gables above the

warehouse style window pattern. The link blocks between are also well designed - one having an interesting curving glazed stair tower which takes full advantage of the attractive views across Vauxhall Park.

The third building is the former Lawn Lane Schools building (now the Lawn Lane Centre for community education) erected by the London County Council in 1908. It is a tall four storey building with plain elevations of red and stock brick enlivened by decorative stone surrounds to some of the windows and a stone tablet proclaiming its name and date of erection. A much lower three storey wing dating from the 1960's is attached at the northern end but this is of no architectural interest. Finally at the south western corner of the park on South Lambeth Road there is a small group of Nineteenth Century properties. St. Anne's Church is a fine historic building which dates back to its foundation as the private South Lambeth Chapel in 1793. The chapel was consecrated as St Anne's Parish Church in 1869 and remodelled in 1874 by R. Parkinson who added a chancel, vestry and tower in a Romanesque style. It is of stock brick diapered with red brick and embellished with stone dressings. Opposite St Anne's stands the mid-Victorian Barren's Comer (1884) - a terrace of 3 storey shops and flats with attractive decorative brickwork detailing.

2.2 Nos. 32 & 34 St Oswald's Place

The inclusion of these two properties seeks to remedy an anomaly of the original designation boundary which for some inexplicable reason included parts of St. Peter's School but excluded the northern sections of this Grade II* Listed group of buildings designed by the leading mid Victorian architect JL Pearson and built in 1861. No.34 is a simple two storey brick building which was built as a school of art between 1857 and 1861 with a c1930's second storey added later. No.32 is an attractive four storey warehouse style building with a stone parapet supported on paired corbels above the first floor and a gable set back from the front elevation.

The inclusion of Nos. 24-30 which are two storey mid Victorian terraced properties with roofs concealed behind a decorated parapet, was initially considered. However following representations from both the prospective purchaser of Nos. 26-30 and the Vauxhall City Farm (occupiers of No-24) who argued that the buildings were in such an extreme state of dilapidation that their redevelopment was the only viable option, it was decided not to include them within the proposed conservation area extension,

Summary

The above proposed modifications have all been carefully assessed in accordance with the criteria recommended by English Heritage and all three extensions are considered worthy of being included within the Conservation Area. The incorporation of Vauxhall Park is an important recognition of its qualities as a good example of a carefully planned Victorian municipal park created by philanthropic campaigners who successfully thwarted its redevelopment for housing. St Anne's Church and the buildings lining the northern edge of the park contribute significantly to the character of Vauxhall and reflect the changing architectural styles of the last 100 years. The small extension in St. Oswald's Place also include the buildings of historic and architectural interest which contribute to the streetscape and character of the neighbourhood.

3. Public Consultation

Letters of consultation asking for the views of owners/occupiers of the properties within the proposed extensions to the Vauxhall Conservation Area were delivered on April 21st 1998. These letters also outlined the type of controls that would apply within a conservation area.

Two residents of Park Mansions have written to support the proposed extension, one stating that he is 'fully in agreement with the proposals and wishes to lend his support to the objective', the second resident comments that they are 'delighted to give the proposed designation their total support'.

The Education Directorate have written to advise that the Council has agreed to relocate its Education Services to International House, including the Professional Development Centre currently based at the Lawn Lane Centre which would be declared surplus to requirements and therefore sold. They do raise concerns that if the Lawn Lane Centre is included in the conservation area, capital receipts arising from its disposal will not be maximised, affecting the council's capital budget strategy.

Response - the implications of the inclusion of the former Lawn Lane Schools building into the conservation area are acknowledged, however it is considered that the most likely future redevelopment of the site would be conversion of the fine Edwardian building into loft style apartments (as has occurred recently in numerous cases in Lambeth e.g. former school/college buildings at Kennington Road, Ashby Mills, Santley Street, Priory Grove and Femdale Road) and the demolition of post-war structures and their sympathetic redevelopment. The Conservation Area status would not impede this now well established form of redevelopment of former Lambeth educational buildings - it would ensure that a high quality scheme was achieved which enhanced this attractive and historic part of the borough. Furthermore it would be quite impossible to exclude the Lawn Lane Centre from the extension as it would be an island site marooned on all four sides in the heart of the conservation area, which would be an unacceptable situation. It should be noted that the inclusion of the Femdale Centre into the Ferndale Road Conservation Area in July 1997 just before its disposal did not hinder a comprehensive scheme for its part demolition - part retention and conversion being approved by the planning authority a few months later.

Design & Technical Services (Landscape Architects) state that they support the extension of the Conservation Area, particularly the inclusion of Vauxhall Park which would justify and assist with improvements to its fabric in the future.

English Heritage were given a guided tour of the area proposed for designation on April 27th 1998 - they have written to say that the draft designation report 'provides an excellent appraisal of the significance and character of the area, reflecting the advice set out in our guidance. I believe the area has a compelling case for conservation area designation'. They go on to say that "Vauxhall Park represents an important example of late 19th Century philanthropic open space provision relating to the improvements of Octavia Hill. Though much of the original park furniture has been lost and there are some modern additions, the original structure of paths and activity areas remains. Much of the planting is likely to also be original, as are the gate piers designed by Harrison Townsend. Given the park's proximity to the existing Vauxhall Conservation Area, and its historical relationship with the adjoining residential streets, it is logical to include the park in this area although it requires also the inclusion of modern properties fronting Lawn Lane". They also support the inclusion of the properties on St. Oswald's Place which they note would be 'a logical extension of the existing conservation area which may have been an oversight of the original designation'

EH also supports conservation area status for the 'rather isolated St. Anne's Church' although they do suggest it may warrant inclusion within either the St Marks or South Lambeth Road conservation areas which could also take in 'the interesting terrace of Barrett's Comer (1884)', the Victorian Public House, Wyvil Primary School, the former Wheatsheaf Mission Hall and terraces further south on South Lambeth Road.

Response- Barren's Comer and the adjoining Grade II Listed Nos. 57-59 South Lambeth Road have now been included within the proposed extension of the conservation area. The qualities of the other buildings are recognised and their inclusion within a possible extension of the South Lambeth Road Conservation Area will be considered as part of the on-going review of Conservation areas in Lambeth. The Vauxhall Society wrote to say they 'welcome the Council's proposal which is in accordance with the proposal contained within the UDP'. They go on to say that 'recognition of the historical importance of the Park is long over-due and that it has suffered considerably from vandalism and inappropriate alterations by previous Lambeth administrations'. They also include some valuable historical information about the park and its founders which have been incorporated into this report.

Under the Town and Country General Development Order 1995 (the GDO) 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.

6. Procedure After Designation

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

- (i) All owners of properties within the area designated as a 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.

7. Legal Powers and Advice

7.1 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".

7.2 Section 69 (4) states that:

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

7.3 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.

7.4 Section 7i(l-3) of the Act identify future duties 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

are? to which they relate.

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

8. Environmental Implications

The designation of this extension to the Vauxhall 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.

9. Financial Implications

Approval of the recommendations will result in the expenditure of £150 for advertising the designation in the South London Press and the London Gazette - the requisite budget is held by the Planning Division Business Unit.

10. Staffing & Accommodation Implications

There are no staffing implications as a direct result of this report. The extension of conservation areas can generate some additional workload for Development Control and Conservation officers, however in this case so few properties are involved that it is anticipated that this should be negligible. The duty to prepare public design guidance and enhancement schemes is already a part of the conservation team's future work programme.

11. 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).

12. 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. XXVI Parish of St. Mary Lambeth Part II: Southern Area L.C.C. 1956

The Buildings of England - London 2: South - Bridget Cherry & Sir Nikolaus Pevsner 1983

Lambeth's Open Spaces - An historical account Marie P.O. Draper (London Borough of Lambeth 1979)

Additional information kindly supplied by Jim Nicholson (Secretary of the Vauxhall Society)

12. Audit Trail

Committee deadline: 22/06/98

Author: Edmund Bird - Conservation Officer

Date drafted: 2nd April 1997

Consultation with other Officers/Directorates

Date	Name	Directorate	Date Received	Date Cleared	Date Returned
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