

**Review of Existing Conservation Areas and their boundaries and the designation of new and extended Conservation Areas****Proposed Extensions to Brixton Conservation Area (CA No. 26)**

(Town Hall, Ferndale and Tulse Hill Wards)

Report by the Director of Environmental Services

Consulted Formally: CEO, EDHS & Bor Sol.

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**PURPOSE**

To designate extensions to the Brixton Conservation Area (CA No. 26)

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

(1) That the Committee approves the designation of the extensions to the Brixton Conservation Area (CA26), under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/427

(2) That the Committee approves the detailed boundary of the extended area as shown on Plan No. DES/PP/427

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 Practice 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 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** A strategy for the review of existing conservation areas and the designation of new conservation areas 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 that included the inclusion of buildings of historic interest which were not recognised at the time of the original designation. 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. This proposal is the ninth existing conservation area to be assessed as part of this review which, following the completion of the review of the Conservation Areas in the northern half of the borough and Clapham, is now focusing on Brixton, Herne Hill and Streatham.

**1.4** Brixton Conservation Area was designated in 1980 and has had two minor extensions since then - first in 1982 when a terrace of seven properties on Coldharbour Lane were included (following

the abandonment of a road widening scheme) and the second in 1995 which incorporated 3 houses on Wiltshire Road and a number of Victorian mansion blocks and other terraces on Rushcroft Road, Coldharbour Lane and Atlantic Road (again following the abandonment of redevelopment proposals of the 1970's).

**1.5** A re-assessment of the Brixton 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 buildings within/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**

**2.1** Following a comprehensive review of the conservation area and its boundaries, three small additional areas adjoining the existing Brixton Conservation Area are proposed. The first comprises of just one building - Brighton House (No. 9 Brighton Terrace) which is a fine Edwardian building (c1912) and was once a furniture depository for the former Bon Marché Department Store. It is of a monumental scale with elevations of stock brick with red pilasters dividing up the six bays of paired windows. It has a terracotta glazed brick plinth and a copper roof surmounted by art nouveau style ironwork with decorative flower heads. A glazed carriage entrance on the eastern elevation allows covered deliveries. It forms an integral part of the adjoining commercial town centre district of Brixton and following its closure as a depository in 1964, has accommodated a diverse range of occupiers which currently include solicitors, a medical centre, college, media consultants, and a gay night-club in the basement.

**2.2** The second block to be included lies immediately to the west and south of the Town Hall. Nos. 1-5 Acre Lane is an imposing four storey beaux arts style building designed by F. Bethell in 1928 and erected in 1930 for the South Suburban Co-operative Society, originally comprising of a series of separate stores including grocery and provisions, hosiery, drapery and outfitters. It is similar in style to the elegant former Quin & Axten Department Store completed a few years earlier in 1927 between Ferndale Road and Stockwell Road. It is a grand structure comprising of a central bay over the recessed entrance with a third floor round-headed window, concave corner elevation facing the Town Hall above a first floor balcony with stone balustrade, and a prominent mansard roof topped by a decorative ridge feature of a bundle of rods in the Ionic style – a popular classical reference of the inter-war years. The store closed in 1968 and, following a brief occupation by a Savemore Discount store, was bought by Lambeth in 1971. It is now occupied by the Directions careers service, the Director of Environmental Services, and the Youth Justice service. In 1993 the exterior of the building was restored with City Challenge funding when the original colour scheme and ornamental shopfront details were reinstated. This building is an integral part of the civic quarter of Brixton and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of this largely Victorian and inter-war town centre.

**2.3** To the south of the Town Hall lie a group of Edwardian properties which all date from 1913. The Fridge nightclub was originally the Palladium Cinema which was designed by Gilbert Booth and opened on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 1913. It survived as a cinema for nearly 70 years before its closure in March 1981, being renamed on several occasions - the Palladium 1913-1956, the Regal 1956-1963, the ABC 1963-1977 and the ACE 1977-1981. Although the auditorium to the rear survives (including some of its splendid interior decorative plasterwork) the magnificent classical frontage block of rusticated stone surmounted by a domed tower was destroyed when the cinema was remodelled in 1955. The 1950's façade is a rather bland design of exposed aggregate and concrete fins with a typical post-war internally illuminated display canopy above a grey mosaic tiled ground floor elevation.

**2.4** The adjoining Nos. 1-5 Town Hall Parade continues the established architectural theme of many of the late Victorian and Edwardian terraces in the town centre – four stories with redbrick elevations enlivened by decorative stonework or rendered panels, however their ground floor frontages have been altered in recent years and could be improved so as to be more in keeping with their original character. No.7 Town Hall Parade is an unassuming redbrick building which is consistent with the

general scale and massing of its Edwardian neighbours. It was designed in 1957 by Brandon-Jones, Ashton & Broadbent (architects to Morley College at this time) as purpose-built municipal offices for the housing department and has a neat splayed corner to the junction with Porden Road which incorporates a first floor balcony displaying the Council's crest.

**2.5** The last building on this frontage is Hambrook House which is a representative example of 1950's commercial architecture. It was designed and approved in 1959 for the ACE Machinery Company and is a substantial six storey structure of Ibstock facing brick with a portland stone panel on the Porden Road elevation incorporating the ACE stone lettering and a popular architectural device for office buildings at this time – the porthole window. It was acquired by Lambeth in 1982 and accommodates Housing Services.

**2.6** The inclusion of these properties on Brixton Hill remedies a long-standing anomaly in that the important setting of the Grade II\* St Matthews church currently lies outside the conservation area and that this group of buildings forms the principal gateway into Brixton Town centre from the south and comprises of buildings which are of the same civic or commercial use and character as those within the existing conservation area.

**2.7** The proposal to incorporate the final group of buildings (Nos. 70-86 Atlantic Road) within the conservation area is based on the same logic. This façade of this late Victorian terrace has recently been renovated with part-funding from Brixton City Challenge by the South London Housing Association who have brought back into full use the upper floors for residential accommodation. The attractive yellow stock brick façade now incorporates new traditional style shopfronts. This terrace is the last commercial/retail block on Atlantic Road before the residential neighbourhood to the south begins, and it continues the established pattern along Atlantic Road of three and four storey late nineteenth Century terraces of shops on the ground floor with residential accommodation above. It is therefore an integral part of Brixton Town Centre and forms part of its generally Victorian and earlier Twentieth Century character.

### **3. Public Consultation**

Letters of consultation were sent on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1998 to the Brixton Society, Victorian society and owners/occupiers of properties within the proposed areas of designation asking for any views within a 3 0week period. No representations have been received to date.

English Heritage have written to support the proposal, commenting that “the proposed extensions to the Brixton Conservation Area appear eminently logical given the function, architectural style and periods of development of the groups of buildings in relation to the existing area. The inclusion of these properties will...re-inforce the prevailing character and appearance of the conservation area by encompassing those associated buildings and groups on its fringe”.

Strategy and Regeneration have responded with the comment that the proposed extensions will enable owners within the areas concerned to apply for up to 80% of the cost of eligible works to secure the fabric of the buildings under the 1998-2001 Brixton Conservation Area Partnership Scheme which is partly funded by the heritage Lottery Fund and Lambeth Council, against a pre-arranged financial Delivery Plan and an Action Plan.

The Brixton Society, in their most recent newsletter, have welcomed the proposed extensions, noting that one of the proposals was actually suggested buy the Society to Lambeth some 20 years ago.

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

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 buildings within a conservation area (section 74 of the Act).
- iii) Consent for all advertisement hoardings, temporary or permanent, is required.
- iv) 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.
- v) The design quality of all new development in a conservation area is important. Planning Policy Guidance: Planning & the Historic Environment (PPG 15) and Section 72 of the Act state that all development is required to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. PPG 15 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.

## **5. 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.

## **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 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 part of their area which are conservation areas.

(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 designation of these extensions to the Brixton 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**

Approval of the recommendations will result in the expenditure of about £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. The inclusion of the properties specified in this report within the Brixton Conservation Area could mean that Conservation Area Partnership Scheme funding for certain external works to the buildings concerned is made available.

**9. Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

There are no staffing implications as a direct result of this report, and given the commercial/civic nature of all of the buildings concerned it is unlikely that the additional powers associated with the extension of the conservation area will generate any additional workload for Development Control. 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 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
- DoE & DNH (now DCMS)- PPG 15: Planning & the Historic Environment (September 1994)
- English Heritage: Conservation Area Practice (October 1995)
- A History of Brixton, Alan Piper - The Brixton Society 1996
- Thirties Society Notes for a Streatham & Brixton Hill walk compiled by Nicholas Long (1989)
- Minet Library, London Borough of Lambeth Archive Department.
- Cinemas in Britain – 100 years of Cinema Architecture – Richard Gray (1996)
- John Cresswell – notes of cinemas in Lambeth (1997)

**12. Audit Trail**

<b>Committee deadline:</b>					
<b>Author: Edmund Bird - Conservation Officer</b>					
<b>Date drafted: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1998</b>					
<b>Consultation with other Officers/Directorates</b>					
Date	Name	Directorate	Date Received	Date Cleared	Date Returned
	M.Dickens	B SOL	20/1/99	21/1/99	21/1/99
	S.Whitaker	CEO (S&Regn)	10/12/99	23/12/98	23/12/98
	A. Eager	DHS: Hsg Dev	No response	received	
<b>Date sent to Committee Secretariat:</b>					
<b>Date received by Committee Secretariat:</b>					
<b>Date sent to Councillors:</b>					