

Response to the public consultation re the draft Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area Special Planning Document (SPD)

Introduction

I am a member of the Barbican Association (BA) Planning sub-Committee but this response is made in my personal capacity. However, BA's formal response submitted on 28 July not only includes my revised version of the SPD (FR Draft) but makes reference to it, including qualifying two parts. Since 28 July, I have made minor amendments to the FR Draft and these changes are shown in the FR Draft Edit in the Appendix.

Many apologies for any confusion but please also consider the changes in the FR Draft Edit when considering the FR Draft. The latter is a Word version of the consultation SDP with all the original images removed.

The Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area (CA)

In October 2016, I represented the BA with two members of Golden Lane Estate Residents' Association (GLERA) when we met Kathryn Stubbs, City Corporation's Deputy Director for the Heritage. The purpose of the meeting was to request that City Corporation designate a conservation area (proposed CA) which was more extensive than the CA designated by City Corporation on 8 October 2018.

Ms Stubbs said she was far too busy on a project to review all the then 26 conservation areas and wouldn't have time to consider our request until that review was completed - in several years' time. Despite Ms Stubbs' dismissal, on 23 May 2017, City Corporation's Planning and Transportation Committee (P&TC) agreed that "the assessment and analysis of the proposed [CA] would be carried out in accordance with policy and national guidelines".

One reason for the volte face was a public online petition organised by BA and GLERA calling for the creation of the proposed CA, which, with a separate paper petition, attracted over 1,000 signatures. The other reason was the imminent approval by P&TC of the destruction of Bernard Morgan House at 43 Golden Lane and its replacement with the massive and entirely inappropriate Denizen. That planning application had attracted over 150 objections.

On 14 November 2017 P&TC considered the Officer's report appraising the proposed CA. This had, for some unexplained but obviously self-serving reason, divided the proposed CA into five separate "zones":

Zone 1 - Golden Lane Estate (GLE);

Zone 2 - The area between Zone 1 and Zone 3;

Zone 3 - Barbican Estate (Barbican);

Zone 4 - The area, including City Corporation's Brewery Conservation Area - "inherited" from LB Islington in the 1995 administrative boundary changes - bordered by Chiswell Street, Moor Lane and Silk Street; and

Zone 5 - The area bordered by Barbican, Aldersgate Street, Fore Street, Fore Street Avenue and London Wall.

Zone 1 was the listed area of GLE - mostly Grade II but Grade II* for Crescent House. Hatfield Lawn and Basterfield service road were excluded without explanation other than that the two areas were not listed – something that is irrelevant to conservation area status.

Zone 3 excluded parts of Barbican, including the listed Cripplegate Street pedestrian ramp to Ben Jonson Place and the listed service yard to Exhibition Hall 2, along with other unlisted parts, including the service yard to Exhibition Hall 1, Barbican Wildlife Garden and Bridgewater Square. A small area of the Barbican Grade II* registered landscape was also omitted, being in Zone 5.

P&TC, following the Officer's recommendations, refused to include Zones 2, 4 and 5 in the proposed CA prior to a public consultation:

Debate ensued and several Members expressed the view that it was wrong to exclude Zone 2 which they considered was a critical part of the estate and should be included in the consultation.

Other Members considered that it would be wrong to include the area given that future planning applications would be affected, and also that it would be wrong to seek the views of people who wouldn't be affected. The inclusion of Zone 2 was put to a vote, which was defeated 14-11

The public consultation ran from December 2017 until 12 February 2018. The responses made by my wife and I challenged the grounds on which the Officers had determined not to recommend the inclusion of the whole area of the proposed CA and requested its inclusion.

In March 2018, The Twentieth Century Society held a workshop – *C20 Conservation Areas: Making it Happen* – following its report, funded by Historic England on C20 conservation areas to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the passing of the Civic Amenities Act 1967. This was very interesting as the main speakers were experienced and knowledgeable Local Authority conservation officers. No City Corporation Officer attended but all the attendees I spoke to about the proposed CA were critical of the appraisal submitted to P&TC.

P&TC met on 8 October 2018 to consider the Officer's report on the result of the public consultation which recommended the inclusion of both Barbican Wildlife Garden and Bridgewater Square - from Zone 2 – and the omitted part of the registered landscape - from Zone 5 - in the CA but nothing else despite there being a majority of responses against the refusal to designate the whole of the proposed CA. As far as Zone 2 was concerned:

The Deputy Chairman stated that any redevelopment would have to consider the character of the adjoining Conservation area and that the importance of these buildings could therefore be recognised without having to necessarily include them within the proposed conservation area and adjust the boundaries.

A second Member stated that she also felt that it was a mistake not to include these buildings within the conservation area and proposed an amendment seeking to adjust the proposed boundaries to include these. Another Member seconded this proposal and it was put to the vote. 9 voted in favour of the amendment and 10 against with 2 abstentions.

As a result, we now have the CA, which was determined purely politically. This is the result of areas being omitted from the proposed CA as the result of a shallow and subjective appraisal, rather than a deep and objective one. According to Historic England:

Conservation areas exist to manage and protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place - in other words, the features that make it unique.

And:

In conservation areas there are some extra planning controls and considerations in place to protect the historic and architectural elements which make the place special.

While both GLE and Barbican are unique, these also comprise historic and architectural elements to the extent that all buildings and both landscapes - except Barbican Wildlife Garden, Bridgewater Square and Exhibition Hall 2 service yard - are also protected by listing. Zones 4 and 5 and the excluded area of Zone 2 - most of which is integral with the Garden and the Square - are also unique and contain historic and architectural elements, some of which are either scheduled monuments or listed:

Zone 2:

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|----------------------|---|
| 45 Beech Street: | An office block by Frank Scarlet, completed in 1958. It's position on Beech Street defined the shape of the adjoining part of Ben Jonson Place and the eastern aspect of Bryer Court. |
| Bridgewater House: | An office block in Bridgewater Square, completed in 1926, extended and converted to mixed residential and commercial use in 1995. The tall rounded windows and coloured fascia are original although renewed in 1985 when in the ownership of the Prudential. |
| The Cobalt Building: | A block of flats in Bridgewater Square, completed in 1997 on the site of a pre-WW1 office block that survived WW2 intact. |
| Tudor Rose Court: | A block of sheltered housing completed in 1997 partly on what was part of the adjoining Barbican Wildlife Garden. By Avanti Architects with design cues from GLE blocks. |
| Eglwys Jewin: | Acknowledged as an undesignated heritage asset by City Corporation. By Caroe and Partners, completed in 1961, on the |

foundations of the previous 19th Century church destroyed in WW2.

1 Golden Lane: Originally Cripplegate Institute with library, educational facilities by Sydney R Smith, completed 1896. Two floors with theatre by Frederic Hammond added prior to 1912 and a redevelopment on an adjoining bomb site, incorporating the existing building completed in 1992. Listed Grade II.

Street network: Bridgewater Street, Bridgewater Square, Viscount Street and Brackley Street are shown on mid 18th Century maps. The part of Fann Street, excluded from the CA, is late 19th Century. Golden Lane, north of Brackley Street existed in the 17th Century. Its southern section was re-aligned with the Barbican development. Cripplegate Street is also late 19th Century but part was pedestrianised between the Barbican development and the redevelopment of 1 Golden Lane.

Zone 4:

The Brewery CA: Designated by LB Islington prior to 1995.

Milton and Shire House: An office block by Sheppard Robson, completed in 1980 and renovated in 1996.

Milton Gate: An office block by Denys Lasdum, completed in 1991 and renovated by Squire & Partners on a separate island site next to the Brewery.

Zone 5:

Area enclosed by London Wall, Fore Street Avenue, Fore Street and Wood Street, connected to Barbican by pedways from both Andrewes Highwalk and The Postern.

1 & 2 London Wall Place: Office block by MAKE Architects, completed 2018.

St Alphage Gardens, London Wall: Laid out as a public garden in 1872, south of a high section of Roman Wall. Part of the Barbican Estate, St Alphage and Barber-Surgeons' Garden Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation Grade 1 (TBC).

Remains of St Alphage Church, London Wall: Scheduled Monument.

Remains St Alphage Church Tower, London Wall: Grade II Listed Building.

- Salters' Hall, Fore Street: Livery Hall. Grade II Listed Building by John S Bonnington Partnership, from concept by Basil Spence, completed 1976. Restoration and extension by De Metz Forbes Knight Architects, completed 2018.
- Salters' Garden: Opened in 1981 and redesigned as a knot garden by David Hicks in 1995. On the other side of the high section of Roman Wall from St Alphage Gardens.
- Roman House, Wood Street: Former office building by R N Wakelin, completed 1957, first in the post-WW2 London Wall Route XI scheme and converted into flats in 2013/14 by The Manser Practice. An inscription on the wall fronting Fore Street denoting where the first WW2 bomb landed on London on 25 August 1940.
- Area enclosed by Aldersgate Street, Barbican, Wood Street and London Wall, connected to Barbican at both ground and highwalk level.
- Museum of London: By Powell and Moya, completed in 1976 in the final part of the London Wall Route XI scheme. Subsequent alterations from 1990 onwards enabled the grant of a Certificate of Immunity from Listing (ColfL), expiring in 2024. Adjoins the CA
- Bastion House, London Wall: Also, by Powell and Moya, completed 1977, the sixth and final tower of the London Wall Route XI scheme. Now has the same ColfL as the Museum of London.
- Ironmongers' Hall, Shaftesbury Place: Livery Hall by S J Tatchell, completed 1925 and recognised as an undesignated heritage asset by the City Corporation.
- Ferroners' House, Shaftesbury Place: Office block adjoining Ironmongers' Hall by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners, to a design by Powell and Moya, completed 1977.
- Barber-Surgeons' Hall, Monkwell Square: Livery Hall by Kenneth Cross, completed 1969.
- Barber-Surgeons' Garden: Including a herb garden within the circular walls of Bastion 13, created in 1991 as a celebration of the passion for healing herbs of John Gerard, a 16th Century Barber-Surgeons Liveryman. Now part of the Barbican Estate, St Alphage and Barber-Surgeons' Garden Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation Grade 1 (TBC).
- Alban Gate, London Wall,

and 2-10 Monkwell Square: A postmodern mixed development by Terry Farrell and Partners, completed 1992, refurbished in 2013/16.

Monkwell Square: Originally formed post WW2, reduced in area as part of the Alban Gate development and laid out to Terry Farrell's design.

Site of the Roman and
Medieval gateway of
Cripple Gate, Wood Street: Scheduled monument.

Not only does the SPD require revision, the CA requires expanding to include Zones 4 and 5 and the excluded parts of Zone 2 along with Hatfield Lawn and Basterfield service road.

The SPD

The amendments in the FR Draft and FR Draft Edit are submitted in response to the public consultation. In part these amendments are additions of factual details, corrections of errors, including typos and editing of part of the text. My added comments are hopefully self-explanatory and the green highlighting is intended to question the original text.

My response is an attempt to ensure that the final SPD is correct in fact and the final document is worthy of City Corporation. I hope this is helpful, although I'm sure there will be both mistakes on my part and errors missed.

29 July 2021

Fred Rodgers

APPENDIX

FR DRAFT EDIT

NOTE: For convenience and brevity, only the parts of FR Draft which are amended by FR Edit are included below.

1. Summary of character, appearance and significance

- Integration of the ancient remains of the Roman and medieval City wall, including Bastions 12, 13 and 14 and the medieval church of St Giles' Cripplegate in a strikingly modern context
- The incorporation within Barbican Estate of both Bridgewater Square and Barbican Wildlife Garden,

2. History

In the late first or early second century AD, the Fort was then built to the north of Londinium. Later, around 200 AD, the Roman wall was erected and incorporated in the Fort wall, remains of which can be seen today in the South the conservation area.

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However, the City Corporation was concerned with depopulation inside of the City and turned its attention towards this issue when planning to rebuild the City post-war. Research of records at London Metropolitan Archives reveals that the need to retain local authority status played no small part in those plans.

Outwardly, the buildings of both estates have hardly changed. Development, leaving aside the destruction of Milton Court and apart from significant alterations to City of London School for Girls, has largely been subtle.

A clumsy footbridge linking the Barbican Estate to Barbican Underground Station around 1988, seemingly to the design of the then City Surveyor, as its inappropriate architecture might suggest.

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4. Boundary and Fringe

Immediate setting

Accordingly, the immediate setting of the conservation area is a densely developed urban heart, largely modern in architecture, variable in appearance and scale (from low- to high-rise) and subject to frequent change and renewal, something its designation is intended to reject.

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Between the Estates

The estates were designed as separate, self-contained entities but, as can be seen on the ground, these merge into one, despite the physical division of Fann Street, as the architects intended.

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Although designed by Avanti Architects with design cues and a palette to match Cuthbert Harrowing House in particular, Tudor Rose Court, of 1997, is one of the buildings of no special architectural value. However, part of its site was removed from Barbican Wildlife Garden and the remainder was the site was known as the Fann St Club Rooms and was originally built for the City of London Residents Association after it was forced to move out of accommodation in a basement on Basinghall Street because of flooding. It was temporarily housed on Beech Street before it moved to the corner of Fann Street and Viscount Street. It had a number of other uses, including for teaching dance and as a youth club for Golden Lane Estate residents.

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5. Buildings, Open Spaces and Public Realm

The intrinsic character and appearance of these set-pieces endure so much so that despite the passage of fifty years the Estates continue to be seen as desirable locations. Both deliver successful mixed-use developments needed when ensuring they can adapt and respond to external pressures of climate change, continued maintenance and cultural vitality, whilst including tranquil places with access for all. In addition to the post-war development Barbican Estate, and hence the conservation area, also contains a fragment of older townscape: Bridgwater Square, laid out in the 18th Century and once part of the sixteenth century Bridgwater House, (destroyed by fire in 16870,) and garden; and Barbican Wildlife Garden. Bridgwater Square was acquired by public subscription in 1926 and transferred to the City Corporation under the Open Spaces Act 1906, it is now largely protected under the London Squares Preservation Act 1931 (amended 1961).

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a. Golden Lane Estate

Introduction

Crescent House, the final building to be constructed, marks a departure from the earlier curtain wall blocks of the 1950s. and the ideas explored in the design of this building had a significant impact, after the development of the now destroyed Milton Court, on the development of the Barbican Estate.

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The recent redevelopments of both Bernard Morgan House and the former Richard Cloudesley School site, both on Golden Lane, have had a significant impact on the setting of the Estate. The former has caused harm to the setting of Bowater House in particular and the latter has caused more significant harm to the setting of both Hatfield House and Basterfield House. In both cases, public benefit outweighed the harm in the eyes of City Corporation but a more objective balance must be demanded in future to maintain the original architectural character of the Estate

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b. Barbican Estate

Introduction

Because, externally, it has undergone very little alteration (apart from works to the civic buildings, with the notable exception of the mixed use Milton Court, destroyed by the City Corporation in 2008 and replaced by soleless glass tower), the Estate has the inner integrity of a single composition and consequently should be considered as such.

Individual elements

Slab blocks

Slab blocks are most numerous building type in the Estate. They are in most cases roomy and mid-rise in height.

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Appearing as a curvaceous distortion of the slab blocks, it makes for a pleasing juxtaposition although having its design cue in the pre-WW2, Jewin Crescent which is now partly under City of London School for Girls and partly under Thomas More Garden.

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Towers

To the north of Beech Street is Blake Tower, of a very different architectural treatment but tied into the whole by the shared material palette. This was original conceived as the Barbican YMCA, hence its different scale and architectural treatment to the others the distinction intentionally creating the linkage between the two estates.

Public Realm, Open Spaces and Trees

Embedded within it at various points are planting beds, particularly in Beech Gardens and Ben Jonson Place, which divide the North from the South, as well as Breton Highwalk, and relics such as tombstones and lampstands echoing the previous urban forms on the site.

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The igloos on the north of Andrewes House; the inlets on Lakeside Terrace, the grassed banks north of Wallside and the waterfalls cascading water down from Brandon Mews provide a mixture of the formal and informal, an often ignored but vital component of the Estate.

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Below the podium, at true ground level and, in some parts, at lower ground level, are the car parks and storage areas, largely plain concrete forms and surface treatments.

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Open space in the Estate is not just confined to the podium, though. As mentioned, the blocks are disposed to create a series of distinct voids between the architectural volumes, occupied by water, greening or the ruins of earlier buildings.

Friends of City Gardens designed and installed the "pop up" Pot Garden on Moor Lane but within the Estate, in 2017. This was part of the Mayor of London's Low Emissions Neighbourhood initiative to how the benefit of planting to reduce air pollution. It has recently been joined by the Culture Mile's Meanwhile Moor Lane Community Garden, a "pop up", designed by Wayward, a lanscape, art and architecture practice. The latter will be replaced under the Moor Lane Environmental Enhancement Scheme, part of The Barbican Area Streets and Walkways Enhancement Strategy approved as long ago as 2008.

Recently, generic TfL "wayfinding" - the so-called "Legible London" - totems have been "planted" around the podium and other parts of the public realm. Not only are these out of character with the Estate, particularly regarding fonts and palette, along with the similar wall mounted signs, many are inaccurate in description and/or direction.

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Civic Buildings

Civic buildings of an outwardly familiar but quite different architectural vernacular are disposed at the upper end of the South Barbican.

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Arts Centre

The Centre can of course be entered from outside the Estate, via Silk Street, through a low glazed portal under a huge bush-hammered concrete soffit interspersed with regular windows and crowned with an upswept canopy. The brick flytower of the theatre, ensconced in the large and angular glazed canopy over the Conservatory, which houses temperate and tropical plants, fishes and amphibians is at podium level.

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Character sub-areas

South Barbican

There are a series of courts formed by the slab blocks. To the South, lower buildings where the ruins are, the Estate rises in scale to the height of the towers at Beech Street.

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Moving north, to the heart of the Estate, the slab blocks increase in size, forming two large courts either end of the lake north of the church of St Giles Cripplegate, dramatically

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retained in a sea of podium bricks, with inset gravestones and lamp standards like echoes of the traditional streetscape that once lay upon the site.

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North Barbican

The slab blocks are more compact, the layout of the area less expansive and defined more by the linearity of Beech Gardens and Ben Jonson Place with the parallel Ben Jonson House. Instead of the expanses of lawn and water to be found in the South, the original landscaping by Chamberlin Powell and Bon, refurbished by Building Design Partnership in 1983, takes the form of a series of tiled planters integrated into the podium, with small lawns, flower beds, trees and shrubs.

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Although not included in the Registered Landscape, Barbican Wildlife Garden was used as contractors' compound during Phase IV of the development and then, with Bridgewater Square, laid out as a single amenity lawn around 1974. After Bridgewater Square was incorporated into the nursery under Bunyan Court, the Garden was laid out as a wildlife garden in 1990, pre-dating the Natural History Museum's by five years. Subsequently, Barbican Wildlife Group, made up of local residents, began tending the Garden, with a City Gardener, around 2003, an arrangement that continues to this day.

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Enclosed by the podium level above, and as a key route east through the City, Beech Street has historically had high levels of air pollution. ¶

¶ In March 2020, the City Corporation introduced experimental traffic changes on Beech Street, Bridgewater Street and Golden Lane in order to address this problem. Beech Street has become a zero-emission street. This means only pedestrians, cyclists and zero-emission vehicles may traverse its length (access for off-street premises excepted). ¶

¶ The experimental scheme will run for up to eighteen months. If made permanent, there could be potential to reconfigure the layout and appearance of the street, transforming the look and feel of the street and enhancing the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area. ¶

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The Garden makes a substantial contribution to the biodiversity of the Estate, alongside its ambience and amenity value. It is well documented in Volume IV of the Estate's Listed Building Management Guidelines, where 1.5.57 calls it "a self-contained landscape enclosure, rich in ecological value" and in 1.5.60 "the [Garden] constitutes an ecological and recreational resource of considerable significance and should be valued as such.

Barbican Wildlife Garden has won several RHS London in Bloom awards, as well being open to the public on Open Garden Squares Weekend and laterly online during London Open Gardens. Along with Thomas More Garden, Speed Garden, the lakes, parts of Beech Gardens, St Alphage Garden and Barber Surgeons' Garden, it comprises the Barbican Estate, St Alphage Garden and Barber Surgeons' Garden Grade I Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation. The City Corporation's Biodiversity Action Plan has an impact on the Estate's three residents' gardens, the lakes and part of Beech Gardens, as well as the area outside the Estate between Bastions 13 and 14, where Friends of City Gardens have recently planted the Barber-Surgeons' Meadow.

Potential Enhancements

Additionally, the reversal of later alterations, in particular the link building (which is actually planned for removal in the Podium Waterproofing Phase 2 works) and the replacement of the footbridge to Barbican Underground Station, could be beneficial where this would better reveal and enhance the original architectural character of the Estate.

6. Streets, Routes and Transportation

9. Local Details

Also on Beech Gardens, the boulder enclosed fountain and the boulder table are features of the Building Design Partnership refurbishment, retained following residential consultatation. On Ben Jonson Place is the Dolphin Fountain (John Ravera, 1990), together with another fountain installed as part of the 1983 refurbishment.