

**DRAFT
FISH ISLAND
AREA ACTION PLAN**

HERITAGE ADVICE

**FOR
LONDON THAMES GATEWAY
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

June, 2011

AD/PD8329

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report regarding the consultation draft of the Fish Island Area Action Plan (hereafter referred to as the AAP) has been prepared by Montagu Evans LLP for the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC). It follows on from an instruction dated 20th June, 2011 from the LTGDC to undertake the work.
- 1.2 It provides planning advice on the heritage aspects of the AAP which aims to guide the regeneration and future development of Fish Island, a mainly industrial area south of Hackney Wick station, east of the A12 road and west of the River Lea. The draft AAP was issued for public consultation by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets between 9th May and 15th July, 2011. (See Figure 1 – Aerial view of Fish Island)

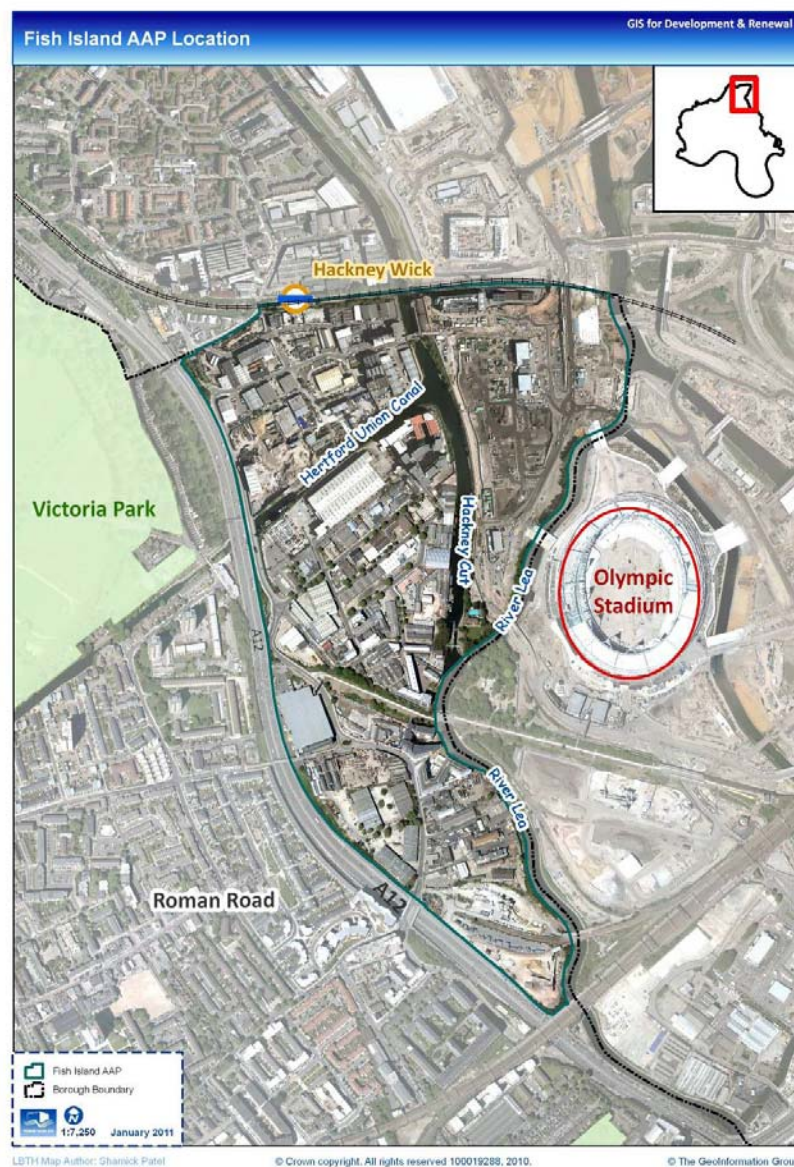


Figure 1 – Aerial view of Fish Island

- 1.3 The AAP aims to strike a balance between regeneration and conservation that will deliver at least 2000 new homes alongside 175,000 sq.m. of floorspace for business and innovation creating 3,500 new jobs, with new schools, open space and health facilities. The strategic spatial vision for these proposals was contained in the Borough Council's Core Strategy which was adopted in September, 2010.
- 1.4 It seeks to provide clear objectives, policies and guidance to help landowners, developers and the community to work with the Borough Council to deliver this vision for the area over the next 15 years.
- 1.5 The LTGDC is one of the public sector organisations that are working with the Borough Council to coordinate regeneration and investment in the area.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

- 2.1 Fish Island is located in the north-east part of the Borough of Tower Hamlets, on the boundary with the adjoining boroughs of Hackney and Newham. The area covered by the AAP is bordered by the River Lea on the east, the Richmond to Stratford Overground Railway on the north, and the A12 Blackwall Tunnel approach road on the west.
- 2.2 The area has a well-established industrial history dating from 1876 when the Gas Light and Coke Company laid out 30 acres of land in the middle section of the “island” for small terraced houses and multi-storey factories and warehouses in streets whose piscatorial names – bream, dace and roach – have given the district its name of Fish Island.
- 2.3 While the nature of the industry has changed from that of noxious chemical process works, such as crude oil and tar distilleries, and from works using their products, such as printing ink, rubber processing and dry cleaning, the industrial activity has defined the character of the area despite the serious affect of bomb damage to the area in the Second World War.
- 2.4 As a result of the serious damage to the area during the War which transformed it from a factory town that included residential streets, schools and other social amenities to an industrial area almost completely devoid of other uses so that just 600 people now live on the “island”. Therefore today its character is mainly industrial, being based on food processing, waste management, printing, motor trades and the construction industry, in a mixture of multi-storey warehouses dating from the mid to late 19th century, and in more recent post-war single-storey factories, storage and distribution units. However, a growing number of creative and cultural industries are based in the area, mainly in the converted older buildings.
- 2.5 Five of the late 19th and early 20th century industrial buildings located along Dace Road, Smeed Road and Bream Road in Fish Island Mid, have been included within the Fish Island Conservation Area, designated in October, 2010.
- 2.6 The area’s strong local character and sense of place based on its industrial heritage, is seen as a significant regeneration opportunity to be used to influence future development proposals for the area. Differences between the various parts of the area have led to its division into four distinct character areas as follows:
- **Fish Island North** (“the Hub”) – bordered by the overground railway at Hackney Wick in the north, the Hertford Union Canal in the south, the A12 in the west and the Hackney Cut in the east;
 - **Mid Fish Island** – bordered by the Hertford Union Canal on the north, the A12 on the west, the Hackney Cut on the east and the Greenway on the south;

- **Fish Island South** – bordered by the Greenway on the north, the A12 on the west, the River Lea on the east and the main railway line on the south;
- **Fish island East** - bordered by the overground railway on the north, the Hackney Cut on the west, the River lea on the east and by the Olympic Park on the south. (See Figure 2 – Fish Island character areas.)

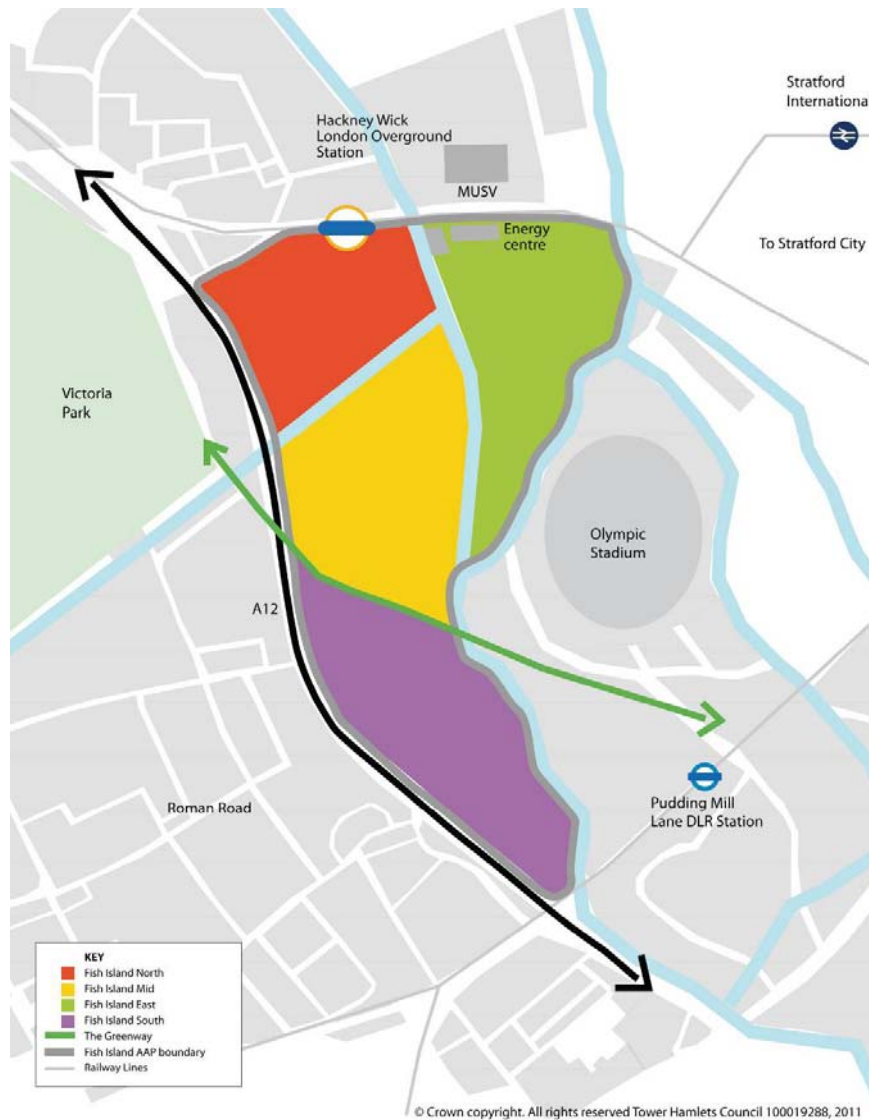


Figure 2 – Fish Island character areas

3.0 THE AREA ACTION PLAN VISION FOR EACH OF THE 4 CHARACTER AREAS

3.1 A different response to the future development of each of the four character areas the form Fish Island is identified in Figure 3, can be summarised as follows:

Fish Island North

3.2 This section of Fish island has been identified as a new neighbourhood centre or 'Hub' for the wider area with at its heart an improved Hackney Wick Station linked to new public squares on either side of the railway. This improved transport interchange would become a gateway to the wider Fish Island area and support new residential and working communities together with a mix of local shops, cafes, bars and restaurants.

3.3 Because of the improved transport links 'The Hub' would be the focus of intensive forms of development designed to complement the existing heritage buildings which define the local character. The heritage buildings would be refurbished and along with new development, they would provide opportunities for the growth of the existing creative industries and for new small businesses to start up in the area.

3.4 New development would be designed so as to provide activity and open up access to the historic Hertford Union Canal and to the Hackney Cut, while the redevelopment of the existing large industrial sites would provide opportunities for the establishment of new routes through Fish Island North.

3.5 A key feature of the plans for this section of Fish Island is that its regeneration should be heritage-led with the potential designation of a new conservation area based on White Post Lane. This matter will be discussed in Section 4.

Mid Fish Island

3.6 The regeneration of this area of Fish Island would be heritage led with new development complementing existing buildings and activities so as to enable workshops, studios, offices and light industry to develop next to residential areas.

3.7 The existing cluster of creative industries and small businesses along Bream, Dace and Smeed Roads within the Fish Island Conservation Area, would complement the main centre of activity at 'the Hub'.

3.8 The conversion of the older industrial buildings in this area would provide a place for innovation and start-up businesses to grow, the sites fronting onto the Hackney Cut would be devoted to residential led development to activate the waterfront.

3.9 This area would become a destination for visitors attracted by the combination of industrial heritage, waterside setting, galleries and shops, linked to the creative industries.

Fish Island South

- 3.10 This section of Fish Island would remain an industrial area with opportunities to intensify and redevelop existing sites for modern industries such as food processing and manufacturing and waste management.
- 3.11 The older industrial sites would be developed with modern sustainable buildings designed to improve access to the River Lea with landscaped areas adjacent to the improved riverside walkways.

Fish Island East

- 3.12 This section of Fish Island would become an established residential area with up to 900 new homes, its character being defined by lower density housing for families, supported by a new primary school, playing fields, community facilities and a local park.

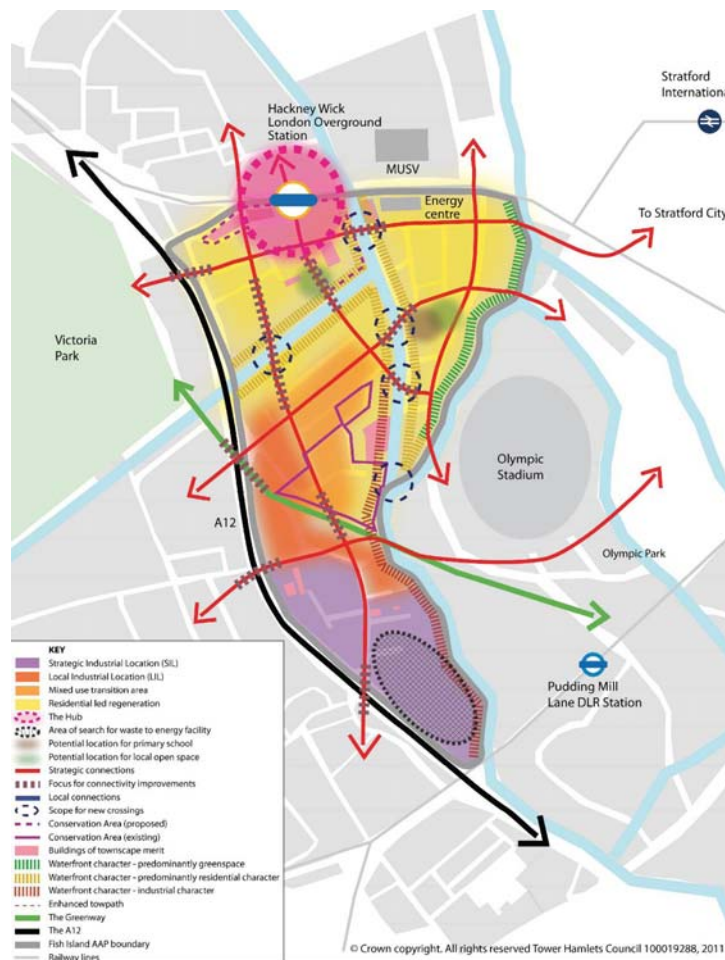


Figure 3 – Development proposals for Fish Island

4.0 THE PROPOSED WHITE POST LANE CONSERVATION AREA

- 4.1 On page 52 (paragraph 5.19) of the consultation draft of the Fish Island Area Action Plan the first mention is made of a new conservation area in Fish Island North, based on White Post Lane. This idea is in support of the adoption of a heritage-led approach to the regeneration of the area whereby buildings of 'local importance' would be retained and the character of the area would be preserved and enhanced.
- 4.2 These buildings of local interest or townscape merit in Fish Island North are identified as being clustered along White Post Lane and the option of designating a new conservation area to preserve them, is mooted on page 56 (paragraph 6.7). The group value of these buildings which are said to define the area's industrial heritage would be recognised by their inclusion in a new conservation area.
- 4.3 An indicative boundary to this conservation area is shown at Figure 4 and depending on the feedback to that proposal in the consultation draft of the AAP, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets will consider how to take that matter forward with more focused consultation as advised by the Government.

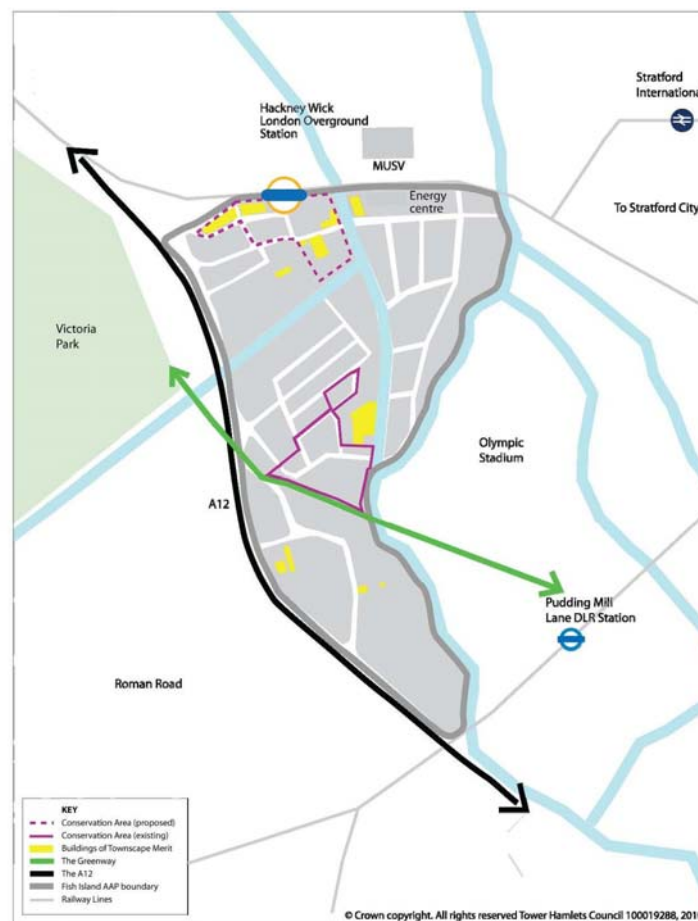


Figure 4 – The proposed White Post Lane Conservation Area

- 4.4 The local planning authority has identified the designation of a conservation area based on the surviving historic buildings on White Post Lane as the means of protecting them. This may be on the basis that none of these buildings of '*local importance*' meets the criteria for listing, that is, for their inclusion on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.
- 4.5 As an alternative to the listing procedures which focus on the protection of individual buildings, conservation area designation is the main instrument available for the protection of areas. This power derives from Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 which imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas any '*areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'.
- 4.6 It is clearly the quality and interest of areas rather than that of individual buildings which should be the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. It is therefore important that conservation areas are seen to justify their status and that the concept is not devalued by the designation of areas lacking any '*special interest*'.
- 4.7 Additionally, the more clearly the special interest that justifies designation is defined, the sounder will be the basis for planning policies and development control decisions, with an authority's justification for designation being a factor that the Secretary of State takes into account when considering appeals against refusals of conservation area consent and appeals against the refusal of planning permission.
- 4.8 While there is no statutory requirement to consult prior to designation the Government considers it to be highly desirable that there should be consultation with the landowners, residents, tenants and other local interests for the greater the support for designation the more likely it will be that policies for the area would be implemented voluntarily. This is the approach that the London Borough of Tower Hamlets is proposing to adopt towards the proposal.

5.0 COMMENT ON THE MERITS OF THE PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

- 5.1 Within the boundary of the proposed White Post Lane Conservation Area identified in the consultation draft Fish Island Area Action Plan, only the derelict former '*The Lord Napier Public House*' at No. 25 White Post Lane and the two derelict houses attached to the north of that building on the Hepscott Road frontage, date from before 1900. These buildings date from 1865 and are very utilitarian in character with minimal external decoration apart from a plaster pilastered doorcase to the former public house and plaster corbelled cornice to the houses. Apart from their relatively early date of construction, these buildings are of little architectural merit. (See Figure 5 – The former '*The Lord Napier Public House*' and attached houses on Hepscott Road).



Figure 5 – The former '*The Lord Napier Public House*' and attached houses on Hepscott Road - circa. 1865

- 5.2 Therefore, all of the other buildings within the proposed conservation area date from the 20th century with just three having been constructed before the First World War – namely, No. 92 White Post Lane built in 1904 (the former Achille Serre Limited dyeing and dry cleaning works), 'Everett House' at No. 43 White Post Lane built in 1911 (the former offices of Achille Serre Limited) and No. 9 Queen's Yard off the north side of White Post Lane built in 1913 (the former chocolate factory of Clarke, Nickolls and Coombs Limited). (See Figure 6 – No. 92 White Post Lane, Figure 7 – No. 43 White Post Lane, and Figure 8 – No. 9 Queen's Yard)



Figure 6 – No. 92 White Post Lane – circa 1904



Figure 7 – No. 43 White Post Lane – circa 1911



Figure 8 – No. 9 Queen's Yard – circa. 1913

- 5.3 While the two early 20th century factory buildings at No. 92 White Post Lane and No. 9 Queen's Yard do not meet the rigorous standards for listing industrial buildings of this period, they are impressive examples of their type and certainly merit preservation.
- 5.4 Associated with this pair of industrial buildings which occupy sites on the opposite sides of the eastern end of White Post Lane, is the wrought iron plate girder bridge over the Hackney Cut. Constructed in 1904, this structure is of architectural and historic interest and forms a group of structures meriting preservation along with the adjacent industrial buildings. (See Figure 9 – Road bridge over the Hackney Cut) However, its future may be prejudiced by a proposal for improving the vehicular access over the Hackney Cut from Fish Island North to Fish Island East.



Figure 9 – Road bridge over the Hackney Cut – circa 1904

5.5 The remainder of the buildings within the proposed conservation area which date from the second half of the 20th century, are of little architectural merit, being mainly “tin sheds” whether they are warehouses, industrial units or works. These include the 11 units that form the Hamlet Industrial Centre at No. 96 White Post Lane (built in the late 1970s/early 1980s) on the site of the early 20th century Lea Works of Carless, Capel and Leonard’s distillery of which only lower parts of the outer walls survive along the Hackney Cut and Hertford Union Canal. (See Figure 10 – The Hamlet Industrial Centre at No. 96 White Post Lane, and Figure 11 – Former early 20th century distillery wall to the Hackney Cut)



Figure 10 – The Hamlet Industrial Centre, No. 96 White Post Lane



Figure 11 – Former early 20th century distillery wall to the Hackney Cut

- 5.6 On the opposite side of White Post Lane is Queen's Yard, developed in the late 1960s on the site of the Clarnico Works, which consist of a range of large sheds that back onto the Richmond to Stratford overground railway, and a group of works and warehouses that front onto the White Post Lane. These latter buildings which also date from the late 1960s are of little architectural merit. (See Figure 12 – No. 8 Queen's Yard, and Figure 13 – No. 2 Queen's Yard)



Figure 12 – No. 8 Queen's Yard



Figure 13 – No. 2 Queen's Yard

- 5.7 Other buildings within the proposed conservation area comprise a derelict 1953 warehouse at No. 67 Rothbury Road/No. 80 White Post Lane and an adjoining works at Nos. 66-78 White Post Lane which was built in the early 1980s. Once again neither of these buildings are of historic or architectural interest. (See Figure 14 – No. 67 Rothbury Road/No. 80 White Post Lane, and Figure 15 – Nos. 66-78 White Post Lane.)



Figure 14 – No. 67 Rothbury Road/No.80 White Post Lane – circa 1953



Figure 15 – Nos. 66-78 White Post Lane

- 5.8 The remaining buildings within the proposed conservation area include a pair of early 1960 works beside *The Lord Napier* at Nos. 27 & 29 White Post Lane which are again of little architectural or historic interest. (See Figure 16 – Nos. 27 & 29 White Post Lane). Apart from the buildings mentioned above, there is a cluster of four single-storey temporary structures sited along Rothbury Road and Hepscoth Road dating from the early 1990s, that are occupied by the The Griddlers café (at No. 69 Rothbury Road), the two office sheds in the adjoining car breakers yards on Rothbury Road and the shed to the stone mason yard on Hepscoth Road. These possess no special interest.



Figure 16 – Nos. 27 & 29 White Post Lane



Figure 17 – Boundary wall on Wallis Road

- 5.9 Within the suggested boundary of the conservation area there are three large cleared sites which in their current state detract from the character and appearance of the area. The main one occupying the site of Nos. 31-41 White Post Lane has been identified in the consultation draft Fish Island Area Action Plan for the creation of a public square at Hackney Wick Station. The other at No. 90 White Post Lane is the site of *The Lea Tavern*, and the last is the entire block bordered by Wallis Road, White Post Lane and Hepscoot Road. This latter site is surrounded by tall stock brick walls dating from 1891, these structures being the remains of buildings and boundary walls to the former Carless, Capel and Leonard's Hope Chemical Works which closed in 1969. (See Figure 17 – Boundary wall on Wallis Road) The walls at the western end of the site that are the remnants of former buildings are in a precarious structural condition and they are unattractive.
- 5.10 In summary, the quality and interest of the area identified as a possible conservation area based on White Post Lane is limited with just two of the buildings, those at No. 9 Queen's Yard (built in 1913) and its companion opposite at No. 92 White Post Lane (built in 1904 and extended in 1923 at the rear), along with the road bridge over the Hackney Cut (erected in 1904), possess special interest in terms of their architectural and townscape quality and historic value.
- 5.11 Whether such a small cluster of significant historic structures would justify designation as a conservation area is questionable but it may be a viable proposition should sections of the two adjoining canals be included, for example the section of the Hackney Cut south from the overground railway bridge across the Cut to its junction with the Hertford Union Canal, and the eastern end of the latter Canal.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The London Borough of Tower Hamlets is currently consulting on the draft Fish Island Area Action Plan, with consultation due to be completed by 15th July, 2011.
- 6.2 The London Thames Gateway Development Corporation as the local planning authority for the area and as a major landowner, will be responding to the consultation.
- 6.3 The Corporation's response to the draft Plan is due to be considered by the Corporation's Planning Committee on 14th July, 2011.
- 6.4 The advice provided in this report is solely in relation to the heritage proposals contained in the draft Plan.
- 6.5 The industrial heritage of the area is recognised as one of its major assets to be used positively in the regeneration of the area with many of the historic factories and warehouses having been converted to smaller units that are used by the creative industries.
- 6.6 The draft Plan identifies that in Mid Fish Island where there is concentration of the area's industrial heritage, that regeneration should be heritage led. Whilst none of these buildings are of listable quality, they have been identified as being of '*local importance*' which is clearly the case.
- 6.7 The concentration of these locally important buildings on Bream, Dace and Smeed Roads led to the designation of the Fish Island Conservation Area in October 2008, in view of the special interest of that part of the Area Action Plan.
- 6.8 Outside of the Conservation Area, the approach proposed to the treatment of the built heritage of Fish Island is to stress the importance of retaining other buildings of local importance in order to give the area a sense of place and to recognise the important role that these heritage assets can play in the regeneration of the area.
- 6.9 With a further cluster of historic buildings identified just south of Hackney Wick Station, along White Post Lane, the Plan contains a proposal that a new conservation area should be designated along White Post Lane, between the Hackney Cut and Hepscott Road.
- 6.10 Whilst it has to be acknowledged that there is a small group of three high quality heritage structures at the eastern end of the proposed conservation area, namely, the two factories at No. 92 White Post Lane (built in 1904) and at No. 9 Queen's Yard (built in 1913) along with the road bridge over the Hackney Cut (erected in 1904) the remainder of the area with its expanses of cleared sites and modern buildings of little architectural quality, can not be said to possess '*special interest*', the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

- 6.11 This small group of heritage structures would not justify designation as a conservation area but should they be linked to the adjacent sections of the two historic canals to the east and south, that is, the Hackney Cut of 1769 and the Hertford Union Canal of 1830, then there would be a sufficient area of quality and interest.
- 6.12 To designate an area based on that shown in Figure 6.1 on page 58 of the draft Fish Island Area Action Plan, where so much of the area lacks '*special interest*' would devalue the concept.