

# 420-440 Romford Road

Conservation Area

## Character Appraisal and Management Proposals



Approved by Cabinet 14th December 2006

London Borough of Newham

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Romford Road Conservation Area was designated on the 15th November, 1993 by the London Borough of Newham. In July 1998 the houses in the area were brought under the control of a comprehensive Article 4(2) direction. Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in “Guidance on conservation area appraisals” (August 2005) and “Guidance on the management of conservation areas” (August 2005). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within “Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment” (PPG15).

This document seeks to:

- *Define the special interest of the conservation area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (in the form of the “Appraisal”)*
- *Provide guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement (in the form of a “Management Plan”)*

This document therefore provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Romford Road Conservation Area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider adopted development plan policy framework produced by the London Borough of Newham. These documents include:

- i) The Adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan. Adopted 2001. All policies are potentially of relevance but specifically Chapter 3 – Environmental Policy, Conservation of the Built Environment – policies EQ29-43 inclusive;
- ii) The London Borough of Newham Local Development Scheme. Published in July 2005, following submission to the Secretary of State in March 2005. The LDS confirms that the Adopted UDP will be saved in its entirety until September 2007. After this date particular policies or proposals may be saved. The LDS sets out the Local Development Documents which the Council intends to produce;





iii) The draft Romford Road Conservation Area: Conservation Planning Design Guide (1998). Provides general design guidance regarding alterations to properties in the conservation area.

Direction under Article 4(2) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995

The Romford Road Conservation Area is subject to a comprehensive Article 4(2) direction, served in October 1998. The direction brings the following classes of development, on elevations which face the highway or on land adjoining the highway or other public open space, and that would otherwise fall within the scope of 'permitted development' under the Town and Country Planning (Permitted Development) Order 1995, under planning control:

- *The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse (Class A, Part 1);*
- *Alteration of the roof (Class C, Part 1);*
- *The construction of a porch outside any external door (Class D, Part 1);*
- *The provision of a building or enclosure, swimming or other pool (Class E, Part 1);*
- *The construction of a hardstanding (Class F, Part 1);*
- *The erection or provision of a container for the storage of oil (Class G, Part 1);*
- *The installation, alteration or replacement of satellite antenna (Class H, Part 1);*

- *The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure (Class A, Part 2);*
- *The painting of any exterior of any building or work (Class C, Part 2).*

The Schedule of properties subject to the Article (4) direction is reproduced at Section 3.1

## 1.2 LOCATION AND SETTING

### Location

The Romford Road Conservation Area is located on the south side of Romford Road, between Forest Gate and Manor Park in the north of the London Borough of Newham

### Boundaries

The conservation area is defined by the property boundaries of the four semi-detached pairs of houses which front the road. These together compose an approximately rectangular land parcel, bounded by development of the later nineteenth, to the east, a row of shops with residential above, and to the west, a former chapel long since converted in a commercial garage. Romford Road leads from Stratford to Ilford.

### Topography and landscape setting

The conservation area is surrounded by Victorian urban development dating from the second half of the nineteenth century and post war redevelopment associated with the Housing Acts and bomb damage. The setting of the conservation area is entirely urban and dominated by the bustling character of Romford Road.



## Geology

The geology of the area is composed of London clay which outcrops on higher ground with localised areas of ferruginous gravels. These have been exploited to provide the only indigenous building material in Newham. Overlying the London clay is alluvial drift, deposited in low lying areas, carved through the clay, by the River Thames and its tributaries, particularly the River Lea. The southern part of the Borough is rich in alluvial drift and marine deposits from the Quaternary period, associated with sea level change. These deposits include rich organic deposits overlaid by marine clays alongside the Thames. The deposits extend along the valleys of the tributaries.

## 1.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

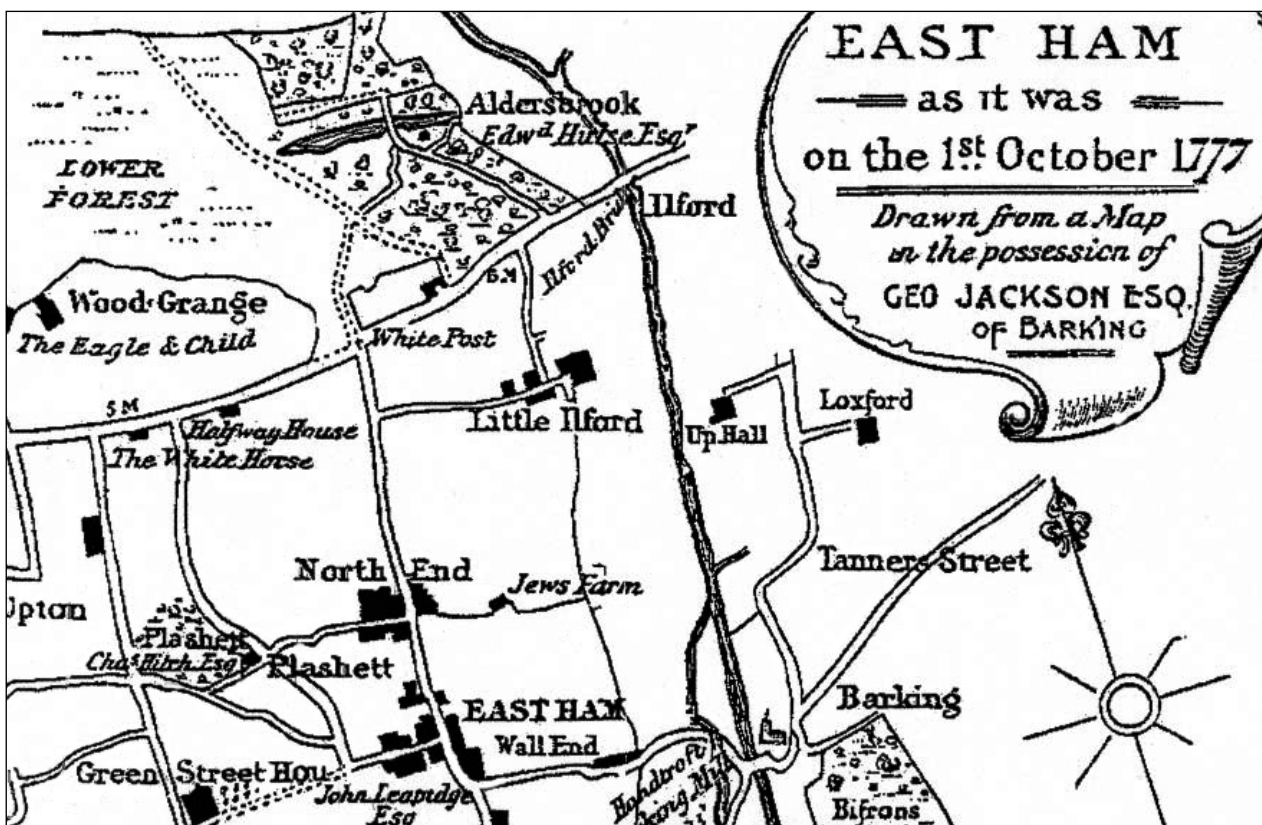
East and West Ham were known collectively as 'Ham' during the Norman period, literally referring to the low-lying pasture extending from Romford Road to Ham Creek on the Thames and divided by Green Street. 'Ham' was part of the administrative Hundred of Becontree. The conservation area is located close to the old border of East and West Ham. Immediately to the north lies the Woodgrange Estate, which was developed as a middle class commuter estate during the period 1877-1892, by Thomas and Cameron Corbett. In the twelfth century, Woodgrange was a farm on the edge of Epping Forest and hence 'Forest Gate' is directly derived from its location. Woodgrange Farm was first recorded in 1189 as part of the Cistercian abbey estates at Stratford. The Romford Road was well established by the sixteenth century and followed

the line of the old Roman Road leading to the City of London.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the land to the north and south of the Romford Road was undeveloped farmland. The First Edition Ordnance Survey map, published in 1844, confirms that this area was largely undeveloped during the first and much of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. These cottages do not appear on a map of the area published in 1839 but the occupiers of the houses are listed in the 1841 census. It is therefore logical to assume that the houses were built during the period 1839 - 40. A large house, called Potato Hall, was nearby and it may well be that these cottages were built for agricultural workers and were those locally known as 'Irish Row'.

## 1.4 SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- *A housing development built c1840, comprising eight semi-detached houses, probably erected by the Gurney Estate to house agricultural workers;*
- *A series of equally spaced pairs of houses set behind short front gardens;*
- *Consistent plots with rear gardens arranged back to back with houses to the south in Sandringham Road, without an intervening rear access lane;*
- *Development comprises modest two storey, semi-detached houses of repetitive design and detail, sharing a common eaves and building line;*
- *Late Georgian architectural character with unaltered window and door openings;*







- *White painted timber picket fences define front boundaries;*
- *Faced in brickwork using yellow London stock bricks arranged in Flemish bond;*
- *Original hornless, twelve paned box sash windows set in reveals beneath gauged brick arches;*
- *Original, painted timber, external two panelled shutters at ground floor level, on front elevations;*
- *Panelled painted timber front doors with blind segmental fanlights over;*
- *Substantial axial brick chimney stacks of rectangular plan, each with six, plain terracotta pots;*
- *Welsh slate is the only original roofing material with black clay, butt-jointed ridges.*

### **1.5 THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

#### **Townscape analysis**

The conservation area is small and includes four, semi-detached pairs of agricultural workers' houses. These are equally spaced along the south side of the Romford Road. The modest scale of the houses and their simple late Georgian style contrasts with the surrounding later nineteenth development which has

an urban scale and character. Furthermore, whilst the adjacent development is set on the back edge of the pavement in a typical 'urban' arrangement, the properties in the conservation area are set back from the road within garden plots more typical of rural and suburban development.

Three of the pairs of houses share a common building line. The fourth pair (nos. 422 and 420 Romford Road) which is set on the western edge of the area, steps back further from the road frontage with a deeper front garden area. The low plot coverage is a distinctive feature of the area. The houses are small but set within generous plots with important gaps between each pair. None of the houses have significant extensions and the original form of the houses remains unchanged albeit with the loss of some original detailing.

The garden setting of the pairs of semidetached houses is an important part of the area's special historic character. The most eastern pair of houses has been subject to the most damaging alterations, including the removal of the picket fencing from across the front boundary, the conversion of front gardens to forecourt parking, and the erection of a flat roofed garage on the side of no. 440 Romford Road.

The adjoining commercial premises to the immediate west and east of the conservation area have a considerable impact on its setting. Unsympathetic



alterations including inappropriate replacement fenestration and the use of intrusive, illuminated signage has a material and negative impact on the setting of the conservation area.

The conservation area is exclusively residential in character and the houses remain principally in their original use, as single family dwellings. There is also evidence of the use of these for business purposes with associated advertising. The residential character of the conservation area is an important part of its special qualities in contrast to the surrounding commercial uses on Romford Road.

#### Focal points, views and vistas

The area forms an indenture in the built frontage on the southern side of the Romford Road. This exposes the blind flank walls of the adjoining buildings (no. 442a and no. 418 Romford Road) to view. The houses are set within a recess which serves to restrict the visibility of the houses in long views from the east and west. The important spaces between the pairs of houses allow views to be gained to the impressively scaled Sandringham School, set to their rear on the southern side of Sandringham Road.

#### Open spaces, landscape and trees

The conservation area is discrete and has no areas of public or recreational space.

Nevertheless, the conservation area has an open grain, in contrast with the densely developed adjacent areas of continuous built frontages. The front gardens and driveways between the houses creates a perception of space, that is further enhanced by trees and planting within front gardens.

#### Public realm

The conservation area is tightly defined and excludes the footway and road immediately in front of the houses. The surfacing of the Romford Road comprises a poorly co-ordinated mix of modern artificial materials. There is no surviving historic street furniture and lighting is provided by tall, utilitarian, late twentieth century columns. These are not sympathetic to the character of the area by virtue of their extremely functional appearance and scale. Traditionally scaled and detailed picket fencing still predominates across the front boundaries but regrettably all of the boundary walls (still evident in 1970s photographs) have been removed. Soft landscaping within private front gardens is an essential part of the contextual setting of the houses. The footway along Romford Road provides the immediate setting for the conservation area.

### 1.6 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

#### Building types

Semi-detached housing is the sole building type in the area. The houses are all of two storeys in height, sharing a consistent eaves and ridge line. Each house is of a single ground floor window, plus door, in width. The roofs have a shallow, asymmetric pitch and simple gabled form with a rear outshot forming part of the original house.

#### Architectural styles, materials and detailing

The two storey semi-detached pairs of houses are designed in a modest late Georgian style, with elevations of yellow London stock brick. The twelve pane sashes are vertically aligned and set in reveals beneath gauged brick arches. The front door to each



house is offset to the outer side of the window. Each has a painted timber, four panelled, late nineteenth century style door, set in reveals beneath a blind segmental fanlight.

Of particular interest are the surviving external panelled shutters at ground floor level on no.438 Romford Road. These were originally restricted to ground floor level. The addition of modern louvered shutters at first floor level detracts from the appearance of the houses.

All of the houses in the conservation area are of brick construction, with yellow London stock bricks are used as facing materials, laid in a Flemish bond. Welsh Slate is the original roofing material with 'Vee' section, butt-jointed ridges and wet verge details (omitting a barge or fascia board). The chimneys are set centrally on the ridge between each pair of houses. They are simply detailed, yet substantial, with a rectangular plan and six plain terracotta pots per stack.

### Buildings of townscape merit

None of the group of eight houses is listed or locally listed. However, all of them have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal map, as being 'Buildings of Townscape Merit'. This is because they make a positive contribution to the special character of the area because of their architectural style, detailing and building materials.

### 1.7 NEGATIVE FEATURES AND ISSUES

#### Public realm

Although the Romford Road is technically outside the conservation area, it plays an important



contextual role. The footway and carriageway which provide the foreground for the conservation area suffers from a variety of artificial paving and finishes, including fractured concrete and red anti-skid tarmac. Together, these seriously detract from the appearance and environmental quality of the area. The roadway also suffers from an abundance of street clutter.







#### Loss of trees from front gardens

Deciduous trees make a significant contribution to the rural character of the conservation area. The unauthorised removal or failure to replace trees which have died is resulting in a less attractive, more open, urban character.

#### Forecourt parking and creation of hardstandings

Front gardens are an essential part of the special character and appearance of the conservation area. Loss of important soft landscaping and the introduction of open, paved forecourts are very harmful to the character of the area. Parked vehicles in front gardens appear alien and intrusive and detract from the special character of the area. The front gardens of nos. 440 and 438 Romford Road have been completely lost to forecourt

parking. Furthermore, the removal of the distinctive picket fencing from the front boundary is another detrimental feature required to provide vehicular access.

#### Erosion of architectural character from the houses

The simple, late Georgian architecture of the conservation area is its principal asset. Some alterations, however well intentioned, erode the special qualities which justified the original designation. These harmful alterations include:

- *The replacement of timber sash windows by inappropriate alternatives, including plastic (nos. 440, 428, 426, 420 Romford Road);*
- *The removal/alteration of features, including chimneys which have been lowered (nos. 426/428 Romford Road);*
- *Unsympathetic extensions, which infill the spaces around the houses and detract from their simple form (no. 440 Romford Road);*
- *The painting or rendering of brickwork (nos. 422 and 420 Romford Road);*
- *The use of premises for business purposes together with advertising and storage introduces features that are visually intrusive and discordant with the character of the area;*
- *The busy visual appearance of adjacent commercial premises also intrudes on and detracts from the setting of these small, simple houses.*



## 2.1 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

### 2.1.1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The designation and appraisal of any conservation area is not an end in itself. The purpose of this document is to present proposals to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area's special character, informed by the appraisal, and to consult the local community about these proposals. The special qualities of the area have been identified as part of the appraisal process in the first section of this document and both will be subject to monitoring and reviews on a regular basis. This guidance draws upon the themes identified in Section 7 of the conservation area appraisal 'Negative features and issues'. The document satisfies the statutory requirement of section 71(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 namely:

"It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas."

The document reflects Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment', English Heritage guidance titled 'Guidance on the management of conservation areas' (August 2005), Best Practice guidelines, policies within the Adopted London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan (2001) [Adopted UDP] and any subsequent Development Plan policies together with published planning guidance such as the 'Romford Road Conservation Area Planning Design Guide 1998'. It is recognised that this area is not one where large scale development is likely to occur and generate major investment and improvements. It is important that the development control process ensures the preservation of special character and that opportunities are taken to identify and implement enhancements.

### 2.1.2 STATUTORY CONTROLS

Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the 'preservation and enhancement' of the area. These controls include requiring Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of any unlisted building, fewer permitted development rights for alterations and extensions, restrictions on advertisements and requiring notice for proposed tree works. These are outlined in the Council's detailed guidance note titled 'The Romford Road Conservation Area: Conservation Planning Design Guide 1998'.

*ACTION: The Council will ensure that new development within the conservation area seeks to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area in accordance with policy EQ30 of the Adopted UDP and other guidance.*

### 2.1.3 BUILDINGS OF TOWNSCAPE MERIT

The Townscape Appraisal Map identified the pairs of semi-detached houses as 'Buildings of Townscape Merit' which, it is considered, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and these are marked on the Townscape Appraisal map. There is a presumption that all such buildings will be retained. Policies EQ30, EQ31 and EQ36 of the Adopted UDP provide the criteria against which all such proposals for alterations will be assessed.

Any application for the demolition of Buildings of Townscape Merit will need to be accompanied by a reasoned justification (similar to that required for a listed building) stating why the building should be demolished. The Council will expect the applicant to demonstrate that:

- *The building is beyond economic repair;*
- *The building has been offered on the open market at a realistic price;*
- *If vacant, that alternative uses have been sought.*

Furthermore, the Council will expect all applications for extensions and alterations to Buildings of Townscape Merit to be particularly carefully considered and only well detailed schemes, using the appropriate traditional materials, will be approved.

*ACTION: The Council will ensure that all Buildings of Townscape Merit are protected from inappropriate forms of development or unjustified demolition. Furthermore, there must be satisfactory proposals for the redevelopment of any site before consent will be granted for demolition in accordance with Adopted UDP and other guidance.*

### 2.1.4 EROSION OF CHARACTER AND ADDITIONAL PLANNING CONTROL

The appraisal identified that the following alterations pose a threat to the special character of the area:

- *Loss of timber windows and doors;*
- *Removal/alteration of redundant chimney stacks and pots;*
- *Painting of brickwork or application of any cladding or render including pebbledash;*
- *Removal of front picket fencing;*
- *Creation of forecourt parking and hardstandings, in place of front gardens;*
- *Unauthorised business use and intrusive advertising.*

Certain minor works and alterations to unlisted buildings, in use as single family dwellings, can normally be carried out without planning permission



from the Council. Development of this kind is called "Permitted Development" and falls into various classes which are listed in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. These minor alterations can cumulatively have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of a conservation area. Consequently, the houses in the area are subject to a comprehensive Article 4(2) direction which brings these alterations under planning control.

Regrettably, some unauthorised works have been carried out. The effect of such works, both individually and cumulatively, can result in a materially detrimental effect upon the townscape quality of the area. If left unchecked, such alterations can effectively erode the special qualities which justified the original designation. The Council will take appropriate enforcement action, where it is expedient, to remove unauthorised works. It will also take action to secure the removal of unauthorised business use and advertising.

*ACTION: The Council will ensure that unauthorised development is subject to effective enforcement action, to ensure that the special qualities of Buildings of Townscape Merit and the setting of the area generally are protected and enhanced.*

*ACTION: The Council will review existing guidance, produce and publish design guidance to illustrate the key features of the area and appropriate forms of development, use, repair and restoration.*

#### 2.1.5 TREES

Within conservation areas, anyone intending lopping or felling a tree greater than 100mm. in diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground must give the Council six weeks written notice before starting the work. This provides the Council with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served. The appraisal identifies a limited number of significant trees which should be retained. Detailed guidance regarding appropriate types of trees for planting in the area is included within the existing guidance produced by the Council.

*ACTION: The Council will consider the use of Tree Preservation Orders in appropriate circumstances where a tree has significant amenity value and is under threat. This will include trees both within and outside the area, where these contribute to the setting of the area or views identified in the appraisal. The Council will consider additional tree planting, subject to highway safety considerations, as part of wider public realm improvements and enhancement schemes, subject to resources.*

#### 2.1.6 SETTING AND VIEWS

The setting of the conservation area is very important and development that impacts in a detrimental way

upon the immediate setting and longer views, into and from the conservation area, will be resisted. The important views are identified on the Townscape Analysis Map in the character appraisal. The Council will seek to ensure that all development serves to respect these important views.

*ACTION: The Council will ensure that all development respects the important views within, into and from the conservation area, as identified in the appraisal. The Council will ensure that these remain protected from inappropriate forms of development and that due regard is paid to these views in the formulation of public realm works or enhancement schemes in accordance with Adopted UDP and other guidance.*

#### 2.1.7 THE PUBLIC REALM AND ENHANCEMENT

The change in the setting of these cottages from semi-rural to a location beside a very busy metropolitan A road has inevitably taken a toll on their historic character both visually and in terms of activity. The appraisal has identified that there is no remaining historic floorscape on Romford Road across the frontage of the conservation area. Lighting is provided by tall late twentieth century, utilitarian columns which dwarf the modest scale of the adjacent houses. Highway signage, traffic calming measures and other structures, designed to meet understandable objectives related to highway safety, nevertheless do not enhance the quality of the public realm and setting of the area.

The reinstatement of traditional flagged pavements could significantly enhance the setting of the conservation area and the quality of the surrounding public realm.

*ACTION: The Council will seek to ensure, where compatible with highway safety objectives, that any future highway works will bring a positive improvement to the setting of the conservation area. All works should accord with the spirit of English Heritage's 'Streets For All' campaign without compromising highway safety.*

#### 2.1.8 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

People make places. Although the Council has planning powers it can exercise over development and may, when funds are available, carry out enhancement works, ultimately the quality of any place depends on all the people who affect the area. In residential areas the owners of property play a key role in affecting how the area looks. Good communication between local residents and the Council is one way of helping owners and the Council carry out appropriate works and take informed decisions that are of benefit.

*ACTION: The Council will seek to promote close collaborative working with owners on all issues relevant to the management of the area, including proposals for development and enhancement, within and adjoining the conservation area. It will also improve dialogue including the production and*

*distribution of newsletters and information leaflets subject to resources.*

## **2.2 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The following actions are to be taken to ensure that this appraisal and management proposals are accepted and acted upon by the local community:

### **2.2.1 PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The appraisal and management plan were subject to a period of public consultation in January/February 2006. Representations were considered in the preparation of the final draft for Council adoption. Consultation included placing the document on the Council's website, in local libraries and service centres; consultation with local amenity and residents' groups; providing hard copies on request at or through the Council's Development Control reception where there was also a small display. A letter advising of these arrangements was delivered to all properties in the area by direct mail drop.

### **2.2.2 BOUNDARY REVIEW**

The appraisal identified that the existing boundary was generally a good reflection of the area of special character and consequently no revisions are suggested to the existing designation.

*ACTION: The Council will maintain the current boundary of the designated area as recommended in the appraisal document and thereafter continue to review the boundary of the conservation area in accordance with Best Practice and guidance on management of the historic environment.*

### **2.2.3 DOCUMENT REVIEW**

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- *A survey of the conservation area and boundaries;*
- *An updated 'Heritage Count' comprising a photographic record of the area's buildings;*
- *An assessment of whether the management proposals detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;*
- *A Buildings At Risk survey identifying any buildings whose condition threatens their integrity;*
- *The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and proposed actions and amendments;*
- *Public consultation on the review findings, any proposed changes and input into the final review.*



### 3.1 ARTICLE 4(2) DIRECTION – SCHEDULE OF PROPERTIES

#### Properties affected by Article 4(2) direction:

420 Romford Road 422 Romford Road 426 Romford Road 428 Romford Road 432 Romford Road 434 Romford Road 438 Romford Road 440 Romford Road

### 3.2 SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

London Borough of Newham  
Regeneration and Development  
Town Hall Annex 330-354 Barking Road East Ham London E6 2RT  
Telephone 020 8430 2000

For detailed design guidance and information regarding the area

English Heritage

020 7973 3000

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas

The Victorian Society  
1 Priory Gardens Bedford Park,  
London W4 1TT

Tel: 020 8994 1019

[www.victorian-society.org.uk](http://www.victorian-society.org.uk)

For the “Care for Victorian Houses” leaflet.

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