Hackney Wick and the Old Ford Area

Characterisation Study and Assessment of Key Buildings
Compiled for EDAW Ltd
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1. **Introduction**

1.1 **Purpose of the Report**

This report was compiled by Joanna Moore, of the Architectural History Practice Ltd, with the guidance of Frank Kelsall and Neil Burton. It was produced at the request of EDAW Ltd, with a view to informing current and future proposals for the area in parallel to the redevelopment of the adjacent Stratford site as the centre for London’s 2012 Olympics.

1.2 **Boundaries of the Study Area**

The study focuses on the area of east London contained within the east side of the A12 and west side of the Hackney Cut canal and River Lea. This covers Hackney Wick to the north, within the London Borough of Hackney, and the Old Ford Area (sometimes known as ‘Fish Island’), within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

1.3 **Scope of the Report**

1.3.1. We have set out a brief review of current heritage policy as we believe it applies to this area.

1.3.2. We have carried out an historic mapping exercise as a basis for understanding the present character of the area.

1.3.3. We have made an extensive visual inspection of the area but not attempted to make an internal inspection of any buildings.

1.3.4. We have reviewed the relevant literature about the area, including unpublished papers, but we have not carried out significant research in original sources.

1.3.5. We have set out our conclusions about the significance of the area and our recommendations about how that significance might be protected.
2. **Policy background**

2.1. The study area contains two listed buildings – St Mary of Eton Church and Gainsborough School. These national designations create a policy presumption in favour of their preservation and place an obligation on the planning authority to pay special regard to the preservation of the buildings and their setting.

2.2. However, the background to this report is a perception that there are wider heritage considerations than those created by present formal designation. This is supported by the general policies set out in PPS 1 for the natural and historic environment. The government’s aim is protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity of urban areas as a whole and to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design, conservation and the provision of public space.

2.3. More detailed guidance on building conservation is offered by PPG15, though this is now somewhat out-of-date and overtaken by the government’s new initiatives on heritage protection. This places greater emphasis on the historic environment as a whole and in particular on the need for understanding the fabric and evolution of a place in order to assess its significance. This process is set out in the *Conservation Principles* published by English Heritage in 2008. These recognise that places may have values which do not necessarily meet current criteria for formal designation but which do have values which should be taken into account in decisions about spatial planning.

2.4. To supplement national designation there are further heritage designations which may be made by local planning authorities.

   (i) Current heritage legislation requires local planning authorities to keep their area under review for the purpose of designating conservation areas. This requirement is already being met in respect of a proposed conservation area in part of the study area within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

   (ii) Local authorities may also compile local lists of historic buildings which may be protected though local plan policies. At present government policy on this matter is expressed through advice in PPG15 but the draft heritage bill issued in 2008 gives a statutory basis to the concept of ‘special local interest’.

2.5. This report is a contribution towards the understanding of the Hackney Wick/Fish Island area required by this evolving policy. It is based on the concept of characterisation though this concept, developed at first for landscape studies, is only slowly being adapted for urban townscape studies. We have based our methodology on English Heritage guidance for conservation area appraisals, published in 2006, the unpublished guidance on rapid area assessments developed for the purpose of looking at areas affected by the Pathfinder initiatives and our own experience of urban conservation.
3. Understanding

Due to its geographical distance from the City of London, Hackney Wick and Old Ford has long been a relatively isolated and undeveloped area. The events and new infrastructure of the industrial revolution radically improved connections to the capital and surrounding country. However, the improvements came at a price: at a local level the growing community became secluded behind extensive railway lines, canal networks and industrial buildings, often with noxious fumes. Consequently, from an early date the residential parts of the area were associated with poverty and crime, this presented an incentive for intervention in the forms of religious, educational or social institutions.

3.1 Pre-nineteenth century history

The earliest known settlement in the Hackney Marshes was based around the Old Ford across the River Lea, the major point of passage between London and Essex from early medieval times until Bow Bridge was built further downstream in the early twelfth century. Other legends associated with Old Ford included that of Henry I’s wife, Queen Mathilda, falling into the watery marsh, and that King John stayed at a castle in the area after signing the Magna Carter.

An early canal was dug into the marsh land in the reign of Elizabeth I, at the expense of the Lord Mayor, to convey grain and provisions for the City. The area remained predominately un-farmed empty marsh due to its temperamental conditions, but was apparently popular for leisure. Old Ford was a scene for Thomas Dekker’s play ‘The Shoemaker’s Holiday’ in 1599, and featured deer hunting. In the seventeenth century Samuel Pepys visited the area at least three times, recording a coach journey ‘to Old Ford, a town by Bow, where I never was before, and there walked in the fields, very pleasant, and sang: and so back again, and stopped and drank at the Gun, at Mile End...’ on 2 June 1668.

3.2 Early nineteenth century history

Laurie and Whittle’s New Plan of London and its Environs in 1809-10 (Fig. X) shows that a number of buildings were grouped around the Old Ford area before the construction of the Hertford Union Canal or railways, although few were built directly by the river. The routes of the earliest roads leading from Old Ford to Bow were determined by marsh plains, and as such the curves of Old Ford Road parallel the meandering form of the Lea, before joining at Bow Bridge. Four buildings are shown with enclosed areas. The only labelled name is ‘Clay Hall’, a single large building with two outbuildings, and a boundary, including gardens, that extended to the banks of the river. Apparently an Inn, it existed until at least 1859, when it is noted as the scene for ‘Eel-pies most unmercifully devoured’ between four and five in the afternoon, in George A. Sala’s Twice around the Clock, a social commentary on the Working classes’ leisure activities. In addition to eels, the marshes also hosted other water-dependant agriculture such as watercress, which was grown on the marshland until the arrival of chemical factories made it hazardous. Early water-based industries arrived by 1829 and included a Dye House at Old Ford Wharf, and a Tan Yard and Ropewalks to the west.
Fig. 1 Detail and Key of Milne’s Land Use Map, 1800 (CoL)
Fig. 2 Laurie and Whittle’s New Plan of London and its Environs in 1809-10 (THLHA)

Fig. 3 Watercolour of Old Ford, with Old Ford Wharf, 1847 (THLHA)
Fig. 4 Detail of John Greenwood’s map of London, 1830 (Motco)
3.3 Transport and Geographical features that shaped Hackney Wick and Old Ford Lock

The distinct geography of Hackney Wick and the Old Ford area was formed by the manipulation of the waterways and the building of transport infrastructure in the nineteenth century. The area became an integral link between Essex, the Docklands, and the City itself, attracting industries which used water directly, and could boat or train resources in and products out.

3.3.1 The arrival of the canals

The building of canals through Hackney Marshes was the first major factor in shaping the landscape, determining its use, types of industry, and architecture. The Hackney Cut (1770s) created a bypass between the River Lea and Old Ford, and with the opening of the Hertford Union Canal (1830), established the route as a major link between Regents Canal and the Docklands.

3.3.2 Water provision and the Northern Outfall Sewer

The East London Water Company was formed in 1808 and completed intake works at Old Ford the following year, establishing two reservoirs. By 1834 a new water source at Lea Bridge was chosen because of its distance from the population and pollution increases in the city. The reservoirs at Old Ford were fed via an aqueduct that ran parallel to the Hackney Cut. A dye house operated on the Old Ford Wharf site, and to the west were a tan yard and 'Rope Walk'.

The Metropolitan Board of Works was established in 1855 to meet pressure on the public sewerage system and improve sanitary conditions after a major outbreak of cholera in 1853. The ‘Great Stink’ of the hot summer of 1858 caused widespread outcry, and within a year the Board’s chief engineer Joseph Bazalgette proposed a new sewerage system. As a result the Northern Outfall Sewer at Wick Lane was built to serve the sewers that drained London north of the Thames. The new system greatly improved the waste circulation out of London. In 1866, however, investigation by Her Majesty’s Rail Inspectorate showed that the River Lea had contaminated the reservoirs of the East London Water Company, causing a further cholera outbreak. Despite the reservoirs having filters and having been recently covered, a Captain Tyler reported that 93% of the victims in the summer epidemic had been supplied water by the East Water Company, who were heavily criticised for attempting to hide the cause. The company, with its contemporaries, was eventually absorbed by the Metropolitan Water Board in 1904. The reservoirs remained intact and were built over to create Bow Goods station by 1896.
3.3.3 The building of the railways

The East & West India Docks & Birmingham Junction Railway, with investment from the London and North Western Railway, was established in the late 1840s. The Victoria Park to Bow line was opened in the autumn of 1850, including Old Ford Station, and extended to Poplar Docks by the start of 1852, also connecting to as Fenchurch Street and Bromley. The Illustrated London News of 15 November 1851 describes a journey on the line; after Bow Station 'passing onward through the verdant fields we came to the retired village of Homerton'. Within a decade the surrounding area was busy with factories which congregated between the canal and the stations. The company changed its name to the North London Railway in 1853. Victoria Park station was opened in 1856 on the junction with the Eastern Counties Railway from Stratford.

The layout of the tracks quickly determined the shape of local development, effectively isolating the Hackney Wick and Fish Island area. The stations at OldFord and Victoria Park encouraged the building of factories along railway lines. This, combined with the building of large depots to the northwest of Hackney Wick and just south of Old Ford Station, had the effect of confining the residential areas and preventing their linking with nearby south Hackney or north Bow.

The railway line from Victoria Park Junction to Poplar was closed to public passengers in 1944, and to Bow by 1949; Old Ford Station was closed in 1944. A goods line still operated until in the 1960s when the line between Victoria Park Junction and Bow was dismantled. The stretch was built upon as the part of the East Cross RouteA102 (M) Road (now the A12) as part of the GLC's plans for the ‘London Motorway Box’, cancelled in 1973. Victoria Park station was built-over by the new road and Old Ford station was replaced by housing.
Fig. 5 The study area as applied to the 1870 1st Edition OS Map. (LMA)
Fig. 6 The study area as applied to G. Bacon’s London Atlas, 1888. (LTS)
Fig. 7 The study area as applied to the 1896 2nd Edition OS Map. (LMA)
3.4 The Development of Industries

3.4.1 Industries in Hackney Wick

The former Great Eastern Railway crosses the river Lea across Hackney Wick, meeting the line of the North London Railway to the west of the site at Victoria Park Junction. Its location triggered a surrounding pattern of growth. From north to south, the Aveline Dye Works, Parksine Works, Waterproof cloth works, Chemical Works and Button manufactory, Varnish Works, and Tar and Chemical Works lined the canal side. Slightly inland (and close to the present Hackney Wick station) were further Starch works, the Victoria Iron Works and Blood Manure Works. The northwest corner of the site had a Ropery, built as two long series of workshops around a central yard.

By 1888 the Hackney Wick group of factories had been joined by a large Jam and Confectionary Works at the north side of the junction of the Great Eastern Railway and Hackney Cut. Of these, Clarnico was the largest. Named after its founders (Clarke, Nickolls and Coombs –‘Clar-ni-co’), the business began in 1872 and was eventually bought by Trebor-Bassett in the twentieth century. The firm’s best-known product were peppermint creams, which retain the name today.

A number of factories had also changed in use: the Parksine and cloth works had become the ‘Vulcan Bedstead Works’, which had its own set of ‘Vulcan Cottages’ across the site, and one of the varnish works became ‘Falcon works’. Indian Rubber Works had been built to the north of the Iron works, and south of the railway the Leo Chemical Works and Leon Cleo’s Benzolene and Oils Works (the London & Provincial Dye Works by 1896). By 1896 a Vinegar Brewery was established on former fields to the north of St. Mary’s, and to the east of Hackney Cut, industrial buildings started to line the waterside.

3.4.2 Industries in the Old Ford area, or ‘Fish Island’

The Imperial Gas Light & Coke Company bought 30 acres of the site in 1865, with the intention of building gasworks on the land. In the event these were built close to Bromley and the land was passed to the Gas Light and Coke Company, who allocated it into streets for factories and housing. The 1870 First Edition OS map shows a variety of factories: Printing Ink Works, Chemical Works and Dye Works lined and drew water from the canal. A little to the west, the Lucifer Match factory was built, and amongst the group, a Mat Manufactory that used imported coconut fibre.

The 1870 map (Fig. X) shows that the surrounding land had a mixture of uses. To the south the water reservoir was covered over and had ventilator shafts. Immediately northwest a green mound provided a viewpoint; further west watercress beds made use of retained marsh land. These remnants of agriculture were not to last; by 1888 the watercress beds had been replaced by a vast Paper Works and the fields to the south had been built over with a large Coal and Goods Depot that served Old Ford Station.
3.5 Early street patterns and residential development.

A map of 1829 shows that at least two roads were laid out in the Old Ford Area, connecting to the west via Old Ford Road. These determined subsequent street patterns. To the north, the first (approximately the location of Avenue Road, later named Autumn Street), joined the dye works. The second led southeast, accessing buildings around the reservoir (aligning with the later boundary between the residential Spring and Summer Streets and the Bow Goods station).

The setting out and building of residential streets closely followed the growth of industry and employment in the area. The layout of the canal and rail tracks, and their subsidiary goods yards, immediately isolated the new community from its neighbours, creating a unique and somewhat insular environment. The street layouts were followed routes to the factories via main roads that connected the area to the more populous Hackney and Bow. Houses were typically of two floors (although some in Hackney Wick featured three), in terraces with back extensions and yards. Built of cheap London brick, the architecture of the houses was out-dated and stark.

By 1896 the residential streets were complete, and over the next half century there was no further house-building. Intervening spaces or leftover parcels of land were used by local factories or as timber yards, a trade which boomed in the area in the early twentieth century.

The Booth Poverty Map, published in 1889, shows that within two decades of being built the streets of Hackney Wick and Old Ford were already classified as among the poorest areas in East London. Amongst the grey and pale blue poor areas, Percy Terrace, Homfray Street, and Chapman Road were labelled as ‘Very Poor, casual. Chronic Want’, whilst Felstead Street achieved ‘Lowest class. Vicious. Semi-Criminal’.

Fig. 8 Wick Lane and Iceland Road, 1934 (THLHA)
Fig. 9 Detail of the Booth poverty Map, compiled in 1899. The dark blue, grey and black areas signify the lowest classes.
3.5.1 Housing in Hackney Wick

The principal roads leading to, or through, Hackney Wick were Victoria Road, Wallis Road and White Post Lane, upon which terraced houses were built by 1870. Off these were Gainsborough Road (later Eastway), Elgin Street, Sussex Street, Chapman Road, Bower Road and Suther Street. Immediately close to the factories were Windsor Road (now Berkshire Road), Prince Edward Road and Davey Road. The latter was named in 1864, and with Hepscott Road (named in 1867) may have been one of the earliest residential terraces in the area. To the west side of the site the original Wick Lane was lined with a long stretch of terraces with yards that backed onto the railway line, with a public house at either end. Felstead Street and Prince Edward Road were built in 1870. Others soon followed, including many with names that have since been lost to Second World War bombing or later twentieth century redevelopment. Those built by 1888 included Plover Street, Homfray Street, Percy Terrace, Comboss Road, Allenmouth Road and Kelday Road.

Fig. 10 West Chapman Road, 1955 (LMA)  Fig. 11 East Chapman Road, 1955 (LMA)

Fig. 12 Trowbridge Road, 1940 (LMA)  Fig. 13 Osborne Road, 1940 (LMA)
3.5.2 Housing in Old Ford / Fish Island

The southern Old Ford half of the site developed a little slower than its northern counterpart. This was due to the fact that there was slightly less industry to begin with, and that many of the early employees would have come from Bow. In the 1860s Iceland Road and Avenue Road were built amongst the southern group of factories, and Spring Street and Summer Street to the south of Fish Island supplied workers to the large Fairfield match factory across the road. A large number of employees crossed the railway over Old Ford Road from Hackney and Bow. Maverton Road and Attley Road had names approved in 1869 and must have been built shortly after, just missing inclusion in the First Edition OS map. Their setting followed localised building works (the new Old Ford Station Depot) on existing streets or former field boundaries: Attley Road was built directly on the former ‘Sounding Alley’ (as labelled in 1870) which separated the former Tan Yard and Ropewalk sites. The north end of the yard was divided by 1870, apparently into small allotments, and the boundary line formed the axis for Maverton Road.
The north area of the island, between the canal and the Northern Outfall Sewer, had a wave of house-building around 1878. Notably this included Beachy Road, Wyke Road, Dace Road and Roach Road, underlining the island’s watery connection. The layout, as set out by the Gas Light and Coke Company was determined by existing roads that connected the Old Ford Lock, Wick Lane Works, and a ‘Woodland Cottage’ north of Old Ford Road. The new Smeed Road was built over a raised ridge or headland that ran north-south across the former agricultural land. In 1870 two public houses on Old Ford Road (the oldest, the White Hart, dated back to at least 1847) served the whole of the Fish Island area. From around 1896 there was no further house-building.
3.6 Religious and Institutional buildings

3.6.1 Churches and chapels

Late nineteenth parish maps show that the area was divided between two parishes. The large portion, from White Post Lane and Wallis Road southwards, came under the parish of Bow. The northern part was affiliated to the ‘New Parish of St Augustine’, South Hackney, which had a hall on the east side of Victoria Park Station.

The mission of St Mary’s of Eton was established in 1880 in the northwest of Hackney Wick, on the site of the former Ropery. G. Bacon’s 1888 map shows that the first buildings on the site were a small church to the south, and separate mission and enclosure to the north. The new church was designed and built in 1889-92 to the designs of the renowned Victorian church architect G. F. Bodley (1827-1907), the mission hall was built in 1897. The growth of the church coincided with the economic decline of the area and social contention. Associated buildings, the Eton Boys and Old Boys Club and the ‘Manor House’ were built in 1913 to the designs of the well-known architect H.S. Goodhart-Rendell (both were demolished in the late twentieth century).

The area was also served by a number of small non-conformist chapels, since lost. Immediately east of St Mary’s was a Wesleyan chapel at the junction of Daintry Street and Mallard Street. A Bethesda Chapel sat on the corner of Percy Terrace and Mallard St, and to the east side of White Post Lane an unidentified Mission.

South of the Hertford Union Canal, the Fish Island Area had a Mission Hall on Shoot Road by 1888 (labelled as a primitive Methodist Chapel by 1896). In 1890 a small church of the Christ Church Mission, with Sunday School, was built on Crown Close, off Wick Lane. The building survives (now part of the New Bethal Revival Ministry); the foundation stone records that the architects were A. Wills and Son and the builders J. & F. Bane.

3.6.2 Schools

The first known school in the Hackney Wick/Fish Island area was a small Boys and Girls Congregational School located on Chapman Road, which existed by 1870. Bacon’s Atlas shows that by 1888 a board school was built at the junction of Gainsborough Road and Osborne Road. A second was located half way down the west side of Smeed Road, and a third was built at the northeast end of Attley Road by 1893. All survived until the second half of the twentieth century. The fourth and now the sole survivor, with five storeys, was Gainsborough School on Berkshire Road, built in 1897-99.
3.6.3 Public Buildings

The north west corner of Hackney Wick was for many years the site of workhouse buildings. Its first recorded form was as a Ropery – where workers were made to disentangle and re-make thick ropes used by ships. In 1906 the Metropolitan Asylums Board was granted a licence to build the Hackney Casual Ward (later the ‘Hackney Union Vagrant Works’) on the site. It was composed of a large ‘T’ shape building, the back was a network of workshops and cramped dormitories around a yard. Documents in the LMA suggest that the main work was wood and iron workshops.

In 1933 designs were drawn up the Borough Engineer and Architect, Percival Holt, for Public Baths (now the Wick Community Centre) on Gainsborough Road. ‘U’ shape in plan, the main baths had a monumental art deco-styled façade constructed in blocks of concrete, set to resemble stone masonry. There were separate female and male entrances and slipper baths behind, and a first floor refreshment kitchen. A separate block to the north housed a wash house.

With the exception of the workhouse and baths, no other public service buildings were built between the nineteenth century and Second World War. That the entire area of Hackney Wick and Old Ford did not have a London County Council fire station is especially out of the ordinary given that it hosted a number of industries that would have dealt with flammable materials as well as train depots and timber yards. Furthermore, there was no police station in the area to oversee the slum terraces and criminal activity indicated in Booth’s 1889 Poverty Map.

3.7 The Second World War

The Hackney Wick and Fish Island area was seriously affected by bomb damage in the Second World War. Direct hits by V2 flying bombs all but destroyed the Hackney Casual Ward and the south east end of Gainsborough Road, opposite St. Mary of Eton. Elsewhere, large areas of streets were damaged beyond repair. These included an area opposite the school on Berkshire Road, the junction of Prince Edward Road, Trowbridge Road and Felstead Street. South of the railway much of Wansbeck Road, Rothbury Road, Trego Road, Allenmouth Road, Kelday Road and some of White Post Lane were damaged ‘beyond repair’. A large factory to the south of Felstead Road was damaged beyond repair, and a number of industrial buildings grouped around the junction of the railway and Hackney Cut, including some across the east side.

In Fish Island, Monier Road and Beachy Road and some of Attley Road were seriously damaged, whilst at the southern tip Spring Street and Summer Street were totally destroyed. Around half the houses of Bower Road were marked for clearance. A number of large buildings were directly damaged. Several factories to the northeast of Old Ford depot were damaged, notably on Dace Road and east Old Ford Road. Most of the rest of the area suffered from ‘minor’ or ‘general’ blast damage, which affected houses and industrial buildings alike.
Fig. 18 Detail of bomb damage after the Second World War, 1945. (LTS)
3.8 Post-war rebuilding

Despite the substantial damage incurred in the Second World War, it was the social politics and modernist visions of the post-war years that dramatically and irreversibly changed the urban landscape of the area.

3.8.1 North Hackney Wick: Social needs and the rise, fall and rebirth of the Trowbridge Estate. 1950s-present

The Vagrant Works had been used for storage in the war and were destroyed by a direct hit in 1944. Documents in the LMA discuss the suitability of the site for a school or old people’s homes. The latter was chosen, and in 1956 plans for a complex of homes were submitted.

A more significant, although short-lasting, intervention on the landscape was the building of the Trowbridge Estate, a set of seven tower blocks amid a network of 400 low-rise dwellings with intervening green areas, in 1967-70. The contrasting scales allowed the GLC to minimise costs and achieve a highly prized PPA (persons per acre) demographic. Roger Blomfield, of Bickerdike Allen and Partners architects, later praised the lower-scale ‘patio’ houses as ‘one of the reasons Trowbridge is such a nice estate with such nice gardens and so little vandalism’. Although the towers did not survive past two decades, the large scale planning completely changed the layout of the streets and landscape to give the present day grid.

The 22-storey tower blocks were designed in 1965 and the first three completed on the south west side of the site by 1968. The year coincided with the Ronan Point tragedy, in which a gas explosion led to the partial collapse of a new 23-storey tower block in Newham, London, and four fatalities. As a consequence Northaird Point and the following three towers, were amended to withstand progressive collapse and ensure public confidence. The Greater London Council Architect’s department were responsible for the drawings, which survive in the London Metropolitan Archives. The towers used the Cebus-Bory system of construction developed in France, which allowed the creation of load-bearing concrete panels on-site.
Construction was fraught with problems, leading to the contractors, J. M. Hill Ltd, subsequently declaring bankruptcy. Later press reports indicate that the system was never intended for structures over eleven floors and was not certified to English standards, and soon after completion the buildings suffered from severe damp penetration. The GLC were forced to spend £1.5 million on the towers over their first decade to safeguard their structures. In 1978 the architects Bickerdike Allen and Partners were contracted to oversee non-structural alterations to the towers at a cost of £2.1 million each. Some work began before public pressure forced Hackney Council to consider demolition in 1982. Three towers were detonated in 1985 and their residents were relocated to other Hackney estates. The event was not without irony; Northaird Point only half-collapsed, its top 12 over-engineered storeys famously protruded from the rubble. Most of the low storey housing, including a series of four-storey apartments built on Trowbridge Road in 1974, was retained.

From 1985, Hackney Council, under architect Robert McKibben, began a programme of collaboration with the Trowbridge Tenants Association and developed a scheme of two-four storey dwellings, designed in mews clusters.
on the ‘defensible space’ principle. However the area, with four remaining
tower blocks, retained its blighted character into the 1990s.

Hackney Council was one of the largest beneficiaries of the increase in Estate
Action Grants in 1992-93, by the then Environment Minister Michael
Heseltine. This enabled the investment in plans by architects Levitt Bernstein
Associates and quantity surveyors Frost Associates, spearheaded by residents’
steering group, who had protested against another council-architect scheme.
The remaining tower blocks were demolished in 1995 and the lower blocks
were converted into flats. The new ‘Wick Village’ was built to the designs of
Levitt Bernstein Associates, chosen by residents, at an average cost of
£55,800 to each of the 119 dwellings. The residents requested the courtyard
layout with communal gardens, as well as traditional-style tiled porches to
doors and reproduction Victorian lamps. The new estate was grouped in two-
and three-storey terraces, punctuated with four storey blocks, executed in
stock bricks with softwood fenestration and pantile roofs.

The regeneration of Hackney Wick facilitated a scheme of affordable housing,
‘St Mary’s Village’ based around the church of St Mary of Eton in 1998-2002.
Built by Hackney Council with the social housing contractors Lovell, the
scheme’s yellow brick walls, red tiles and turreted entrances are now
established as a local vernacular architecture peppered around west Hackney
Wick. The 220 homes ranged from one to four bedroom apartments and
houses as well as live/work units.

3.8.2 Post-war rebuilding in central Hackney Wick

The land between the Hackney Wick rail line and the Hertford Union Canal
was the most damaged by the war. The houses were cleared and within two
decades nearly all of the site was re-built as industrial buildings. The Victorian
Chemical works were untouched, as were some small warehouses along the
south of the railway.

To the north of the railway line a number of small buildings were retained and
continued in use, although all of the remaining Victorian terraces, save for the
two neighbouring the ‘Lord Nelson’, were demolished to make way for
industrial buildings. The former Indian Rubber Works was demolished and
replaced by a pair of factories: the East and West Oslo House buildings.

3.8.3 Post-war rebuilding in Old Ford

Around a third of housing to the south of the Hertford Union Canal was
cleared immediately after war and replaced by warehouses by 1961. By 1973
most of these had been demolished and the residents relocated to the
completed Trowbridge Estate to the north. The area between the south of the
canal and the surviving ‘Fish Island’ was filled with new warehouses or
industrial yards, built to the previous street boundaries. To the south and east,
a large proportion of early twentieth century buildings survived and
continued in use; damaged properties by the canal side were repaired. At the
far southern tip of the island small streets were also cleared by 1973, and after
Bow Goods Yard became redundant the land was used for more warehouses.
The new A12 road sliced through the former parameters of Old Ford Depot,
eradicating the south end of Attley Road and the cleared Spring Street and
Summer Street.
3.9 Conclusions

The area of Hackney Wick and Old Ford has a typical story of an industrial area supported by local workers, and served by local institutions. The history of the area is that of an urban landscape defined by infrastructure and generations of factories whose success, or adaptation, has left a legacy of varied and interesting industrial buildings. Nearly all of the surviving ‘original’ buildings of the late Victorian to early Edwardian buildings that remain in use today, a testament to their durable and flexible designs. The wealth generated by its factories, many of which were pioneering of their time, rarely reached its residents.

Considered collectively, the pre-Second World War development of the area had a limited variety of buildings types. The cheaply-constructed and stark houses epitomised the slum conditions to which their fledgling communities were destined, dramatically illustrated in Booth’s Poverty map of 1889. The area also suffered from a lack of civic investment, notably in its absence of fire or police stations. The early OS maps record many public houses between the factories, streets and workhouse, and would have been the centres of communal gathering. Yet the religious and social realms were quick to respond; within two decades the streets were supplemented with chapels and a network of Board schools, as foundations were laid for a bigger and bolder St Mary’s church and mission buildings.

The very few early terrace buildings which remain, catalogued below, add contextual significance to the surviving institutional buildings in Hackney Wick. The Second World War damaged the area irreversibly. More importantly, the aftermath triggered the social concerns which would dictate the urban landscape. With no question of re-building social housing immediately close to a still-thriving industrial district, attention focused to zoning the area. Hackney Wick became the centre for residential redevelopment and social engineering via new street layouts and high-rises, the Old Ford area was quickly ran over by industry, eventually rendering its schools and chapels defunct. When considered with the humble low-rise survivors of the Trowbridge estate and their recent neighbours, the area to the north of the station has its own important history of community and social provision.
4. **Assessment of the present architectural characters of areas within Hackney Wick and Old Ford.**

The Hackney Wick and Old Ford area can be broken down into a number of small character areas, defined by use and types of building. Within these are a variety of key buildings, of high architectural or historical significance. There are also a number of buildings which, although not of high interest, complement their neighbours and make a positive contribution to the characters of the areas considered.

The buildings are grouped in areas corresponding to those identified in the report by EDAW Ltd: *Baseline Report Hackney Wick and Fish Island* (April 2008). Where appropriate, these have been sub-divided to define smaller areas of interest. The buildings are grouped and identified in Fig. 20.

A small number of buildings are listed locally by Hackney and Tower Hamlets Councils. These are recorded below. Where appropriate, further buildings are suggested for future inclusion in local lists.
Fig. 20 Overview map showing buildings and character areas of significance
4.1 HW 1: West
St Mary of Eton and the former Victoria Junction ‘village’

4.1.1 The area immediately around St Mary’s church is the most interesting part of the Trowbridge estate and retains the greatest variety of historic buildings in the Hackney Wick/Old Ford vicinity. Some of the original street layout remains, and around the former Victoria Park Junction the traces of the former commercial hub survive. The most recent housing by Lovell, rendered in yellow, is peppered around the area.

4.1.2 Buildings of a high significance, or which make a positive contribution to the character of the area:

1. St Mary of Eton, Eastway, 1890
The mission church dominates the landscape and can be seen from several points across the estate. In addition to its Grade II* status and renowned architect, the church is an important reminder of the former surrounding slum community which it was built to serve.

2. Mission buildings, Eastway, 1892-1912
West and north of the church are a group of large ancillary buildings that housed mission personnel and community activities. The buildings are well-constructed in red brick and have many original features; they connect to the church behind its landmark tower. The buildings are mentioned in the church’s list description (see Appendix XX) and form an integral part of the mission complex. They have some architectural significance and high local and historical significance.
3. The former Public Baths, Eastway, 1934
Although the internal structure of the building is altered, the exterior of the baths is a good example of municipal architecture in a modern style. It also has local significance in its history of providing for sanitary needs in a slum area, and in more recent years, as a community centre. There is a contemporary substation immediately behind. The building makes a positive contribution to the character of the area and should be included in a local list.

4. Terraces, Eastway, c. 1870-1885
These modest houses are the last group of surviving Victorian terraces in the entire Hackney Wick/ Old Ford area. Although architecturally unexceptional, the survivors of the Second World War bombing and post-war slum clearances are historically significant as reminders of the past landscape and make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

5. Former Goods Depot, Eastway, c. 1880-90
This small group of buildings around a yard are now privately-owned in use as work/live accommodation, with some new alterations. They are located behind a private gate. Although architecturally uninteresting, the group is a reminder of the area’s importance as a transport hub and has some historical significance.

6. Cottages, Eastway, c. 1880.
Immediately outside the former rail depot, the cottages face Eastway. The south building has a large ‘Victory Works’ sign painted across its south wall. The buildings make a positive contribution to the local area.

Although recently extended, the building retains its original decorative character and is a positive addition to the area. The building is listed locally by Hackney Council.
8. Shops and domestic building, Eastway, early twentieth century.

*These brick Neo-Georgian shops and simple Arts and Crafts style building are architecturally unexceptional but make positive contributions to the ‘village’ character of the area.*

4.2 **HW 1: East: The centre of the Trowbridge Estate**

4.2.1 The remaining buildings of the Trowbridge Estate are low-rise bungalows, houses and apartments dating from the late 1960s to mid-1970s. There is no visible trace of the former high-rises. The homes are built of homogenous brick and concrete and informally grouped around gardens. There is no commercial activity within the estate’s boundaries. The two newer developments at Waterden Road and Leabank Square have a distinct early 1990s style and materiality but are architecturally of low significance. The only building of high historical or architectural significance is Gainsborough School:

4.2.2 Buildings of a high significance, or which make a positive contribution to the character of the area:

1. Gainsborough School, 1897

*The building is due to be listed at Grade II. The school is a large landmark in the area and a good example of its type. It is architecturally significant and, as the last surviving school building in the area, is of high local and historical significance. The school is locally listed by Hackney Council.*
4.3 HW 2: The north side of Hackney Wick station and railway line.

4.3.1 The area has a large number of industrial buildings of different sizes dating from the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century. Most lie to the east and canal area. These are interspersed with some post-war rebuilding and, to the west, more recent residential buildings and a few shops. A number of yellow houses built by Lovell connect the area to its Trowbridge neighbours. The area retains its original street pattern.

The buildings have a greater variety of uses than as first appears; several former industrial buildings are used as creative studios and incorporate the live-work units of artists. There are a number of important early industrial buildings as well as some smaller Victorian or Edwardian buildings. Most of the late twentieth century buildings are large industrial sheds or small garages and are architecturally uninteresting.

4.3.2 Buildings of a high significance, or which make a positive contribution to the character of the area:

1. Central Books c. 1910 / surviving George Spill’s Vulcanised Rubber Works buildings, 1861, Wallis Road

_The vulcanised rubber works are thought to be the oldest survivors of their kind in London and is most historically significant industrial building in the Hackney Wick area. The neighbouring book store, formerly a printing works and cardboard box factory, is a distinctive building of some architectural significance and retains many original features. Although the buildings are not of a listable quality they are the most distinctive and important buildings on Wallis Road. They should be included in a local list of buildings of architectural and historical significance._
2. Oslo House (East and West) Felstead Street, c. 1955-60
This large pair of factory buildings are well-constructed and a good example of their period. The buildings have additional architectural interest in the exposed language of the steel-frame and brick-infill construction. Four storeys in height, the north fronts are stepped back. The series of sloped roofs features alternating glass and corrugated metal panels. It is thought that they built for detailed printing works such as wallpaper or textiles. The building is now largely occupied by artists and many spaces have been subdivided to create live-work units.

3. Lion Works, c. 1880 onwards
The former iron foundry, and later glass works, is a well-designed building with interesting original details. The buildings were occupied by Achille Serre from 1903-1927, who extended the factory to the east and west. The surviving buildings are in good condition and now in mixed-use. The distinct courtyard setting of the buildings makes a positive addition to the surrounding area. The building warrants inclusion in a local list.

4. Three and two-storey buildings, Wallis Road, c. late nineteenth century
Many of this group of buildings between the Lion works and Oslo house are in need of repair but retain their original character and some details. The buildings are not of architectural interest but have some historic interest.
5. Eton Mission Boat House, 1934
*Formerly connected with St Mary’s church, the domestic-scaled building is an unexpected survivor in an industrial area and has some historical significance. Although out of character with its neighbours the boat house makes a positive contribution to the canalside.*

6. Factory/warehouse, early twentieth century, south Wallis Road.
*This large block comprises a two storey building to the east and single storey with a series of north-facing pitched glass roofs to the west side. The north-facing windows indicate that the building was designed for detailed work such as printing. The building is not of architectural interest, but a typical example of industrial building at a smaller scale which complements its neighbours.*

7. Former Carless Institute, 1926, extended after 1937
*A former social centre for workers in the area, the building is typically detailed for its time and in good condition. The institute was set up at the bequest of William Leonard, one of the owners of chemical manufacturers Carless, Capel and Leonard. With its matching extension, the building is architecturally uninteresting but has historical and local significance as a meeting place, and alternative to nearby public houses, for workers.*
4.4 FI 1: Northeast of the Hertford Union Canal

4.4.1 The area between the railway line and the Hertford Union Canal is defined by large warehouses, small ancillary buildings, storage yards and a few survivors from the site’s pre-war residential streets. The east-west roads follow their original pattern, the north-south Wansbeck Road has disappeared and is now built over with yards. There is a high quantity of open, parking, or yard space between the buildings to the west, although this side of the area has a stagnant quality due to its proximity to the A12 road. The most significant older buildings lie to the east and canal side and form a distinctive group. They are predominately brick-built factories with large series of fenestration, and details such as arches in coloured brick.

4.4.2 Buildings of a high significance, or which make a positive contribution to the character of the area:

1. Former Confectionary factory, north White Post Lane, 1913. The building dominates the rise of White Post Lane bridge. Built by Clarke, Nickolls & Coombs Ltd in the Queen’s Yard, the factory produced chocolate throughout the early twentieth century. The building retains original features and is a striking part of the canal front. The sloped set windows in blue brick on the south ground floor give it an interesting relationship with the street. The buildings are not of listable quality but are of architectural interest and important landmarks on the canal side. They have high historic significance and should be included on a local list.
2. Former Achille Serre Dye and Dry-cleaning works, White Post Lane, 1904 (extension 1923). The four storey factory is well-built with consistent detailing; the blocks are joined by ramps which have been in-filled at a later date. As a set, the buildings provide an intimate setting for rented space and studios; the ground floor of the front building is occupied by a printer’s. The buildings are not of a listable quality but have some architectural and historical significance and should be included in a local list.

3. The Lord Napier and neighbouring houses, c. 1865. The public house appears on the 1870 OS Map and was the first in the Hackney Wick area. The building and neighbouring houses are derelict, but are the only visual reminder of the former residential life in the area. As a set, they make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

4. Everett House, White Post Lane, 1911. The former office of drycleaners Achille Serre (the name still legible in mosaic on the parapet), the façade features carefully-designed brick channels. The building has been heavily altered and as such has only some architectural significance. Achille Serre were a large company and employers locally and so their former office has historical significance.

5. The Lea Tavern, White Post Lane, 1897. The former public house is designed in a Queen Anne style and features colourful brick detailing. Another survivor of the residential terraces, the building is redundant. The building is not listable but is of architectural and historical interest. It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area and should be added to a local list.
6. Brick walls and gate of the former Chemical Works, 1891. The walls are the only reminder of the former factory, which had been established in 1859 and was one of the earliest industries in the area.

7. McGrath House, Hepscott Road, 1906. Formerly the factory of dyers and dry-cleaners Lush & Cook. This three storey building is segregated from its contemporaries by newer warehouses. It is the last Edwardian building to face the Hertford Union Canal.

8. Clarnico Confectionary starch department, canal side, 1905. The three storey brick building was part of the extensive sweet manufacturer’s complex and is the sole surviving Edwardian industrial building on the east side of the site. It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area and warrants inclusion in a local list.
4.5  FI2: North Old Ford (‘Fish Island’)

4.5.1 The Old Ford Area is dominated by industrial architecture of several periods. The north west side is predominately late twentieth century architecture, but follows the old street pattern. At the far north end a modern block of apartments, finished in different materials, dominates the entry to the Hertford Union Canal.

The south and east side has a rich mix of old warehouses and factories which have a distinctive relationship with the canal, the lock, and where they survive in together, each other. The east canal side id defined by a series of low-medium height warehouses. Further inland factories line up closely to create shady streets, contained to the west by the outfall sewer.

4.5.2 Buildings of a high significance, or which make a positive contribution to the character of the area:

1. Swan Wharf Stable block, 1906-12, extended mid twentieth century. *The building its distinguished by small openings to the street. Now blocked, these give it a defensive or prison-like quality. The stable is a rare survivor of its type.*

2. Former Rubber Works, 1889. *With an end gable with tall blind windows and red brick detailing, the factory has a strong street presence. Birnbaum’s factory is thought to be the last surviving rubber works buildings of the Victorian era.*
3. Former Waterproof Clothing Factory, Dace Road, 1882 and 1884. 
*Four storeys with red brick detail, notably basket-shaped arches.*

4. Algha Works, Smeed Road, 1908. 
*The factory is typical of Edwardian industrial architecture. The exterior retains original features.*

5. Former Rubber Works, Smeed Road, 1886-89. 
*A four storey factory and two storey office with distinctive entrance to the street.*

6. Percy Dalton Factory, Dace Road, 1898, extended 1907 
*The factory was built for the Britannia Folding Box Company, who also printed on the site.*

7. Percy Dalton Offices, Dace Road, 1898, extended 1902-1910 
*Built as the offices to the Britannia Factory, the cottage-like building doubled as a gatehouse to the factory and to the yards behind.*

8. Former Carbonic Acid Works, Bream Street, 1898. 
*Built for Barrett and Elers Ltd, the factory contained large plant works. Now somewhat isolated from the street and canal by intervening yards.*
9. Screw Stopper Works, canal side, c. 1924
Also Barrett and Elers Ltd, the long single-story building was repaired to the north after the Second World War. The factory's scale and character make it positive but modest addition to the canal side area.

The two storey brick building is derelict and in need of repair, but retains a simple industrial character.

11. Old Ford Locks, Hackney cut, c. 1865
The canal side retains walls of Kentish ragstone, matching wharf walls along Hackney Cut and the Hertford Union Canal.

12. Sewer Bridge, c. 1862, crossing River Lea to the south of lock.
The wrought-iron bridge carries two original sewer pipes, and two added in 1907. There is a Second World War pill box to the east side. The bridge is overgrown with vegetation, although this adds to its character, softening the aspect towards the new residential developments to the south.

13. Old Ford Lock House, c. 1930
The large house is the only surviving domestic structure in the central Old Ford Area. Although externally altered, it remains a positive addition to the Lock environment.

14. Three Ramps, east canal side, date unknown.
The wharf ramps were built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century to serve timber yards, which lined the east bank. They feature rectangular cobbled surfaces designed to prevent slipping.
4.6 FI3, FI4, FI5: South Old Ford (south ‘Fish Island’)

4.6.1 The southern tip of the Old Ford area is separated by the crossing outfall sewer bridge and has an isolated and heavily industrial character. The riverside around the sewer bridge has some vegetation. There is no public towpath to the river side and the west side is trapped by the A12 road and Blackwall Tunnel Approach. Most of the site is used as yards or has late twentieth century warehouses. There are a small number of inter-war warehouses to the south east and around the former Bow Goods Yard, although they are architecturally uninteresting and have been heavily altered. The original street pattern is essentially intact but has been modernised and now incorporates traffic control measures. The north east end is dominated by new large blocks of residential housing which are rendered in bright colours. These have encouraged at least one small shop and pub.

4.6.2 Buildings of a high significance, or which make a positive contribution to the character of the area:

1. Church of Christ Church Mission and Sunday School, Crown close, 1890. *The building is much altered but is the last reminder of the former residential history of the area.*

2. Two-storey industrial building, off Wick Lane, c.1900
   *A late Victorian or early Edwardian building in brick. A rare post-war survivor in the area, in need of some repair.*

3. Two-storey houses/ public house, Wick Lane, c. 1900.
   *The pub has recently been refurbished and much of the structure re-built, but retains its character. The nearby houses appear in a good condition and are the sole survivors of original residential buildings in the area.*
4. Industrial building, Dye House Lane, c. 1910-1920. A plain four-storey warehouse or factory in brick, the building appears to be the least altered of the few that survive in the lower Old Ford area. It is in use and in an acceptable condition.
5. **Recommendations**

5.1. Our assessment has shown that there is significant historical interest in the Hackney Wick and Fish Island area, manifested in the survival of buildings of interest. We believe that the character of the area is sufficiently established for regeneration proposals to be based on an evolution and enhancement of that character rather than a cleared site approach.

5.2. Our map regression exercise has shown that these fall into groups as shown in Fig 19 of this report. These groups form the basis for a strategy for the area where conservation issues should be given a high priority. We believe that such a form of regeneration would provide a necessary foil to the Olympic site to the east of the Lee Navigation where the regeneration will be characterised entirely by new building.

5.3. All the buildings which we have identified have some claim to retention. If affected by redevelopment proposals these buildings should first be considered for conversion and adaptation rather than demolition. If in the interests of a wider regeneration demolition is deemed unavoidable, they should at least be properly recorded.

5.4. We have noted that some of the buildings we have identified as of interest are currently in use for studio or craft based industry. Buildings with north light roofs (such as the factory south of Wallis Road and Oslo House) are especially adaptable to such use. In our view many of the buildings are comparable to those in Clerkenwell or Shoreditch where such new uses have proved to be the early stages of regeneration. Many of the buildings we have identified are architecturally robust and capable of sustaining substantial intervention, to adapt to new use or mixed use, without losing their significance and character.

5.5. We support the proposal to designate an Old Ford Conservation Area. We recommend that the proposed boundaries be reviewed to include further buildings of interest, so offering them greater protection, and also to offer greater incentive to the enhancement of the setting of the existing buildings of interest in new development.

5.6. We have not identified any further area where conservation area designation seems immediately appropriate. However, in the light of the forthcoming Heritage Protection Act we recommend that when new guidance is issued to assist implementation of the act the whole be reviewed in the light of that guidance.

5.7. We recommend that some of the buildings we have noted in our survey be included in local lists and given protection under local development framework policies. The buildings in question are noted in the building by building description in Section 4 of this report.

5.8. We believe that the west bank of the Lea Navigation should be made more accessible, but done so in a manner that those buildings which have a significant link with the waterway do not lose that link. The creation of the Hackney Cut and Hertford Union Navigation were the key originators of the development of the area and their heritage significance should be taken into account in redevelopment proposals.
5.9 Area-specific Advice

5.9.1 Hackney Wick (the London Borough of Hackney)

The north site is the most varied in building types, contributing to the distinctly different characters within the area, but with an uncomfortable relationship between residential and industrial areas. The mixed-use or live-work units in some of the former industrial buildings has kept good buildings in use throughout the day and ensured maintenance. We advise further investigation into the extent that this model may have wider application in the area.

5.9.2 HW1: West: around St Mary of Eton

The collection of varied building types around St Mary’s church form an important historic ‘village’ group which should be protected. It has high potential as a starting point for the encouragement of a civic realm, small scale commercial activity or minor ‘high street’, and the opening up of access to the Trowbridge Estate. The church and mission buildings are in need of restoration but should form a focus for regeneration and community activity.

5.9.2 HW1: East: Trowbridge estate

The Trowbridge area and neighbouring Wick Lane Village and Leabank Square are in good condition. There is a risk that the estates could be left out of regeneration to the south. While the redevelopment, and community involvement of this area is of social historical interest, there are at present no heritage concerns.

5.9.3 HW2: The Station Hub

The area has a number of small historic buildings which would benefit from restoration and re-use. The historic industrial buildings near the canal should be retained, as should many of the smaller neighbouring buildings catalogued above, which contribute to the character of the locality. New buildings in the area should respect their scale and character. Recent large-scale development, namely the new residential block on Felstead Road, has had a negative impact on the area and similar proposals should be discouraged.
5.9.4 The Old Ford area (the London Borough of Tower Hamlets)

A significant part of the area is under consideration by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for an Old Ford Conservation Area. Subject to the review of the boundaries we support this. In addition, surrounding high quality structures (such as the rear buildings of the dye and cleaning works on White Post Lane) could warrant inclusion and should be treated with consideration.

5.9.5 FI1: North: above the Hertford Union Canal:

The area between the Hackney Borough Boundary and the Hertford Union Canal has large expanses of uninteresting twentieth-century warehouses and has the most scope for redevelopment. The areas around the station and canal are vulnerable to change. The redevelopment of the canal side and immediate area should envisage the re-use of existing buildings where possible to maintain its character, which should be reinforced in the design of new buildings.

5.9.6 FI2: The centre: ‘Fish Island’ and the proposed Conservation Area

The designation of a new Conservation Area on the site should be used as a starting point for positive regeneration. In addition to those within the proposed boundaries, some surrounding buildings (notably the Carbonic Acid Works on Bream Street) could warrant inclusion and should be treated with consideration.

5.9.6 FI3, FI4, FI 5: South Old Ford Area

There is little left of architectural or historical significance in the far south of the site. The new residential blocks are out of scale and character with the former industrial centre of Old Ford, and impede on the few small old buildings that remain nearby.
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